

Michael Bettencourt

Screenplays: Volume 3

Block & Tackle Productions Press



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How Do You Like Your Blue-Eyed Boy • Click • Downsize
Equal. Separate. • Glory Train • Hold On
In The Fort • Everything's Jake • Tips
Touching Down • The Letter

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Block & Tackle Productions Press



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To María Beatriz - always in all ways

How Do You Like Your Blueeyed Boy...

FADE IN

INT. - TIME INDETERMINATE

In a warehouse, dark, but with a glow of light as well, as if from windows very high up. A VOICE cries out: DR. JEREMIAH KISSÓV.

KISSÓV

Let me go!

No answer.

KISSÓV

You don't know how much trouble you're in!

No answer.

KISSÓV

Let me go.

CEILING

The SNAP of a light switch somewhere, and a light overhead pops on, a single bulb covered by a tin shade.

UNDER THE LIGHT

Kissóv is taped to a wooden office chair: arms to the arm rests, a band of tape around his chest, legs to the legs.

Kissóv hears FOOTSTEPS. He twists and turns to see if he can see who is making them.

EDGE OF CIRCLE OF LIGHT

The tips of a pair of shoes -- nice shoes, but not too expensive -- just break into the circle. They step forward.

Into the light walks a leather-trench coated, leather-gloved lower half of a body. Its right hand holds an automatic pistol.

The body stands behind Kissóv, to his left; Kissóv wrenches himself to see who it is but can't get far enough around.

The body's VOICE cuts through Kissóv's PANTING.

VOICE (O.S.)

Dr. Jeremiah Kissóv.

KISSÓV

Let me go.

The gun gets placed behind his left ear.

VOICE (O.S.)

Shut up. You've been summoned. So shut up until I need you.

KISSÓV'S LEFT EAR

The gun-tip digs into the bone just behind the ear lobe and leaves a red round circle.

The gun tip disappears.

EDGE OF CIRCLE OF LIGHT

The feet, behind Kissóv, walk to Kissóv's right. They make slight SCRAPING and CRUNCHING noises as they move across the concrete floor.

UNDER THE LIGHT

Kissóv tries to see who is behind him, but he can't do it. His BREATHING becomes more RASPY.

KISSÓV'S RIGHT EAR

The gun-tip digs into the bone just behind the ear lobe. It pushes just hard enough to force Kissóv to tip his head to the left.

VOICE (O.S.)

Okay, now I give you permission to talk.

Kissóv says nothing. The gun-tip releases its pressure, leaving behind an ugly red mark.

A mouth, a pair of lips, cozies up to Kissóv's ear.

VOICE

Suddenly mute, are we? That's actually fine -- I was getting tired of your whining.

KISSÓV (O.S.)

Please put the gun away.

The mouth does not form any words.

KISSÓV

Put the gun away.

The mouth disappears.

EDGE OF CIRCLE OF LIGHT

The body circles Kissóv along the rim of light. The FOOTFALLS make ECHOES that underscore Kissóv's harangue.

UNDER THE LIGHT

KISSÓV

You are in a lot of trouble! I'm sure someone saw us leave and knows where we are. And I know where we are since you didn't even bother to blindfold me. And when they get here -- assault, kidnapping, emotional abuse -- my lawyers -- do you know who I am? I'm known all over the world! You won't get away with this, whatever it is you're doing. Release me. Now. Right this minute. Immediately.

Kissóv runs out of steam. The feet take two steps more, then the body sits on Kissóv's lap, and Kissóv sees the face of LOUIS LAWTON. The gun remains in full view.

LAWTON

Finished? Hmm?

KISSÓV

Yes.

LAWTON

Keep adding to it if you want to -- we have time.

KISSÓV

No.

LAWTON

Sure?

KISSÓV

Yes.

LAWTON

Good. Then we can get started.

KISSÓV

Started?

LAWTON

Why I've brought you here.

Lawton stands up, walks out of the circle, then walks back into it with a folding chair on which he sits. Though he does not sit there long before he gets up and paces as he speaks.

LAWTON

Dr. Jeremiah Kissóv. A.k.a. DeathMaster. Murderer.
Résumé correct so far?

KISSÓV

I don't kill people.

LAWTON

That's right -- you have a new name for your assassinations.
Remind me? Remind me!

KISSÓV

Dig -- dignicides.

LAWTON

Right. You perform dignicides.

KISSÓV

What are you doing to me? Why have you --

Lawton hits him with the pistol on the back of his head, just hard enough to remind him.

LAWTON

Don't ask questions. Now, what is a dignicide again?

KISSÓV

What?

Lawton slowly presses the gun against Kissóv's temple, forcing him again to cock his head painfully to one side.

LAWTON

What did I just tell you about questions?

KISSÓV

Dignicide. Death with dignity.

Lawton releases him.

KISSÓV

I help people die with dignity -- all right?

LAWTON

And just how do you do this?

Lawton taps him lightly with the gun as a reminder.

KISSÓV

They do it themselves --

LAWTON

(coaxing)

With a device --

KISSÓV

-- I've put together -- they make the choice when to die.

LAWTON

A device.

KISSÓV

An injection device -- they push a plunger --

LAWTON

I know how it works. I do, very well. Very well.

A moment of loud SILENCE. Lawton faces the chair to Kissóv, sits.

INTERCUT between Lawton and Kissóv.

LAWTON

Dr. Jeremiah Kissóv, I want to question you about the death of one Alice Lawton, the most recent victim of your -- circus. I can't wait for the courts or the talking-heads or the Last Judgment to get around to it. You will answer now for her death. And admit what an infection you are, what a running sore you are, what a disposable creature you are. Agree?

KISSÓV

What?

Lawton hits him with the gun in some way that is moderately painful.

LAWTON

No questions! Now that I have your full attention, we can begin. I trust you're completely uncomfortable. Now, tell me what you know about Alice Lawton.

Kissóv, in an attempt to act bravely, purses his lips and shakes his head no.

Lawton takes the little finger of his left hand and inserts it into his own left ear, wiggles it around as if to clear out the wax. He switches the gun to her other hand, then does the same thing to his right ear.

Lawton stares at Kissóv, then tosses to him a most winning smile.

LAWTON

Oh, all right. You can ask some questions -- for clarification.

KISSÓV

What are you doing to me?

LAWTON

(to a schoolchild)

Why, Dr. Kissóv. Isn't it plainly obvious? I am treating you to death with undignity. Just like you do to all your victims. Don't you recognize it, my blue-eyed boy?

KISSÓV

That's not what I do. Let me go.

LAWTON

Soon released. Tell me about Alice Lawton first.

KISSÓV

Age 65. Beginning stages of Alzheimer's. She wanted me to help her die because she didn't want to face the "dissolving" -- her word.

Lawton puts his boot against the chair leg and gives the chair a slight push.

LAWTON

And the allegations in the press that you may have "nudged" her along?

KISSÓV

She made her own choice. I am in pain -- I need your help.

LAWTON

You said in one news story you had contacted all next of kin.

KISSÓV

I always do. She didn't have any -- just some close friends.

Lawton erupts from his chair. The folding chair SKITTERS back into the darkness.

In a flash Lawton is behind Kissóv and pulls Kissóv's head back by his hair so that he glares into Kissóv's upside-down face.

LAWTON

Wrong. Wrong. Wrong, wrong, wrong, wrong, wrong. Son.

KISSÓV

Son?

LAWTON

You missed her son Louis. You. Missed. Me.

Lawton pushes Kissóv and the chair over so that Kissóv slams into the floor on his left side.

FLOOR

Kissóv's left cheek presses into the floor. Dust is stirred by his heavy breathing.

CIRCLE OF LIGHT

Lawton stalks around the perimeter of the light. His heavy breathing ECHOES in the room.

FLOOR

Lawton's shoes stop. Kissóv sees that the tips are slightly scuffed.

Then the shoes moves away as Lawton walks behind Kissóv and pulls him upright.

UNDER THE LIGHT

Lawton brushes the dirt off Kissóv's left cheek. The gun is no longer in Lawton's hands.

LAWTON

Me. Louis Lawton.

KISSÓV

She never mentioned you.

LAWTON

That's not true.

KISSÓV

It is. True. No one mentioned you.

LAWTON

She must have mentioned the son "given away," her youthful
-- lapse --

KISSÓV

No -- no. I'm sorry -- she -- she never mentioned a --

With a GROWL of rage, Lawton reaches down, grabs the legs of the chair, and upends Kissóv onto his back.

Lawton straddles his knees and glares down at Kissóv. The light overhead swings, throwing around shadows.

LAWTON

I know she was not sick. This is when you squeal in protest and say, "How could you know that?" Hold up your end of the interview.

KISSÓV

How could --

LAWTON

I also work in the health "industry," though as a real doctor -- not some "lower level" grunt like, say, a forensic pathologist -- oh, yes, I forgot, that's what you are! Pathetic.

Lawton unstraddles him, then moves around, grabs the chair, and sits Kissóv up upright.

Kissóv is clearly in pain.

The swinging light casts shadows.

Lawton walks into the darkness and comes back with the folding chair in his hand. He sets it down, sits.

LAWTON

Well -- here we are again. As I was saying -- I have been a doctor without borders. Some of my operating rooms: Bosnia, Somalia, Rwanda. I could write a Michelin Guide to a killing field. And I can also get access to records, just like you. I know all about her medical history. Her whole history. Did you know about her recent treatment for melancholia? Don't answer -- I already know you don't know.

KISSÓV

Why are you doing this?

FACES TOGETHER

Lawton puts his face only inches from Kissóv's. The shadows play across the both of them.

LAWTON

Do you have any idea the life I've lived?

KISSÓV

How could I?

LAWTON

Blood up to my elbows in places that have no name.

KISSÓV

That's not death -- that's slaughter. That's not what I do.

LAWTON

Death is a messy, filthy business, and no one needs a liar like you telling them it has dignity!

KISSÓV

What you and I do -- as doctors -- we're not different.

LAWTON

Not different?

Lawton pulls away.

UNDER THE LIGHT

LAWTON

Not different?

KISSÓV

You did everything you could to reduce their pain --

LAWTON

We are done here.

KISSÓV

Listen to me! If they were dying, you wanted them to die with dignity, yes? Just a difference in degree with me --

LAWTON

The defense gets no time at all.

KISSÓV

-- but the same point: no one needs the kind of pain that eats away their pride. We're alike.

LAWTON

Shut up! Shut up.

KISSÓV

I won't. Shut. Up! Kill me if you're going to kill me, but she never mentioned you.

LAWTON

The Alzheimer's was a ploy to get you to do a low-rent suicide, and you obliged, to up your own score.

KISSÓV

That's not who I saw. She didn't do this for attention.

LAWTON

What do you know?

KISSÓV

I know I saw a woman who did exactly what she wanted to do. She wasn't weak.

LAWTON

She wanted to die?

KISSÓV

She chose -- freely, calmly.

LAWTON

I can't believe you.

KISSÓV

Alice Lawton --

LAWTON

I know she wanted me to come home. To see me before she died. You took that away from me.

KISSÓV

She never mentioned you.

LAWTON

Because she was so disgusted with her own life. And because of your ambition --

KISSÓV

Ambition?

LAWTON

-- you have stolen my only chance to bring this prodigal son back to her.

KISSÓV

Prodigal son? -- Prodigal son. You wanted to come home --

LAWTON

Home!

KISSÓV

Home. After all you've seen -- And no one there to -- welcome -- you -- love -- you --

Lawton stands up, moves the folding chair out of the circle, stares at Kissóv as if deciding. Then decides.

LAWTON

Prosecution rests.

KISSÓV

Wait.

LAWTON

Your greatest sin, Herr Kissóv, is not killing my mother. What I indict you for is not making her have second thoughts so that she might think of me again. I'll never escape that hunger. And if I can't escape -- neither should you.

Lawton slides the gloves off his hands, holds them in his right hand. With his left, he reaches into the left pocket of his coat and pulls out a Swiss Army-style knife. Switching the knife for the gloves, he slides the gloves into the coat's left pocket.

KISSÓV

What she didn't say is not my fault!

LAWTON

Right- or left-handed?

KISSÓV

What?

LAWTON

Right or left?

KISSÓV

Left.

Lawton opens the knife and cuts the tape holding down Kissóv's left arm. Kissóv flexes his hand.

LAWTON

Leave it on the armrest.

Lawton pulls a roll of tape from an inside pocket, holds the roll as he closes the knife and puts the knife away in the inside pocket. He then pulls the gun out of the right pocket.

LAWTON

Don't move.

Lawton kneels on his right knee. He puts the tape in Kissóv's lap, then puts the gun in Kissóv's left hand, Kissóv's finger through the trigger guard. He takes up the tape, pulls off a length of it, and tears it off the roll. He puts the roll on the floor, then uses the tape to tape the gun in Lawton's hand.

LAWTON

You think you're a good doctor? A good doctor always finishes his work.

Lawton lifts the gun and jams it against his own temple.

LAWTON

Finish what you started.

KISSÓV

I can't do that!

LAWTON

C'mon, two for one. Finish it!

KISSÓV

I can't!

Lawton raises Kissóv's arm straight up, slips a finger into the trigger, and FIRES OFF a round. The CRASH reverberates throughout the space.

Lawton puts the gun back against his own temple.

LAWTON

Complete the circle.

KISSÓV

You'll have to shoot me because I won't do it.

LAWTON

It's my free choice --

KISSÓV

-- but not mine --

LAWTON

-- you're just the device -- no guilt -- what's the problem?

KISSÓV

You have -- life left to live.

LAWTON

Even the hesitation in your voice shows you don't believe that.

LAWTON

Do it -- or I'll kill you and do it to myself anyway. Finish. Your. Work!

Kissóv glares at Lawton. His body shakes.

KISSÓV

(low-voiced)

No. We are not different.

Lawton looks at Kissóv shivering. Kissóv scans Lawton's face for intentions.

Lawton lets go of Kissóv's hand, rests it back on the armrest. Lawton stands. Kissóv pulls away as Lawton goes to stroke his hair.

LAWTON

Mama, mama, mama --

KISSÓV

Don't!

Lawton touches Kissóv's hair anyway. Kissóv holds himself very still.

LAWTON

It's a long list, mama. I don't want to add his name.

Lawton reaches into his pocket to get the knife, which he opens, and cuts the gun free, then cuts Kissóv free. Kissóv springs out of the chair. The chair falls back.

LAWTON

You should probably go.

KISSÓV

I don't want to turn my back on you.

Kissóv indicates the gun.

KISSÓV

Or on that.

Lawton tosses Kissóv the gun, which Kissóv catches.

LAWTON

Do what you have to do.

Kissóv hesitates, then pockets the gun.

INTERCUT Between Kissóv And Lawton.

KISSÓV

What I do -- it's not the best way. For some, it's the only way. I am going to go.

LAWTON

Tell me. Tell me about her. You were the last.

KISSÓV

I have to go.

LAWTON

Bring me home to her. You were the last to see.

KISSÓV

She was never treated for melancholy.

LAWTON

I made that up.

KISSÓV

I never doubted her.

LAWTON

Tell me. Bring her home to me. Help me remember what I never knew about her. Help the prodigal son.

KISSÓV

I should go -- What do you want to know?

LAWTON

Begin with when she never mentioned me. Our last
common ground.

Kissóv hesitates again: a look at Lawton, a look at the darkness and escape.

KISSÓV

Get the chair.

Lawton uprights the chair.

KISSÓV

Sit.

Lawton sits.

KISSÓV

Alice Lawton.

FADE OUT

Click

FADE IN:

INT. - DAY - KITCHEN

PINTO, 50s, wearing glasses, sits at a table in an ordinary kitchen reading a newspaper. Over the table hangs a lamp with a hunter green tin shade, casting down a cone of warm light. There are four chairs around the table -- wooden, old-fashioned.

A mint-green vinyl table cloth, on which sit salt and pepper shakers -- clear glass, with silver metal tops -- next to a sugar bowl. A half-height metal paper napkin dispenser, exactly like one on a diner counter, stands next to the sugar bowl. One broken-handled coffee mug holds pens, pencils, markers, and scissors. A second broken-handled coffee mug holds scuffed flatware: spoons, butter knives, forks.

Grey overcast light sifts through the window over the sink. MUSIC from a radio plays in the background.

INT. - DAY - KITCHEN BACK DOOR

Through the window and the sheer curtain covering it, the dark outline of MARLIN appears, indistinct in the grey light.

KEYS in the lock, the SHAKE of the window in its frame as the door opens, and Marlin, 50s, enters.

He SNIFFS the air.

PINTO (O.S.)

That you?

Marlin says nothing as he locks the door, puts the keys in his jacket pocket, takes off his jacket, and hangs it up.

KITCHEN DOOR FRAME

Marlin looks at Pinto's back, sees the newspaper.

Pinto turns to look at Marlin.

PINTO'S POV

Marlin is silhouetted by the grey light in the door frame.

PINTO

It is you.

KITCHEN TABLE

Pinto turns back to reading his newspaper.

Marlin pulls up a chair to the table, leans forward.

He taps a finger on a picture on the page that Pinto is reading.

NEWSPAPER PAGE

Marlin's fingernail, bitten and ragged, taps the picture.

MARLIN (O.S.)

I did that.

KITCHEN TABLE

Pinto takes off his glasses, fixes his look on Marlin.

PINTO

What's listed here.

MARLIN

Yes.

PINTO

I don't believe it.

MARLIN

Believe me.

PINTO

I don't want to.

MARLIN

It's true.

NEWSPAPER PAGE

Marlin's fingertip taps the text of the story.

MARLIN (O.S.)

It's true.

PINTO (O.S.)

If that's true, then kiss me.

THEIR FACES IN PROFILE

Marlin kisses Pinto. They separate by an inch, nothing more.

PINTO

How?

MARLIN

Lock, stock, and barrel to his head. That's not in the article.

Pinto pulls away, leaving only Marlin's profile.

KITCHEN TABLE

MARLIN

Only a detail the perpetrator would know --

PINTO

Cause of death is not in the article.

MARLIN

But I know. I was there.

Their eyes lock, then Pinto turns his face away from Marlin.

NEWSPAPER

Pinto's index finger, nail neatly trimmed, traces the edge of a grainy photo of an overexposed body under a covering.

PINTO (O.S.)

Then that means -- last night I slept with --

MARLIN (O.S.)

Such a one that would do that, yes.

PINTO (O.S.)

(overlapping at "would")

-- would do this --

MARLIN (O.S.)

You always knew I was capable.

KITCHEN

Pinto's chair scrapes back as he jumps out of it. He paces. He shuts off the radio.

Marlin pivots the newspaper in front of him, takes a pen from the mug.

NEWSPAPER

Marlin's pen scribbles around the edge of the photo and the caption underneath: "Local shopkeeper murdered."

MARLIN (O.S.)

No photo can ever capture, you know -- two dimensions
can't be three -- the air, the brittle light -- pixels cannot --

KITCHEN TABLE

Pinto, hands planted flat, leans in to Marlin.

PINTO

Tell me. Why. Hard.

Marlin puts the pen back in the mug.

MARLIN

Of course. It's not without a reason. I had my own business to mind --

PINTO

Faster.

MARLIN

-- self-important, going through the park --

Pinto pulls his chair up to the table, sits. He folds his glasses and slips them into his shirt pocket.

MARLIN

-- a mundane day.

PINTO

Then. What.

MARLIN

Not him -- not at first. Jonathan.

PINTO

Johnny Appleseed? (sing-song) Troll, troll, troll for my hole --

MARLIN

I don't think he was there for that. Hair slicked, teeth white -- clean. No prowling-around for him. He had found a source.

PINTO

And of course --

MARLIN

We greeted.

PINTO

Innocent.

MARLIN

Jonathan is all done. I have told you that.

PINTO

You have told me that.

MARLIN

But still open, as befits friends -- a kiss, an embrace. We are not in medieval times.

PINTO

So when did he appear?

Marlin positions the sugar bowl behind the napkin dispenser.

MARLIN

He must have been there, but maybe behind those concrete urns with the knackered flowers -- a niche --

The shakers now become Jonathan and Marlin.

MARLIN

Jonathan and I, we talk -- by now, dusk -- the lamps splutter on -- traffic, moist air -- you know that garden -- and Jonathan leaves.

PINTO

A big kiss.

MARLIN

You know his manner.

PINTO

Several -- and him watching all.

MARLIN

And then I am alone.

The salt shaker gets put to the side. The pepper shaker stays.

MARLIN

I thought that that would be brief -- that time of day -- but the place stayed deserted. Only myself.

EXT. - HOUSE - DAY

In succession: flower urn on the front stoop, peeling white paint, dead plant in it rustled by the breeze; the back door that Marlin entered, a St. Brigid cross hanging just below the window; a small dead vegetable garden with a statue of Buddha; Marlin and Pinto at the table through the window over the sink.

MARLIN (V.O.)

I knew he was there, though I hadn't seen him. Ghost-nerves, you know, the ones that pick up on a breeze: they zizzed. Purple shadows, like ink.

PINTO (V.O.)

I have to know.

INT. - KITCHEN - DAY

Marlin dances the pepper shaker in front of the napkin dispenser.

PINTO

You had no reason to stay.

MARLIN

I had no reason to stay.

PINTO

But you did.

MARLIN

Something stayed me. Danger -- excitement --

PINTO

Your center of gravity always.

MARLIN

It's why you love me. I called out -- "olly olly oxen free" -- he didn't have to stay, either -- but his voice came back: "I saw you." "I can't talk to a ghost," I say. And he, summoned, appears.

Marlin looks at Pinto and nods.

MARLIN

Go on.

TABLE

Pinto's hand moves the sugar bowl from behind the napkin dispenser.

MARLIN (O.S.)

And when he did, I swear the air broke. Not shattered but
-- reconfigured.

KITCHEN

Marlin gets up and walks to the window over the sink.

KITCHEN WINDOW

Through the window, Marlin sees the vegetable garden with the Buddha statue.

PINTO (O.S.)

"I saw you."

MARLIN

"I saw you," he said, with a voice like ripped glass. "I saw
you kiss him."

PINTO (O.S.)

A double-edge to that.

Marlin turns to face Pinto, leaning the small of his back against the sink.

MARLIN

Doesn't it. "I saw you -- I want" or "I saw you -- I loathe."
Then this bit of closure: "You faggot."

Pinto's voice changes slightly to take on a different timbre.

PINTO

I saw you, faggot.

MARLIN

Like that, yes.

PINTO

Because I need to know.

Pinto gets up and approaches Marlin.

PINTO

I saw you, faggot.

MARLIN

More hoarse, more outbreath.

PINTO

I saw you kiss him, you faggot.

KITCHEN WINDOW

Marlin turns away from Pinto, puts his hands on the windowsill and leans his weight toward the window.

MARLIN

Something -- clicked. Brittle to brutal.

WINDOWSILL

Marlin's knuckles go white as he squeezes the wood to anchor himself.

KITCHEN

Pinto stares at Marlin's hunched back.

PINTO

I saw you kiss him. I did. I saw all of it.

MARLIN

"What of it?" I say.

MARLIN AT WINDOW, IN PROFILE

PINTO (O.S.)

Do you want some for yourself?

MARLIN

I did say that, almost beat for beat.

PINTO (O.S.)

That's why I said you said it.

MARLIN

"Do you want some for yourself?"

Marlin turns and faces Pinto.

KITCHEN

PINTO

Why do you always have to correct?

MARLIN

Because I knew what was next. I knew, even before the words I knew would come out of his mouth came out of his mouth.

PINTO

(outbreath)

I hate you.

MARLIN

See, you know as well. The words lasering in, zeroing out. "I hate your kind."

PINTO

Your kind --

MARLIN

"I hate all of you -- filth."

Pinto sits down. He holds the pepper shaker.

MARLIN

The air frags all around me -- and something just -- clicks.

PINTO

Permission.

MARLIN

Granted.

PINTO

Sit. Please.

Marlin sits.

MARLIN

Permission.

Marlin indicates for Pinto to pass him the pepper shaker, which Pinto does. Marlin pulls the sugar bowl toward him, faces the two items together.

MARLIN

"Filth," "sewage," "deserve to die" "loathe" -- as these grenades come in, I am in this suspension, waiting for the permission to begin.

PINTO

Why didn't you leave? Avoid the temptation.

MARLIN

I had that choice.

PINTO

Sky failing, venom spilled -- but you still intact --

MARLIN

Intact --

PINTO

The higher road to take --

MARLIN

(laughing)

You are so delicious, you are! You would have left.

Marlin lifts the sugar bowl up like a chalice.

MARLIN

"I loathe you" -- infection, viper -- that long "o" -- click.

PINTO

Click.

MARTIN'S POV

Marlin's hands hold the sugar bowl.

MARLIN (O.S.)

A voice in the dusk -- no human tether --

Marlin drops the bowl, and it CRASHES onto the table.

KITCHEN TABLE

The upended bowl, sugar spilled across the photo.

MARLIN (O.S.)

He had earned his passage out of the garden.

KITCHEN

Pinto moves to clean up the mess.

MARLIN

Leave it alone -- stop being who you are!

Marlin gets out of his chair and moves around the kitchen. Pinto doesn't stop cleaning up.

MARLIN

It was easy, actually. Stop it!

Pinto stops.

MARLIN

Come here. Come here.

Pinto goes to Marlin.

THE TWO IN PROFILE

Marlin takes Pinto's hands.

MARLIN

We share everything. This will out in our every touch from now on -- these hands make you co-conspirator. Co-respirator.

Marlin puts Pinto's right hand around his throat.

MARLIN

I grab him -- click, off go his words -- the soft places to the sides of the larynx. Squeeze!

Pinto squeezes.

MARLIN

(constricted voice)

I ram him against the wall. Do it!

Pinto, pressing against Marlin's throat, slams him against the counter edge. Pinto's BREATHING is heavy.

MARLIN

He feels this vice tighten, tighten until --

Marlin slides out of Pinto's grasp to the floor.

MARLIN

He falls.

Marlin LAUGHS. Pinto looks crushed.

MARLIN

At the foot of the wall, but still breathing.

Marlin imitates THICK, RACKETY BREATHS.

MARLIN

Pick up that chair -- pick it up! Over your head.

Pinto lifts the chair over his head.

MARLIN

The trash barrel.

Marlin sits up, adjusts his back against the cabinet door.

MARLIN

"Look at me." Honestly, I can't tell, but I hear him turn his head. "I want you to see what's going to kill you" -- and then I know.

Marlin SNAPS his fingers.

MARLIN

Click.

Pinto puts the chair down, sits in it. Marlin reaches out his right hand. Pinto grasps it.

MARLIN

No good scare and give him a chance for penance -- but with cold rage end his days. I hated him, friend, I hated every hatred he held for me, for you, for Jonathan -- and it was no effort at all to let gravity judge.

KITCHEN

Pinto moves to his original seat at the table. Marlin picks himself up off the floor.

MARLIN

Now one less hater in the world.

Pinto picks up the newspaper with the spilled sugar on it and takes it to the sink to empty it.

PINTO

Floating it as a possible "hate crime."

MARLIN

How do these things gets judged?

Pinto sits back down, lays the emptied newspaper in front of him, stares at the picture.

MARLIN

How do you judge me? There is one less hater in the world.

Pinto takes a pair of scissors from the mug.

PINTO'S POV

The scissor blades slice through the paper as Pinto cuts out the article and picture.

PINTO (O.S.)

Hate for hate.

The scissors slice. The SOUND of a chair being pulled up to the table.

MARLIN (O.S.)

Hate for hate, it was -- but at least a little bit cleaner, don't you think?

And the scissors slice.

MARLIN (O.S.)

Yes? Cleaner?

KITCHEN

Pinto finishes cutting out the article and picture.

PINTO

It is not without meaning. And I am scared.

MARTIN

If they find, they find, not likely, but --

PINTO

Not that.

Pinto turns the cutting face down, smoothes it.

MARLIN

Of me.

Pinto half-shrugs, half-nods.

MARLIN

One less.

Pinto half-shrugs, half-nods again. He arranges the items on the table, putting them back into order.

PINTO

Could you turn the radio back on?

Marlin doesn't get up right away, but then he does, goes to the radio, turns it on. CLAIR DE LUNE plays at a low volume.

Marlin watches Pinto, who stares at the turned-over article.

FADE TO WHITE:

FADE IN:

EXT. - HOUSE - DAY

In succession: flower urn on the front stoop, peeling white paint, dead plant in it rustled by the breeze; the back door, a St. Brigid cross hanging just below the window; a small dead vegetable garden with a statue of Buddha.

INT. - KITCHEN - DAY

Pinto at the kitchen table, dressed in different clothes but otherwise unchanged, bathed by the overhead light.

Yesterday's newspaper is folded. The article, face up, sits on top of it.

The radio is not on.

INT. - KITCHEN BACK DOOR - DAY

Through the window and the sheer curtain covering it, a dark outline appears, indistinct in the grey light.

KITCHEN

Pinto hears KNOCKING on the back door. He looks up, stares ahead, says nothing. KNOCKING again.

PINTO

It's open.

The SHAKE of the window in its frame as the door opens.

BACK DOOR

JONATHAN enters, early 30s verging on going to seed but looking cleaned-up. He closes the door, then slides around the door jamb and looks at Pinto's back, the newspaper on the table.

He SNIFFS the air.

JONATHAN

Hello.

KITCHEN

Pinto still stares straight ahead, his face shaded by the reflection of the overhead light bouncing off the table cloth.

He hears Jonathan STEP into the kitchen, WALK toward him. Jonathan pulls out a chair, sits.

JONATHAN

Pinto.

PINTO

Jonathan.

A silence hangs in the air.

JONATHAN

Marlin about?

Pinto does not answer, stares. Jonathan fidgets but light-hearted, not anxious.

JONATHAN

You look stung, bub.

Jonathan, using the edge of his hand, makes a chopping motion between his own eyes.

JONATHAN

Two-by-four'd -- pole-axed.

JONATHAN'S POV

Jonathan sees the article on top of the folded newspaper.

ARTICLE

Jonathan's fingertip, the nail clean and clipped, taps the picture.

JONATHAN (O.S.)

Ah.

KITCHEN

JONATHAN

Ah.

PINTO

You know. Don't you.

JONATHAN

Well --

PINTO

I know. I was -- informed.

JONATHAN

Now I know what I'd only suspected.

Jonathan makes the chopping motion.

PINTO

Stop that! Lock, stock, and barrel to his head -- I sit here knowing!

JONATHAN

Not doing you any good.

PINTO

Why are you here?

JONATHAN

A visit. Long time.

PINTO

You can have him, his lock, stock, and barrel --

JONATHAN

Not why I came.

PINTO

Because he has forfeited! Take him!

Jonathan picks up the salt and pepper shakers.

JONATHAN

I came by because he said he was happy.

Pinto shoots him a quick look. Jonathan makes the shakers do a dance for Pinto. Pinto goes back to staring straight ahead.

JONATHAN

Yes.

PINTO

Happy.

JONATHAN

See it myself because I am happy for him. I am!

PINTO

Happy. Put those down.

Jonathan puts them down.

JONATHAN

Whatever Pinto wants.

PINTO

All night --

Pinto SLAMS one palm flat on the table, then SLAMS the other one next to it, parallel. Jonathan, for all his coolness, jumps.

PINTO

Like this.

Pinto then CLAPS his hands together, palm to palm, and holds them together tightly.

PINTO

Not like this. All night --

Pinto SLAMS both hands back onto the table.

PINTO

The ceiling steals my eyes all night. Drawn out there -- the scene.

Jonathan makes the chopping motion.

JONATHAN

Barrel.

KITCHEN - BACK DOOR

Marlin eases the door open, newspaper under his arm.

PINTO (O.S.)

Could feel his warmth next to me.

Marlin leans against the wall, unseen by the two of them.

PINTO (O.S.)

And then the barrel -- cold. And then his warmth. And then the --

Marlin eases the door closed.

KITCHEN

PINTO

He slips away early -- I'm glad! Never was before -- but I am now! I have to do something --

KITCHEN DOOR FRAME

Marlin slides around the door frame.

KITCHEN

Jonathan sees Marlin. Pinto sees that Jonathan sees something and stops talking.

MARLIN

What? Hello Jonathan. Do what?

Marlin kisses Pinto on the forehead.

MARLIN

My love.

Pinto does not answer.

Marlin throws the newspaper on the table.

MARTIN

So -- are we all knowing all here?

JONATHAN

I didn't when I came in. Completely. Then when I came in, I did. Completely. Him --

Jonathan makes the chopping motion.

PINTO'S CHAIR

Marlin pulls an empty chair next to Pinto. He clamps an arm across Pinto's chest, as much embrace as stranglehold.

MARLIN

Do what? Do some. Thing. Do what?

MARLIN'S HAND

Pinto lifts Marlin's hand and clamps his teeth down on it, but lightly. Pinto slowly but intentionally increases the pressure of his bite.

KITCHEN

Not showing any of the pain he feels, Marlin stands up. Pinto carries Marlin's hand in his mouth: a feral image. Then Pinto releases his bite. Marlin holds up his hand like a prize.

MARLIN

I'm not sure that that was unpleasant, given our present circumstances.

PINTO

Jonathan? A favor.

JONATHAN

By all means.

PINTO

Would you ask him what he expects of me.

JONATHAN

Through me to him?

Marlin holds up his hand.

MARLIN

Because contact is painful.

PINTO

Will you?

MARLIN

Do it, mate.

JONATHAN

Well -- what do you expect of Pinto?

Marlin turns away from them both.

WINDOW

Marlin puts his hands on the windowsill and leans his weight toward the window.

HAND ON WINDOWSILL

The bright red outlines of a set of human teeth.

THROUGH WINDOW

The vegetable garden with the Buddha statue.

MARLIN (O.S.)

I went back.

KITCHEN

Marlin turns and faces them both, leaning back against the edge of the sink.

MARLIN

To the scene.

JONATHAN

You punk.

MARLIN

This morning.

JONATHAN

Brass-faced.

MARLIN

The "crime scene." The people milling about -- and the secret lodged right there among them. I had all these -- impulses.

PINTO

Jonathan, ask him again --

JONATHAN

Can you answer to him, Marlin?

MARLIN

I am.

JONATHAN

Not really.

MARLIN

Do you like being his solicitor?

JONATHAN

He asked what you expected, and, Christ, he even bit you to get it!

MARLIN

You like being his advocate?

JONATHAN

I like to know the future when I can.

Marlin LAUGHS.

MARLIN

The officer in charge.

Marlin takes a page from the newspaper he brought in and folds an origami admiral's hat as he talks.

MARLIN

To him I say, "I did that." Eyes never flinched. "Did you, now?" "Yes," I repeated, still, composed.

Martin puts on the hat, models it.

JONATHAN

You look daft.

MARLIN

"Barrel to his head." A flick! of his eyes -- we lock for a moment. Then. "You should move along."

JONATHAN

You are daft.

Marlin takes another piece of newspaper and rolls it so that it becomes a sword.

MARLIN

"I'm trying to make your career." But he doesn't bite. And off went I, a freed man. La di da di da di da.

JONATHAN

Moth and flame as usual.

Marlin turns around the empty chair next to Pinto, straddles it between the two of them. He leans toward Pinto.

THE TWO IN PROFILE

MARLIN

Two dark spots on the ceiling -- your eyes boring last night -- the dust of judgment raining down --

JONATHAN (O.S.)

What else could you expect --

MARLIN

Did you not gavel me all night long? By morning, Jonathan, I was encased in judgment. Muddled up, immured. Cask of Amontillado.

Pinto finally turns his face to Marlin.

PINTO

But did you just want me to dismiss it?

MARLIN

Yes.

PINTO

As if what had happened --

MARLIN

Yes.

PINTO

-- did not happen.

MARLIN

Yes. Yes.

KITCHEN

PINTO

How?

MARLIN

You mean, "why." Why. Why? For love, of course. For love, love.

Jonathan rolls out of his chair, LAUGHING but without any real humor behind it.

JONATHAN

Oh oh oh.

Jonathan walks over the window, looks through it.

PINTO

If I did that for you --

MARLIN

Then what?

PINTO

(as if coming up for air)

Nothing!

MARLIN

Advocate.

JONATHAN

Then -- he would be like you -- barrel held overhead, ready.

PINTO

Co-conspirator, you said. Co-respirator.

MARLIN

Can you love someone who did barbaric but who you know is not barbaric?

Jonathan LAUGHS derisively. He turns and faces them.

JONATHAN

Oh, rich, Marlin! Don't you see it? He's as deep as guano on the cliffs of Peru! No doubt at this moment sorry --

Jonathan straddles a chair at the table.

JONATHAN

-- sincere -- always good at moments --

Jonathan makes a series of faces.

JONATHAN

A little simper, droop of mouth, sad-face of sorry -- seen it all, Marlin. Pinto, it's played out.

Pinto turns an anguished face to Marlin.

PINTO

I want to believe you.

JONATHAN

Cherub! There are clues here! He confesses to a brick-brained officer of the court -- he obviously does not care about you --

Pinto grabs Marlin's paper sword.

JONATHAN'S CHEST

The sword crumples against Jonathan, right up to Pinto's hand. Jonathan eases the paper out of Pinto's hand.

KITCHEN

With daintiness, Jonathan smooths it out on the table.

JONATHAN

How easy these things have become.

Pinto tears out of his chair, caroms around the kitchen.

PINTO
(choking)

I have to --

MARLIN
I meant what I said --

PINTO
I can't --

MARLIN
I did it because --

Pinto picks up a chair and, for an instant, seems capable of smashing it against one or both of them.

PINTO
I -- have -- to -- tell -- I -- have -- to -- tell --

MARLIN
Who? Who?

PINTO
The -- proper -- authorities --

MARLIN
Proper authorities?

JONATHAN
So much for your love.

Marlin grabs Jonathan by the throat.

MARLIN
Shut up!

JONATHAN
I am commanded.

PINTO
I am tired of "Pinto, you can't do"!

Pinto throws the chair down.

PINTO

Something has to resolve! Human being wasted!

MARLIN

Not without meaning, you said --

PINTO

Meaning -- meaning --

Pinto snaps his fingers faster and faster, as if trying to find a word or words but cannot.

PINTO

Aaaaagggghhhhh! My head -- smashed -- My face --
Ahhhhhhh! One -- less -- hater -- yes -- but -- even -- he
-- deserved --

MARLIN

Even he?

PINTO

Not -- to -- die --

Pinto smashes his fist into his other hand several times, hard. Pinto BREATHES HEAVILY for a few beats, then calms himself and SNAPS his fingers once.

PINTO

(quietly)

I feel I have to.

MARLIN

(equally quietly)

Then what has been unthinkable has become available to our thought.

JONATHAN

Marlin?

MARLIN

And if to thought, then to action.

PINTO

What could be unthinkable to you now?

MARLIN

Faced with your betrayal --

Marlin SNAPS his fingers.

MARLIN

Faced with being walled away --

Marlin SNAPS his fingers again.

MARLIN

Nothing is unthinkable.

Marlin SNAPS his fingers a last time.

JONATHAN

Marlin. Marlin!

PINTO

We have cut each other loose.

JONATHAN

Pinto!

MARLIN

Equals, then.

PINTO

Equals more than we have ever been.

Marlin and Pinto stare at each other for a hard moment. Then Pinto reaches out.

MARLIN'S FACE

Pinto's hand caresses Marlin's cheek. Marlin ever so slightly leans in to the caress.

KITCHEN

Jonathan suddenly moves between them.

JONATHAN

Marlin, come home with me -- you two obviously need a break from each other. Come on -- I'll take care of you.

Marlin does not move. He and Pinto continue to look at each other.

JONATHAN

C'mon, love -- come on -- you know -- you know you've always wanted to come back.

MARLIN

Have I always?

JONATHAN

You can't really mean to --

MARLIN

What a finger down the throat is to puking -- that's you. Why would I?

Marlin takes off his admiral's hat and puts it on Pinto.

MARLIN

Real danger, worth courting.

JONATHAN

So I should leave?

MARLIN

You were never invited.

PINTO

No scraps for you here.

Jonathan hesitates, then goes to leave.

KITCHEN DOOR FRAME

The light behind Jonathan casts him as a silhouette.

JONATHAN

I've got no pity for the broken bastard in the park -- but who knows? Investigative dead end, walled in -- then some --

Jonathan SNAPS his fingers.

JONATHAN

-- tip, anonymous, that cracks the case, as they say. One can never predict how things will click.

Jonathan pivots and leaves, the SLAM of the back door RATTLING the window in its frame.

THE TWO IN PROFILE

Pinto takes off the admiral's hat.

PINTO

Nothing is changed. Everything is changed. All possibilities.
All wounds.

Like GUNSHOTS, several rhythmic heavy POUNDINGS on the back door. Their faces startle, then ease, as they continue looking at each other.

Jonathan's LAUGHTER rings out, then FADES as he moves away from the house.

VEGETABLE GARDEN

Jonathan picks up the Buddha and slams it down to the ground, then does it again.

BREATHING heavily, he glares at the house.

FADE OUT

Downsize

FADE IN:

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Beginning of the work day, drones streaming into corporate buildings. Faster and faster the lines blur and weave and people become faceless and bodiless until...

INT. OFFICE - DAY

The face of HANNAH (20s) -- stunned, tight, emotionless.

BOSS (O.C.)

You're a moron. You're a moron!

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - CUBICLE AREA - DAY

GERARD (20s), VERA (20s), and KHALID (20s, Indian) -- the Boss' personal staff -- peek over their cubicles into the BOSS' windowed office as he yells at Hannah -- their faces worried and ghostly under the BUZZING fluorescent lights.

THROUGH OFFICE WINDOWS

The Boss has his back to them, and they can see it shake in anger. They see Hannah's contorted face. She holds two large cups of water.

BOSS

(muffled)

It was a goddamn simple fucking data analysis, but you come up with figures we can't use!

CUBICLE AREA

Gerard, Vera, and Khalid pop up and down, share worried glances. They resemble nothing less than the moles popping up and down in the Whack-A-Mole arcade game.

BOSS (O.S.)

And you're saying that it's because my initial fucking assumptions were wrong? Wrong?

THROUGH OFFICE WINDOWS

Hannah rigid, dumbstruck, a deer in the headlights.

OFFICE

Hannah's blank face stares ahead.

Two hands come in to view holding a stiff old-fashioned dunce cap with "MORON" on the front. They jam the cap on Hannah's head.

As the Boss' VOICE lifts, Hannah begins to vibrate. The water in the cups vibrates.

BOSS (O.C.)

Only a moron would say that. And I want fucking bottled water, not that crap from the fucking staff cooler!

ON HANNAH'S HANDS

The water tremors. Then, without warning, she tosses the water from one of the glasses.

ON BOSS

The silver ribbon of water flies into his face and over his suit.

THROUGH OFFICE WINDOWS TO CUBICLES

The faces of Gerard, Vera, and Khalid pop wide with disbelief as they watch Hannah pitch the water onto the Boss.

THROUGH OFFICE WINDOWS FROM CUBICLES

Then, the strangest, strangest thing: smoke rises in thick billows, like water hitting dry ice, and the Boss melts away.

OFFICE

Smoke from the vaporizing Boss ribbons across Hannah's impassive face and the "MORON" dunce cap on her head. The Boss' VOICE changes into the agonized VOICE of Margaret Hamilton in The Wizard of Oz.

BOSS (O.C.)

What the fuck have you done? Don't you realize I'm the boss? You don't do this to bosses! I'm melting! Christ, I'm melting! Oh, this is a wicked, wicked world.

The Boss' LAMENTATION trails away to SILENCE.

CUBICLE AREA

Gerard, Vera, and Khalid exchange scared, astonished, joyous looks.

THROUGH OFFICE WINDOWS

The three of them see Hannah standing stock still, wreathed in smoke, still holding one empty and one full vibrating glass of water.

ON HANNAH'S HANDS

The water in the remaining glass quivers. Then stops. Completely.

OFFICE

HANNAH puts both cups on the Boss' desk. She walks to the chair and swivels it around. It is empty and wet. She jerks her hands away from the chair as if she'd touched something hot. She continues circling the desk, eyes fixed on the chair, amazement blooming on her face.

OFFICE - DOOR

Gerard on the threshold, looks at Hannah, looks at the chair. Vera and Khalid bob behind Gerard.

GERARD

What the hell was that? Where is he?

HANNAH
(half-smiling)

He. Is. Gone.

VERA
He was yelling at you -- like he always does --

KHALID
Using his boss voice.

VERA
He gave you the dunce cap -- again.

GERARD
Sssh!

Gerard speaks over his shoulder to Vera and Khalid.

GERARD
Do you hear it?

They wait, ponder.

GERARD
Do you realize how quiet it is?

OFFICE

Gerard, Vera, and Khalid edge in as if they were entering the lion's den. The three stare at the wet office chair as if it were a viper.

HANNAH
Khalid --

Hannah gestures to close the door. Khalid closes the office door.

KHALID
We don't have a boss.

VERA
We don't have a boss.

GERARD

No boss.

KHALID

It's 8 o'clock in the morning, and -- no boss. Isn't that unnatural?

They all look at each other. Khalid reaches to take the dunce cap off, but Hannah stops him.

HANNAH

We are all free.

CUBICLE AREA

Without warning, the overhead fluorescent lights sputter and snap off.

HANNAH (V.O.)

We are all free.

OFFICE

GERARD

Naw. There's always a boss. Somewhere.

VERA

But not here.

GERARD

But his boss --

HANNAH

Gerard, shut up: we're free.

VERA

We're free.

CUBICLE AREA

One by one, the computers blink off.

GERARD (V.O.)

But what does that mean?

OFFICE

VERA

We can leave.

GERARD

No we can't.

KHALID

It's possible.

GERARD

No it's not.

HANNAH

Yes it is.

GERARD

(angrily)

Why did you do it? Now we don't have a boss!

CUBICLE AREA

The fax machine cuts out. The copier snaps off.

KHALID (V.O.)

(very quietly)

Gerard seems to need a boss.

OFFICE

Gerard moves behind the chair, goes to put his hands on it.

HANNAH

Don't. Don't touch it.

Gerard gives Hannah a hard look.

GERARD

Why the fuck not?

Hannah points to the chair.

HANNAH

Because I never even saw him.

GERARD

You saw him enough to whack him. Fuck you.

Gerard puts his hands on the chair, and immediately a vibration shoots through him. Just as quickly, his body stops vibrating. Something about him has changed: now a deeper voice, harder face.

GERARD

This is a nice chair, everyone. This is a very nice chair.

VERA

Gerard?

HANNAH

I didn't see him.

GERARD

(with a sneer)

So what did Wonder Woman see?

Hannah points directly at Gerard.

HANNAH

I saw -- flames. I tasted fire.

Hannah pivots, goes to the window.

VERA

Hannah?

(to Gerard)

What've you done to her?

(to Hannah)

Come back.

THROUGH EXTERIOR WINDOW - FROM HANNAH'S POV

The plaza below filled with blurred hurrying people.

Across from her, an office building filled with blurred drones.

As Hannah SPEAKS, flames replace her reflection in the window.

HANNAH

My brother set the back field on fire one summer, burning grasshoppers with a magnifying glass. I was caught in the middle.

OFFICE

Hannah at the window. Khalid stares at Hannah's back. His body begins to vibrate slightly.

GERARD

(swiveling chair)

Nut case.

VERA

Ssh!

With an abrupt turn, Khalid moves to the desk, starts poking around.

GERARD

What're you --

But Khalid pushes the chair back against Gerard, which bumps Gerard against the window-wall. Khalid shakes out his hands -- as if in touching the chair, he had touched something very hot. Gerard pushes the chair back but misses Khalid.

Khalid finds what he wants: a red felt-tipped marker or dry erase pen. He presses the tip against his forehead, right between his eyebrows, leaving a red dot.

KHALID

I can finally hear it -- the old voice.

Khalid tosses the pen back onto the desk, moves behind Hannah, stares out the same window.

THROUGH EXTERIOR WINDOW - FROM HANNAH'S POV

Hannah stares at the flames in the window. Khalid's reflection is among the flames.

HANNAH

In the sunlight the flames were almost clear. The smoke roped around me. I couldn't move. My brother kept yelling to run, kept calling me "you moron!" "Run, you moron!"

OFFICE

Gerard finally sits in the chair. He takes a pen from the pen set and starts writing on a pad of paper, SPEAKS in a fake VIENNESE ACCENT.

GERARD

Und how long have you had zese zexual tensions?

Vera flashes him an annoyed look, turns back to Hannah and Khalid at the window.

VERA

Stuff it!

GERARD

Stuff yourself.

EXTERIOR WINDOW

Hannah whips around. The flames disappear. The office building with its drones reappears. Khalid is so close that he has to jump back.

FROM HANNAH'S POV

Khalid glows, as if in flames, especially the dot on his forehead. Then he is just Khalid with a red dot between his eyebrows.

OFFICE

HANNAH

You're from India. You know these things.

GERARD

(sneeringly)

"Note: Khalid is an Indian from India."

Vera moves closer to Hannah and Khalid. Khalid looks at Hannah with an open bemused face.

KHALID

"The insatiable fire of desire is the constant foe of the wise."

Khalid shakes himself, as if to wake himself up.

GERARD

Where did that come from?

HANNAH

I could feel the heat on my legs.

GERARD

(writing, LAUGHING)

Hot legs.

VERA

(to Khalid)

What are you saying?

KHALID

Old lessons.

Khalid LAUGHS sheepishly.

KHALID

"The insatiable fire of desire is the constant foe of the wise."

VERA

(overlapping)

" -- is the constant foe of the wise."

KHALID

The Bhagavad-Gita. Don't usually quote it on company time.

GERARD (O.C.)

Now, none of that on company time.

KHALID

(to Hannah)

But the boss is gone -- gone! -- and for some reason it now comes back to me.

GERARD (O.C.)

(writing)

"Unbridled lust."

HANNAH

And then, out of the sky, water. The fire fighters had gotten there, and they arced a hose to cover me while they put out the fire. Safety.

GERARD

(writing)

"She gets hosed."

As Hannah strides toward the desk, she takes off the dunce cap.

DESK

Gerard is scribbling on the pad.

GERARD

"Then orgasm."

Hannah jams the dunce cap into Gerard's chest, driving him back.

ON THE CAP

The word "MORON" disappears against Gerard's chest.

DESK

Hannah tosses the crushed hat on the desk, "MORON" facing upward.

Gerard leans forward slowly, his eyes narrowed to pin-points. He twirls the pen in his fingers.

HANNAH
(pointing at Gerard)
All I saw were flames. "Moron!"

Vera joins Hannah at the desk.

VERA
(miming throwing)
That's why you --

HANNAH
Yes.

Khalid joins them. The three face Gerard, who faces them back from the depths of the chair, looking very "boss-like" all of a sudden.

KHALID
"The offering thrown into the fire reaches the sun --

GERARD
Shut up.

KHALID
"-- from the sun comes rain -- "

VERA
And then -- poof!

KHALID
" -- from rain, food; and from food, all creatures." Us.
(to Gerard)
Even you. Hannah has fed us.

Hannah turns away from them. Khalid turns to watch her.

GERARD

Bullshit fucking poetry.

Gerard knife-throws the pen at Hannah. But Khalid catches it mid-flight and drops it to the floor. Their eyes lock.

BOOKCASE

Hannah wanders to the bookcase.

GERARD (O.C.)

It won't happen!

One shelf holds a metronome. She unhooks the arm, which begins to CLICK back and forth.

DESK

The TICKING of the metronome in the background.

GERARD

They're just going to jam another boss up our asses.

VERA

Is that what you want?

GERARD

Some boss, some get bossed.

Gerard leans back into the depths of the chair.

GERARD

I have no problem with that.

BOOKCASE

Hannah stares at the metronome.

VERA (O.C.)

So you like it up your ass?

GERARD (O.C.)

Ooh, Vera's getting a little mouthy --

DESK

Khalid stares at Hannah.

GERARD

Fit yourself in, or you'll never get ahead.

VERA

And you -- foom! up the corporate ladder, Mr. Junior Account Executive!

GERARD

At least I didn't ice a boss to get there.

VERA

Yet.

GERARD

Yet.

KHALID

(to Hannah)

What should we do, Hannah?

BOOKCASE

Hannah holds up the metronome, starts walking to the desk.

HANNAH

I don't know.

DESK

Gerard toys with a letter opener.

GERARD

Sooner rather than later someone is going to notice. They're going to be curious. Then what?

He points the letter opener at Hannah.

GERARD

What are you doing?

Hannah continues to bear the TICKING metronome to the desk.

HANNAH

I only saw flames. With a voice. He was never real.

Gerard tosses the letter opener onto the desk as he shoots up from the chair, which bangs against the glass wall.

GERARD

All twisted, all of you. Voices, chants -- Christ, it makes no sense!

Hannah gets to the desk, cradles the metronome. It TICKS.

VERA

Just take a deep breath!

GERARD

I am already breathing!

VERA

The Grand Fucker is gone. We don't exactly know the physics -- okay -- but somebody's going to want to know, and -- My suggestion: no one knows a thing. We were at our desks, and whatever -- happened -- happened -- I think we should all go back to our desks.

KHALID

Finish out the day?

VERA

I think that's best.

KHALID

No you don't.

GERARD

Like some ordinary Tuesday?

VERA

Exactly.

(to Khalid)

Yes I do.

HANNAH

No you don't.

Hannah puts down the metronome. It TICKS.

HANNAH

No. We're free.

GERARD

No we're not.

KHALID

Not you because you want the chair.

GERARD

And why not?

KHALID

At some point you too will just be a fire waiting to be put out.
You'll want too much.

Gerard moves up close to Khalid. His sudden action bangs the chair against the wall again.

GERARD

That's the fucking way I'm built. That's the fucking American way, in case you don't know that, Indian.

Vera holds up her hand, as if for permission.

GERARD

What? What?

VERA

(to Khalid)

I lied.

(to Gerard)

I want to leave --

HANNAH

Then why don't you?

VERA

Do you really think --

Hannah dips her fingers into remaining glass and flicks water at Vera. Vera does not flinch.

VERA

Maybe a matinee -- something small -- I've never done that.

GERARD

Not me. I've got work to do.

VERA

Saturdays. The Grand Fucker had us work on Saturdays.
I think we can --

Gerard moves to the door, holds up his hand to stop Vera from talking.

GERARD

Save it.

VERA

So -- are we agreed on our story?

GERARD

Yeah.

(hands over his ears)

Me one of the monkeys.

He gestures to the door.

GERARD

Anyone else?

No one moves.

GERARD

Losers.

Gerard leaves.

CUBICLE AREA

Gerard notices that everything is shut down.

GERARD

What the --

Then, as if on cue, all the lights and machines bump on, and the office HUMS.

GERARD

That's better.

Gerard stalks off towards the bathroom.

OFFICE

SILENCE as the three of them look at the closed door, the re-lighting of the office space. Then at each other. Then Vera, with a BURST of FALSE BRAVADO.

VERA

Okay, I'm gonna do it!

She strides toward the door, but at the door she stops, turns, and puts her hands over her mouth.

VERA

(sing-song)

Me one of the monkeys!

She LAUGHS as she turns to leave. But she doesn't quite make it through the door.

VERA

Monday.

She turns and faces Hannah and Khalid.

VERA

I'll do it on -- Monday -- that cash-flow report -- you know
-- Monday for sure!

Vera gives them a cramped little wave and leaves. SILENCE. The metronome TICKS.

FROM HANNAH'S POV

The metronome flicks back and forth, back and forth, TICKING.

DESK

Khalid puts his hands over his eyes, then pops them open.

KHALID

Me one of the monkeys. Me have been asleep.

He dips two fingers into the water and runs them from his forehead over the bridge of his nose to his chin. He gives Hannah a "V for Victory" sign.

KHALID

Goodbye.

FROM HANNAH'S POV

The metronome TICKS. The SLAM of a closing door.

OFFICE

Hannah scans the empty room. She looks at the empty chair. Her face looks peaceful, calm. She stops the metronome.

THROUGH OFFICE WINDOWS

Hannah picks up the glass of water and holds it over her head.

OFFICE

As Hannah pivots in a slow circle, she pours the water over her head, as if it were a rainshower.

Her turning reflection bounces back from the office's interior windows, from the glass on the cabinet housing the Boss' golfing trophies, the glass top of

the Boss' desk, from the exterior windows -- clip after clip after clip of the exultant spinning Hannah.

A healthy toss of her hair, and the shower of water catches the light as it flies around the room and lands everywhere.

She picks up the metronome, rears back, and lets it fly at the interior office windows.

WINDOW

Freeze just as the metronome slices through the glass.

FADE OUT

Equal. Separate.

FADE IN

EXT. - CONSTRUCTION SITE - DAY

Building site in full gear, loud and dirty, hard-hatted WORKERS scrambling everywhere.

In the crowd, obvious because they are two women among a herd of men, are PAT, Caucasian woman, and CHRIS, African-American woman, about the same age. They work just as hard, and joke just as hard, as the men as they build form-work for concrete.

SITE - FORM WORK

Gut-bloated site supervisor DOHERTY passes by them, wearing a tee-shirt which says "Kill 'em all and let God sort 'em out." Chris stiffens as he puts a hand on her shoulder and whispers something to her.

Pat, face twisted in anger, pounds the business end of a claw hammer into the palm of her hand.

Doherty gives Pat a fuck-you smile and moves on, rubbing his gas-bag belly.

Pat and Chris flip each other a look. Chris shrugs, and they get back to work.

EXT. - HANRAHAN'S BAR - DAY

Ratty bar on a ratty street near the construction site.

INT. - BAR - DAY

VOICE-LOUD, MUSIC-LOUD, crowded with workers.

TABLE

Pat and Chris, hard hats still on, put down two beers and two shots each, then unharness themselves from their gear.

Pat yells to SOMEONE across the room.

PAT

Yeah, I got a match -- my ass and your face!

The "someone" gives her a friendly middle finger, which she returns.

They sit, each grab a beer.

PAT

Ready?

CHRIS

Ready.

They raise the beers and toast.

CHRIS

It was a bitch today.

PAT

A bitch today it was.

CHRIS

Today I built the formwork.

PAT

Today I built the brick shithouse.

CHRIS

To the first sip.

PAT

To the first sip past the lip.

BOTH

With a maximum of zip. Whoo-wah!

They drink deep.

PAT

Even shit-brewed beer like this tastes good cold, first guzzle.

CHRIS

On to the second, then.

They finish the beer, then sip the shot.

PAT

I think --

Pat belches.

PAT

I think my throat just released.

Belches again.

PAT

Beer as roto-rooter.

CHRIS

Beer as confession.

PAT

Bitch of a day.

CHRIS

Bitch of a day it was.

DOOR OF BAR

In walks fat-fucker Doherty, hair water-slicked, with a new tee-shirt: "Rehab Is For Quitters."

TABLE

Chris and Pat watch him burrow his way in.

DOOR

He catches Chris' eye, blows her a kiss.

TABLE

Chris looks away. Pat gives Doherty a middle-finger salute.

PAT
(yelling)

It's your IQ!

BAR

Doherty, laughing, makes an "O" with thumb and forefinger of one hand and slides the middle finger of his other hand back and forth in the "O," as if to say, "Fuck you."

Then he disappears into the mob at the bar.

TABLE

So -- PAT

So -- CHRIS

So -- Doherty -- PAT

I know -- I know! CHRIS

He's getting worse. PAT

I'm handling him. CHRIS

The man who sprayed "Property of the Cunt" on your locker? PAT

I'm handling him! CHRIS

PAT

He's handling you.

CHRIS

I told him --

PAT

Like handling a pit viper.

CHRIS

I told him --

PAT

To Doherty, "handle" only means one thing --

CHRIS

Yeah --

PAT

-- and it ain't the George Frederick fucking "Water Music"
Hallelujah chorus.

Chris glares at Pat.

PAT

I'll shut up.

CHRIS

I told him --

PAT

Yeah --

CHRIS

-- one more pass of his hand across my ass --

PAT

Yeah --

CHRIS

-- and I was going to clamp it 'tween my cheeks and use it
for a wipe.

PAT

Could be he'd like that.

CHRIS

And then I'd shit nails.

They pause, catch each other's eye, and laugh.

BAR

Doherty, hands out to his side, makes a huge "O" with his mouth and pops it over the top of a shot glass. Then, shot glass clamped between lips, he snaps his head back and the liquor flashes down his gullet.

The crowd HOWLS.

TABLE

Pat and Chris peer over at the racket, see Doherty with his head tilted back and the shot glass pointed ceilingward.

PAT

"Shit nails" -- good scum-back to that cum-chum. Useless, though.

CHRIS

What?

PAT

Words. With chuckleheads like him.

CHRIS

I know. Wasted. I really would have to shit nails on him.

PAT

If you want to really shit nails --

Pat sips her shot.

CHRIS

Rest of a sentence go with that?

PAT

Talk to the steward. File on him.

CHRIS

File on Doherty.

PAT

Go to the union --

CHRIS

File for "hair-ass-ment."

PAT

The gut-bloated fat fucker --

CHRIS

-- for hair-ass-ment.

PAT

You file -- and it'll be like with a mule, a two-by-four cranked between the eyes.

CHRIS

Her-ass-ment. His-ass-ment. My-ass-ment --

PAT

Your ass means a lot, honey.

CHRIS

Please.

PAT

It's the battleground.

CHRIS

It's big enough --

PAT

You know, like I know, the Dohertys of this fucking world only obey hard objects against their soft parts.

CHRIS

File.

PAT

It's your two by four.

CHRIS

And "you know, like I know" the follow-up -- you seen this! --

EXT. - WORK SITE - DAY

A patch of ground, a SOUND like a coming freight train, then a BOOM as a cinderblock smashes into the dirt.

CHRIS (V.O.)

An "accidental" cinderblock --

CONCRETE WITH REBAR

Two-foot-long nasty rusted rebar sticking up through concrete -- Chris' hard hat falls out of the sky and bounces off the jagged ends.

CHRIS (V.O.)

-- or I'll be a perforated sandwich on some rebar or, or --

INT. - BAR - DAY

CHRIS

-- or --

CHRIS shows the palm of her hand.

CHRIS

-- ten-penny Christ with a nail gun -- bam, bam, bam! Deened testosterone is one dangerous bodily fluid.

BAR

Doherty and another WORKER balance shot glasses on the backs of the hands.

CROWD

1 - 2 - 3!

On "3," the two men pop the shot glasses up into the air, grab them, then down the shot. DOHERTY wins. Rowdy YELLS.

TABLE

PAT

No use fighting to get in if you can't get on --

CHRIS

I got my boy to think about --

PAT

I got my kid, too.

CHRIS

You'd risk it?

PAT

I'm saying I'd at least consider.

CHRIS

You'd bat for me?

PAT

Solidarity forever.

Chris looks into her glass of beer as if she were waiting for the Virgin Mary to appear.

PAT

What?

Pat leans in.

PAT

What is so hard?

CHRIS

Easier for you.

Why? PAT

Still looking.

Color. CHRIS

Color? PAT

CHRIS
Out there, there's bitch, and that's you and me, we can handle that -- and then there's black bitch, that's just me, and I get to be what the dog kicks when the dog gets kicked --

It ain't as bad -- PAT

It? CHRIS

Color thing. PAT

Not bad? CHRIS

As bad. PAT

As what? CHRIS

Look at the laws. PAT

As what? CHRIS

Black millionaires now. PAT

CHRIS

Pat -- don't --

PAT

Look at you and this job.

CHRIS

Are you hearing the undertone of that?

PAT

You don't have it just because -- I'm not saying that, Chris
-- c'mon!

CHRIS

Then what are you -- Park it. I'm tired -- I can't do the
curriculum today with you.

PAT

The curriculum?

CHRIS

Never mind.

Chris downs the rest of her beer: no Virgin Mary at the bottom.

I gotta go --

BAR

Doherty sees Chris stand up and slip her tool belt off the back of the chair. Her eye catches Doherty's. He sticks both hands over his head, fingers spread out, then "counts down" from ten by folding a finger away with each number.

Pat does not see him do this.

TABLE

Chris stares at Doherty's "count down," not sure what it means, knowing it means nothing good. It rattles her.

PAT

So fine.

CHRIS

What?

PAT

Fine.

CHRIS

Fine what?

PAT

You don't want to see the advances, fine.

Chris sits back down before Doherty reaches "one," but she can't quite take her eyes off him.

Doherty puts an exaggerated little-boy pout on his face, then laughs like the gut-bloated fat fucker he is and turns back to the bar.

Chris continues to stare into space, vaguely hearing Pat's voice behind her.

PAT (O.S.)

Way up in the government -- way up. Multi-bazillion dollar athletes.

Chris turns to look at Pat.

PAT

Judge. Judges. Arts. Entertainment. Everywhere. Lot of crime, too, but hey -- you know.

CHRIS

Know what?

PAT

Bound to be sludge --

CHRIS

-- sludge --

PAT

-- in the engine of progress.

A beat between them, then Chris reaches over, grabs Pat's the rest of Pat's first shot, chugs it down, and puts the glass down gently.

CHRIS

Slavery --

PAT

Gone.

CHRIS

Jim Crow --

PAT

Flown.

CHRIS

Affirmative action --

PAT

Affirmed. It's a new paragraph.

CHRIS

Better world?

PAT

By far.

Chris takes Pat's second beer, guzzles it, puts the glass down very carefully.

CHRIS

Never guessed you for an -- optimist.

Pat, surveying the three empty beer glasses, looks puzzled.

PAT

It doesn't always pay to run things down.

Chris picks up her own second shot, downs it.

CHRIS

Let me ask you then --

PAT

Anything.

CHRIS

A test.

PAT

Whoo-wah!

But Chris does not rise to the chant.

CHRIS

Your Leslie --

PAT

Yeah?

CHRIS

Your Leslie. My Jamie.

PAT

You mean --

CHRIS

I mean your new paragraph.

PAT

What?

CHRIS

I mean mix it up. I mean "mix"-cegenation. Well, optimist?

The bar NOISE has lessened considerably as patrons have started to leave for their own after-work business. In the air is MUSIC: Marvin Gaye. Doherty, alone at the bar and soused, is dancing by himself to the music.

CHRIS

Whoo-wah. I'm getting your silence loud and strong.

PAT

Um --

CHRIS

Any nouns or adjectives with that?

PAT

No.

CHRIS

No.

PAT

It wouldn't work --

CHRIS

You know him. I know her. They know each other. They like each other. They like each other. Genuine lay-down-the-foundation like each other.

PAT

Damn!

CHRIS

If the world smells so good to you -- What?

PAT

She wanted to, you know -- Jamie. Go with Jamie. I said no.

CHRIS

And why?

PAT

The children --

CHRIS

Children?

PAT

If they had -- children -- wouldn't be a good world for them --

In their background, Doherty dances.

CHRIS

Light coffee not your color?

CHRIS

People would see mixed race, they wouldn't see them!
Eaten alive. I really believe that. I wouldn't. You wouldn't.
But -- well -- Doherty would.

CHRIS

Doherty?

PAT

The likes of Doherty. Taking their sheets to the tailor.

CHRIS

And so Doherty wins?

BAR

Doherty stops dancing, looks at Chris.

TABLE

Chris looks at Doherty. Pat turns and sees what Chris is looking at.

Doherty takes his right index finger, slides it in and out of his mouth, then closes his eyes and runs the finger under his nose, as if he were smelling it. He lets out an operatic "ah!", then laughs at Chris and turns away from her.

Chris hooks her eyes to Pat's.

CHRIS

You give it up to that?

PAT

It's protection.

CHRIS

So -- because we're gutless --

PAT

Gutless?

CHRIS

-- then Jamie and Leslie have to lose. Is that where all this we've done has got us to? Doherty wins again?

Chris stands, hooks on her belt, grabs her hard hat.

CHRIS

Is the office closed?

PAT

What?

CHRIS

Is -- the -- office -- closed?

PAT

Project manager's there, usually -- paperwork.

Chris takes money of her pocket.

CHRIS

You -- you and Doherty -- are not going to win. Jamie and Leslie are going to have a shot. I have some paperwork to do.

PAT

Let me go back with you. I'll back you up.

CHRIS

Back off!

Chris lays the money down very carefully.

CHRIS

(softer)

As you said, you have a daughter to get home to. I get this one on my own.

PAT

Chris --

CHRIS

Don't -- Don't start lying --

Chris straightens the money.

CHRIS

I used to be able to watch my back with you. That was the gift, Pat. No more. In the space of two beers --

Chris is unable to believe what she is thinking.

CHRIS

In the space of two beers we can't go back to the back we used to have.

Chris looks at Doherty's whale-like back lumped over the bar, then back to Pat.

CHRIS

The point of it all?

Pat says nothing. Chris leaves.

BAR

Doherty sees Chris leave, and he immediately makes for the door.

TABLE

Pat sees Doherty move. She grabs her hammer from her belt and is up and out of her chair like a bolt. She intercepts Doherty at the door, stands in his way, delays him, gives Chris time to make her get-away.

The air fills with Marvin Gaye as Doherty laughs and dances in front of Pat.

FADE OUT

Glory Train

FADE IN

INT. - ASHMONT/MATTAPAN HIGH SPEED TROLLEY, IN BOSTON - DAY

Summer, very hot, no air conditioning in the trolley.

PREACHER MAN, old before his time, Latino/Caribbean, gets on, nods to the DRIVER, African-American, dressed in his uniform. He holds a Bible and wears a blank nametag. He stands at the head of the aisle and looks at the other passengers of various ethnicities scattered around, all fanning themselves. He wears an absurdly optimistic smile.

DRIVER

Move to the back, please.

PREACHER MAN

Say hey, I obey.

Preacher Man walks to the back of the trolley.

DRIVER'S SEAT

The driver watches Preacher Man walk to the back in his rear-view mirror. He shakes his head in mild disgust.

AISLE

Preacher Man passes one passenger, WOMAN, African-American, perhaps, or Haitian, of an age that could be young but certainly looks worn. She sits wrapped in herself, her arms crossed tightly across her chest. She wears a "belly bag." As the train pulls out, Preacher Man speaks, and he walks back down the aisle as he delivers.

PREACHER MAN

Good morning, people.

No response from anyone -- doesn't faze Preacher Man.

PREACHER MAN

Thank you for letting me talk to you. I'm from Victory Outreach, doing the Lord's work today. We work mostly with kids, trying to get them away from the streets, away from the evil, and into something that's gonna turn them around. I know -- I was there. Heroin. Crack. Alcohol. Homeless. Hooked. All by eighteen. My mind was clouded, closed --

(holds up Bible)

-- until the Lord Jesus Christ spread his light in me. The Lord Jesus can save you from evil with love. That's why I'm riding the rails with you.

(holds up Bible again)

It's all right here, the only roadmap you'll ever need.

Preacher Man begins handing out business cards.

PREACHER MAN

If you know anyone who needs help, if you know anyone needing the Lord's juice -- maybe yourself -- give us a call. I made the call a long time ago. You make the call.

Preacher Man sits next to PASSENGER 1 and begins talking. The two sit across from Woman.

PREACHER MAN

Good day, brother.

Passenger 1 nods. They shake hands.

PREACHER MAN

How are you today?

PASSENGER 1

Fine.

PREACHER MAN

Read the Bible?

PASSENGER 1

Used to.

PREACHER MAN

Accepted Jesus into your heart?

PASSENGER 1

I don't know. What's that feel like?

PREACHER MAN

Joy -- that someone loves you. Sins and all.

PASSENGER 1

I just be trying to make a living. I don't have time for sins.

PREACHER MAN

Ah, sins aren't something you do, brother -- they're in the blood.

Woman, not directly to either one of them, speaks in a loud, clear, cracked voice.

WOMAN

Bullshit.

Preacher Man and Passenger 1 look at her.

DRIVER'S SEAT

The driver looks in his rear-view mirror again, just to make sure.

TROLLEY CAR

Woman still does not speak directly to them.

WOMAN

So much fucking bullshit.

PREACHER MAN

Young lady --

WOMAN

Fuck you. Fuck the Bible. Piss on it.

(to Passenger 1)

Don't buy this bullshit about Jesus savin' you. Jesus can't save no one. There ain't no escape. From nothin'. All of us already dead.

Rather than dismay, Preacher Man shows the sermonizer's enthusiasm for the possible convert.

PREACHER MAN

You just have to let Jesus --

WOMAN

Been there. Had it done to me. Didn't take.

Preacher Man is really excited now. He leans in to talk with her, Passenger 1 momentarily forgotten.

PREACHER MAN

I can't believe, woman, that you really believe --

Woman turns on him with a snarl.

WOMAN

Didn't you hear me? You already a dead man. Sins and all.

Woman reaches into her belly bag and pulls out a small glass vial, holds it up. It has a cloudy liquid in it.

PREACHER MAN

What's that?

WOMAN

What do you think it is?

PREACHER MAN

I don't know.

WOMAN

You?

Passenger 1 shrugs.

WOMAN

It be the comin' death. Yours.

EXT. - TROLLEY STOP - DAY

The next stop.

INT. - TROLLEY - DRIVER'S FOOT

The driver presses the brake hard.

INT. - TROLLEY

The trolley lurches as it comes to halt, and they all jerk forward and back in their seats.

The doors swing open, but no one gets on or off.

With another jerk, the trolley pitches as it pulls away.

Woman pretends to almost drop the vial.

WOMAN

Don't want to drop this! Not yet, at least.

PREACHER MAN

What is it?

WOMAN

Know any of that Latin?

Preacher Man shakes his head no.

WOMAN

You?

PASSENGER 1

No.

WOMAN

I do. I do. *Bacillus anthracis*.

(shakes vial)

Anthrax.

PASSENGER 1

What's that?

WOMAN

Don't you read the papers? Remember that Sa-damn Hussein bastard, all them chemical weapons they were tryin' to take away from him?

Woman shakes the vial again.

WOMAN

I have my own little weapon here. Kill everybody on this train, and then some, if I just threw it down on the floor and broke it.

She looks right into Preacher Man's eyes.

WOMAN

Kill you outright if I opened it up and threw it on you. Would the Lord save you then? Sins and all? Huh?

Holds up the vial.

WOMAN

Now here's a real effective Bible for you.

DRIVER'S SEAT

In the rear-view mirror, the driver sees Woman hold up the vial, but he can't hear a word because of the trolley's clatter.

TROLLEY

PREACHER MAN

That isn't --

WOMAN

How you know?

PREACHER MAN

It can't.

WOMAN pulls a tattered news clipping from her bag.

WOMAN

Read this, God-fuck-up.

Preacher Man scans it but doesn't read it out loud.

PASSENGER 1

Go on.

PREACHER MAN

"Biological terror. Prepare for it, US cities are urged."

WOMAN

Read the circled part.

Preacher Man shakily hands the clipping to the Passenger 1.

PASSENGER 1

"The terrorists released an odorless aerosol in the airport terminal. Several days later, passengers from all over the world began dying from anthrax, a deadly bacterial infection."

WOMAN

Give it back!

Passenger 1 hands it back to Woman.

WOMAN

Weapon of choice among truth-seekers.

PREACHER MAN

Where would you get it?

Woman makes to unscrew the cap.

WOMAN

Lord Jesus gonna save you now? He's gonna have to be quicker than me.

Woman fakes a motion to throw the contents on Preacher Man. He raises his Bible to block it.

PASSENGER 1

You a sick woman.

WOMAN

No I'm not. I'm not. I'm just dead. I don't care. Dead people don't hafta care.

PASSENGER 1

Jesus raised the dead.

WOMAN

Raised dead bodies. Betcha Lazarus had maggots all through him. What'dya think that did to his self-esteem?

Makes to drink the vial herself, with an eye on the two of them.

WOMAN

Or maybe I'll just save myself. Sins and all.

EXT. - NEXT TROLLEY STOP - DAY

A large black woman, PASSENGER 2, waits, a flowered bag and a clump of magazines in her hands.

Train lurches to a stop.

INT. - TROLLEY

Passenger 2 gets on the train, sits, can see everything going on. The magazine is The Watchtower.

PREACHER MAN

That's not real. That can't be real.

PASSENGER 1

I'm gettin' off.

PREACHER MAN

No, you gotta stay, see this through.

PASSENGER 1

Not me.

Train lurches as it starts up.

PASSENGER 1

Ain't another stop between here and the end.

PASSENGER 2

Warm today, ain't it?

PREACHER MAN

Ma'am, you might not want to sit here.

PASSENGER 2

Why?

WOMAN

I am the coming death, that's why.

WOMAN shakes the vial.

PASSENGER 1

She says its anthrax. You might want to move.

PASSENGER 2

That ain't anthrax.

WOMAN

What makes you almighty smart?

PASSENGER 2

That ain't anthrax.

PREACHER MAN

She says --

PASSENGER 2

Dishwashing liquid, or something like that.

PREACHER MAN

She says --

PASSENGER 2

I seen sheep and cattle die of anthrax as a kid in Tennessee.
Burn the bodies, burn the fields to get rid of it. No fool
would carry it around.

WOMAN

I'm not just any fool.

Passenger 2 leans forward, looks directly at Woman.

PASSENGER 2

Look at me, honey. No, you not just any fool. Some special
kind of fool, eh? Holy fool.

WOMAN

I could open it right here! Right now!

PASSENGER 1

You shouldn't push her.

PASSENGER 2

(to Passenger 1)

Don't talk about what you don't know.

(to Woman)

Honey, you can put it away now.

Train lurches to a stop, then starts again.

WOMAN

I could do it.

PASSENGER 2

I know you could. These two fine gentlemen know you
could, too. They got it. Right?

They nod.

PASSENGER 2

You made your point.

A hesitation, then Woman stuffs the clipping and vial away in her belly bag.

WOMAN

You gotta die to be saved. I'm halfway there.

PASSENGER 2

Whatever was your point, honey, you made it.

Woman cocoons herself again.

PREACHER MAN

If you came to the Lord --

PASSENGER 2

That dog ain't gonna hunt here.

PREACHER MAN

But Jesus --

PASSENGER 2

You have to be reachable.

PREACHER MAN

Jesus can reach anybody!

Passenger 2 indicates Woman with a nod of her head.

PASSENGER 2

You got a lot to learn about the limits of your employer.
There's gold in the center of the earth no one is ever going
to reach.

Train lurches, comes to a stop.

DRIVER

Last stop.

The four of them look at each other for a moment. Woman gets up, pats her belly bag.

WOMAN

You just never know.

Woman gets off the train and disappears.

DRIVER

Last stop.

EXT. - TRAIN STATION - DAY

The other get off the train. The train pulls around the yard, ready for its return trip.

PASSENGER 1

You know her.

PASSENGER 2

I do.

PREACHER MAN

Who is she?

PASSENGER 2

She's had pain you can't even imagine. She just wants attention. Human attention. Not ghosts. She has enough of those. It's only gonna get hotter today.

Passenger 2 turns to walk away.

PREACHER MAN

So it wasn't anthrax?

She turns to face them.

PASSENGER 2

I didn't say it wasn't anthrax. You just never know.

She hands them each a copy of The Watchtower.

PASSENGER 2

Might as well, since I got'cha here.

She smiles, then makes her way off.

TRAIN STOP - OPPOSITE SIDE

The driver pulls the trolley around, RINGS the bell to announce its arrival.

PREACHER MAN

Gotta go back.

Passenger 1 hands Preacher Man his copy of The Watchtower.

PASSENGER 1

Won't do me any good.

Passenger 1 moves away.

The driver RINGS the bell again.

FADE OUT

Hold On

FADE IN:

EXT. - COUNTRY CLUB - DAY

The beautiful grounds of a country club. A nicely arched stone bridge crosses a wide stream.

The windows of the main dining room display a wedding reception in full alcoholic swing.

INT. - MAIN DINING ROOM - DAY

Crowded and hot, with dancing, drinking, and all the usual sports.

CAPPY, dressed in a tuxedo that just doesn't quite fit him, stands yukking it up with four FRIENDS, brandy snifter in one hand and a cigar as thick as Ahab's peg-leg in the other.

To one side and slightly behind him stands RONNIE, dressed in a dress that fits her the way Cappy's tuxedo doesn't fit him, watching Cappy closely. They cannot see her.

CAPPY

I can see the Calvin Klein angle, but me, I'm a Fruit of the Loom guy --

FRIEND 1

Really?

FRIEND 2

Didn't know that about you.

CAPPY

Well, I am, so when she had me try them on --

FRIEND 3

Cappy with butt floss!

CAPPY

No, no, no -- these were bikinis.

FRIEND 4

Why do they call them "briefs"?

CAPPY

Listen! I mean, I love that she bought them, you know, for me -- but bikinis, you know, with this high leg hole --

Ronnie deliberately drifts into their view.

CAPPY

-- and my package just -- you know, like a bunch of grapes -- hanging --

All of them except Cappy see her.

CAPPY

Definitely Fruit of the Loom --

FRIEND 1

(toasts Ronnie)

But Cappy, you gotta love a woman who cares about your leg holes.

Cappy faces Ronnie, their eyes locked.

RONNIE

(to Friend 1)

That's what I always thought.

A suspended moment as Ronnie and Cappy lock eyebeams. Then Ronnie firmly pivots on her heel and marches out.

FRIEND 2

(to others)

Did you just get freezer burn?

(to Cappy)

Looks like your leg holes are gonna be quite lonely in the near future.

CAPPY

Oh, Ronnie'll be --

But he doesn't finish the sentence as he stares at the door where Ronnie left. The four friends toast their snifters to Cappy.

FRIEND 4

To the Fruit of the Loom.

EXT. - BENCH - DAY

Ronnie perched, the hem of her dress gathered into her lap, hugging her knees.

Cappy sees her, hesitates, then runs up and scoots in as if he's sliding into base.

CAPPY

Safe.

Ronnie does not even look at him.

RONNIE

Out.

CAPPY

Safe!

RONNIE

Out at home. Play ball somewhere else.

CAPPY

So you don't want me here?

RONNIE

Go away.

CAPPY

Free bench.

RONNIE

For human beings.

CAPPY

I'm not?

RONNIE

Not today.

(looks at him)

I cannot believe --

CAPPY

Ronnie, it's small stuff.

RONNIE

Begone.

CAPPY

Small potatoes.

She swivels to look at him, still hugging her knees.

RONNIE

You want to know some big potatoes, then? I've decided that Cappy makes me feel crappy, and for me to be healthy, I'm going to flush you out.

CAPPY

Flush me out.

RONNIE

An ultra-high colonic. The enema to top all enemas. From stem to stern and back. It's the least the Fruit of the Loom deserves. And you deserve the very least.

They sit, silent, not at ease, but necessarily overly tense, either -- as if this is not a new conversation.

CAPPY

Finished?

RONNIE

With you.

CAPPY

Crappy Cappy.

RONNIE

Got a big hole in my personal ozone from your toxic waste.
Time for you to be phased out.

CAPPY

Anything else?

RONNIE

When they passed out brains --

CAPPY

Ah, something from your second-graders.

She stops.

RONNIE

I'm not going to dance this jig any more.

CAPPY

C'mon --

RONNIE

I'm not.

CAPPY

C'mon, you're supposed to play out --

RONNIE

-- I get mad -- again! --

CAPPY

-- it brings out your best colors --

RONNIE

-- you sit there and soak up my spew --

CAPPY

-- such lovely spew, well-crafted --

RONNIE

-- we jig this over and over again, and I feel stupid seven
different ways for saying what I feel, and you come off

squeegee-clean and well-defensed, which I hate, and it's never going to change.

Pause -- air filled with faint 80s dance MUSIC from the country club, also a soft breeze.

RONNIE

Just for the record. You really hurt me back there.

CAPPY

Ronnie -- just guy stuff --

RONNIE

"Guy stuff" -- you don't even smoke.

CAPPY

Peer pressure.

RONNIE

You're not eighteen.

CAPPY

Out of my hands. But I didn't inhale.

RONNIE

I can't believe you said -- what you said.

Cappy goes to speak but she cuts him off with a hand gesture.

RONNIE

Why didn't you tell me you didn't like them?

CAPPY

Ronnie --

RONNIE

Why didn't you? I went to all this trouble, for your birthday, to buy you some nice French silk underwear.

CAPPY

Low-cut bikinis.

RONNIE

Excuse me, Mister Fruit -- how was I to know you held a distinct opinion about the rise of the leg hole?

CAPPY

They just rode -- up -- you know. Up. They weren't comfortable.

RONNIE

So why didn't you say something? You know, talk to me? Especially when I bought you some more for Christmas.

Ronnie holds up imaginary underwear -- a mocking tone.

RONNIE

"Oh, thanks honey! I really wanted some more -- "

CAPPY

Just didn't want to hurt your feelings.

RONNIE

You don't even know what those are.

CAPPY

Yes, I do --

Ronnie gets off the bench, torn between walking away and giving Cappy the one-two he deserves.

RONNIE

It wasn't that you told them. Macho it up all you want with your buds. It was how you made me look like an idiot for wanting to do something nice for you. Like I was this bubble-brained bubble brain!

CAPPY

You're not --

Stops him.

RONNIE

Hup! As if I didn't know you. After seven years. As if I didn't know you! That's what hurt.

She sits. They both hang there, undecided.

CAPPY

Nice wedding.

RONNIE

Other peoples' usually are.

CAPPY

Am I still out at home?

RONNIE

Cappy --

CAPPY

Ronnie, don't --

RONNIE

What are we up to?

CAPPY

Jeez --

RONNIE

Seven years.

CAPPY

Good ones. Can we go back in?

She stares at him, sadness and determination on her face.

RONNIE

Not all good.

CAPPY

On average.

RONNIE

No.

CAPPY

Back?

RONNIE

I watched you today, a lot.

CAPPY

Go back?

RONNIE

As the priest blessed them, as everyone clapped, as people came up and just bathed in their happiness. And I realized that you and I will never have anything like that. Ever. Not the marriage necessarily. Just that kind of connection. In cigarus et brandius veritas. We're holding on to nothing. No trumps.

CAPPY

That's not true.

RONNIE

It's true, no matter what you say.

CAPPY

This isn't the first time. This has come up.

RONNIE

I think it's going to be the last, Cappy.

They sit in defeated silence. In the distance is the SOUND of a speeding car approaching, the squeal of brakes, and a crash. They sit up, suddenly alert.

EXT. - COUNTRY CLUB BRIDGE - DAY

A car has broken through the railing of the bridge and teeters, half on, half off. The trunk has popped open.

INT. - CAR

An elderly woman in the driver's seat, paralyzed with fear. An air freshener, hanging from the rear-view mirror and sporting a smiling angel's face, pendulums wildly.

EXT. - CAR

Ronnie and Cappy run onto the bridge. Ronnie moves to the driver's side.

RONNIE

It's Jim's aunt, the one that smelled --

CAPPY

-- like fermenting apples.

Ronnie moves back to Cappy.

RONNIE

Right!

The car slides an inch forward. Cappy grabs the lip of the open trunk.

CAPPY

Grab! Grab!

Ronnie also grabs on, and they find themselves anchoring the teetering car by their own strength and weight.

CAPPY

See if we can keep it from see-sawing. Ah -- hey -- what the hell's her name?

RONNIE

I called her "Red Delicious gone bad."

CAPPY

Granny Smith!

RONNIE

Granny Smith?

CAPPY

You're gonna be okay!

INT. - CAR

The old woman hears Cappy's "Granny Smith."

OLD WOMAN

He's coming to take me away! Oh, oh --

She rocks. The air freshener whips back and forth. She blesses herself.

OLD WOMAN

Our Father, who art in heaven --

EXT. - CAR

The car teeters because of the teetering old woman.

CAPPY

Christ! Jesus Christ!

INT. - CAR

OLD WOMAN

Hallowed be thy name --

The old woman hears the word "Christ!" and stops. She looks at the smiling angel's face on the air freshener.

EXT. - CAR

RONNIE

Help is on the way!

INT. - CAR

The old woman, now still, watches the smiling face, and it's as if Ronnie's words come from the grinning angel's mouth.

OLD WOMAN

Save me.

EXT. - CAR

The car settles, finally, and they can hear the world around them.

CAPPY

Someone must have heard it.

RONNIE

The band was pretty loud.

CAPPY

No one was bleeding from the ears.

RONNIE

I hope someone heard. What was she doing?

CAPPY

Probably a geezer spasm --

RONNIE

What are we going to do?

INT. - COUNTRY CLUB

By this time, everyone is dancing wildly. Through the windows the car plainly hangs off the bridge, but no one notices.

RONNIE

My hands are going to decide this pretty soon.

CAPPY

I've given you many chances to exercise those hands. Not my fault if --

The car teeters again.

INT. - CAR

The old woman is dancing in her seat.

OLD WOMAN

He's going to save me, he's going to save me!

EXT. - CAR

Pulling down with their weight, they just manage to keep the car in balance.

CAPPY

Settle down, Mrs. Appleseed!

RONNIE

My hands don't have much grip left.

INT. - COUNTRY CLUB

The place is packed with gyrating dancers. Friend 1 wanders to the window and sees, through blurred and alcoholic eyes, the car half-on the bridge and what looks like two fishing bobs in formal clothes hanging off the rear bumper.

EXT. - CAR

CAPPY

No one's coming.

Ronnie screams.

RONNIE

Cramp!

She shakes one of her hands violently in the air.

CAPPY

Warn me at least!

RONNIE

A spasm doesn't come with trumpets! Christ!

INT. - CAR

The old woman hears "Christ" again, stops dancing, and pushes a tape into the cassette player. Out of it comes some syrupy Muzak of The Carpenters' "We Only Just Begun." She starts to sway to the rhythm.

EXT. - CAR

RONNIE

That hurt!

CAPPY

Yeah -- but he got it through the palm.

A look of intense annoyance from Ronnie. Cappy grins -- he is in his element.

CAPPY

You "knead" to make bread more often. Get it? Knead?
Build hand strength?

RONNIE

Shut up.

CAPPY

Just trying to lighten things.

The car rocks slightly, gently. Ronnie looks at Cappy's absurdly smiling face.

RONNIE

(hesitating)

Not what I expected to "come to hand" when I came out here.

CAPPY

I guess we're "hanging on."

RONNIE

To Granny Smith.

CAPPY

Who had a geezer spasm. / Almost drove her car --

RONNIE

Into a chasm. Wait! Wait! Another one!

Takes her other hand off and shakes out a cramp.

INT. - CAR

At a peak in the music, the old woman hears Ronnie's yell, and she matches it in trying to sing to the music, swaying a little bit harder.

INT. - COUNTRY CLUB

Friend 1 turns to the gyrating crowd and YELLS.

FRIEND 1

Hey, everyone, come look at this! I just saw a see-saw!
Haw, haw!

Friend 1 sees Ronnie shaking out her hand and, thinking she's waving to him, waves back.

A few people turn to look at him, see him waving and laughing wildly at his own joke.

FRIEND 1

Look at what we saw! I just saw a see-saw. See-saw,
see-saw --

The three other friends walk toward him. In the background the band plays a punk version of The Carpenters' "We've Only Just Begun."

EXT. - CAR

The car teeters.

CAPPY

She's running in the home stretch.

RONNIE

Sit still!

CAPPY

-- frisky, ain't she --

RONNIE

-- or the Social Security check --

CAPPY

-- she's probably buried a husband or two --

RONNIE

-- gets it in the neck!

CAPPY

That -- was -- a -- good -- one.

They stabilize the car.

CAPPY

A reminder.

RONNIE

What?

CAPPY

Remember to shoot me when the dementia sets in.

RONNIE

Right now, you mean?

CAPPY

The senile kind. Not the juvenile.

RONNIE

That means I'd have to wait around that long.

CAPPY

I guess it would at that.

They can vaguely hear an overly of The Carpenters from inside the car and from the country club.

INT. - COUNTRY CLUB

FRIEND 1

Is that what I think it is?

FRIEND 2

It is.

FRIEND 3

Should we go?

FRIEND 4

To the rescue!

Friend 4 jabs the air with his finger, and then makes a few bad John Travolta moves from "Stayin' Alive."

EXT. - CAR

CAPPY

This -- a good story for your class on Monday. This is good second-grade material.

RONNIE

I'd like a happy ending for them.

CAPPY

You want it over?

RONNIE

Not what I want. Just is. Well, life support, anyway.

CAPPY

I gotta agree, I guess.

RONNIE

Everything's been boiled down to shoulds.

CAPPY

I take you for granted.

RONNIE

Granted.

CAPPY

And the underwear -- you're right, it wasn't fair.

RONNIE

I should have asked.

CAPPY

We coast.

RONNIE

We're in Lazy-Boy recliners.

CAPPY

We're flipping the remote without a tune.

RONNIE

We're shaving with old razors.

CAPPY

I know all your dances.

RONNIE

I know how you drive to the hoop.

CAPPY

So what do we do?

INT. - CAR

The old woman hears the TOCSIN of an emergency vehicle. She looks at the smiling angel on the air freshener.

OLD WOMAN

The sound of angles.

EXT. - COUNTRY CLUB LAWN

The four friends gallop toward the bridge as if they are riding horses, whooping it up like the cavalry.

EXT. - COUNTRY CLUB ROAD

A fire engine blows along, lights and SIREN blaring.

EXT. - CAR

RONNIE

Someone must have called in. And here come your men of war to the rescue.

The four friends pull to a halt and grab the car. They sit on the lip, and the added weight keeps the car stable.

Ronnie and Cappy shake out their hands as the fire truck pulls up and four beefy guys leap out. Two add their weight to the four horsemen.

EXT. - COUNTRY CLUB LAWN

The multi-hued wedding guests are streaming out toward the bridge, champagne glasses in hand.

INT. - CAR

Two helmeted official-looking faces peer inside. The old woman, seeing one, then other, YELLS out joyfully.

OLD WOMAN

My angles! My angles!

(to air freshener)

Thank you.

EXT. - BENCH

Cappy and Ronnie retreat to their original bench. The hubbub leaves them high and dry and alone for a moment.

CAPPY

I can come in to your class, and we can do a show-and-tell.

RONNIE

Which part?

CAPPY

The "so what do we do" hopefully happy ending part.

Ronnie watches the ten guys pull the car back onto the road.

RONNIE

Maybe we should find another car to hold on to. You know, to finish the conversation.

She looks at him and LAUGHS.

RONNIE

Granny Smith!

CAPPY

Sweet and tart at the same time. Just like me.

The both watch the four friends high-five the people in the crowd.

CAPPY

Safe at home?

RONNIE

Call under protest -- for the time being.

They massage each other's hands as they watch the rescue efforts go forward.

FADE OUT

In The Fort

FADE IN:

EXT. - BACKYARD - DAY

October, sky grey, but the air not yet chilled. A house in a settle neighborhood.

Towards the rear of the backyard, a tall tree -- old, thick, reliable.

In the tree, a platform: PABLO's "fort." A rope ladder leads up to the fort. At the top of the ladder, a set of handrails, like in a swimming pool, to help the climber get onto the platform.

In the fort: Pablo, a second-grader, wearing a blue jacket. He holds a plastic sword, a lá a light saber from Star Wars. In front of him, half open, lies a bag of cookies.

The wind sifts through the branches, showering down the last of the leaves.

INT. - LIVING ROOM - DAY

LUZ ELENA, Pablo's mother, looks through a set of sliding glass doors at Pablo while she talks on the phone.

LUZ

Querido, I do not know what got into him. No, he won't say. Pobre niño is sitting out there, in his fort -- you're right, with the cookies and the sword. Just came home from school, grabbed his supplies, and booked. Not a word. Okay -- I know you have to run -- kill 'em with the presentation. Hablamos.

Luz clicks off the phone, stares out at Pablo, this small blue figure against the dull tree and sky.

EXT. - FORT

Pablo, shoulders hunched, sits cross-legged, stabs half-heartedly at the leaves with his sword.

INT. - LIVING ROOM

Luz puts the phone back, then grabs a jacket off the rack and slides open the doors.

EXT. - FORT

Pablo, hearing the doors, looks up, sees Luz, then looks back down at the leaves, tries to spear a few but only manages to nudge them around.

He looks up again to see Luz cross the yard to the tree.

EXT. - BOTTOM OF ROPE LADDER

Luz looks up the ladder into the grey sky. She can't see Pablo, but she can hear him.

LUZ

Hola.

No response.

LUZ

Como estás?

No oral response. But she hears him whack the sword against the wood.

LUZ

May I come up, pequeñito?

No response.

She puts a foot and her hands on the rope ladder and climbs, slowly and carefully. It's been a long time since she'd climbed a tree.

EXT. - FORT

Pablo watches the head of his mother appear over the edge.

LUZ

Hola.

PABLO
(softly)

Hola.

LUZ
Can I come aboard?

PABLO
No.

LUZ
Okay.

Luz continues to climb, grabbing the handrails, until her torso comes into view.

LUZ
This okay?

Pablo looks over to check.

PABLO
'kay.

Luz surveys the world around them.

LUZ
Nice up here!

Luz takes another step up, then twists to sit on the platform itself.

LUZ
Okay?

In response, Pablo chomps on a cookie.

LUZ
I can understand why you like to be up here. It's nice! I never had a fort when I was growing up. Mi padre didn't think children should have one --
(mock-tough voice)
"Ay, Mami! Mira! They should work in the house and not be fooling around outside, los chanchitos!"

Luz makes an OINKING noise. Pablo smiles -- but only just a little. Luz notices the half-smile.

LUZ

Silly, huh? Isn't it much better to be a fool outside, eh?

She edges on board another inch or two.

LUZ

This okay?

Pablo nods yes, finishes his cookie.

LUZ

(inhaling deeply)

Nice.

They both sit. The wind SOUGHS through the branches. Far off they can hear neighborhood SOUNDS: leaf blower, voices yelling, a truck passing.

LUZ

Everything go okay in school today?

For an answer, Pablo whacks the floor with his sword and then eats another cookie. Luz swings her feet around.

LUZ

Was that hitting, like, somebody with your sword or was that just a general whack, you know, like a fun whack? It was a pretty hard whack.

Pablo hits the platform again with the sword.

LUZ

Ooh, a double whack. Something must have pissed you off.

PABLO

That's a bad word. Daddy said so.

LUZ

You're right -- I forgot. When you get angry, easy to forget your manners. You that kind of, you know, like mad?

Pablo throws a cookie up and hits it with the sword. It sails into the yard.

EXT. - YARD

From out of nowhere a squirrel darts to the cookie, picks it up, and nibbles on it, sitting on its haunches. The squirrel watches the two humans while it chows down.

EXT. - FORT

LUZ

Can I have a cookie?

As an answer, Pablo balances a cookie on the end of his sword and reaches it out to Luz, who takes and eats it. Pablo eats one as well.

LUZ

Gracias, querido.

PABLO

De nada.

Luz points to the squirrel, Pablo notices, and for a moment the three creatures eat and watch each other, Pablo absently tapping the sword against the platform.

PABLO

Mami?

LUZ

Yes?

Pablo hesitates.

LUZ

Go ahead.

PABLO

Do you like Papi?

LUZ

Of course! He's the cream in my café!

Pablo takes this in.

PABLO

Somebody at school called him -- something.

LUZ

Something.

PABLO

Yeah. At recess.

LUZ

Can you tell me what the something was? Do you want to say it?

PABLO

You like Papi, right?

LUZ

I love Papi, just like you do. You want to say it?

Shakes his head no, at first, then yes, but he doesn't say anything. Luz makes the sound of spitting.

LUZ

Escúpelo fuera, like that time I fed you the lima beans. Remember? You kept spitting them out, one by one? Bing! Off the ceiling. Bing! Out the window.

PABLO

Yeah!

LUZ

Just like that.

Luz makes a series of rapid spittings.

LUZ

C'mon, can you spit for me?

Pablo dry-spits, and Luz joins him.

EXT. - YARD

The squirrel, half a cookie in its mouth, bounces out of sight.

EXT. - FORT

They finish "spitting."

LUZ

Good. Now, spit it out.

PABLO

Wetback.

The word, unexpected, takes Luz by surprise, which she tries not to show.

LUZ

Do you know what the word means?

Pablo nods.

LUZ

Tell me what you think it means.

PABLO

Big voice?

LUZ

Use the big voice only if you want to use it.

A hesitation, then Pablo indicates with his sword for Luz to move closer. She does. He whispers in her ear. She can barely repress a smile.

LUZ

Are you sure?

PABLO

Yeah!

LUZ

Just checking.

PABLO

Well, isn't it?

LUZ

Isn't what?

PABLO

Doesn't Papi have one in the basement?

LUZ

The WetVac.

PABLO

He uses it when he cuts wood, to clean up. And when the hot water tank busted.

LUZ

Sí, he does. He does, manzanita. So you think someone called Daddy a vacuum cleaner?

PABLO

Wetback.

LUZ

And that's what made you mad?

Pablo nods.

LUZ

Fighting mad.

PABLO

No.

LUZ

How did you feel?

Pablo shrugs.

LUZ

Teeny-tiny?

Pablo nods yes.

LUZ

Can I have another cookie? And can I have a hug to go with that cookie?

Pablo gets up and Luz, on her knees, hugs him. He pets her hair.

LUZ

Your dad will be very proud of you.

Pablo pulls away: enough hug.

PABLO

Yeah?

LUZ

I know I am.

PABLO

Yeah? Why?

LUZ

Because you showed a lot of heart -- you showed me tu corazón. That's really good.

PABLO

I wanted to slap her.

LUZ

She's just a lima bean in your mouth. Ready?

Together, they mock-spit.

LUZ

What d'ya say we get some milk to go with those cookies and get the lima beans outta our mouths?

PABLO

Okay.

LUZ

Go on -- start pouring for both of us.

PABLO

Chocolate for me?

LUZ

(indicating both)

Para ambos.

PABLO

Yeah!

Pablo starts to scamper down the rope ladder.

LUZ

Hey! The cookies!

PABLO

Oh, yeah.

Pablo comes back and stuffs the cookies in his jacket, and as he leaves, he gives Luz another quick hug, which she returns.

EXT. - YARD

Pablo shimmies down the ladder.

EXT. - FORT

Luz watches Pablo tear across the yard, slam open the glass doors, and, leaving them open, disappear into the house.

Luz sees the sword, picks it up. She stands.

LUZ

Can't protect you anymore, mihito. Not anymore. But you don't have to know that, at least for a while. We'll pretend -- Mami and Papi will keep the sword -- you keep the cookies. We'll pretend at least for a little while, for a little while longer.

Luz slides the sword into her belt, like a mock knight. She stares up into the branches and beyond that into the empty grey sky.

FADE OUT

Everything's Jake

FADE IN

EXT. - PARK - MORNING

Nice pocket park with benches, trees, just off a busy street. TRAFFIC sounds, but only just barely.

JANE already on one bench, coffee and a scone in hand. JAQUIE comes in carrying a bag with the same and sits. Jane is very nervous, twitchy.

JAQUIE

It is so good to see you.

A simple caress, but Jane does not respond.

JANE

Good to see you, too.

JAQUIE

Your message sounded worried. You look worried. What is up?

JANE

Everything's fine.

Jane takes a sip.

JANE

Too hot.

JAQUIE

So the distraught tone in your 2 AM message -- just my imagination?

JANE

(another sip)

I wasn't "distraught." Still too hot.

JAQUIE

And the fact you didn't return my beautifully solicitous message at 2:05 AM is because --

JANE

Time just got away --

JAQUIE

And your "everything's fine" is supposed to convince this highly evolved Star-Trekkian-type being that everything is, well, fine?

JANE

Everything is fine.

JAQUIE

So why are we here?

Jane prepares to take a third sip of the coffee that's obviously still too hot. Jaquie stops her.

JAQUIE

Nothing cools that fast except a royal marriage. Look at me. Look at me.

Jane looks, looks away, looks back, etc. while they talk, ready to spout something but can't.

JAQUIE

How long? C'mon.

JANE

A year.

JAQUIE

How often do we talk to each other?

JANE

Often.

JAQUIE

How close are we? C'mon.

TOGETHER

"Dirt and roots."

JAQUIE

You do remember the day --

JANE

In that book discussion group.

JAQUIE

The topic?

JANE

Gender slavery. With that dyke group leader --

JAQUIE

-- her sacred womyn [pronounced "wimmin"] handshake --

JANE

-- "solidarity hand-jive" you called it --

JAQUIE

Shall we?

They do their handshake. Jane laughs, nervously.

JAQUIE

Good. Now I recognize you. Out with it.

Jane picks up the coffee cup; Jaquie gives her a playful but sharp look. Jane puts it down.

JANE

I need to talk -- with you.

JAQUIE

Remember: Star-Trekkian.

Jane looks away, peeved and nervous.

JAQUIE

Sorry. What is it, really? Which bastard boyfriend this time?

JANE

It's not about that -- surprise, surprise. Something -- more important.

JAQUIE

More important than the bastard boyfriend du jour? I'm shocked --

Jane looks as if she is in pain.

JAQUIE

Sorry again -- didn't mean to make fun -- you know that. Just tell me.

A glance, a hesitation, a deep breath.

JANE

I've decided to become a pre-operative transsexual.

Silence, then more silence.

JAQUIE

Repeat.

JANE

I've decided to become a pre-operative transsexual.

JAQUIE

(overlapping)

-- pre-operative -- This is -- not what I expected --

More silence.

JAQUIE

Why?

JANE

I'm tired of being a woman!

JAQUIE

Have you explored what this means?

JANE

Sure.

JAQUIE

Really explored?

JANE

Yes. Absolutely.

JAQUIE

Consulted the physicians and read the books and talked with others who have gone the "F-t-M" route?

JANE nods yes.

JAQUIE

And you're emotionally ready to suffer the hormonal treatments, the reassignment surgery, the years of therapy, abandonment by everyone you know and love?

JANE

Abandonment?

JAQUIE

It happens.

JANE

Yes, yes, I've done all that!

JAQUIE

And you would be better off as a man?

JANE

Don't use that tone! I hate it when you treat me like I'm --

JAQUIE

What?

JANE

Like I'm not serious. I have thought long and hard.

JANE indicates her body.

JANE

I need to escape from this. I need the advantages --

JAQUIE

(tenderly)

You don't know step one about what you're saying.

JANE

You're doing it again!

JAQUIE

Then if you're so sure, Jane, stand up to me.

JANE

All right.

JAQUIE

Stand up to me.

JANE

All right! I suppose you think the "monthly flow" is a marquee event? Along with breast cancer, and cervical cancer, and uterine cancer, and hot flashes and estrogen cocktails, and osteoporosis, and lower benefits from Social Security and higher prices at the dry cleaners -- it's too much work to be a goddess. Give me drumming in the woods! Give me Zeus! Yeah!

Jaquie does not respond to this but lets the words float for a beat or two.

JAQUIE

Liebchen, just be straight with me. Just tell me what's really gnawing at you. I'll listen straight. I always have.

JANE

Why won't you believe me? This has to work.

JAQUIE

Because you're bluffing.

JANE

It is true! You're supposed to support me. I even have a name picked out: Jake.

JAQUIE

Why are you saying this?

Jane makes a feeble attempt at the handshake with Jaquie, but Jaquie refuses to go along.

JANE

I'm saying it for you.

JAQUIE

Repeat.

JANE

For you.

JAQUIE

I don't understand. Be clearer.

JANE

How much more fucking clear do you want me to be? I want you! I love you!

JAQUIE

Me?

Their eyes lock.

JAQUIE

Me.

JANE

I love you, Jaquie! I love you so much. Almost from the day we met. I've been able to keep it tamed. Mostly. But not any more. I'm really, really desperate about it. About you. I thought that if I became a man, you know, maybe you would -- You wouldn't take me as I am, right? The lesbian thing wouldn't work with you, would it? Am I a lesbian for feeling like this? Oh, Christ, listen to me! Really stupid, huh? Really, really stupid.

JAQUIE

No.

JANE

First Prize in the stupid category. Whooowee! Right along with the Miss Humiliation plaque.

JAQUIE

Slow down.

Jane makes to leave. Jaquie puts a hand on her, lightly.

JAQUIE

Don't. Stay.

JANE

Roll over. Play dead. I feel like I want to jump right out of my skin.

JAQUIE

I know the feeling. Stay.

JANE

Don't hate me.

JAQUIE

Why would I hate you?

JANE

I was so afraid I'd disgust you -- you aren't disgusted, are you? -- I was just so desperate. I figured -- I don't know what I was thinking. So clueless. "Ring-ring. Pick up the clue phone, Jane!" I had none, obviously. Me becoming a man! To love you! I mean, you date men all the time -- how could I know whether you would or not? I just needed a way to escape from all this bottled-up -- Oooh, I can't find the word! Do you know what I mean?

JAQUIE

Yes.

Pause. Street sounds.

JANE

What do I do now?

JAQUIE

Well, give your stupidity award -- to me.

JANE

You?

JAQUIE

Yeah.

JANE

Why?

JAQUIE

For not being honest with you sooner. So that you wouldn't have had to contort yourself the way you did. So that you would know who you were loving. So that you would know who loved you.

JANE

You -- me?

Jaquie nods yes.

JANE

True?

Jaquie nods again.

JANE

All along?

Jaquie nods again.

JANE

Whooowee! Yee-haw! Yes!

JAQUIE

But I need to tell you something.

Jaquie rummages in her bag while they talk.

JANE

Tell away. This is ace! This is a great day!

JAQUIE

This will not be easy.

JANE

I didn't need all that man shit. What was I thinking? Free at last!

Jaquie pulls out what looks like a driver's license or an ID card of some sort. She hands it to Jane. Jane looks at it.

JANE

What's this?

JAQUIE

Just look.

JANE

Who is -- (looking at the card) -- Jack Ashley? Your brother?

JAQUIE

Jane, look closely.

Jaquie watches Jane closely. Jane looks again, and a sudden dawning comes to her face. She looks back and forth between the card and Jacquie. The following lines should be taken slowly, deliberately.

JANE

Not your brother. At all.

JAQUIE

In some places, not even the original skin.

JANE

Jack. Jacquie. So that's how you knew about --

JAQUIE

(without being flippant)

Been there. Done that.

JANE

You were once --

Jaquie nods yes. Jane hands back the card.

JAQUIE

Jack Ashley was and is a vibrant person. I like Jack. You'll like him, too. But he wanted to be me. So we exchanged places. That's the easy way of describing a long, painful journey. Are you all right?

JANE

I don't exactly know -- what I am. My skin feels tight again.

JAQUIE

I told you this wouldn't be easy.

Jaquie reaches out to touch her, but Jane pulls away.

JANE

Wait.

Several heartbeats of silence as Jane ponders the situation. She sees her coffee and slowly, deliberately replaces the lid on it. Street sounds float around them.

JANE

So, I am in love with a woman who was a man? And this woman who was a man loves me, a woman, who, though not seriously, was talking about becoming a man in order to love a woman who had been a man, though she didn't know that?

JAQUIE

Gets tangled.

JANE

You date men.

JAQUIE

So do you.

JANE

Women, too?

JAQUIE

I've taught myself not to make too fine a distinction. After the -- change -- it was clear to me that the boy/girl line could be erased. So I erased.

JANE

Erased.

JAQUIE

I love people. Lust for, care about people. You, for instance. I've escaped from the Bastille of gender, and I ain't ever goin' back.

JANE

But you're a woman.

JAQUIE

Visually, socially -- and for some reason the biomechanics just work better this way -- a lot I haven't figured out yet. But inside, in the spirit, where it counts, I'm just a human being. Unfortunately, we don't have a pronoun for that yet.

JANE

Whew.

JAQUIE

Yes.

JANE

Men and women both, huh?

JAQUIE

Yes. Just like you.

JANE

Like me?

Jane chews on these words.

JANE

I feel like my brain is three sizes too small for this information.

JAQUIE

Got more than you came for. Do you need to leave?

JANE

Very mixed at the moment. Got a thousand questions and mental lockjaw.

JAQUIE

Borrow my voice.

JANE

What?

JAQUIE

Send me your thoughts. Here.

Jaquie holds out her hands.

JAQUIE

Use the keyboard.

Jane takes Jacquie's hands, holds them, gives them back.

JANE

I can't. I don't know what to say. I don't know if I can do this.

JAQUIE

We're not double-parked. No hurry.

JANE

I just don't know, Jacquie.

JAQUIE

Don't fly away. Please. I love you, too. Please.

JANE

I don't know -- why didn't you tell me all this before?

JAQUIE

I wanted to -- but I didn't want to risk -- I'd decided that it was better to have coffee with you as a friend than tell you

the truth and drink my coffee alone. It would kill me not to be near you.

JANE

I just don't know if I can be enough.

JAQUIE

Yet.

JANE

Yet. I should go. Would you walk me home?

JAQUIE

Of course.

Picking up their trash, they move away from the bench.

JANE

So many things --

JAQUIE

We have time.

They walk in silence for several steps. Jane turns to Jacquie.

JANE

I'm going to walk the rest of the way on my own.

Jaquie stops while JANE continues a few steps on. She turns and holds out her right hand. In synch they do an "air" version of their handshake. JANE leaves.

FADE OUT

Tips

FADE IN

INT. DINER - MORNING

Typical busy greasy spoon, a real ptomaine palace, packed, both counter and booths, and the NOISE borders on ear-numbing.

In the exact middle of the counter sits BRAD. Like his name, thin, hard, pointed, dressed in clothes just a day past handed-out from the Salvation Army: dress pants with a sheen, suit coat that may or may not have mated with the pants, a white shirt just barely hiding the fray on collar and cuff, and a tie as colorful as Brad is not.

In front of him sits a heavy scratched coffee mug, half-full. Just a coffee mug, unaccompanied by food.

To his right and left, however, food overflows as construction workers and secretaries and the whole army of labor chow down. Brad left, then right. If hungry eyes could speak, his would scream.

Brad's eyes drift back to his cup, and into his field of vision punches the sharp lip of a coffee pot refreshing his half-full mug. The steam curls upward, and his eyes follow it to catch the eyes of the WAITRESS, who gives him an automatic forced half-smile, then retreats down the line, refreshing everyone's mug. He watches the tight bow of her apron, chugs down half the coffee. His face doesn't even register how hot it is.

To his immediate right, a burly GUY wipes up egg residue with his toast. Last slurp of coffee, last chug of OJ, a signal to the waitress to bring the bill. She does, and Brad catches her eye again, this time throwing back his own smile. Forced half-smile again from her as the guy pulls bills from a wad of wallet fished out of his back pocket.

She disappears down the line to the register. The guy tucks two one-dollar bills under the plate, scarfs down the remaining crust of toast, half-spins on the stool, and exits.

Two one-dollar bills -- within easy finger distance. He checks -- he can't see the waitress. He looks back at the bills, and the hunger in his face steams.

He uncurls his hand from his mug and eases it rightward. A quick glance up, then steady, steady....

The coffee pot again, the cup brimmed up. She gives him another forced little smile, then moves down the line in the opposite direction: fill, half-smile, fill, half-smile. Craning over, he watches the bow on her apron.

Right hand out again, snakish, almost there... Then a sharp pain in his back as the leading edge of a briefcase, artilleried by a LAWYER, dings Brad's left kidney. Knocked into the counter, he barely catches a glimpse of the unapologetic backside of the shyster as he spews out words to a co-worker trailing behind.

Now or never, no finesse, and so Brad slides the bills out from under the weight of the porcelain. He's just about to pocket them when the coffee pot pins his hand to the counter. He jerks it away from the hot glass and looks up into the waitress' eyes.

She stares at him -- no smile. He tries to stare back at her, but he can't hold up his end of the match and goes back to focusing really tightly on the coffee in his mug. The bills sit just at the edge of his eyes.

Her fingers on the money -- he sees the hard-bitten nails, the cracked, overworked tips. The fingers guide one of the bills toward him, then make the other one disappear.

When he looks up again, all he can see, when he cranes over the counter, is the bow on her apron.

He fiddles with the bill, folds and unfolds it, then slides it under his coffee cup and gets off his stool.

But two steps away, he turns back and nips it into his suitcoat pocket.

Eyes straight ahead, he burrows through the crowd --

EXT - DINER - DAY

-- and out the door into the harsh impersonal sunlight.

FADE OUT

Touching Down

FADE IN

EXT. - DEEP ARBOR NURSING HOME - SUNRISE

The sunrise light falls on the sign at the entrance into Deep Arbor Retirement Community.

EXT. - PARK - DAY

A small park attached to the nursing home. A deep river runs through it, crossed by a rustic stone bridge.

EXT. - PARK BENCH - DAY

Two pair of feet, one smaller than the other. The smaller pair wears ratty sneakers and belongs to THOMAS TOUCH-FIRE, an elderly frail Seneca Indian. The larger pair, wearing scuffed-up work boots, belongs to LINDBERGH, his son-in-law.

A small cooler sits by Lindbergh's foot, two beer empties beside it.

Soft light. Birds SING, and the river BUBBLES.

A BELCH: Lindbergh.

LINDBERGH (O.S.)

Sorry.

THOMAS (O.S.)

It's fine.

LINDBERGH (O.S.)

Not used to beer at breakfast.

THOMAS (O.S.)

Beer's made from grain.

LINDBERGH (O.S.)

True.

THOMAS (O.S.)
Makes it a cereal of sorts.

LINDBERGH (O.S.)
True again.

BENCH

They toast each other, then sip meditatively.

THOMAS
Eructation.

LINDBERGH
What?

THOMAS
What you did -- eruct.

LINDBERGH
Eruct.

THOMAS
You eructed. An eructation.

LINDBERGH
Vaguely sexual, heh? "He could feel himself getting eruct."

THOMAS
One little letter between a hard-on and a mouth fart.

Thomas works up a belch. They toast again.

LINDBERGH
To the morning songbirds.

THOMAS
Feels good.

A moment of SILENCE as they drink. Water BURBLES, birds CHIRP, sunlight brightens.

INT. - DEEP ARBOR - DAY

The community room at Deep Arbor -- functional, drab. A few worn, elderly people sit in the sunlight, alone.

EXT. - BENCH - DAY

Lindbergh looks at Thomas with a mixture of sadness and humor, holds out his beer bottle.

LINDBERGH

Given our agenda this morning, this is not just for our refreshment, is it?

Thomas sips, finishes, hands the empty to Lindbergh, who puts it by the others.

THOMAS

Depends.

Thomas leaves his hand out, and Lindbergh, with a half-smile, snags and opens another one from the cooler but holds it back for a moment.

INT. - DEEP ARBOR - DAY

The dining room -- feeding time. Ranks of old people trying to eat. Falsely perky or truly sullen nurses and aides wander among them.

LINDBERGH (V.O.)

Why did I bring this grain with me, hahnii [my father]? Why will this morning be different from all the others?

EXT. - BENCH - DAY

No answer at first. Thomas' hand still outstretched. Lindbergh hands him the bottle.

LINDBERGH

Go on -- eruct away.

THOMAS

When you and number one daughter visit, this is where I
sneak the beer you bring me.

LINDBERGH

Your little biergarten.

INT. - DEEP ARBOR DINING ROOM - DAY

A nurse gently guides a quivering liver-spotted hand holding a shaking
spoon from bowl to mouth. Half the contents of the spoon spill out.

THOMAS (V.O.)

I can sit here, by this water, unwitnessed because nobody
on this reservation moves from their soaps or their slops or
their beds. I'm safe.

EXT. - BENCH - DAY

LINDBERGH

Safe from the marauding nurses.

Thomas starts to lightly move his feet, as if he were dancing.

THOMAS

Thomas Touch-Fire, 74 years old, of the once-proud
Seneca nation, the People of Stone --

LINDBERGH

Here, here!

THOMAS

Member of the Iroquois confederation --

LINDBERGH

Double here, here! Here, here, here, here!

THOMAS

Ben Franklin stole it --

LINDBERGH

I know.

THOMAS

-- to write the Constitution that then murdered us --

Thomas stops his "dancing."

THOMAS

How the mighty have fallen.

LINDBERGH

'Tis a sad world, indeed.

They drink.

INT. - DEEP ARBOR - DAY

An elderly woman has fallen. She cries out, but no nurse or aide is nearby. Several other RESIDENTS stand and look at her. One MAN cries because he is unable to help her up.

THOMAS (V.O.)

Usually have to drink this warm. It feels good to drink it so cold. What I actually want is just that.

LINDBERGH (V.O.)

What?

THOMAS (V.O.)

To feel this last coldness.

EXT. - BENCH - DAY

THOMAS tries to burp again but gets nothing.

LINDBERGH

Nice try.

Then, in a move that surprises Lindbergh, Thomas throws the bottle away -- a feeble throw, but definite nonetheless. It rolls away.

BOTTLE

The amber beer leaks into the dirt.

BENCH

In another move that surprises Lindbergh, Thomas stands -- shaky, bent, but defiant.

He shuffles to the beer bottle and, in a third surprising move, kicks it. Not hard, of course -- not much spring in the leg. But off it rolls, streaming its remaining beer into the dirt.

Lindbergh puts his bottle down.

LINDBERGH

Thomas --

Thomas turns on Lindbergh, a fierce look in his eyes.

THOMAS

This shell --

(indicating his own body)

-- this bag, is ridiculous.

LINDBERGH

Sit back --

THOMAS

Gases, slimes, squeals, splats, hisses, explosions --

LINDBERGH

Remember, two of those "bags" came together to make you.

THOMAS

(as statement)

That's been a plus?

LINDBERGH

I happen to think so. As does number one daughter.

Thomas dismissively turns and walks toward the water. Lindbergh gets up to follow, but at a little distance.

Thomas stops. Lindbergh stops. Thomas is listening to something inside his body. He unzips his fly to pee.

THOMAS

Well, you two like all those ancient meaningful tribal stories about Haweniyo [Great Spirit] mixing up some dirt with spit or piss or dried sperm or whatever --

DIRT

Thomas makes figures in the dirt with his piss -- a surprisingly large volume, given how old he is. The figures are quite elaborate.

THOMAS

Oops, first man. Oops, first woman.

LINDBERGH

Don't piss on your shoes.

THOMAS

You know what they were? The first leftovers. Afterthoughts!

LINDBERGH

And he's off.

THOMAS

Don't mock.

LINDBERGH

Not when you've got a head up -- and your dingleberry hanging out.

Thomas shakes himself dry, redeposits himself, zips up.

THOMAS

I expect that from an intact bastard like yourself.

INT. - DEEP ARBOR - DAY

A checkerboard, seen from overhead. Only the fingers of the two players can be seen. They move pieces, but with pauses between moves.

THOMAS (V.O.)

Here's God: "I breathe the breath of life into you" --

(Bronx cheer)
-- now get the fuck out of here! Dismissed! Dissed! Is that right? Dissed? Dissed! Into the world wit cha, ya clueless and flimsy beast! Ya brittle bastard! And while yer at it -- go get yerself conquered!

EXT. - BENCH - DAY

With the tip of one sneaker, Thomas rubs out his dirt piss-patterns, then peers off into the dappled light on the trees. He looks back down, sees the bottle, shuffles over to it, picks it up, turns to Lindbergh, holds it out to him.

THOMAS
It will be good to leave all of it.

Lindbergh walks to him, takes the bottle, empties it out.

LINDBERGH
The litany of despair still flows.

THOMAS
But -- today is different. Isn't it?

LINDBERGH
Yes it is.

Lindbergh walks back to the bench, puts the empty with the others.

THOMAS
It will be different today.

LINDBERGH
Yes it will, hahnii.

THOMAS
After today, you won't have to hear the litany any more.
Let's start.

Lindbergh steps up to Thomas and offers his arm. Thomas takes it.

They walk slowly onto the bridge. The sides of the bridge are tall.

The deep water slides easily underneath.

THOMAS

When I escape from there --

(indicating home)

-- it's to here. Water, stone arch -- slip out of this wreck and remember. Well, to start. Lift me over.

Thomas puts both his arms by his side, waits. Lindbergh does not move.

THOMAS

What are you doing?

LINDBERGH

I'm not doing anything.

THOMAS

That's not what you promised.

LINDBERGH

I know what I promised.

THOMAS

Then why aren't you keeping it?

LINDBERGH

Because I've promised something else.

THOMAS

Jesus, you thought about it!

LINDBERGH

You can hardly fault me.

THOMAS

I told you not to! Thinking makes cowards of us all!

LINDBERGH

I'm still not doing anything.

Thomas turns away in disgust. Lindbergh watches closely, not offended.

THOMAS

You betray me.

LINDBERGH

I'll admit it.

THOMAS

Like everyone else. Everything else.

Thomas tries to hoist himself over the side of the bridge but can't manage it because he's too short and weak.

Lindbergh walks over and puts a firm and gentle hand on him. Thomas stops but rounds on Lindbergh in real fury.

THOMAS

Why did your parents give you such a God-awful first name?

LINDBERGH

Take your hits.

THOMAS

Lind-bergh. Lind-burger --

LINDBERGH

Read 'em off.

THOMAS

Lind-boig, Lind-booger, Lind-bunghole --

LINDBERGH

(as if said a hundred times)

An uncle, mother's side, her favorite brother --

THOMAS

Lind-boozer, Lind-bugger --

LINDBERGH

For Charles Lindbergh --

THOMAS

Lind-burp, Lind-barf --

LINDBERGH

The uncle was hatched the year Charles crossed the pond.
C'mon, more.

THOMAS

Fly, fly away at the least little storm!

LINDBERGH

I'm bruising up nicely.

THOMAS

You promised!

LINDBERGH

I promised, yes -- I promised to help you.

THOMAS

So help me!

LINDBERGH

Subject to interpretation.

THOMAS

Interpretation! Fuck!

Thomas, fueled by his anger, moves fiercely as he speaks.

THOMAS

I have been at 27,000 sunrises. I don't know how many I've really noticed. But this sunrise -- this one, this one --

LINDBERGH

Because --

THOMAS

Because I have decided.

LINDBERGH

Thomas --

INT. - DEEP ARBOR - DAY

The checkerboard, seen from overhead. The fingers have moved pieces, and a red jumps a black. A pause, a move, a pause, a move.

THOMAS (V.O.)

Just shut up! The litany? I hear it, I smell it, every day. Every subtraction. You should sit in the rec room of the Deep Arbor Retirement Community sometime -- you'd be sore amazed at the noises and smells. Corruption! Decay!

EXT. - BRIDGE - DAY

THOMAS

There comes a time when, héawak [my son] -- and you know it is over: No more reservation! And to need a fellow bastard like you to help me get over this wall, something I could have flown over! I can't get over it myself!

Thomas puts out his hand.

THOMAS

Now do your fucking part.

Lindbergh comes to Thomas and, in one smooth motion, picks up him.

THOMAS

Go.

LINDBERGH

All right.

But instead of dumping him over the wall into the water, Lindbergh carries him back toward the bench.

THOMAS

No! No! No!

Feeble blows, of no consequence. Lindbergh firmly sits him down. Thomas stands up.

THOMAS

Goddamn you!

Lindbergh picks up a good-sized stick from the ground, waves it like a wand, punches it forward like a rapier, etc.

LINDBERGH
En garde!

THOMAS
No!

LINDBERGH
Sit down.

THOMAS
I would kill you if I could.

LINDBERGH
I believe you believe that.

Thomas picks up an empty and makes to throw it. Lindbergh takes up a batter's stance.

LINDBERGH
Right down the middle.
(pointing)
Right field, upper deck.

Thomas does throw it but not very hard. Lindbergh easily catches it.

LINDBERGH
Strike three.

THOMAS
I want out.

LINDBERGH
No you don't.

Fake-tosses the bottle to Thomas, who reacts to catch it. Having gotten his attention, Lindbergh very softly tosses the bottle back to Thomas, who catches, then drops it.

LINDBERGH
If you had wanted out so bad, you could have just walked
into the river.

Lindbergh walks right to the spot.

LINDBERGH

Right around there. Or there. Then float out to the ocean, Thomas Touch-Fire Hamlet's Ophelia bobbing like a fishing bob. You didn't need me.

Lindbergh walks up to Thomas.

LINDBERGH

But here you wanted me. Obvious question, then, Thomas. Number one daughter and I figured it out, so so can you. C'mon, what would that question be?

THOMAS

I want out.

LINDBERGH

And I -- we -- number one and I -- don't want you out.

THOMAS

You don't get to say.

Lindbergh does a little sloppy soft shoe holding the stick, somewhat to "Tea for Two."

LINDBERGH

"No -- more talk -- of ending -- things / Now -- let's talk -- of mending -- things."

Lindbergh whirrs the stick over his head, and subtly but definitely the light and air change, as if the stick and Lindbergh are changing the environment around them.

LINDBERGH

Raise high the roofbeam, carpenter. Now comes the new generation. Sounding prophetic enough, Thomas? Getting into that storyteller zone? Because that's right where we are at the moment. Now, listen!

Thomas, SOUNDING more brave than he feels, talks back to Lindbergh.

THOMAS

Why should I?

LINDBERGH

Listen!

Lindbergh whirrs the stick faster and faster until he slams it down with thunder into the earth. The trees, the wind, the sky, the TRILL of the water -- all change as if to pay attention to the story teller.

INT. - DEEP ARBOR - DAY

As Lindbergh speaks, various elderly men and women look up and pay attention, as if they, too, have caught wind of the changes around them.

LINDBERGH (V.O.)

Haweniyo, the Great One, decided that something very important was missing in the world he'd made.

EXT. - RIVERSIDE - DAY

THOMAS

I know this story.

LINDBERGH

Too quick on the draw. Old version you know -- but now new generation, the re-generation, Thomas. Haweniyo decided that something was missing in the world he'd made. What comes next?

Thomas sits on the bench, petulant.

THOMAS

I don't want to.

Lindbergh pokes his pockets with the stick.

LINDBERGH

You have to give something to the teller for the story.

Bats the stick away.

THOMAS

No.

LINDBERGH

Contribute, damn it!

Thomas stares Lindbergh straight in the eye, and Lindbergh stares straight back.

LINDBERGH

Contribute.

INT. - DEEP ARBOR - DAY

An elderly woman stares at her quivering hand holding a glass of water, and for a moment, the quivering stops.

LINDBERGH (V.O.)

Be with your powerful voice again!

EXT. - RIVERSIDE - DAY

Again, they stare at one another. Thomas gestures, and Lindbergh whirls the branch once, then slams it down.

THOMAS

He created a man and a boy.

LINDBERGH

Good.

THOMAS

"Walk like human beings," he told them, and they were perfect. They followed Haweniyo down to the river, where he gave them speech.

LINDBERGH

Like us, palavering. C'mon.

Thomas, his face square to Lindbergh's, stands, and his body change subtly but obviously, picking up power as he spills out the words.

THOMAS

"What state are we in?"

LINDBERGH

"This is life," said Haweniyo . "Before, you were mud."

THOMAS

"Now, you live." From dust and shit --

Lindbergh hands Thomas one end of the stick, which he takes.

LINDBERGH

"When we were mud, were we alive?" Come on, Thomas.

Holding the end of the stick, they slowly circle.

THOMAS

"No."

LINDBERGH

"What is that called?"

THOMAS

"Death."

LINDBERGH

"Will we be alive always?" Thomas.

THOMAS

Haweniyo pondered.

LINDBERGH

"I didn't think about that. Let's decide it right now. Here's a chip of bear dung. If it floats, then people will die and come back to life four days later."

THOMAS

"No."

LINDBERGH

"No" said the man in his brutal innocence.

THOMAS

"The chip will dissolve in the water. I'll throw this stone, which will not melt."

INT. - DEEP ARBOR - DAY

An aquarium. Colored stones, kicked up by the bubbling of the filter, float up, then sink.

THOMAS (V.O.)

"If it floats, we'll live forever. If it sinks, then we'll die."

EXT. - RIVERSIDE - DAY

LINDBERGH

He didn't know about stones and water, having only been alive for a few hours.

Lindbergh stops.

LINDBERGH

Go ahead.

Thomas, also stopped, looks around his feet and picks up a stone.

THOMAS

He threw the stone.

LINDBERGH

Yes.

Thomas, with more vigor than might be expected, throws the stone toward the river.

STONE

The sun glints off the stone as it flies through the air.

THOMAS (V.O.)

Haweniyo watched it flash in the sun, and he could have had Raven come down and snatch it away.

RIVERSIDE

They both watch it hit the water.

THOMAS

But he let it fall --

LINDBERGH

Stop.

Thomas gazes at where the stone entered the water.

INT. - DEEP ARBOR - DAY

One by one, the heads of the elderly that had lifted at the seeming change in the air droop back, the expectation defeated.

EXT. - RIVERSIDE - DAY

LINDBERGH

Stop.

THOMAS

You can't --

LINDBERGH

Rewind. New generation.

THOMAS

The stone falls, we die -- that's the story.

LINDBERGH

We have more choices than you dream of, Thomas.

Lindbergh points with the stick to the bench.

LINDBERGH

Sit.

THOMAS

I'm not a fucking dog.

LINDBERGH

Sit, and be sore amazed.

Lindbergh flicks Thomas' pockets with the stick.

LINDBERGH

Payment, remember? Sit and be sore amazed.

Thomas makes it back to the bench, suddenly very tired, glad of having the place to rest, though the straightness of his spine shows that he has no intention of letting Thomas know how relieved he feels.

Lindbergh whirls the stick around again, and again it is as if his actions change the local climate around them: light dapples, the river churns, the wind prods and lifts.

LINDBERGH

Listen: Haweniyo with a bam of his cane summoned Raven, Gágga, to catch the stone. Which Raven did, and brought the stone to Haweniyo, who gave it to the man and said, "Take more time to learn." Then the man tossed the stone to his son and said, "You hold on to the future."

THOMAS

No, no, no! Haweniyo lets it sink because that's how it has to be!

LINDBERGH

No it doesn't.

THOMAS

"You made a choice there," said Haweniyo. "Now nothing can be done about it. Now people will die." That's how it ends!

LINDBERGH

The son has the stone, Thomas. And, yes, at some point he must throw it, and, yes, it will sink, and Raven will not always catch it.

Lindbergh kneels by the bench.

LINDBERGH

But, Thomas Touch-Fire, there are an infinite number of ways, and an infinite number of appointed times, to throw it.

Seeming to speak against his will, but unable to stop the words.

THOMAS

And you -- you hold the stone.

Lindbergh steps back and swings like a batter.

LINDBERGH

Right here in my pocket.

Thomas, unable to speak, simply sits there. Lindbergh joins him on the bench.

LINDBERGH

You know I love you. That we love you. We have watched you be a restless ghost for so long -- a stone in mid-flight, that's what you were --

THOMAS

Are.

LINDBERGH

Lusting for the water --

THOMAS

No more gravity on my bones.

LINDBERGH

And life tasting like warm beer!

THOMAS

These knees push, gravity -- pulls -- down --

LINDBERGH

Thomas Touch-Fire, you are not in mid-arc any longer.

THOMAS

What do you mean?

A few soft shoe steps, ending with a button.

LINDBERGH

Raven, at your service.

INT. - DEEP ARBOR - DAY

The checkerboard. One hand, moving a king, leaps and leaps the other's pieces until the board is swept clean.

LINDBERGH (V.O.)

You are coming home, hahnii, to stay with us.

EXT. - BENCH - DAY

THOMAS

You can't afford that!

LINDBERGH

We will.

THOMAS

You can't!

Lindbergh smiles.

THOMAS

Really?

LINDBERGH

Number one daughter is getting the papers ready right now.

THOMAS

Can I drink beer?

LINDBERGH

We'll graduate you from macrobrew to microbrew.

Pointing to the river and bridge with the stick.

LINDBERGH

I would never have done it, you know. Like Anchises with Aeneas, I would have strapped you to my back.

Thomas stares at Lindbergh, then looks at the river. He stands.

THOMAS

Pick me up. Pick me up.

Thomas puts up his arms, just like a child would do, and Lindbergh cradles Thomas easily.

THOMAS

Bring me there. Hold me over the water, like you would have.

LINDBERGH

Why?

THOMAS

Because I need to remember.

LINDBERGH

What?

THOMAS

Just do it.

BRIDGE

Lindbergh, without much effort, holds him.

THOMAS

Do you know what the stone said to the man, but the man didn't hear?

LINDBERGH

No.

THOMAS

"I do not want to leave your hand and sink in darkness and be alone. Bring me back with you." Bring me back.

LINDBERGH

(laughing)

You sure?

THOMAS

Bring me back!

Lindbergh stands him upright on the bridge.

THOMAS

Thank you, Raven.

LINDBERGH

You have some papers to sign.

Thomas puts his arm through Lindbergh's.

THOMAS

What's a microbrew?

They walk to the bench.

LINDBERGH

I'll line 'em up for you, and we can try 'em all!

THOMAS

I could live for another 20 years.

LINDBERGH

Take us that long to drink 'em all.

THOMAS

Good.

Lindbergh puts the empties into the cooler, then lifts the cooler by the handle.

Arm in arm they walk out of the park across the wide lawn up to the main building. Their footsteps leave a darker green behind them as they move through the dew on the early morning grass.

FADE OUT

I Know What I Did Not Know

FADE IN

INTERIOR - DAY - GRITTY SALOON IN CALI, COLOMBIA

Light leaks through some covered-over windows. The air fogs with smoke and dust and haze. The bar's raised rim shows the divots of the thousands of forearms that have rested on it; the brass foot rail gleams where the thousands of boot soles have polished it.

The face of MATEO, the bartender, resembles a fleshed-out version of the bar.

A MAN PLAYS a guitar somewhere in the background.

AT THE TABLE

ENRIQUE, age indeterminate but not young, drinks rum while he smokes. A writing pad sits in front of him, the ashtray and rum bottle not far away, surrounded by crumpled papers. The table is covered by a torn plastic tablecloth of red and white squares.

HAND

His hand grips a pencil, poised over a blank sheet of paper.

SHEET OF PAPER

Enrique marks the paper, then scratches out what he's made. Write, delete. Write, delete. The cross-outs knife through the ruled lines of the page.

AT THE TABLE

He crushes out the cigarette, exhales, leans back, stretches (a little GROAN, maybe), stares at the paper, papers. He drains the glass, then grabs the bottle to pour. Nothing.

BOTTLE ON TABLETOP

The pencil tap, tap, taps against the empty bottle. The GUITARIST appears through the bottle, distorted.

Wait. Wait. The SOUND of scuffed boots on a wooden floor.

TABLETOP

Mateo's right hand, veined, with "AMOR" tattooed across the knuckles, grabs the empty bottle while his left hand, veined, with "ODIO" tattooed across the knuckles, puts a full bottle on the table. In between the taking of one and the placing of the other, the guitarist comes out of focus into focus then out of focus again.

The pencil taps against the new bottle. The guitarist now looks more liquid. The SCUFFING BOOTS move away.

The bottle tips, its lip CLIPPING the rim of the glass, and out pours the waited-for rum.

INTERIOR - DAY - ENTRANCE TO THE BAR

ENRIQUE'S POV

ELENA edges in, framed by sunlight. She wears a workman's clothes, down to the gnarled leather boots. She clutches a worker's cap her hands, sweat-stained and limp.

Enrique watches her go to the bar and speak to the bartender. The bartender points in Enrique's direction. Elena walks to Enrique's table.

The guitar PLAYS under their words.

INTERIOR - DAY - ENRIQUE'S TABLE

ELENA

Hello.

ENRIQUE

Welcome. This is where I retire for my inspiration.

ELENA

Rough day.

ENRIQUE

It's early.

ELENA

It's lunchtime.

ENRIQUE

Maybe I haven't drunk enough yet. I will cure that. And you are --

ELENA

Elena.

ENRIQUE

What do you do to keep body and spirit together?

ELENA

A mason -- a bricklayer --

ENRIQUE

I know what a mason is.

Enrique leans to one side and shouts to the BARTENDER.

ENRIQUE

Hey, Mateo.

INTERIOR - DAY - BAR

MATEO, with buzz cut and wearing a dirty cotton collarless shirt, leans back against the ranks of bottles, tattooed arms crossed. He lifts his chin to indicate that he has heard Enrique.

ENRIQUE (OFF CAMERA)

Do you know what she does for a living?

MATEO

She lays bricks.

MATEO points with his chin.

MATEO

Across the street.

ENRIQUE (OFF CAMERA)

Is she good?

MATEO

A good lay?

MATEO shrugs his shoulders.

MATEO

Find out yourself.

INTERIOR - DAY - ENRIQUE'S TABLE

ENRIQUE

How would he know this about you?

ELENA

I drink here after work.

ENRIQUE

So that's how you know I'm here. Such a small world.

ELENA

You've got another question -- I can see it in your face.

ENRIQUE

Amazing you can see anything in here --

ELENA

Go on.

ENRIQUE

A woman who works with bricks -- rare. You have to sit down because you have to tell me more. A second glass?

Elena sits. The GUITAR weaves its way through the dim air.

ELENA

No -- my bricks have to be straight.

ENRIQUE

I can appreciate that. So.

ELENA

My father gave me this skill so I could escape the kitchen.

ENRIQUE

An interesting father --

ELENA

My father had a heart.

ENRIQUE

Maybe he should be in my next play. So what does a mason with such a father want from a playwright?

TABLETOP

Elena's hat lands on the table. Her hands arrange the crumpled papers as if she were lining up brick.

ELENA (OFF-CAMERA)

I saw your play the other night. A la diestra de Dios Padre.

Elena's hands move with precision.

ENRIQUE'S TABLE

Enrique picks up the hat, shakes it open, looks inside.

ENRIQUE

Good -- no brick. I don't need a review. So at least you didn't hate it.

ELENA

I left better than when I walked in.

ENRIQUE

So the mason loves the arts.

Enrique raises his glass.

ENRIQUE

You're who we want in our seats.

He leans forward to peer at Elena.

ENRIQUE

But there's something else.

ELENA

In your play -- you know how to talk about -- how one person can feel about another person and say what they feel -- it was true, how you had them say it.

ENRIQUE

Thank you. But there is something else.

ELENA

I am asking you to write a letter for me.

ENRIQUE

For whom?

ELENA

For her.

INTERIOR - DAY - GUITARIST

The guitarist's hands glide across the scuffed fretwork and scarred body, and the music winds through the air until he ends the song with a single string plucked.

INTERIOR - DAY - ENRIQUE'S TABLE

The guitarist starts another song.

ENRIQUE

For her.

ELENA

I can write -- I'm not illiterate.

ENRIQUE

Your father wouldn't let you. What would this letter say?

ELENA

If I knew, I wouldn't come ask you to write it. I can pay.

ENRIQUE

You've seen the play -- no need.

Elena gestures for the glass. Enrique gives it to her, and she downs the contents.

ELENA

This is terrible.

ENRIQUE

Perhaps that accounts for my lack of inspiration.

TABLETOP

A few bills land on the table. The SCRAPE of a chair as it moves back.

The guitarist plays on.

ENRIQUE'S TABLE

ELENA

Buy better and write the letter for me.

ENRIQUE

I haven't said I would.

ELENA

Why would you say no?

ENRIQUE

It's not the kind of thing I usually write.

ELENA

Maybe you need some new angles.

ENRIQUE

Some information, then.

ELENA

Use your imagination.

ENRIQUE'S POV

Enrique watches Elena walk to the bar. He sees her gesture to Mateo, who leans in to her. She says something. Mateo nods, goes back to his lean against the shelves, arms crossed.

Elena disappears into the light as she walks through the entrance.

ENRIQUE'S TABLE

Mateo stands at the table, arms crossed over his dirty cotton collarless shirt, his hand tattoos, AMOR and ODIO, front and center.

Enrique notices Mateo but doesn't speak. Mateo waits.

Enrique fans out the bills, picks them up, and looks at Mateo.

ENRIQUE

I would like to request an upgrade.

Mateo takes the bills, pivots, and leaves.

Enrique takes the paper discards and, like Elena, lines them up as if they were brick. Thinking, thinking, thinking.

A BARMAID enters: apron on, cloth over her shoulder, bottle in hand.

ENRIQUE

Where's Mateo?

Barmaid jerks her head back. Enrique looks around her to see Mateo at his usual station. He pulls back.

Enrique hands her the bills. Barmaid hands him the bottle and waits.

BARMAID

Mateo says you have a question.

ENRIQUE

I do.

BARMAID

You always have questions.

ENRIQUE

Life is questions.

BARMAID

Change is mine?

ENRIQUE

Keep away.

Barmaid pulls out the chair and sits.

BARMAID

Then you can ask.

ENRIQUE

If a woman loves a woman --

BARMAID

"If"?

ENRIQUE

When?

BARMAID

Silly man.

ENRIQUE

All right, so when a woman loves a woman -- what does one say to the other to say that?

BARMAID

And why would you think I'd know?

ENRIQUE

It's just a question, unless, of course, you do know, then it's a consultation.

BARMAID

When a man loves a man -- what does one say to the other to say that? Eh? Think! You already know! When a person embraces the dog -- when the one dying grips the priest's hand -- the morning kiss on the forehead --

Barmaid raps her knuckles on the top of his head -- but gently.

BARMAID

Just use that, all right? It's the best of all your parts. Enjoy.

Barmaid leaves. Guitar plays on.

Enrique opens the new bottle, pours for himself, lights a cigarette, muses, then clears the papers on the table, picks up the pencil, and writes, smoking and drinking as he does so.

The guitar UNDERSCORES.

INTERIOR - DAY - PASSAGE OF TIME

TABLETOP

What light is in the room passes slips along the glass of the bottle. As it does, the liquid level in the bottle lowers, and Enrique's hand, distorted by the glass and the liquid, moves across the paper.

INTERIOR - DAY - NOON - DOORWAY

Elena stands in the light.

BAR

Mateo looks at Elena, then at Enrique, reading over what he has written. Mateo jerks his head at Elena, indicating she can come in.

INTERIOR - DAY - TABLE

Enrique looks up to see Elena.

ENRIQUE

How are your bricks?

ELENA

Getting laid. And yours?

Enrique pours himself a shot and spins the pad of paper to face Elena.

ENRIQUE

You tell me.

Elena throws her cap on the table, sits, picks up the pad, reads.

The guitar UNDERSCORES.

As she reads, they look at each other, nod, perhaps giggle a bit -- he gives her an inquisitive "eh?", she returns with a "hmm" -- full non-verbal communication, thoroughly enjoyed.

Elena takes Enrique's glass, downs what's in it, leans back in her chair.

ELENA

I didn't know that that was what I wanted to say. But it is what I want to say.

ENRIQUE

It will do?

ELENA

Up to her. It does for me.

ENRIQUE

I think it was the new rum.

ELENA

Maybe -- maybe not.

Enrique leans into Elena. She faces him back.

He dips his fingers into the rum and traces them over her lips. Then he kisses her. She kisses him back. That's all they do -- kiss. Not embrace, not caress -- just kiss. Once.

ENRIQUE

I think it was "maybe not" about the new rum.

ELENA

Pleasure is as pleasure does.

ENRIQUE

I should apologize.

ELENA

But you won't.

ENRIQUE

No.

ELENA

Good. You shouldn't.

Elena carefully folds the sheet of paper into quarters and slips it into a pocket.

ENRIQUE

Your father?

ELENA

He's always known.

ENRIQUE

Then he's going to make an appearance in whatever plays are coming up. Straight bricks are hard to come by these days.

Elena stands. She takes the pencil and writes something on the pad of paper.

Enrique looks up, catches the eye of Mateo at the bar, who has been watching them.

BAR

Mateo holds out both his fists, displaying AMOR and ODIO.

TABLE

Elena lays the pencil on the pad. She dips her fingers in the rum and flings drops at him as she "blesses" him. Elena leaves. Enrique watches her disappear into the light.

Enrique reads what she has written and LAUGHS out loud, really loud, from the belly. He dips his fingers in the rum and makes the sign of the cross.

ENRIQUE

Another use for the right hand of Our Father!

Still laughing, he downs the rest of the glass of rum and begins writing, writing, writing, writing his new plays from the end of the phrasing that ELENA has given him.

The guitar PLAYS and the sun crosses the sky.

FADE OUT

About Block & Tackle Productions

After more than a decade of projects together, Michael Bettencourt and Elfin Frederick Vogel joined forces to form Block & Tackle Productions. In addition to producing Michael's plays with Elfin directing, B&T Productions also looks to collaborate with other playwrights and directors and explore different media for dramatic narrative, such as live-streaming theatrical productions, recording radio-play podcasts, and creating short films.

Whichever project B&T Productions pursues, it will create theatre narratives focused on our present times and where every part of the production - design (set, lighting, sound, media), performance, script, the brand of beer sold in the lobby, and the pre-show music - relates to and nourishes every other part. As often as possible, B&T Productions will do this in collaboration or conjunction with like-minded theatre-makers.

Elfin Frederick Vogel (Producer/Director) -- Elfin has directed over thirty productions in New York City and regional theatres, from classical plays (among others, *Othello*, *As You Like It*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Measure for Measure*, *All's Well That Ends Well*, *Three Sisters*, *The Cherry Orchard*) to 20th-century plays (*Six Characters in Search of an Author*, *The Real Thing*, *Exit the King*) and new plays, among them *Only the Dead Know Brooklyn*, *Excerpts from the Lost Letters of Hester Prynne*, *No Great Loss*, *Four Plays*, *The Sin Eater* (all by Michael Bettencourt), and *Moral and Political Lessons on "Wyoming"* and *Reckless Abandon* (by Vincent Sessa).

Michael Bettencourt (Producer/Writer) -- Michael is an award-winning playwright and screenwriter. As always, special thanks to María Beatriz. All his work can be seen at www.m-bettencourt.com

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PRODUCTIONS

www.blockandtackleproductions.com

