THE CHILDREN OF THE ELVI

By Constance Congdon

*PREMISE: What would happen if the patriarchy were overthrown by a matriarchy?*

{HOW THIS PLAY CAME TO BE, AND A DEDICATION, SORT OF: I read RIDDLEY WALKER by Russell Hoban and woke up to write the next morning, the voices of my Kentucky Scots-Irish family in my ears and, then, on the page. The courage to continue: Mac Wellman, fellow confabulator as well as my belief that playwriting is frequently transcription}

This play received its first and only professional production at Key City Public Theater in Port Townsend, WA, directed by Denise Winter in 2007.

This draft 2012.

AGENT: SETH GLEWEN, THE GERSH AGENCY, 212 997 1818[Scene 1. REDMOND is sleepless and far from his bed. It's just about sunrise, at the family compound. He speaks to the sun. Further into the compound is RAINY, a young girl, standing, with MAMA, an aging warrior, clinging to her leg. MAMA stares out, alert, then starts to nod off. RAINY shakes her leg and MAMA wakes up]

REDMOND

Oh come on, reveal yourself, you oozing red ball of hyper gas. Another ignorant night has passed and Redmond is still here. And referring to himself in the third person. Singular. For that is what he is. And will remain. Although his splooj is much prized.

RAINY

[RAINY has to shake her leg again to wake up MAMA]

*You* come on, Redmond. It be your turn to keep her awake. I’m gonna be sportin’ a contusion tattoo of Mama’s fingers on my ankle. And stop braggin about your splooj.

REDMOND

Tribes of them out there want to harvest my reproductive fluids Cold metal sucking contraptions--I've seen them glint in the sun. How I will lose my virginity. “Get away from me with that thing! Aghh! Woaa! Uhn.”“Mama, is it supposed to be bright red like this? It hurts to micturate

RAINY

You are no virgin, Redmond.

REDMOND

Self-manipulation does not fulfill the basic requirement-event to qualify a person as not a virgin. If the only “date” you’ve had was with yourself, then your viginity is intact. If someone asks to meet your lover and you show them your hand, your virginity is intact.

If you notice your hand wearing tight leather gloves, black preferably, and pumping up with one of those hand exercisers or if your hand is wearing make-up, sporting a manicure, then it’s seeing someone else. But you’re still a virgin.

RAINY

What;’s a “date”? Oh, it makes no nevermind. Let it be. We’re all virgins—me, you, Beartha--

REDMOND

Beartha is strangely silent. Where is her night terrors? She’s had them forever. Our mater caught then from her. My so humble as to be ingratiating opinion.

[CHET, an android, enters, holding a container of water, hands it to RAINY—she takes a sip]

CHET

[to REDMOND]

Greetings. son. A sequence of comforting “oo” sounds. To you. Boo. Coo. Doo. Doubled. Boo-boo, Coo-coo, doo-doo, foo-foo, goo-goo, hoo-hoo, Joo-joo, Koo, again, loo-loo, moo-moo, noo-noo, oo-oo, poo-poo, kew-kew, roo-roo, soo-soo, too-too, voo-voo, woo-woo, zoo-zoo. There. There. Pat—pat.

REDMOND

Cease And Desist, you unearthly clump of electro-bunk!!

CHET

Emotion plus high volume equals youthful rebellion.

I am cool with that.

Yo.

RAINY

You brought me the good water?

[RAINY takes another sip]

Sweet and clean. Mama’s stash? You must want something bad. Me?

CHET

Non-deteriorated data.

RAINY

Got no data that’s undeteriorated. Don’t even have truth. Only what I can conjure—memory or poetry. And what do you want with truth, anyway. No hexadecimals. No on or off.

CHET

Chet is the father.

RAINY

Chet is not the father. Listen to your brain.

CHET

Motherboard.

REDMOND

And……?

[CHET doesn’t get it]

See. Proof positive you’re not our dad. NO SENSE OF IRONY. “Mother”? Board? Hellooooooo?

CHET

Hello, Son.

REDMOND

It’s pathetic—this brain—excuse me—motherboard washing she has done on you.

[hears something]

What? Attende? Can you hear that, Rainy?

[gull sounds]

RAINY

Sea birds. But no sea. Just a rumor. A rumor of seas.

REDMOND

Them.

[Suddenly, sound from the dark place beyond is heard--of a high-pitched gull cry, but made by a human.]

REDMOND

My spunk is mine!!!

[To them]

You Amazonian wannabee splooj pirates! You will never touch me!

[More of these human “gull sounds”, and more insistent, too. This scares him--they're too close].

REDMOND

Excrement!

[REDMOND exits quickly]

RAINY

I sincerely hope that all that is a ruse to get out of Mama-sitting. ‘Cause if he believes all that, we’ve lost another one. I say “we” meaning you and me, Chet.

[looks into his eyes]

I swear there’s something in there that’s human and sensible. ‘Cause if there ain’t, then I am one sad, solitary piece of flesh. And I may as well fling myself into the big hole and let red snake have me, if I ain’t burnt to a crisp on the way down. We be the same age, Chet. We could be close and solace for each other.

CHET

“Age?” Chet has a warranty. The second that expires, he will require an upgrade And all his programming will stop running due to compatibility issues. He will, no doubt, need a re-imaging. And more RAM.

RAINY

Do you remember coming here?

CHET

Chet has always been here. This is his location. He is the father.

RAINY

Because there’s gots to be other places on account of we came from somewhere. And you are not the father or any father and you are not my father. Mama! How could you do this to him?

Is she awake? She’d better be! MAMA!

[MAMA answers by opening her mouth widely and growling “AHHHH”]

Are her eyes open?

CHET

Her eyes are open so she can see Chet.

RAINY

Oh, Chet. It’s you that can’t see.

CHET

Chet has concerns about his love object. How can the Beloved Preceptor still hold on so hard? Why won't she let go for once?

RAINY

Our dad used to say that.

CHET

No, I didn’t;

RAINY

You see? This could be a moment—you using the first-person singular and all that. If what you spoke wasn’t so dead wrong and deluded. Mama holds on because she fears all this near-time dreaming she be doing.

CHET

Chet's understanding is that the Preceptor is afraid of nothing. Chet, for example, fears undisciplined voltage which happens with the rare precipitation event. Chet's Beloved fears nothing and sleeps with her eyes open to see Chet.

RAINY

Can't you tell when she's been in your—alright, ***files***, whatever, mucking about?

CHET

Chet is ever-vigilant.

RAINY

She’s gone boop shooby!! Sorry, Mama. She thinks she's got the gift of prophecy.

CHET

Probability.

RAINY

*Prophecy,* Chet! Besides, what difference do it make she only *thinks* she's got it!

CHET

Increases in amperage do not validate the content of any vocal emission. No yelling at Daddy.

RAINY

Chet!! Last green moon period, you thought you were a back-hoe. And four moontime periods before, a toaster! And before that—OWWWW! Mama! Stop squeezing—you done squoze out most of the blood already! Grab the other ankle.

[RAINY undoes MAMA’S grip and reattaches her to RAINY’S other ankle. RAINY finishes the last drop of the good water, then hands the container back to CHET. He puts it down and looks at her, expectantly, ready to listen.]

RAINY

All right. Bribe accepted but unnecessary. Here’s the proof you are NOT the father, at least of me. Or any of us—don’t want to get your hopes up. It were a dark and stormy night and Mama wanted to be with child bad. She loved the throwing up with the sunrise--it were a way to cover up the hangover. She loved being fat with no questions asked. She loved having a reason to not do or think but just to be. Action had been her lover and her undoing. Trying to prove that she could be King. It were hard and I appreciate that. So she worked me dad up and then said, "I can't stand ye. I'll be in my quarters." So me dad did what he could and put it in his helmet--we was at war, of course--and left it outside her tent. Well, it rained, but warm rain, and the little mud doggies kept swimming. Me dad wanted me to be born, so he sent mom a *telepathetic* message--"look for me outside." Well, Mama always paid more attention to messages in her own head than anything she got through her ears, so she rose up from her bed where she had been pining, so she says, for the loss of her love of me dad, and the potential of having his seed so that all the children will be matched, like some ammunition won't fit in some guns but in others it will. She poked her head out the tent flap to find the helmet--knew immediately what it was and administered it to herself with a funnel she made from a map of the countryside with current troop movements in red. Consequently, my complexion was quite pink, but I was called Rainy on account of half of me lived for a while in warm rain before I was sliding, wild, toward the big, white planet that was my Home and then my Self.

[Beat]

CHET

Factoids are slippery things like vaseline. Vaseline is an ineffective lubricant--for Chet, although gelatinous substances are useful, in the joints. A proper seal is essential, after assembly. Chet received that.

RAINY

You saying no memory be right, then?

CHET

Self is motherboard for flesh wiring. Memory is flesh. Facts are hexadecimals and different. Facts are not flesh. Flesh can be on and off simultaneously. This is wrong and not to be trusted.

RAINY

Yet I be here. And we be the same age.

CHET

Time is analog. Flesh is analog. Time is human.

RAINY

But to be our pater, you must be human.

CHET

Chet's syllogism is faultless. Your mater is Chet's beloved--so Chet is The Father.

RAINY

Chet. You don't need to be our father for us to keep you around! Besides, there's no one to give you to. You know it's only raggedy bands of women looking for my bro. Poor Redmond, the last of his gender and Mama won't let him out to spread his Y bubbles everywhere. There hasn't been a caravan in four ertines. Shelf life on the victuals be ticking away. It's more than worrisome.

CHET

Chet is male.

RAINY

*Chet, do you got boy jelly? If’n you do, I wants to hear it because this race done been run.* Redmond's my brother--no copulation there or I be popping out monsters. More monstrous than any of us, even the Matriarch, which be as monstrous as this sorry world get and still call it human.

CHET

Chet finds it impossible to integrate criticism of his Beloved into his information platform. In fact, such fraudulent material is disruptive to his temporal memory cache, making it impossible to down or upload further data.

RAINY

And why is that? Who programmed you? You'd think a walking computer could put two and two together!

CHET

Chet is glad The Beloved Preceptor is on power-conservation mode and cannot receive this disordering data.

RAINY

[to MAMA]

Bad old night nearly done for. Sunrise, in a minim.

[We hear a woman's scream offstage, then the racket of her trying to kill something that eludes her]

And that's how I reckon dawn time--a scream to start each day.

[Offstage--the frantic clatter of a metal folding chair being slammed on the ground]

Wake up, Beartha! Chet, you go. It's your turn.

[CHET exits]

CHET

[to BEARTHA, offstage]

Beartha!! Cancel this sequence!!

RAINY

[to MAMA]

It's a magic mirror--you and Beartha. I know I'm your favorite, but she may as well be your replicant. Except she do sleep. But like a time-bomb--the sulfuric and nitro of her fears all oozed together in the glycerin of her stupidness. A little tremor from the earth and "wham"! She's armed and nightmare-walking.

CHET

[offstage]

Now relinquish the chair to Daddy. It belongs to your male sibling.

[Sound of chair hitting Chet--one big slam]

That is sufficient!

[CHET re-enters with a destroyed metal folding chair]

Some day she'll break Chet's superficies or sever something and then where will Chet be?

[REDMOND enters]

REDMOND

I heard screaming. Has Her Supremeness had her usual harrowing night-fantasy?Are we going to war? No, everyone's DEAD. Then what shall we do? With all our AGGRESSION? Oh, here's a innovative idea. LET'S TORTURE EACH OTHER!!!

CHET

[refering to MAMA]

The Beloved Preceptor is on re-charge. I await her re-booting.

REDMOND

[to CHET]

She's human, you big metallic container of discarded electro-bunk. She does not re-boot. Besides, re-booting is re-START!! And with HUMANS that would mean resurrection! And THAT is cosmically frightening!!

[notices the chair]

Is this my chair?!

This is /was the last folding chair in the world!

RAINY

[to REDMOND]

Stop with the pity party. I've been stuck here since Half-Night. With Mama.

REDMOND

[about the destroyed chair]

I don't blame you, Rain. I'll just stand for the rest of my life. It's a minor thing for the only male heir to this House of Transcendent Belligerence.

And so it came to pass, that after years of war, the children of the Elvi feared only the slumber of their female progenitor, the arrival of Morpheus, her jive-talking lover who makes her think what she dreams will actually come true. Isn't that just the least bit pathetic?

[Throws the destroyed chair]

CHET

Wrath—a glitch in all analog systems.

REDMOND

[to CHET]

You are NOT MY FATHER!!!!

[REDMOND exits]

MAMA

[choking her way out of the dream]

Ach! Ick! Ulk!

Rainy!

RAINY

Here, Mama. What's wrong?

MAMA

Tiny hands! Around my throat! It’s a he. It’s an infant and it’s trying to kill me!

RAINY

[Looks into her eyes]

Oh no! You been dreaming.

[about the area in front of MAMA'S eyes]

After-image way out here--whoa.

[RAINY waves her hand in front of MAMA's eyes, then shakes her hand, as if trying to get something sticky off of it]

MAMA

Light-webs. Hypothalmus fog-stuff. Cold front coming in, soon to collide with El Niño. Stay off the highway.

CHET

A storm?

MAMA

Oh man oh man. Why did you let me sleep?!

RAINY

No! Your eyes be wide open the whole time!

MAMA

[about the dream]

All the more reason to believe what I saw, then. Shit. Dammit.

CHET

Chet is here and primed for interface.

MAMA

I saw him.

CHET

Yes, he is here. Hello, my love.

MAMA

Not you.

RAINY

Father?

MAMA

The sun was in my eyes--made a spikey halo around his head, his face one dark oval void. I could feel his fingers around my neck--his thumbs right here. I fought him--I fought him, but he took my voice away.

RAINY

Who?

MAMA

And young, young, young.

CHET

Of whom are you speaking, Cara Mia?

MAMA

My apocalypse!!

RAINY

How could all that happen--you never let go of my ankle.

MAMA

Dream came anyway. And was a doozer.

Chet, gather my progeny. Let's rock!

CHET

I'll get the male child.

[CHET exits to get REDMOND]

RAINY

Mama. Tell me this trembling from you be low blood-sugar and not the dream doin' it.

MAMA

Rainy, snap to, my baby. I spied my death.Look me in the eye. In the midst of all this menapausalyptic raving that usually eats my morning, I saw something real. Real as methane. A boy is coming. Simple. Soul-less. And bringing Bedlam, no sloucher, he.

RAINY

You want some powdered fruit drink? Lots of sugar in it.

MAMA

Don't doubt me, Rainy. Not this morning. When you doubt me, it feels like you've gone away. And I couldn't stand that, my baby.

RAINY

But someday I want to be gone. I've got to have another life.

MAMA

You're lucky to have life at all. In this world, that's the luxury.

RAINY

It don't feel luxurious.

MAMA

What do you want, Princess--a pillow of white sateen?

Like they put in caskets for the corpse to rest its empty, perfectly coiffed, DEAD head.?

[CHET re-enters]

CHET

Redmond blue screens any interface.

MAMA

[continuing with RAINY]

So, my ex-baby, go live with the dead.

Curl up on a nice pile of--what did they call it?

Plexiglass.

Make a little dwelling of the I-beams and rebar.

You always loved that shit.

I don't need anyone.

CHET

To Redmond, Chet is spam.

RAINY

Mayhaps, you're trying too hard.

MAMA

[To RAINY]

Get your own sex toy.

[Back to CHET]

Chet! Derek! Sergei! Istvan! Let's roll!

[CHET rolls MAMA off.]

RAINY

I love my Mama, I do.

[RAINY exits]

[end of scene]

[Scene 3. XXXX enters, a feral-looking young man. He checks for danger with the quick movements of an alert animal. He sniffs the air, then exits]

[Scene 4. REDMOND is sleeping finally. BEARTHA enters]

BEARTHA

Yo, Bro. Yo, Bro. Yo, Bro.

Battalion meeting.

REDMOND

“Battalion” meeting? Why oh why? How long must this denial go on? Chet, the parent manqué, was just here to fetch me for yet another one of Mater's looney ramblings. And I tried to explain to him—

BEARTHA

Rainy says there's something to the dream this time.

REDMOND

Puh-leez. To continue: to have a battalion, one must have two or more companies of soldiers. Do you see any soldiers, Beartha?

BEARTHA

Me, Bro.

REDMOND

All right. I'll accept that. So there's one. One soldier. One soldier does NOT a battalion make. And don't you dare point to me. We both know I am NOT soldier material. Mama wouldn't even let me have a gun until the last skirmish and then I wasn't useful.

BEARTHA

Don't sob when shooting. Can't see. Every soldier learns that first.

REDMOND

When did you ever sob, Beartha?

BEARTHA

[after thinking a beat or two]

Wait. I 'member. Your face gets real wet.

[The memory arrives]

Here it is.

Dirt in the old dude's face. Shovel coming down. Mama raises it again and “wham.” He look at me 'til blood fills his eye holes. I say “Papa” but he can't hear--no word in the air from me. No breath, so silence. You and I make the mound. Rainy just stand there like a little perfect staring shit-head she always be.

REDMOND

Okay. I'm frightened now. I've never heard you speak that many words sequentially ever.

BEARTHA

Headache!!

REDMOND

And this memory is incorrect. He disappeared, the Old Man. No mound. No murder. Violence is so pervasive in your system that it's running through your veins straight to your brain and corrupting our very history.

BEARTHA

You lost me, Bro. As per usual.

REDMOND

I don't go there, Beartha. They lie in wait to ambush me.

BEARTHA

They won't get you when we're around. Beartha'll pop 'em. You'll be safe. Bro.

REDMOND

What world do you inhabit? This one? Or some elementary, poofy one where all is well, always.

BEARTHA

That's that thing you do to me all the time!

REDMOND

It's called “sarcasm”, Beartha. With a soupçon of irony, for flavor.

BEARTHA

[she produces the destroyed folding chair]

Okay, then. Here's your chair. Somebody whaled on it.

[MAMA enters in a wheel chair, pushed by CHET. They both are wearing binoculars with which they've been checking the boundaries]

BEARTHA

[to MAMA]

He won't move. Scared of the ramparts.

MAMA

Where's my young'un. Where's my baby?

CHET

You sent her away, love drop.

MAMA

Not really. Never really. Go find her!

[CHET exits. She begins "pacing" and talking to BEARTHA and REDMOND]

MAMA

One of you should take the veritible broad sword and Cleave this bastard, self-begotten Nit Twit that has started up again. He's the youngest of a long line of nose-to-nosers, "kiss-my-ass-but-don't-touch-my-joint" trouble lovers. I'm too old and flabby to give him what he needs which is a big cock-hardening fight in front of screamers and frothers.

We’re On the verge of Deep Shit again--can you believe it--with me in my Dotage I thought a nice night-night, stars out, moon-blow up my nose and brains to dust, at last a dignified end to 52-Pick Up Obsessions and Delusions, not even the Joker's pointy shoe left. Amen.

But nooooo. And Know. No matter how the fractal curls and in what color, Some Greedy Twerp of Time rolls out of Fucking Somewhere, his kawabunga bungee cords stretched to the max, his horny toes hanging twelve on a self-consciously decorated surfboard still emblazoned with some Aged Rocker's snakey tongue sticking out of the mouth of Satan. Hokey is always dangerous, and should never be taken lightly.

*ARE YOU LISTENING?*

This meeting ain't a feast of pud-pulling and clit-friction on my part, although my soldiers and I used to do that--and god, it was fun. Nope. No. Nein. Nyet. Those were the old days, before you were born--when my pussy was as tight as a young boy's ass and my nipples didn't spend all day looking at my shoes.

BEARTHA

So, Mama, you want us to cut this dude?

MAMA

Good idea. Possible. You were listening. Hold that thought.

REDMOND

May I ask, Mother—

MAMA

Here it comes.

REDMOND

What have you observed or perceived, or what has your spy observed or perceived that lead you to the conclusion or, may I suggest, the inference that some, as you so quaintly put it, "Nit Twit" is promulgating a "Start Up"--whatever in Hades that means?

MAMA

Where do you get it? This ability to pillow my brain up with words until any action in the whole comfortable mess is gasping for air?

BEARTHA

He's a fairy.

MAMA

Shut up, Beartha. So was your father.

BEARTHA

Not me dad--don't say that.

MAMA

Could've been. Could've been. Lots of gossamer in the old boudoir. Bells on shoes. Rings on cocks. Matching push-up bras.

[MAMA stares in pleasant memory]

REDMOND

Madre? Mater? Mom?

MAMA

Still interrupting my sex life--even when it's only the memories!

REDMOND

Mother. Yes. This “Dude”--how do we know he's coming?

MAMA

I dreamt it. A tide of dreams. Wave upon wave, spreading further and further up the shore until I was wide-eyed and awake, my dream staring back at me.

REDMOND

Size and numbers, troop movements, ballistics, etc.

MAMA

It's murky. And yet the portent wasn't lost on me. One dude, as 'twere. One dangerous dude. Angry. With his hands around my throat. Small hands grasping my throat. And eyes that looked right through me.

BEARTHA

One? Just one. . .Dude? With small hands?

REDMOND

Turn and Return. Mama, this is the self-same dream you birthed last year after consuming all those mutant crustaceons.

MAMA

No, it wasn't. And they were mollusks, and that's what you get for cutting biology and spending all that time listening to the parlance of your post-Marxist, Ennui-Ridden, Hyperbole-Flinging, Villanelle-Ringing Fruit Fly dons at that Mansard-roofed, Bates Motel Community College I sent you to.

REDMOND

What do you and the Robot Sex-Toy do all night? Make shit up?? Let's deal with this, piece-by-piece. First of all--the architectural erroneousnesses. Mom--Yale was Gothic, Harvard was brick, Stanford was, I believe, Spanish Colonial, and I'd've never known about any of them if it weren't for those moldy encyclopedias we've carried lo' these many years. Besides which, Mater, those halcyon halls are all a pile of ash by now or filled to their window sills with the excrement of Rattus norvegicus. or some other untidy member of the Rodentia family, as opposed to our family which is supposed to be human. I never went to school, you pathetic excuse for a matriach, dearest MUM--I never had the opportunity--and you know it! I'm self-educated!! And why??????

MAMA

It's not my fault!! The world!!!

REDMOND

Well, whose fault is it?? Because I'd like to have a word with her, him, them or IT!!

BEARTHA

I'm thinking something--mollusks already look mutant.

I think they's naturally mutant.

MAMA

Beartha! Verbosity!

See, Redmond? Scrotum from inside me? Try to summon up your testosterone from whatever dark caverns of knee cap or toe wherein it has sunk and get it booking into the caldron of your gut, groin or Chakra Number Six. Words from Beartha Bode Big Change and True. Family Meeting over.

And bring me Rainy when she comes in. I miss my baby.

[MAMA exits]

REDMOND

Has it occurred to you, Beartha. That our mother might be not just crazy, but outrageously demented?

BEARTHA

Oh. Oh. A question. This be new. For me. Mother. Crazy. Occurred to me. My answer. . .To this question. Must think about someone who isn't here. Mother. Yes.

REDMOND

Me, too.

Now that we have “shared,” I feel decidedly unwell. I liked you better--well, I've never liked you--but when you didn't try to converse.

BEARTHA

Now see? I understand what you just said. And it wasn't nice. I bet you're meaner to me all day every day and I never knowed it half the time. *Hey, where you going?*

REDMOND

*You won’t leave me so I’m leaving you!!*

[taking out an ammo belt--which he kisses and then treats as a sort of rosary, saying a tiny prayer with each bullet he touches]

I never knew where you went or why but I knew it had to be supernatural--your disappearance--because I could never believe that you would leave me, your only son, unless you were raptured or liquidated or magically transformed into a dolphin or infused in a tree stump or some other metamorphosis common to a previous time, thought about, remembered, but never spoken about because it causes too much pain and embarrassment--a previous time and you,

both.

[REDMOND kisses the belt again and lies down, trying to hug it to him]

Father, please come back and save me!

I fear a walk alone anywhere. I know a band of female predators will jump me, pump me, leave me dry and gasping and then laugh at me and tell the whole barbaric world of clefted humans how weak and scared I was.

So I'm pathetic. Help.

Beartha's getting words--I'm losing them.

Help. Father. Help me.

Please.

Amen.

[A feral-looking young man enters, sniffs the air like an animal, sees REDMOND and exits. REDMOND doesn't see him. CHET enters]

CHET

You're assumptions about your mother have been rejected by Chet--she would never do such a thing. She would never allow you to be harmed.

REDMOND

We really have to give you decent squeaks or two--a sixty-cycle hum--something to let us know when you are there behind the arras!

And I want you to know that I don't need a father, anyway! I'm a grown man!

CHET.

Speaking loudly to your father wastes energy and taxes his aural mechanisms and is improper use for all units in the quadrant.

REDMOND

You're going to wake up someday AS A TOASTER!!!!!

[REDMOND exits]

CHET

Chet is ever-vigilant.

[CHET exits]

[end of scene]

[Scene 5 RAINY is picking herbs and packing]

RAINY

Wortlewood, Wigmuck, Mellontoni, Footsure, Kudzu--always need that. Mint, Basil. Face to the issue--I can't take them no more. Garlic roses--my best experiment. Rainy giveth up, yea verily--like Redmond talk when he was a boy child--made me laugh. How can I leave Mama? Book of Hope and Cure. I'll take that. Shows how pathetic I can be in my wishing. Maybe she'll change. Hope is a hologram. You break it into pieces and each one is a full-to-the-brink hope's worth. And break those pieces and they're all complete hope, too, and you break those until you get sand. Hope is silicon that promises to be a beautiful pane of glass instead it's just pain. No, this is the end. Gots to do it. Wish I could spring Chet. He don't know anything about who he is--how much is flesh. How much is circuitry. Who Redmond is to him. In another place, I could tell the truth. But Mama would turn on me. Her heart would close up to my name, never to open again.

They think I'm a nice little girl, but I'm not.

Pee in the pot and be goooood.

No, I'm not one of the long-term memory

Lost typees that used to wander

Drooling, crying for something they lost

Because they couldn't remember

What it was I think it was civilization.

Nope.

It was just a big fart

Methane and salt and curry and garlic

And ginger and chilies.

And polysorbate 60, maltdextrin, lechitin, and mononitrate biotin pantothenate.

And Mount Trashmores of packaging.

They were storied up

And songed to death--

And now it be a dead silent city--

Just hissing and crackling from the

Fire still burning and writhing--

That's where I spied Red Snake--

I can see her moving on dark day.

Dark days are good for seeing movement in--

They are good for seeing the--the--

Words fail me, like everything else sometime.

[RAINY reaches into a hidey place and takes out aluminum cans, and arranges them in a kind of design--a name to go with each can]

RAINY

Trace Elephants. Great Auk. Gorilla-Whales. Uni-horns. Duo-horns. Doll Fins. Dolls without.

[Then she lays out seven bones by the cans]

Seven is Sacred. Dog notion.

Dear Dog,

[beat]

Alright. I don't know how to do this!

I didn't identify pray as spelled with an A until Redmond straightened me out on that.

[RAINY senses something, stops and speaks to BEARTHA without looking at her]

Beartha! I know it's you.

BEARTHA

How?

RAINY

I smell blood. Your cycle could wake the dead.

[BEARTHA xs to RAINY and kicks the cans]

RAINY

Party on, Big B. Invisible forces ain't watching.

They be on one Huge Binge of Absence.

[BEARTHA kicks the bones.]

RAINY

[rescuing them]

I'd stay away from bones!

They'd smell your blood so strong, they'd taste it,

And they'd think it, too.

“Our blood's come back to us!”

And then they'd start to migrate towards you.

Imagine their fury

When they realize it's only Beartha

Who fills and sloughs like she was born

To breed a race of giants,

If she could find a mate!

Relax, dead ones--nothing between her legs except a saddle and That be erts ago—

BEARTHA

Don't talk about the horse, Rainy.

[RAINY starts gathering her cans]

BEARTHA

[about the cans]

What's so great in these?

RAINY

[holds a can up to BEARTHA'S eyes]

Redemption!

[RAINY sees that BEARTHA doesn't understand]

You be like some starved-to-death person with a big, hot hydrated meat-product sandwich staring them in the face and they don't have sense enough to open their mouths and take a bite.

BEARTHA

I could cut you. I could splay you from your neck to your love button, fill you with tubers and have dinner.

RAINY

You've been threatening to eat me since I were a babe.

BEARTHA

When you were a babe, I just wanted to bite you,

feel your little hand between my teeth.

Your fingernails were so small, with even smaller moons in them. You were perfect, then, Rainy.

RAINY

Right. I wasn't ambulatory.

I had no words.

I had no ideas except big, warm thing above me was good.

I didn't have no wants, just needs.

I wasn't complicated.

BEARTHA

COMPLICATED IS HARD TO LOVE!!!

RAINY

Truth from you, Beartha: it's a strange day.

My skin's got lightning all of a sudden--

Up and down.

BEARTHA

I got words this morning.

Lots of them and I HATE IT!

More words means HEADACHE!!

RAINY

Maybe something's gonna change.

BEARTHA

I liked it the way it was.

RAINY

Which time?

Before the corpses?

After the hole-digging?

The years in the tunnel?

Which time?

BEARTHA

Yesterday.

A white fly landed on my knee and I killed it.

I haxed at a mutant snake--it got wings but couldn't fly.

I threw rocks far off and away and watched them land and sometimes the earth popped open like a pimple 'cause I hit some munition that had some life in it.

Went into Redmond's tent--thought about riding his pillow, bare-assed, like a horse--that always riles him and gives him funny dreams.

Instead I crossed a lot of wires in his cogitator.

Oh, he do love that--his cubes become bulbous, oozing things and he add four and nine and get X! Oh, it make me laugh!!

RAINY

Beartha, Beartha--silent all my life. Just grunts and complaints and swears and demands and now all these words. I never knew what you did all day. and now I do and I'm scared even more.

BEARTHA

You're not scared. I could never scare you. You always just look at me. Like you do now! What is that look, Rain?

RAINY

Religion. Not religion. In the crack. Where all of us are born.

BEARTHA

That look. That why both Red and I gonna kill you someday.

[BEARTHA exits.]

RAINY

That's it? You just threaten my life and leave! Like everybody else in this blood-angry family!

[As she picks up her bone ceremony and cans]

I wish I be like the trees--they were very stoic-like. They were the strong, silent sufferers and they said nothing when they be brought down long ago. They just fell hard and lay there, mute. And all the other little beasties that lived in them went on about their lives. Like nothing really important happened.

[RAINY exits with her bag]

[BEARTHA begins to throw rocks past the family compound and listening for the explosion as the hit old munitions]

BEARTHA

There! That one's for words! That one's for ideas! That one's for other stuff that be running around behind my eyes! That one's for place in the middle of my back I can't itch! That one's for these spaces in my brain that are filling up with SHIT!!! And THAT one--big one--be an end to me wanting Father back! There. That better. Beartha be back.

[She belches loudly]

Hungry.

Kill something.

Pond serpent.

[end of scene]

Scene 6

MAMA rolls on in her wheelchair. She looks exhausted. CHET is with her--he's in a sombrero and little Spanish vest.

MAMA

Hormonal torture, sleeplessness.

What do they want, the little shits?

For me to say, "Yea, take this smooty crystal, find ye Father and thereby save the world?"

I won't give up.

He and his had fucked us into one intolerable

Stand-Off and apocalypse.

Women and kids just luncheon pork for cocks and mouths, not to mention, entertainment.

And pissing contests for the last pure grove of trees,

Oh, it won't come back, those bad old ways, I swear.

I'll raise barbarian girls and arm them afore I let us all be meat again.

CHET

You've done that, Holy One.

MAMA

Spit out your meaning, Manuel.

CHET

Beartha's a barbarian.

MAMA

Beartha's stupid and, besides,

She wouldn't hurt a fly.

CHET

She eats them.

MAMA

But she doesn't chew, my darling.

CHET

Bands of women run along the parapet and ambush men.

MAMA

For fun and sperm--they take it and they store it, frozen.

CHET

Revenge is purpose.

MAMA

Oh, that. Revenge will run its course.

And now, the race will try to propogate--somehow.

This family will die out 'cause the only male is ours.

That's fine. I'm tired of all these genes.

And you can't reproduce--you're Chet, MY Robot sex toy.

CHET

Chet feels human.

MAMA

Your circuitry protrudes from every joint.

CHET

Chet feels human.

MAMA

Compared to what? You've never felt another way.

You could be vegetable, feline, fish--how would you know?

CHET

Chet feels human and when you're beneath him--Chet feels good.

MAMA

You're a bimbo, darling.

You're Bambi in the headlights of this cosmos,

Innocent as Rainy, my favorite.

CHET

Should Chet rub your back?

Should Chet rub your front?

MAMA

Hold me, spoon-style, Baby Fish,

I've got to sleep.

CHET

Chet's not a fish, is he?

MAMA

You're my cipher.

CHET

If they take Redmond's sperm,

You'll have kith and kin galore.

You'll be related to a race of fatherless babes--

Who would call you "Grandmere", if they knew.

It may have happened now.

MAMA

No. Such horribleness.

CHET

But immortality, my love,

Hovers there, a swarm of May flies.

MAMA

May flies mate and die--one day is all they have, you putz.

CHET

You programmed Chet.

MAMA

My typing sucks--it always has.

You're filled with glitches and they're all my fault.

CHET

Chet loves it when the subject's him, even when you're mad.

Say you love Chet.

MAMA

Please.

CHET

Say it and Chet will hold you 'till the cows come home.

MAMA

Moo. That's all you get. Just moo.

CHET

Chet is powerless. He's spatulate. He's spoons.

Come here.

[He picks her up, sits in the wheel chair with her on his lap. Afraid she'll witness the sex act, BEARTHA covers her eyes]

CHET

Pet?

MAMA

Yes, Cisco? What do you want?

I'm almost happy, so make the interruption good.

CHET

Cielito Lindo? Chet--Cisco must report, even though the multi-tasking has created cross-talk, your only son prayed to your spouse today--called him “Father.” Asked him to return. There. Chet has completed that command sequence. Now Chet can focus on the presence of you in his lap.

MAMA

That cannot be.

CHET

[about the pleasure of her being in his lap]

Yet it is and Chet observes a power surge that's speeding up recursions.

MAMA

Get out of my chair and put me back in!

[CHET obeys]

MAMA

I can't believe it!

Yet I knew this day would come!

Of course it would.

I have to think!

[To CHET]

You're certain?

CHET

Chet hid and watched.

He's been vigilant, the way you like it.

He lives to please his Stewardess--I mean, his Señorita.

MAMA

This Señorita's very angry now.

You're witnessing the birth of Killer Señorita

Now I need support and comfort, even guidance,

If only I could remember how to ask for it.

CHET

Ask Chet--he's here.

MAMA

Oh, Chet--it's lonely at the middle.

CHET

You're the tops.

MAMA

No singing, please.

I'm not "the tops"--He is.

Even though I buried him alive and laughing.

He thought I wouldn't do it.

He thought I wouldn't have the "guts"--

as he so prettily put it, for my benefit.

He thought because I'm clefted, I wouldn't win.

He watched me give birth three or four times,

and still he thought I couldn't take the pain.

Not observant, Chet.

So "know your enemy"--he taught me that.

The irony of eating that as he was swallowing dirt,

I'm sure it wasn't lost on him,

Although we didn't get the chance to talk about it--pity!

He always did appreciate the ironies of life.

I miss him sometimes, late at night,

When he was sapped of meanness,

From just being tired,

Or sometimes the dark would make him gentle

As an old horse often is,

But then the dawn would bring a skittishness

And he'd be stomping, snorting, jumping at the stall,

Ready to trample me or any living thing

Beneath his iron foot.

CHET

You speak of him with love.

MAMA

Somewhere deep inside, swimming in this bile,

Foul with memory and hatred,

There's a molecule of--love may be too strong a word:

"affection", maybe, "habit."

We're hard-wired to love.

As often as I prayed to be a sociopath, like him--

I never could quite make it.

Children fuck you up, you know.

They're tiny and you care for them

And before you know it,

You're all goo, and, basically, no good to anyone.

CHET

Chet rates you solid winnage, Love--from hard to software.

MAMA

Well, that's because I programmed you that way!

I learned to never trust free will and choice.

They're freaky and misfire, giving you no time to duck,

So soon you have a hole right in your head

Where your third eye should be,

And someone's stupid choice

Is air-conditioning your brain.

I gave my children their free will

And look what they do with it!

Redmond turns on me!

It's betrayal, pure and simple,

And I should finally smite the boy,

And smite him good

And, maybe, then I'll have some peace!

CHET

Smiting could happen on your behalf.

MAMA

Really? You'd do that for me?

CHET

Absolutely. Chet longs to be a proper father to your children. And that includes the disciplining of them.

MAMA

Do you know what "smite" means?

CHET

[He's running his internal computer]

No mention in the files--does it mean "spank"?

MAMA

Yes, that is to say--correctamundo, Paco.

Perhaps it's finally time to smite the only male.

And put his little butt to bed.

"Night, night, darling.

Mummy says, "Night. Night."

CHET

Consider it accomplished.

MAMA

Let me choose the weapon--I mean, instrument of discipline. Paddle? Hairbrush? Willow switch?

No, it's not quite right. I need something even more antique and quaint. Let's seeeeee--ah--scimitar.

CHET

And scimitar it is, my love.

One will be found by Chet for practice.

MAMA

You do that, lovedrop. Now, maybe I can sleep. Take me back to the cantina for a little pre-nuptial fandango.

[CHET rolls her off--they exit.]

[end of scene]

[Scene 7. XXXX enters, finds a pond of water and carefully crosses to it, looks down, trying to see his reflection.;BEARTHA is transfixed]

XXXX

You don't know me

You never seen me

I never seen myself

I came down, down, down the tunnel

Hanging on a string of time.

[No response from BEARTHA]

If thou dost know me, thou has knowledge sweet

For I, myself, as in a muddy pool

Where vain ones in their bootless efforts seek

A beauteous image, would be joy's fool

For one brief glimpse some moment to espy

The unknown mask wherein these watchers lie.

[Still no response]

Crystal pond is still a moment--

Look! A face!

I see--

Splash! Hop toad!

Gone!

[BEARTHA picks up the hoptoad and, holding it like a big candy bar, bites off half of it]

XXXX

Poetry not your metier?

[He tries something else]

The proposed variation with time of the sizes to which the various dimensions of space expand in a conceivable superstring universe begin with all dimensions expanding in the same way, but after the Planck time, 10 to the minus 43 seconds, only three of the dimensions of space continue to expand, and that is what we perceive as the known dimensions.

[another try]

2+ 2 = 5?

BEARTHA

Who are you?

Did you fall out of someone's dream?

Been traipsing around in me mum's head?

XXXX

Help

BEARTHA

You cry "help" like a boy.

Boys are no good.

XXXX

Boys

BEARTHA

It's a fact. My brother proved it. With his life so far.

[She comes up to him and tears out some of his hair]

Proof.

[He puts his arms around her and then licks her cheek in one long motion. Trembling, she sinks slowly to the ground. XXXX leans down and pats her.]

XXXX

[opens mouth, out comes strange humming noise, then he speaks, imitating BEARTHA exactly]

Who are you?

Did you fall out of someone's dream?

[He exits, stepping over BEARTHA'S still-stunned body]

[end of scene]

[Scene 8. CHET has a scimitar and is practicing "smiting"]

CHET

Smite. Smite.

It makes a nice whooshing sound.

Let's see how it spanks.

Whap. Be loyal to your mum.

Yes, I'M A DAD!!

"I'm"???? What is "I'm"? Where is "Chet"?

Chet and "I'M" are the. . .same??????

"I"M Chet, I'm Dad!! I'M I!!!"

[looking in awe at the scimitar]

This scimitar is a complex and poweful object.

[sees something on the ground]

What's that? A living thing? A little eeping thing?

With fur and two heads.

Trying to go two places at once.

No, no! Don't do that or I must spank thee.

You persist?

Daddy warned you.

[spanks with the scimitar--it slices the little thing in two]

Uh-oh.

[Picks up the bloody halves, kneels and tries to fit the two halves together and make them move again]

"Eeep? Eeep?"

[He pets the corpse. No revival. He looks up at the sky]

Dog?

I'm "I" and a friend of Rainy's.

Actually, I'm her alias father now.

[CHET motions to the little dead thing and to the sky]

Fix it, please? I've never asked for anything before.

I'll wait.

I'll wait right here. “I'm” and “Chet” are the same, in case you didn't realize it.

[He waits quietly by the dead thing]

I'm waiting. So is Chet. We're the same.

[REDMOND enters]

REDMOND

Chet?

CHET

Please call me "Dad."

REDMOND

Has anyone checked your power cells of late?

[sees the dead animal]

Oh dear, a little furry deceased thing.

What happened?

CHET

I punished it. "I" did.

REDMOND

You are a master of understatement, Chet.

This animal is punished--what was its sin?

CHET

I'm practicing for fatherhood.

I'm fathering all of you now. I'm "I" and "Dad" and "Chet."

REDMOND

Well, let me say that whate'er you ask of me, I will, most definitely, do.

CHET

At last!

All right, then this: be good to your mother.

REDMOND

Oh that--you would ask that.

You see, I fear that is impossible--being good to Mom. There's too much history of a particularly despicable kind. She scares me. She's a scary mom--there are such things.

CHET

Then I'll have to punish you, my son.

Time out or scimitar?

REDMOND

Time out is fine--I'll go directly to my tent,

And ponder what I've done.

And emerge a better person. Promise.

CHET

But your mother sent me to smite you, and I always obey the Beloved. Therefore I must rescind my offer of Time Out.

REDMOND

My mother sent you, her robot love toy, to smite me with that? Why, Chet? Was she, you know, chemically besotted, as she is wont to be now and again?

CHET

If your question is, was she malfunctioning or even off-line when the command was received by Chet, the answer is no.

REDMOND

I'm having trouble processing this. I know she's despicable, but I always thought , deep down, she loved me. She gave birth to me. What does it mean to be born of something that wants to kill you? A beautiful woman emerges from a river, gives birth to a child, then grows scales and claws, eats the baby, and returns to the river. What kind of story is that? There's a bedtime story for a little boy.

CHET

You used the word, “processing.” You are my son.

REDMOND

Well, if that's the way the world is, then kill me because I don't want to live in it! Wait a minute--what am I saying?

Chet--Chet--let me go. That scimitar has blood on it. Think about it. Dad, please. Daddy.

[Still holding on to REDMOND, CHET thinks for a beat, looking at the blood on the scimitar. CHET lets go of REDMOND and REDMOND escapes and exits quickly]

CHET

The scimitar seems most effective

When it's used only as a threat.

Implementing it directly is clearly irrevocable

Because the child's, in this case, animal's

Learning curve is interrupted in a profound way

And learning stops. Ergo, the scimitar is not the proper instrument of discipline, in spite of what she says.

[He looks at the dead animal for a long beat and then nudges its corpse lightly with the scimitar]

It's Boolean--there are no variable values.

Death is either true or false.

 [He nudges its corpse lightly again with the scimitar]

Some things cannot be fixed, even by Dog.

Some things stay the way you put them,

Even when you want them not to mind

And be alive again and eeping

And go two ways at once

Or whatever pleased its little, little, furry

mutant mind, its little eeping soul,

its tiny black-eyed spirit that you snuffed out

as efficiently as water on a candle.

I'm so very sorry, little mammal.

[looks at the scimitar]

I'm "I" and "Chet" and "Daddy" and all three of us have killed something.

And it could have been Redmond--my only son.

Yet aborting the Preceptor's command to smite has severely disordered my data.

Must--have--downtime.

Crashing is imminent.

Must remember: chaos is merely unseen order.

I need a kludge. I'm getting a bomb.

Non-managed data is NOISE!

Interrupt! Interrupt!

Hit me. Tweak me. Zap me. Put me on null cycle.

Give me an infinite loop or something!

Command 44: Go to Command 52.

Command 52: Go to Command 44.

Command 44: Go to Command 52.

Command 52: Go to Command 44.

Rats live on no evil star--

Mom wow--

Om mani padme om mani padme om mani padme om. . .

[CHET calms down]

I'm hung. Lock up.

[CHET freezes--he's crashed]

[end of scene]

[Scene 9]

[BEARTHA sees RAINY]

BEARTHA

I know what you're doing. But you can't. Leave. Not now.

RAINY

Whose. . .Hair is that? Have you harmed Mama?

BEARTHA

His hair! His hair! The Dream Boy's here.

RAINY

You're just saying that to make me stay.

BEARTHA

No! He licked me!

No more information!

[She stuffs something from her bag into Beartha's mouth. REDMOND enters]

REDMOND

You would not believe what I've just found out. What's that in Beartha's mouth?

RAINY

My underwear. I had to shut her up. She was hysterical.

REDMOND

Not enough estragon for that. Try “berserk.”

BEARTHA

[having cleared her mouth finally]

Pt tooey! Blaa! Yuck?! Ick!

[She exits, still gagging]

RAINY

She was spewing all kinds of meanness..

REDMOND

Something new?

RAINY

Meanness about Mama.

REDMOND

I can second that.

RAINY

But it's you and Beartha that are the mean ones. Both of you want to kill me!

REDMOND

How Greek of us.

How house of Atreus.

How Biblical.

And They--the ever-present "They"--said culture died before the fire.

How wrong they were.

It lives--in us.

[pretending to be touched, he wipes away a fake tear]

I'm proud.

Aren't you, Rainy dear?

RAINY

I'm scared and lonely, Bro--

Aren't you?

REDMOND

My mother wants to have me murdered--”smote” to be specific--and by her deluded android--whom I created, mostly.

And how was your day, Rainy dear?

Noi siempre nomadi. I am outa here.

[REDMOND starts to leave, turns]

That rhymed.

Rhyming means Fate,

And Fate means Bad News.

If you had a heart, you'd stop me.

But you'd rather be a prophet.

Prophets be schtupping Fate all the time--they love It more than people.

You don't love anyone, even Ma.

If you really did, you'd be in pain, like all of us,

And fucking up, and heartbroken, and running away.

[REDMOND waits for RAINY to stop him. She doesn't]

Not gonna stop me? Even a little?

See? You'd rather be an Avatar than Good.

[REDMOND exits. RAINY stands completely still for some very long beats]

RAINY

I am good. I'm the only good person in this sorry world!

So there, Redmond! So—

[XXXX enters]

XXXX

I'm no dream-boy, 'less you want it. I be listening to your ramblings, this history you always spew--it be pretty interesting, for sure.

RAINY

My family's barbarous and there's no place else to go and. . .Where'd you come from?

XXXX

Some place else.

RAINY

You be a miracle. Did I make you up?

XXXX

Reach out and touch--see. You see--a milagro, but I be real, real, real.

[RAINY touches him]

Never touch boy-flesh before, huh?

Got the shivers--it's all right.

RAINY

What you looking?

XXXX

Your eyes. I can almost see my image. Never seen myself, little girl. Am I. . .Pretty at all?

RAINY

Yes.

XXXX

Simple answer be the best some time.

RAINY

Am I. . .What's that word? Pretty?

XXXX

As rain. As trees. As sun. As grass. As loam. As food. As fire. As night. As stars. As home.

RAINY

Trees? Home?

XXXX

Shall we go walking?

RAINY

I was doing something--what.

Clearing out.

XXXX

I just got here.

RAINY

'Kay.

XXXX

Let's go walking. Show me this world of yours.

RAINY

Your skin is cold.

[She takes out some clothing and puts it on him]

XXXX

Need that. You--thanks.

[He takes her by the arm and they exit]

[end of scene]

[Scene 10. MAMA finds CHET where he's crashed. It's late at night and she zaps him with a light pen. He re-boots. He sits up and sees her. He is cold, robotic]

CHET

You?

MAMA

Yes, Tyrone.

Come hither.

CHET

Please insert your card

And remove quickly

To receive service.

MAMA

We haven't played this game in ages.

Late night vending fun--yes.

CHET

In what language would you like to continue?

MAMA

The language of love.

CHET

[trying to ignore her advances]

Press the button next to your choice:

English, Spanish, German, Italian, French, Russian, Latvian, Japanese, Cantonese, Vietnamese--

[she moves in on him a bit]

MAMA

Where is that enable button?

CHET

[trying to get control of his desire]

--Portugese, COBOL, PASCAL, DOS, the language of Bees, the language of Birds, the flowers and the trees and the moon up above, it's a song of love.

[getting control of himself again]

Please remove your card.

It is unreadable.

MAMA

OOooo. I like it when you sling this distant "I'm Mount Everest--dare to climb me" demeanor. You know that hard-to-get stuff makes me hard.

CHET

If you don't need me, Madam, I'll withdraw.

MAMA

OOoooo. The butler definitely did it. And that personal pronoun???? Sooooo Sexy. Some program mutation, but I'm not fixing it. I love it.

I'm ready now.

[She leans back, ready to be taken sexually, but her CHET doesn't move]

Lead on MacDuff!

[He doesn't move]

Come to Mama.

[He doesn't move]

Derek? Brian? Bruce? Chet?

[the name she saves that gets him every time]

Hal?

[He flinches]

Hal?

[He's having trouble resisting]

You know you love that name.

*Hallllllll?*

[CHET doesn't answer]

MAMA

Enough--I'm tired of games--

Mind the gap and fall into it A.-S.-A.-P.!

CHET

No.

MAMA

What?

CHET

No. No gap for Chet.

MAMA

No gap?

But you love the gap.

You're my little spelunker.

CHET

No more.

MAMA

I'll pull your plug.

CHET

Do it.

MAMA

I'll remove your motherboard--use it for ping pong.

CHET

Dismantle me.

Put me back together as a toaster.

I don't care.

MAMA

You're programmed to care.

CHET

I can resist my programming!

I'm not a robot!

Well, I guess I am, but the "I"-ness and the desire to resist my programming--that's new!

Where newness is, there's hope!

MAMA

What if I told you that I love you?

CHET

I wouldn't believe it.

MAMA

Well, you'd be correct there.

That's the problem with the computer-driven--the inability to lie to themselves or others.

Must work on that.

Well. all right, then. I guess it's over. . .

[she plays her last card]

David.

[He knows this name]

CHET

That name. . .from far back. . .like an old song on young ears. . .I feel something in my chest.

MAMA

It's your name, my love. Your real name.

CHET

Yes. Across a grassy slope--

Red flowers on one side,

Yellow on another,

Burning up the hill

with flames of pure color.

I'm running without current,

I'm running, silent, except my breath!

I'm breathing and my eyes are wet,

And someone's called my name--

I'm coming to them, running!

And in my chest, a living thing,

Like now, a throbbing--all this time, I thought it was a clock--that rhythm ticking off the time--

But no, it's pumping, keeping me alive,

Filled with blood,

I'm filled with blood,

I'm human and my name is David.

MAMA

I called you. It was me that called you.

Those flowers you remember? Flames.

They burned for months.

Your eyes were wet because you had been sobbing.

I won't tell you what you lost.

The World. 'Nuff said.

Perhaps they'll come to you in dreams

Now that the door's been open.

I hope not. Nothing's meaner than a memory of things and people gone forever.

Huge and silent ships went by and ran aground.

That's when we knew the flames would come,

And come they did.

And were welcome--they were our morticians.

We were thankful--nature made a little effort to clean up the dreadful mess we'd made.

The kids were small and Rainy was inside me.

The rains came, as if she'd called them to her

And she was born,

And we began to dig the tunnel.

CHET

Redmond was born when you saved me? How can I be his father, then? Perhaps--perhaps--I'm--------not.

Chet is flesh. Oh my. I'm flesh and you made me kill.

MAMA

So you did it, then? You killed Redmond? I don't know--it's not as satisfying as I thought'd be. But it had to happen. The Old Man can't come back. Never. Never. They don't realize. But Redmond--ohhhhhh, I'm sorry now.

CHET

Beloved. I couldn't do it. Instead I killed something more helpless--a little furry eeping thing.

MAMA

Some mutant mammal! Oh, thanks be!

Since they learned to self-mate,

They're constantly in heat and reproducing,

Just can't keep their hands off themselves.

You're warmed to me again.

CHET

It's strange--I had a conscience lying around here somewhere--and now it's gone.

MAMA

It's with your motorcycle keys and that errant laundry ticket. Let's to bed.

CHET

I can't make love when I feel bad.

I'm not a robot. Oh, it feels so good to say that.

I can't give you sex on demand--I'm not a robot!

MAMA

Yes, you are! I lied, Chet--David! That story of the hill--I read it in a book! I programmed that memory! There was no David.

CHET

You're a bad god. And I'm leaving you.

[He exits and she snickers, sure he'll be back in in any moment. Long pause as she waits. She decides to give into him and call him by his favorite names]

MAMA

Hallll?

[No answer]

RICO? It's your little Godzilla calling!

[No answer]

Baby fish?????

[Nothing]

Chet? Chet. Chettttt?

[She rolls toward where he exited to look for him--no sign]

He'll be back. He'll be back.

[suddenly, she yells, as if to the sky]

*Nooooooooooooo!!!!!!!!!!!!*

[Beat]

I'm not doing well with this.

How did it come to pass that I began to need him?

[MAMA exits]

[end of scene]

[Scene 11. REDMOND is huddled on the ground on the ramparts. He's just suffered an attack of the barbarian girls--the Dolophines--who have jumped him and pumped him for sperm. He's frantic, distraught and arguing with himself]

REDMOND

Come on, you asked for it.

Not true.

You were standing there, begging for it--your legs spread--your butt tightened--your basket thrust forward ever so slightly.

Incorrect.

Seen you stand that way a million times.

Sequestered, unseen.

Oh, come on. You knew they were watching. You know someone is watching all the time.

Deceptive, fallacious, impossible.

And those trousers? You know you look good. I saw you stitching up the legs so they're tight around your thighs.

That's style--that's savor faire.

No one has trousers like that unless they want it. No one stands like that or walks the way I seen you walk unless they want it.

Prevaricator!

You tease and taunt and then you don't want it? You parade around in front of us and get us all worked up and then you don't want it? Who do you think you are?

Redmond.

Who is that? Nobody! Let me tell you who you are--you're the only man around here and you know it! DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND WE HAVE A RIGHT TO YOU!!

You don't have a right to execute that particular action without my permission.

Oh, listen to the ANCIENT liberation rhetoric. And don't be such a baby, anyway. You never been beat up?

The two are disparate, distinct and separate events.

Right. Getting beaten up hurts. You CAME, baby! You closed your eyes and CAME!

Erroneous.

You liked it.

Wrong.

You loved it.

Noooooo!

You are desperately alone, hormonally imbalanced, rampant in all of your dreams, and longing to couple with anything other than just your own hands night after night after dark, lonely celibate night. Are we right? Are we right, Red?

Yes.

We can't hear you.

YESSSSSSSSS!

[BEARTHA enters]

BEARTHA

Yo, Bro. Yo, Bro. Yo, Bro.

You all right? Wake up! What you doing over here?

REDMOND

Beartha!

[He reaches to hug her--she recoils]

BEARTHA

Just 'cause someone wants to have you murdered doesn't mean you get a hug--that's the family rule.

REDMOND

You know, then, about our Mater? And that traitorous unit of leftover diodes, cathodes, solid-state circuitry, LED read-outs, motherboards, electro-chaos! When I think of all the mountains of defunct cogitators, cookers, communication devices, I rooted through to keep him functioning and with some semblance of life. .

BEARTHA

Chet try to “smite” you? Bro? Look at you!!

I'm so glad I found you. I saw something. I have something--

You're all messy-like. Upset.

What is it, Red? Oh man--they--the Dolophinaes--Barbarellaes, whatever--they do you?

[REDMOND nods]

Oh man. You okay, though. Right?

Look at me--look at Beartha.

[REDMOND looks at her]

Have to ask, Bro. Have to. What was it like?

REDMOND

Overwhelming.

BEARTHA

Like. . .Wonder-over-whelming, right?

REDMOND

No.

BEARTHA

No?

REDMOND

No. They laughed at me.

BEARTHA

Your first time, Dude.

Sorry.

REDMOND

Am I bloody?

BEARTHA

[she checks inside his pants, looks at his groin]

Raw, more like. It'll hurt to pee. But you wont have time for that. Dream boy's here.

REDMOND

What?

BEARTHA

Boy from dream. Here's his hair.

I tore it out.

REDMOND

It's not the color of my hair, or yours, or Mama's, or Rainy”s or Chet—

BEARTHA

I'm tellling you, Bro. He's here. He licked me

REDMOND

Nobody can lick you, Beartha. Not in a fair fight.

BEARTHA

With his tongue, Bro.

Yeah, that kind of lick

REDMOND

This was a man? Not just big dog. There's all these mutant dogs still around.

BEARTHA

No, MAN, like you. Man. No fur. Talks. Good. Licked me. I liked it. Yeah, I did.

REDMOND

It's possible.

BEARTHA

Look, I've been thinking.

REDMOND

No, you haven't.

BEARTHA

Yeah, Bro. I have had thought happening up here. And, boy, it's something. Like a bunch of little people between my ears, having a meeting and talking all the time. Finally, I just yell, ShutUP! And then, here's this idea. Like someone wrote it in the dirt--on the inside of my forehead. And it say, “Manifest Father.”

REDMOND

“Manifest”, Beartha?

BEARTHA

Yeah, I know--big word--it's been happening to me all day. I've got such a headache! Ate a toad--didn't help.

But then I meets the Dream Boy, Bro. Our Vicious Matriarch was right. Something's major coming down all over you and me.

Dig this: Mom's a Prophet, but She's Not Nice. She's got the gift of prophecy, and yet she's evil. What does that say about our world?

REDMOND

Do you know where to find him? Father?

BEARTHA

You really don't recollect any of it, do you?

He's buried, Redmond. She buried him alive.

REDMOND

Yikes! Horrible! He's dead, Beartha.

BEARTHA

Don't you remember how terrible mean he was? That much meanness don't die. Got a feeling back here that he's breathing. A bad shiver 'gainst my neck. His Breath. And the Dream Boy arrived, Bro. So forces are amassing, right? Something broke through, so we ride this story out, like my Pesach. She could leap over anything and take you through the tunnel. She was the last horse on this earth, but she's still under me sometimes. And she's under me now. Zip up. We're going to the mound and raise the Old Dude. Dog Help Us.

[They exit]

[end of scene]

[Scene 12. RAINY and XXXX. They're by a chasm. Their faces are glowing red from the reflection]

RAINY

Red snake.

It's fire.

No one's ever come this far with me.

Beyond all this--another tunnel

Filled with crazy children.

They hang from the ceiling and cry and laugh and throw shit .

No, real shit--what's your name?

XXXX

Four-Ex.

RAINY

What does it mean?

XXXX

nothing to lose.

RAINY

In what language?

XXXX

Dog.

RAINY

Oh. Oh.

You've come at last then.

I been so alone.

[She embraces him and he hugs her back, then lifts her up, with his mouth on hers, as the sexual power overtakes him.]

RAINY

Wait--wait. I'm new to this. This be my first time and I want to. But, hold it, I just want to have some say about--

[He nearly devours her as REDMOND and BEARTHA run in with flashlights, looking for the mound]

RAINY

[penetrated]

Ahhhhhhhh!?

[BEARTHA'S flashlight light hits the bodies of RAINY and XXXX]

BEARTHA

Whoa.

REDMOND

What's transpiring--yikes!

BEARTHA

Is--is this the act? The actual act?

REDMOND

Yes. That is coitus, intercourse, sexual congress, the beast with two backs.

BEARTHA

Hey, it's Rainy! HEY, NO FAIR! NO FAIR! GET OFFA HER!

[BEARTHA pulls XXXX off of RAINY]

I'm the oldest, shithead! I'm the oldest—

[the truth occurs to her]

--virgin in the world!!!

[Overcome with frustration and rage, BEARTHA dumps her flashlight and starts beating on XXXX. The sound of violence awakens FATHER and he emerges, covered in mud and earth, and begins to speak. The others stop what they're doing and stand and watch him, transfixed.

FATHER

I long for thee, I long for thee.

The cacophony, yea, pandemonium,

The loathing, malice and enmity

Of progeny and mate, Of brood and wife,

The raging, wicked, trapped, mortal and ancient tribe

Of hairless apedom.

I miss the evil bitch, I do,

And all our perfidious spawn--

Except that younger one,

Conceived from the contents of my helmet.

I don't miss her--

She sang, as I remember,

And Thought Things.

And once, she wept, and I smote her good.

"The world don't need more tears!" I said,

With antique grammar, quoting some ancestor

Before or After the Great Woe.

It's difficult being dirt.

I find that I am made from pieces of the dead,

The smallest tendril from a shard of rotting bone that makes my eyebrow talks--

Stories, stories, stories--save me.

The earth is filled with whispering.

"SHUT UP!!" I cry, "and disintegrate with dignity!"

But no, the puniest bit holds on to memories as if they were the buds of immortality.

This really all must pass,

Myself included.

She thinks she Fixed me Good by casting me into the earth. She's wrong. I lie here free of appetite.

Buddha can eat my dust--I'm heavier than Heavy Water.

Clear, free, pure--I see it all, and understand.

I just miss their toes, their legs, their lovey bits, their hands.

 [pointing at the children he recognizes]

Redmond.

Rainy. . .

[Points to BEARTHA]

Clovis?

[Sees she isn't CLOVIS]

Who be you?

BEARTHA

Beartha, Papa. You remember. I'm your dead spit--the one that got your hands. It's me what called you back--I was angry, pounding, but you always like that in a person, I remember. Tell me you remember--I'm the last face you saw when the blood was filling your eye holes. You looked right at me, Beartha, and I said “Papa.” 'Member, Dad? You remember me. Say “yes.”

FATHER

No.

Only had one female—

[points to RAINY]

--her, the smug, self-righteous one named after weather. When I fucked your mother, boys were born: Clovis, first, then Redmond.

[To XXXX (CLOVIS)]

Thought you were dead, my son. Your mother lost you in a card game. 'Course you were my heir--she couldn't stand that. Where is the battleaxe? Dead, yet?

[MAMA enters in her wheelchair, on attack, screaming, trying to hit him with the shovel again. FATHER overcomes her quickly, grabbing the shovel and dumping her out of her wheelchair]

FATHER

You relentless cunt.

I'm back!

END OF ACT ONE

[ACT TWO. Scene 1. At the main camp, **FATHER** is naked in a outdoor tub--some large vessel that may have had another use, but now serves as a bath. **REDMOND** has been helping by supplying water, soap, towels]

**FATHER**

[about his body being able to move again]

Sublime. Supreme. Superb. Way-*Rad.*

Component functions--nonpareil. Fluidity under the--what is the term--epidermis. That would be *blood*--it’s blood. Joints. And these—

[about his biceps]

--look! I move and it grows in circumference.

[Stops, looks at **REDMOND**]

How did I get here?

**REDMOND**

I helped you walk over here.

**FATHER**

Helped? I don’t ask for assistance nor do I accept it.

[Beat]

**REDMOND**

Oh, I forgot, Father. You helped me. Because I need help, Father

**FATHER**

And you are. .

**REDMOND**

Redmond, your son.

**FATHER**

Our location?

**REDMOND**

Campas Familias.

**FATHER**

You don’t speak like her.

**REDMOND**

I’m self-taught.

**FATHER**

Is that a criticism of me? I left involuntarily, you know.

**REDMOND**

No, no! But I sound like you, don’t I? It must be patrilinear, my flair for language.

**FATHER**

You’re going to be a burden, aren’t you?

**REDMOND**

No! I’ve waited so long for you to come.

**FATHER**

Now there you sounded like her.

[Beat]

That was a joke, Son.

[**REDMOND** doesn’t get it]

This civilization’s in trouble.

Now how did we arrive here again?

**REDMOND**

You started lurching off after the shovel incident. Everyone else deserted you, but I came along to hel--in case you. . .wanted. . .company.

**FATHER**

You *are* going to be a burden.

**REDMOND**

No! Father. No. I won’t be anything! I mean, I’ll be whatever you want me to be. Father. I’m the one who’s here. Beartha ran off after you denied her. And Rainy left. And the. . .Other--I don’t know where he went.

**FATHER**

“Beartha.” If I’d sired that I’d’ve hit *myself* with the shovel.

Towel me off.

[**REDMOND** begins to do this]

**REDMOND**

So this is how a man looks--

Very different from Beartha, Rainy or the Mater.

Even with the variation among the three of them.

Still this is very separate and most pleasing.

The buttocks--so amazing.

**FATHER**

Son--

**REDMOND**

Yes, I’m a *son* of a *father*.

I guess my butt must look like that.

Please, tell me, my father.

[**REDMOND** shows his butt to his father]

Is it like yours? I could never see my own.

[pointing to the penis]

And that--I’ve only seen one other,

not counting my own.

Oh! Clovis must have one, too.

I must see his, as soon as possible.

An amazing piece of flesh, not to mention,

Engineering.

**FATHER**

I’ll have my clothes now.

[Getting dressed]

Tell me son. What is your sexual orientation?

**REDMOND**

I’m not sure what that means. Does it involve a compass?

**FATHER**

Whose hands are on you when you’re having sex? A man’s hands or a woman’s?

**REDMOND**

A man’s.

**FATHER**

And who is this fortunate man? I didn’t think there were any males left in the world!

**REDMOND**

He is here, Father. Me. The man’s hands are my own. I only have sex with myself.

**FATHER**

My son, my son, how did you endure?

**REDMOND**

It was unrelenting Hell.

Sometimes.

**FATHER**

You miss them.

**REDMOND**

No.

**FATHER**

You miss them. Admit it, Son.

**REDMOND**

I was just wondering if the Mater was all right.

[**FATHER** looks at **REDMOND** for several beats, not moving, just staring. Suddenly, **FATHER** slaps **REDMOND** with one blow which flattens him]

**FATHER**

Awaken!

Zen with me.

Be here fucking now.

DO YOU VIDDIE WHAT I’M STREAMING?

And Realize: The--”Mater”--has--never--been--*all right.*

And never will be.

And, my son,***use the subjunctive***--for a statement contrary to fact: you were wondering if the Mater **were** all right. Civilization hath returned and, with it, grammar--my grammar. Syntax-*-mine*.

Are we plugged in properly now, my progeny?

Do we have coaxial hook-up?

**REDMOND**

Yes.

[Long beat as **FATHER** waits, not moving]

Father.

[That’s what he needed to hear. **FATHER** pulls **REDMOND** up]

**REDMOND**

It’s just that--excuse my naivete, indeed, jejune-ness--but--and I know, believe me, I understand how specious and manipulative this may sound--but I’ve never been actually, you know, hit before.

Not even by Beartha.

**FATHER**

Physical violence is clean, Son.

It is free of ideas and the burdens of language,

And the complexities thereunto.

It is an act of the body

Which is controlled by chemicals

And electrical pulses that jump

From synapse to synapse, like fleas.

I know fleas well as I know your mother.

I’ve lived with both phenomena--and she is a large phenomenon--a marvel, even, a curiosity, an oddity, a bizarre occurrence, like phosphorescent fog or that ooze that leaks out of Mount Trashmore I was always afraid would engulf me when I was deep in my earth bed.

But she can’t jump the way fleas can--any more.

**REDMOND**

Why is that, Father? If you don’t mind me asking. Why did she take to the wheel-chair?

**FATHER**

It’s a mysterical injury, son--one day she preferred wheels to legs--an hysterical response to power.

**REDMOND**

She always says you did it to her.

[Beat. **FATHER** assesses **REDMOND**, decides to tell the truth]

**FATHER**

Götterdammerüngian Night,

Oh holy night.

We finally recognized each other

Across an empty room

We came closer for a better look

Because the only thing we had left

Was truth.

When you’ve lost the world, son,

When you’ve lost an entire world,

You don’t want another lie.

Lies brought down the world, son--

Lies and fear.

So when we got eye-to-eye--

There it was--the prime directive:

Fuck, Kill or Know.

But to have Knowledge of another human being?

It’s like knowing a river.

[beat]

I’m used to my profundity being acknowledged.

**REDMOND**

Oh! Yes! A river as an image for the intransience-

**FATHER**

Midrash is not the same as praise.

My son. . .

Can what’s behind those doe eyes do what needs to be done?

You look cozied up for a bedtime story.

Son, my son, the feets done been cut out of them pajamas for a lonnnnng time now.

Button up that back flap, climb on the killer motorcycle--your license plate reads “666” and your cause is just.

It’s time to torque that pendulum of change--get it back to our side and nail it there.

But first, I need some--what do you call it?--food.

[Beat]

You wanted me back, didn’t you?

**REDMOND**

Of course.

**FATHER**

I wasn’t sure.

[ **FATHER** picks up a rifle]

**FATHER**

Now this is a *what?*

**REDMOND**

Gun.

**FATHER**

No, this is a rifle.

[Pointing to his penis]

This is a gun.

[The rifle]

This is for killing.

[The penis]

This is for fun.

**REDMOND**

Not so far. Pater. Actually.

No fun there for some time.

It’s so raw from the pumping,

the mechanical sucking devices they used.

Can’t bear to touch it much

and it’s been a tad unresponsive

since the incident.

It will spring back, won’t it?

[**FATHER** doesn’t understand]

I was jumped and pumped--

Amazon attack up on the ramparts.

Sperm stealers pumped me raw.

**FATHER**

So.

**REDMOND**

Father? I do enjoy saying that.

Father, you look deeply worried.

**FATHER**

This is anger. Come here.

**REDMOND**

Where are we going? On a father-son outing?

**FATHER**

To the ramparts.

**REDMOND**

I don’t go there. No.

**FATHER**

Yes, with me, you do.

With your father.

And your gun *and* rifle.

Face your fear, my son and shoot it, dead.

Let me lead you into manhood,

And deliver you from Evil.

NOW I know why I’ve come.

[They exit]

[end of scene]

[Scene 2. **RAINY** enters and crosses to the edge of the chasm. She has run there to get away from the violence of FATHER’S attack on MAMA.

**CHET** who has entered, with difficulty]

**CHET**

RAIN--NEEEE.

**RAINY**

Chet! Oh, *Chet!* The stuff that has gone down you would not believe! Where you been?

**CHET**

I. . . . . NEEEED. . . . .Powwwerrrrrrrr.

**RAINY**

Why do you stay here? I must be the only one who wants to get out of this place.

**CHET**

I. . .stay. . .to protect. . .you--Father. . .Behavior.

**RAINY**

Why didn’t you ever just get out, then? You can go for a long time without fuel.

**CHET**

The Beloved.

She’s. . .Bad, Rainy. Your mum is evil.

**RAINY**

You gave up on her, too? Poor Mama.

**CHET**

Blackout emminent.

**RAINY**

Chet, there’s something you should know--about who and what you are.

**CHET**

Need Ohms.

**RAINY**

Not really, Chet. Only for some parts that need a spark now and again. You’re mostly--

**CHET**

Capacitance *null.*

**Transduce.** *Shut-down coming.* Save me, Rainy!

RAINY

Oh, what is he doing? He don’t need to do this, really.

Wake up, Chet. She’s wrong about you. You ain’t all machine, at all.

Well, much, anyways. That sweetness you have--that be you.

Come on, Chet! I can’t lose nobody else!!!! You be my onliest friend.

[She kisses him]

**CHET**

[coming to]

What story am I in?

**RAINY**

There you be!! My sweet Chet!!

**CHET**

THANK DOG.

**RAINY**

You thank Dog. I’m fed up with him. Besides which, it were me brought you back to life.

**CHET**

Somebody kissed me with two soft lips barely open--no biting, no devouring. Just love.

**RAINY**

See how you sound there? Just then?

**CHET**

I never saw so sweet a face

As that I stood before

My heart has left its dwelling place

And can return no more.

My memory cache is scaring me.

**RAINY**

Something maybe got shook loose.

**CHET**

I sing the body electric.

**RAINY**

Yes, you do.

**CHET**

I want to get out of this place,

If it’s the last thing I ever do.

**RAINY**

It won’t be. I promise.

But I gots to go back, Chet.

I can’t leave Mama.

**CHET**

Girl, there’s a better life for me and you.

**RAINY**

Chet--move out of the long ago song lyrics.

We need to stay home

**CHET**

I years had been from home,

And now, before the door,

I dared not open, lest a face

I never saw before.

[They exit]

[end of scene]

[Scene 3. At the mound. **MAMA** is lying, face up, on the spot where **FATHER** dumped her out of the wheelchair. It’s dark. She comes to]

**MAMA**

Jumping Jesus on a Stick!

Did I just come out of surgery?

Do I still have all my eggs?

Take ‘em out. Remove them.

You’re lying there one night

Next to some man you think you like

Some sperm gets up inside

Sixteen years later, it’s driving you down the road.

Twenty years later, it’s borrowing your weaponry and telling you what to do.

Thirty years later, it’s left you lying in your own pee.

[**BEARTHA** enters, sits in the shadows]

Yes, we both must face it--

This marriage is in trouble.

This forced separation with him cast into the earth

I had such hopes for.

But absence didn’t make the heart grow fonder, no.

I hear breathing--am I alone?

**BEARTHA**

Beartha’s here.

**MAMA**

Where’s my chair?

**BEARTHA**

I’ll get it for you after.

**MAMA**

After what?

**BEARTHA**

[standing over her]

Who was my father?

**MAMA**

Mummy doesn’t know, Pumpkin.

**BEARTHA**

[threatens her with a knife]

How’d you like to be a jack-o-lantern, you old hump.

**MAMA**

Alright, alright.

I was lying dead drunk in this field--

**BEARTHA**

That’s my mama.

**MAMA**

Suddenly, I’m entered.

[**BEARTHA** picks **MAMA** up, so she can hear her better and have complete focus.]

**BEARTHA**

Truth some more.

**MAMA**

It may not be to your liking.

And you’re sort of choking me now.

**BEARTHA**

Speak!! NOW!!

**MAMA**

My nipples twitch, my hair stands on end,

Every bit of spit inside my mouth dries up,

My eyes pop open, and what do I see?

The after-image of your father

Burned into my retina.

He was beyond quick.

I woke up singed and pregnant.

Nine months to the day,

You popped out, loaded, as they used to say,

For Bear.

Hence, your name.

**BEARTHA**

What he look like?

**MAMA**

You just don’t get it, do you?

Your father was a bolt of lightning, baby.

It split the egg inside me and started cell division.

You see, no sperm has ever touched you,

From inception to this very second.

You’re all female.

And all mine.

In fact, you’re me, my replicant.

**BEARTHA**

Well, that be the worst news I have ever fucking heard.

[**BEARTHA** drops **MAMA** and exits]

**MAMA**

My chair! Beartha! Don’t leave me!

[Beat. **BEARTHA** doesn’t return]

Well, isn’t this just perfect, then.

[**CLOVIS** enters, carrying a rifle]

**MAMA**

You come back?

**CLOVIS**

Succintly put. But you always were the better poet of the two. Must be where I got it.

**MAMA**

Who’s there now?

**CLOVIS**

Your son.

**MAMA**

Redmond?

[No answer]

Clovis?

**CLOVIS**

Good guess.

But you may not operate my name--

I think that even you, in your supreme absorption in yourself, could see the writing on the wall--you defaulted, Mum.

**MAMA**

Help me.

**CLOVIS**

Why? I’m interested in your reply.

**MAMA**

Because I’m--I’m--goddamit all to hell--I’m helpless.

**CLOVIS**

I was helpless once. You didn’t help me.

And yet it was your, if not vocation, ***job***,

Proscribed by Nature and the Law.

**MAMA**

Where you been living--the Planet of the Lawyers? And the Moralists?

**CLOVIS**

I live alone and have for many years, thanks, Mum.

**MAMA**

You can’t just let me lie here. I have bugs in my pants, and I can’t do nothin’ about it.

**CLOVIS**

Poor bugs. Hard knocks for them.

But their life is Hell, anyway.

**MAMA**

Clovis, my baby, please. Mama is begging you.

[She starts to cry]

**CLOVIS**

Tears is interesting. No one ever knowed why we cry. Humans cry more than any of the other creatures on this lonely rock. We have these ducts--and they is there to wet the eyes for the health of the eyes. Yet, yet, misery in here--

[his heart]

--or here--

[his head]

--will, in fact, cause water to pour out of these ducts and fall down the face.

**MAMA**

You sound exactly like Rainy now. Before you sounded like Redmond.

**CLOVIS**

My vocabulary and syntax transmutes as it needs to, Mater. I needs must speak many languages to achieve my end.

**MAMA**

What end?

**CLOVIS**

Not yet.

Now when you lost me in that game, you had said, “I bet my first-born son,” so you could finish out your hand. Being attached to your teat, I could see the cards and I could spy that it was to an inside straight you were betting me, and I knew that the odds was zero to one you’d draw the card you needed which was a nine. And you drew a four, I gasped, dropped the nipple, and that was the last taste of love I knew. And it wasn’t even love--just calcium and fat and breast sweat .

**MAMA**

That game was fixed! I filed an objection through the proper authorities. I DID!

**CLOVIS**

So when the little, skinny man in the polymer-based fabric jumpsuit picked me up, I looked at you and you’re negotiating a drink. I said then, to myself, “Entre nous, baby self, we won’t be activating these here ducts for this mean, narcissistic old harridan because she doesn’t deserve to see anything I produce, even salty water, until I can come back as a big man and show her my complete disregard and lack of feeling for her -- And I’m proud to say I have perfected indifference.

You’re a really bad print of a bad moving picture show that I’ve fallen asleep in front of and you yammer on and on. And now I’m going to turn you off.”

[He aims the rifle at her]

**MAMA**

Is that the Z-2400?

**CLOVIS**

Dunno.

**MAMA**

You’re holding it wrong. The kickback’ll put you on your ass ‘bout twelve axe-handles from where you’re standing.

**CLOVIS**

***Shut your gaping tooth cave you old reptilian!!!***

**MAMA**

Indifference *gone.*

Safety’s on.

**CLOVIS**

***How does it work??!!!!***

**MAMA**

Need a code.

**CLOVIS**

No, I don’t.

[**CLOVIS** grabs the rifle by the barrel and raises it as a club to beat **MAMA** with the stock end. Just then, **RAINY** comes in and sees him]

**RAINY**

You!

[**CLOVIS** drops the rifle and goes right to **RAINY** and picks her up, staring at her. **CHET** picks up the rifle]

**RAINY**

Put me down!!

**CLOVIS**

[still holding her and looking into her eyes]

I can see myself in your eyes.

[With the butt of the rifle, **CHET** hits **CLOVIS** in the back of his knees. **CLOVIS** collapses, drops **RAINY**, who escapes and goes to **MAMA** and tries to help her up]

**MAMA**

Chet--Chet, at least look at me!

**RAINY**

Come on, Mama. We gots to clear out!

[**CHET** refuses to look at **MAMA**, but is distracted long enough for **CLOVIS** to grab **CHET** and drag him offstage]

**RAINY**

Chettttt! Noooo!

**CLOVIS**

[offstage as he beats on **CHET**]

Where would ***I*** have learned love? At whose scraggy knee?? Huh? Eh? What? Come AGAIN????

**MAMA**

Noooooo! Stop him!!

**CLOVIS**

[offstage]

There now. There. All right.

**RAINY**

[rushing offstage]

Chet? Chet?! Where are you? The maniac’s gone? Chet?

[Offstage now, we hear her as she realizes the extent of Chet’s injuries]

No. No.

No. Chet.

[**MAMA** crawls and manages to get herself back into her wheelchair]

**MAMA**

Rainy! Stay clear of that psychopath I popped out of my womb lo these tooo many years ago!

[**RAINY** enters, blood on her, and carrying something--some prosthetic part of **CHET**--wrapped in some piece of clothing of hers]

**MAMA**

What do you have there? In your arms? Rainy?

**RAINY**

No--don’t look.

**MAMA**

What is it? Rainy, I’m a warrior. I’m a killer, baby.

**RAINY**

It’s bad, Mama.

**MAMA**

I have layers, baby. If that’s my insane progeny, I’ll endure. I’d nearly forgotten that I loved him, anyway.

Stop crying--let’s view the damage.

**RAINY**

[opening her arms for **MAMA** to see]

So sorry, Mama.

**MAMA**

Chet?

**RAINY**

Not all of him. Most of him is back in there.

**MAMA**

My baby fish? My Rico?

What have they done to you?

Chet? Chet! *Noooooooo!*

I’ll kill ‘em! I will kill them!!!

Wait--who? Who am I killing?

**RAINY**

Him, Mama. The new one.

**MAMA**

Just when you think you could stand it if Cain kills Abel,

He goes and fucking kills Bathsheba!!!!

How am I supposed to survive when they keep shifting stories on me?!! Huh?

**RAINY**

I’m sorry, so sorry about Chet. I was just beginning to care about someone other than you, Mama.

**MAMA**

[to herself]

All right. All right. No foundering--no time for grief.

If these dipilitized primates on this twirling rock took all the time they needed to grieve their way to mental health,

we would have never progressed past the fall of Nineveh--

we’d be piled up outside the walls of rubble and bawled ourselves into a salty grave.

[Finally has heard what **RAINY** said]

What do you mean, care about someone other than me?

**RAINY**

It is possible. Never knowed it before.

**MAMA**

Gather him up. Gather him up. Gather up my baby fish.

**RAINY**

Are we going to. . .Bury him?

**MAMA**

Bury him? No! *Hell*, no! We’re taking him to Redmond!

**RAINY**

Why? And Redmond’s with, you know, Father.

**MAMA**

Don’t sweat the small stuff.

Redmond fixed Chet once--he can again.

**RAINY**

But didn’t that bashing do too much?

**MAMA**

Can you turn off that overactive brain for once and just follow an order???

Let’s go. You drive.

[They exit offstage to gather what is left of **CHET**, **RAINY** pushing **MAMA** in her wheelchair]

[end of scene]

[Scene Four. **CLOVIS** enters, carrying the bloodied rifle]

**CLOVIS**

I’ve done it now. They’ll never love me.

I’ll never find a home, I’ll never be one of them.

I need an exoskeleton, instead I’m hard inside

And gooey on the surface, hurt so easily, uncontrollable.

This metamorphosis is incomplete.

I emerged before I was ready, cooked,

Before Old Dog was finished with me.

[Beating himself on the skin]

What good is this? It doesn’t cover anything!

And look, it bruises!

[**BEARTHA** enters]

**BEARTHA**

‘Lo.

**CLOVIS**

We’re out of toads. . .Today.

**BEARTHA**

No tongue from you! I come to see the Old Man.

**CLOVIS**

Not your old man.

He don’t know ye.

**BEARTHA**

I want to make a deal.

**CLOVIS**

What you got to barter?

**BEARTHA**

I can fight good.

And I don’t never give up.

**CLOVIS**

We’re not at war.

[SOUNDS of gunshots from the ramparts]

**BEARTHA**

You be lying.

**CLOVIS**

Target practice.

Old man’s teaching Younger Bro to shoot.

**BEARTHA**

Redmond has a gun?

Get out of the way!

Does he know which end to shoot and which to hold?

He usually can’t keep that straight.

And then there’s all that crying he do.

**CLOVIS**

Men be stupid, don’t you think?

Girls be the better mammal, right?

**BEARTHA**

You sound familiar, of a sudden.

**CLOVIS**

I’m your familiar, witchy girl.

You ever traded breath with someone?

**BEARTHA**

What do you want?

**CLOVIS**

To breathe what’s deep inside of you.

**BEARTHA**

No way. Get back. You’re. . .Close to me.

No one gets close to me. Before your tongue--

*I ain’t been touched since I was born!*

**CLOVIS**

Then it’s time.

**BEARTHA**

You’re my brother.

**CLOVIS**

Maybe not. And then it’s only half.

**BEARTHA**

I don’t think I like you anymore.

**CLOVIS**

You never did--no problem.

**BEARTHA**

What are you doing?

**CLOVIS**

You smell. . .Spicey, loamy--

Like the earth in fall.

[**CLOVIS** blows his breath around her neck, then up her cheek, then touches noses with her. **BEARTHA** grabs him, kisses him passionately, loses control, then wrestles him down to the ground and lays on top of him]

**BEARTHA**

[nearly hyperventillating]

You’re mine. You’re mine. You’re mine. You’re mine.

[**FATHER** enters with a bag, in time to pull **BEARTHA** off **CLOVIS**]

**FATHER**

Get off of him, you female Bison!

**BEARTHA**

Mine! Mine! Mine! Miiiiiiiiiine!!!

**FATHER**

Are you all right, my son?

**CLOVIS**

She’s carnivorous!

I wasn’t doing anything--she ambushed me.

**BEARTHA**

Don’t leave me--I just found you!!!

Noooooo!

[**FATHER** hauls **BEARTHA** offstage tying her up. **REDMOND** enters, covered in blood, carrying his rifle like it’s a baby. He’s in shock]

**CLOVIS**

I see that you been blooded, finally.

It had to happen, Brother Redmond.

**REDMOND**

We got revenge--you know what that is--

Or something, something terrible we got.

[**FATHER** re-enters, goes to the bag he brought in, reaches in and takes out three severed heads of women, shows them to **CLOVIS**]

**FATHER**

It takes three to capture, place the victim, pump the semen,

So three we took--no idea if any of them’s the right ones.

But the score is settled. Order can return.

They won’t be bothering us again,

Unless we want them to.

So, you see, my sons, power is a real thing

And it’s got to be in the right hands.

Redmond did the honors-- the ladies thank you.

[**FATHER** holds the heads up to **REDMOND** and has them nod. **REDMOND** exits quickly. We hear him retching offstage]

**FATHER**

[to **CLOVIS**]

He’ll make it. Still I’m glad you’re heir.

And he’s the spare.

It’s strange, you don’t resemble either one of us--

The Bitch Queen Of The Damned or me.

Do you remember anything?

**CLOVIS**

Everything.

The stench of the car-bound cities,

The noxious clouds that followed us,

The flaming lakes we passed,

The burning of the books and then the woodwork in the libraries.

The crowd of locusts we became.

The trucks and cars that sat abandoned

And we lived in them.

That trailer full of rancid peanut butter we found.

And we were *thankful,* but to whom, we wondered.

The same god who clearly dropped the threads some time ago and we just noticed, thinking all that slack was freedom?

**FATHER**

How can you know all that?

You were in the womb then, Son.

**CLOVIS**

Babies know everything. And when we’re born, you shut our mouths right here--see the indentation on the upper lip?

**FATHER**

Where have you been?

What happened to you?

**CLOVIS**

That’s the question I would ask of you.

**FATHER**

I survived. So did your mother.

So did your brother and your sister

And that barbarian I pulled off of you.

I smell a judgment, Boy.

Are you critical of your old dad?

**CLOVIS**

You’re covered in blood and are holding

Three severed heads of women.

A father’s day card you’re not.

[**CLOVIS** exits]

**FATHER**

You’re our son, all right!

You’ve got our sense of humor!

[Addressing one of the severed heads]

What are you lookin’ at?

[To the other severed heads]

You, too.

All of you, stop staring!

[**FATHER** exits]

[End of scene]

[Scene Five. **BEARTHA** is captive and tied up where **FATHER** put her. **REDMOND** is dunking his body in a tub of water, washing the puke and blood off]

**REDMOND**

It’s just so--it’s just so horrifying. When I think about it, I just get--I just want to kill myself.

**BEARTHA**

That’s always been your problem, Red, that thinking stuff.

**REDMOND**

When I think about the time I was a virgin, I could cry.

Because I really was a virgin in so many ways.

We hated each other, but we were nicer people.

**BEARTHA**

I’m still a virgin, Bro.

**REDMOND**

I’m afraid to let you go. I’m scared of them. And me! I’m scared of me now! When I think about what I must become.

**BEARTHA**

Stop thinking! Use your instinct.

**REDMOND**

My instinct is to run and hide.

**BEARTHA**

Oh, right. Well, use mine then.

**REDMOND**

I want to be a good and loyal son.

I want to be a man.

**BEARTHA**

You’ll get there.

**REDMOND**

Where would that be that I am getting?

And do I really want to be there?

**BEARTHA**

Someone has to run the world, Red.

Why not you? So toughen up--I’d rather you than Mama or our carnivorous father--oops I keep forgetting, he’s not mine. A little murder, mayhem--what’s that in all of human history?

**REDMOND**

Beartha, you don’t know history.

You’ve never read a book.

**BEARTHA**

It doesn’t have to be written in a book to happen.

**REDMOND**

You’re being awfully nice to me.

**BEARTHA**

There’s nothing else to do.

Can’t torture Rainy--she’s not here.

Me mum is crazy, as well as absent.

Your dad I thought was my dad, too, won’t look at me.

Me dad’s a thunderbolt--he’s no fun.

And Clovis--can’t be near him without thoughts of sweet and gentle cannibalism.

You’re my only friend--and isn’t that, that, that thing you’re always pointing out. That thing, you know, that thing--

**REDMOND**

Ironic.

**BEARTHA**

Yeah. Ironic. Big time, Bro.

[End of Scene]

[Scene Six. **RAINY** and **MAMA.**  **MAMA** still has **CHET** in a bag]

**MAMA**

Something major bad went down here.

Blood mixed in the mud, don’t like it.

Shit! I’m stuck!

**RAINY**

Hand me Chet. And then I’ll push you.

[**MAMA** hands the bag to **RAINY**. **RAINY** puts the bag down in a safe place and tries pushing **MAMA** in her wheelchair, but with no luck]

**MAMA**

Let’s face it. I am stuck.

**RAINY**

But I can’t leave you—

**[Rainy enters** reluctantly leaving **MAMA**, carrying the bag of **CHET** with her]

**MAMA**

Have Redmond make him cute again!

[End of scene]

[Scene Seven. REDMOND’S tent. **REDMOND** is there, disconsolately playing with his cogitator]

**REDMOND**

All that simple childhood stuff. Gone.

[**RAINY** enters]

**RAINY**

Redmond?

**REDMOND**

Rainy? Rain--how are you? Where is Mama?

**RAINY**

She’s stuck in the mud.

**REDMOND**

I’ll help you get her out--wait, no.

I can’t. I’m working for the other side now.

**RAINY**

[Hands him the bag of **CHET**]

It’s *this* Rainy come for help with. Be careful.

[**REDMOND** opens the bag, looks in, recoils]

**RAINY**

It’s Chet.

**REDMOND**

Oh my. This all of him?

**RAINY**

Yeah. Mama said you’ve fixed him good before.

**REDMOND**

My whole life--this has been my project.

**RAINY**

He, Chet, said your soldering’s protuberant.

**REDMOND**

Well, some of it was--the early efforts--before I got more expert at it.

**RAINY**

But Chet thinks he’s *your* father.

**REDMOND**

Don’t you get it? Chet’s in an epic and he’s the center of it. We’re fortunate in that we *know* we’re peripheral.

[Looks in the bag]

Oh my.

**FATHER**

[calls from offstage]

Redmond, son, time for saber drill!

[**RAINY** panics, finds a place to hide]

**REDMOND**

I wish that were Chet’s voice. Am I having a sentimental moment? Slap me!

Rainy?

I’ll need your help to hold the light.

**FATHER**

[enters]

Hop to, my son!

**REDMOND**

Where’s Clovis?

**FATHER**

We had a spat--quite touching, since it was the first.

He thinks I’m Hitler. I hit him up side the head, “I’m STALIN!” Know your thugs, I said.

[Producing the saber]

Hand-to-hand combat, my son. That’s real fighting.

[Marches **REDMOND** off]

One, two, three, four--

[They exit. **RAINY** comes out of hiding, sits and waits for a few beats, then lies down on the bedding, instinctively hugging the bag of  **CHET** to her. **CLOVIS** enters]

**RAINY**

No!

**CLOVIS**

What’s in the bag?

[He tries to take it from **RAINY** and succeeds]

**CLOVIS**

This debris look quite familiar.

It has the mark of rage on it--

I see, it’s mine--my rage.

**RAINY**

[wrenching the bag back from him]

Leave it alone. It doesn’t belong to you.

**CLOVIS**

You’ll bond with anything but me.

Even junk.

**RAINY**

Chet isn’t junk.

**CLOVIS**

I still see myself dancing in your eyes.

**RAINY**

You remember dancing--Rainy don’t.

**CLOVIS**

What do you remember?

**RAINY**

Pain.

**CLOVIS**

Not a bit of pleasure, then?

Not one moment?

**RAINY**

The whole thing only took a moment.

Once the pain was there--it stayed.

**CLOVIS**

I had to do it.

**RAINY**

Why?

**CLOVIS**

I have to mate before I die.

**RAINY**

You’re dying?

**CLOVIS**

Yes. Aren’t you?

**RAINY**

Rainy hopes--not yet.

**CLOVIS**

See? It’s more than sand in your shoe.

**RAINY**

What?

**CLOVIS**

You don’t remember? *Hope.*

You still have some,

Now give me that. I broke him.

I will fix him. Do you doubt that I’m a genius?

**RAINY**

Rainy doubts that being a genius makes you good.

**CLOVIS**

If you don’t have anything, you can’t lose it. So every step from here on is easy--I know that. I need your hope. So does Chet. ‘Fraid?

**RAINY**

All the time. Particularly of you.

**CLOVIS**

Clovis understands that.

**RAINY**

Now you’re talking like Chet.

**CLOVIS**

I was trying to sound like you.

**RAINY**

Who *are* you?

**MAMA**

**[offstage]**

*Goddammit!*

RAINY

Mama’s coming

[**RAINY** exits reluctantly with **CLOVIS]**

[End of Scene]

[Scene Nine. **MAMA** enters in her chair, but it tips over, lying on its side]

**MAMA**

*Goddammit all to hell. Goddammit! Shit! Goddammitt!*

[**FATHER** enters, bloody, holding his side--he sits on the dirt]

**FATHER**

I miss the dirt. I want to go back. I belong there.

**MAMA**

Help me up.

**FATHER**

I can’t.

**MAMA**

*I’m not armed.*

**FATHER**

Not armed? What about your voice? What about your opinions? What about what you know about me and never let me forget?

**MAMA**

I’ll be quiet--just help me up.

**FATHER**

I can’t.

**MAMA**

Oh, you always were such a stubborn prick. We can only do something, be it slap the children, eat, have sex, get me up off the ground, when it’s your idea, when you’re damn ready to!

**FATHER**

See? You couldn’t keep your big trap shut for a second, for a breath, could you?

[MANY beats of silence]

Well?

**MAMA**

I’m quiet. Help me up now?

**FATHER**

I can’t. I’m bleeding to death.

**MAMA**

Always an excuse.

**FATHER**

I turned Redmond into a man and he killed me.

**MAMA**

Always exaggerating.

**FATHER**

Look.

**MAMA**

I can’t see. Help me up.

**FATHER**

I can’t help you up. I’m mortally wounded.

Look!

**MAMA**

I can’t see!

[She sees him]

Oh my god, you look awful.

**FATHER**

Always late to get the fucking point.

**MAMA**

And now my neck has a crick in it!

**FATHER**

I’m dying, Flora.

**MAMA**

You’re not, Ed.

**FATHER**

You never believed a single thing I told you.

**MAMA**

Including “I love you.”

**FATHER**

When the hell did I say that?

**MAMA**

Right before the shovel hit your forehead.

[Beat]

When our first child was born.

**FATHER**

The one you lost.

**MAMA**

The one you gave away.

**FATHER**

The man was going to kill you.

**MAMA**

This old history’s boring.

Lies and excuses--we’re both hopeless.

**FATHER**

We’re not hopeless--we just killed it in our children.

Hope.

**MAMA**

Oh, that. Who needs it.

[Long beat]

**FATHER**

We do.

**MAMA**

You are right, Sir.

You are correct, although it pains me to admit it.

**FATHER**

I want to live.

**MAMA**

I want to move.

**FATHER**

If you really cared, you could get over here.

I know your arms still work!

**MAMA**

You may be bleeding, but you’re ambulatory!

Suck it in and get over here.

**FATHER**

Always your needs first!

**MAMA**

Who had all the children!? Who had all the pain!?

**FATHER**

I’m hemorrhaging!

**MAMA**

I’m suffocating!

**FATHER**

[looking up at the sky]

What’s that? What’s this stuff? Ash? Is something still burning? Is something left to burn.

**MAMA**

It’s snow. It’s fucking goddam snowing.

**FATHER & MAMA**

Isn’t that just perfect then.

Stop copying me!

You, stop copying me.

This is hell.

Leave me alone!

I would if I could!

Stop--

You--

Stop--

Leave me alone!!!

[End of scene]

[Scene Ten. Lights up on **CHET’s** face, eyes suddenly open]

**CHET**

Did you hear someone shouting?

**RAINY**

Chet! Look at you!!

Clovis fixed you--as much as possible, that is.

**CHET**

I have bad data on this Clovis person.

Wait--he trashed me.

**RAINY**

Rainy held the light and watched, made sure everything was there and got put back where it belonged. You have a beautiful heart--it’s made of something shiny and flexible. It was made someplace with no vowels. You were born with your eyes. And your head and neck and torso and lovey bits. Inside you have a beautiful liver. And your stomach and alimentary canal are most excellent. Rainy’s not sure what an alimentary canal is but Clovis seems pleased. I want you to know I love you. And although I don’t believe in Dog or any Divine Thing, and I know Clovis don’t--in fact he’s hostile to the notion--he said it would take a miracle for everything to work together right. But I’m proud to go with you anywhere you want to go I hope it’s with me.

**CHET**

I accept your offer of a life

With you beside me as my wife.

**RAINY**

Un-oh, memory cache booted up. What’s that from?

**CHET**

I made it up. For you. On the spot. Right now.

**RAINY**

That’s the best poem I ever heard.

**CHET**

I felt something. On my head. A snowflake.

**RAINY**

We’d better leave soon.

We’re going to the city of New Work--the big hole.

Winter’s coming and Red Snake is there.

She’s warm, being pure fire.

**CHET**

Where is Clovis?

**RAINY**

As soon as you were fixed, I got us out of there.

He’s so unstable.

[**RAINY** pushes **CHET** on his wheels and they exit]

[End of scene]

Scene Eleven

[**CLOVIS** is huddled, wrapped in a blanket]

**CLOVIS**

The snow’s coming--I have ‘til spring.

I hoped to get more accomplished.

I won’t be recognizable to them by then.

I feel a softening just everywhere.

[**BEARTHA** enters]

**BEARTHA**

I won’t bother you. I’m just. . .lonely.

**CLOVIS**

Where is Redmond?

**BEARTHA**

Practicing--it’s scary.

[**REDMOND** appears above them, practicing with scimtar and saber]

**BEARTHA**

He’ll catch his death. No shirt on--jeez.

**CLOVIS**

“Catch his death”--we’re speak so strangely.

**BEARTHA**

What are those lumps over there, covered with snow?

**CLOVIS**

Dead Amazons, I reckon. Or our parents.

[Long beat as they look at the snow-covered lumps]

**BEARTHA**

Maybe we should get them out.

[Another long beat]

**CLOVIS**

Let them hibernate. They need the downtime.

**BEARTHA**

Us, too?

[**BEARTHA** squats and watches **CLOVIS**, adoringly]

[end of scene]

[Scene Twelve. The pit that is the City of New Work. **RAINY** is pregnant and showing. **CHET** is sitting on the ground and she is with him]

**CHET**

I’ve loved this time with you, Rainy.

**RAINY**

Rainy’s loved the time with you, too, Chet.

**CHET**

You are Rainy.

**RAINY**

Rainy knows that.

**CHET**

We have to work on this.

**RAINY**

Rainy knows that, too.

I love you, Chet.

**CHET**

[about her use of the personal pronoun, “I”]

See? That’s where you are.

**RAINY**

It’s getting cold.

**CHET**

That’s because Red Snake is getting smaller.

**RAINY**

Yes.

**[RAINY** picks up a small baby, wrapped in bubble wrap.]

**CHET**

I wish the child were mine.

**RAINY**

It could be. Mayhaps.

**CHET**

He got there first--I doubt it.

I always liked you, Rainy.

Now I love you.

I’m not much of a man.

**RAINY**

Not true. Besides, the standard model didn’t do so well by me.

**CHET**

What shall I do? I want to do something! Something fabulous and helpful! What? Whatwhatwhat?

[He moves toward her and holds her]

**RAINY**

I want to go home.

**CHET**

Where is that, Rainy?

**RAINY**

With my family.

**CHET**

You’ve go to be kidding.

**RAINY**

No, I’m not.

**CHET**

You’re saying “I”.

**RAINY**

It’s cold and we’re going home.

[End of Scene]

[Scene Thirteen. Ramparts. **CLOVIS** and **BEARTHA** are covered with snow--they haven’t moved in months. Suddenly, **CLOVIS** wakes up]

**CLOVIS**

Good morning.

Near them are the parents, **MAMA** and **FATHER**, looking hoary from their hibernation. **FATHER’S** wound is still there but frozen shut. **BEARTHA** is still watching **CLOVIS** who has become one with his blanket, looking pupa-like. There is no sign of **REDMOND**]

**FATHER**

[to **MAMA**]

Are you going to ask? Why do I always have to ask?

**MAMA**

[to **FATHER**]

We’ve never asked before--this is the first.

**BEARTHA**

Let me ask.

**CLOVIS**

They’re fighting over who will ask the gender of the child.

**RAINY**

It’s a--No. I’m not going to tell you.

We all feel the same at this moment--nobody’s disappointed, nobody’s secretly smug or downright crowing.

This child is a child, period.

[smiles, looks at **CHET**

Then **REDMOND** enters, with his saber. He’s a lean, mean fighting machine, oiled and ready for war]

**REDMOND**

What’s happened to all of you?

Look at this wretched creche scene!

I miss our nihilism--it was what made this family solid.

[**BEARTHA** stands and faces him]

**BEARTHA**

Bro--it’s time to give it up.

[**REDMOND** makes a lunge to kill the baby. Light change and sound of a power change, as if the universe were run by a dynamo--time slows down. **BEARTHA** grabs a weapon and fights with **REDMOND**. **REDMOND** overpowers her, and **CLOVIS** steps in to protect her. **REDMOND** easily pushes him aside and heads back toward the baby.]

**MAMA**

Ed?

**FATHER**

I. . .Can’t. . .Move.

**MAMA**

Redmond, this is Mother! Stop it!

[**REDMOND** flinches but keeps on moving.

**RAINY**

Redmond? If you touch this child--I swear on the sanctity of Dog and the life of Red Snake, ***I will kill you.***

**REDMOND**

You won’t be able to.

I’m killing it and then myself.

You all think you love each other.

Well, I’ve spent too many nights alone to believe that.

I know the truth.

You need each other and

you pretty up this need and call it love,

But that’s all love is--need in a dress!!

[**REDMOND** raises his saber to kill the baby]

**MAMA**

David? David? DAVIIIIIIIIIIDDDDDDD!!!!!!

[**CHET** steps off his wheeled contraption and with great effort and no little pain stands as a man, **DAVID**. He grabs BEARTHA’S weapon and flings himself in front of **RAINY** and the baby. Just as **REDMOND** is about to kill him, **CLOVIS** comes between the saber and **DAVID** and takes the blow. **CLOVIS** collapses and **REDMOND** drops his saber]

**REDMOND**

Why did you do that?

**CLOVIS**

Needed to.

Open me, Beartha--gently.

[**BEARTHA** leans down and puts her hands on **CLOVIS’s** body. They watch in wonder]

**FATHER**

Was that our boy?

**MAMA**

I think so.

**DAVID** (**CHET**)

I’ve never seen anything like it.

**RAINY**

Neither have I.

**REDMOND**

I think something good finally happened.

We mustn’t forget it.

I don’t trust myself anymore--

So you remember it, Beartha.

**BEARTHA**

Don’t worry, Bro. Beartha is ever-vigilant.

[**RAINY** walks towards an area where a light seems to be leading them]

**CHET/DAVID**

Rainy. . .Be careful. You’ve got the baby with you.

**MAMA**

He’s already telling her what to do.

**RAINY**

[too involved in what she sees ahead to hear him]

It’s--it’s way out I never saw before.

[**CHET** hands **MAMA** the baby and proceeds]

**CHET/DAVID**

Rainy! There’s a light and sounds--be careful!

**FATHER**

Flora, could it be--the world?

[Sound of music, sounds, human voices. A different light intrudes from a huge opening. They all approach the opening with wonder, excitement, dread]

**CHET**/**DAVID**

What if they’re fighting? What if there’s war? What if they’re the next evolutionary step?

**BEARTHA**

Bugs in suits.

**MAMA**

If they’re the next evolutionary step, they don’t know from suits. Or pants. They don’t know from anything we know.

**CHET/DAVID**

We could be slaves.

**BEARTHA**

We could be food.

**REDMOND**

We could be used for experiments.

**RAINY**

We could be homeless.

**FATHER**

We could be an Inca band in their subways.

**MAMA**

This damn baby has its hands around my throat! I’m telling you this baby is trying to kill me!

**RAINY**

[grabbing the baby]

This baby ain’t your apocalypse! This baby is hope!

**BEARTHA**

[to **REDMOND**]

RACE YOU TO THE LIGHT!!!

**REDMOND**

[to **FATHER**]

Wait a minim--you don’t get to go--you’re a murderer!

**FATHER**

You killed your brother.

**REDMOND**

You beheaded three women!

**FATHER**

Can we refrain from the rewriting of history for at least twenty four hours? You beheaded them.

**REDMOND**

After you killed them!

**RAINY**

[to **FATHER**]

You don’t get to go, old man.

You don’t get to go.

**FATHER**

You again.

**BEARTHA**

[To **FATHER**]

Yeah, we don’t need you. We’re starting over.

**FATHER**

But I’m--I’m--context, at the very least! I’m your father!

Flora?

**MAMA**

[Baby grabs her again]

I’m telling you, this infant is trying to KILL me!

**RAINY**

I have spoken.

[**RAINY** gets the baby and heads toward the light, turns to speak to **FATHER**]

**RAINY**

Sit.

[**FATHER** sits]

Stay.

[**FATHER** stays]

[**MAMA** tries to roll her wheelchair, gets very frustrated. **FATHER** stands up and quickly pushes **MAMA** in her wheelchair into the light, passing all the children before they can stop him. Sounds of the “world” swell as **REDMOND** and **BEARTHA** exit into it, afraid of whatever it holds for them. But **RAINY** and **CHET** are holding back—he is holding her as she holds the baby.]

**CHET**

Rainy—

**RAINY**

Come on, Chet.

**CHET**

I don’t know. . .

**RAINY**

Chet, it will be fine. It’ll be *better.*

[she looks toward the exit into the other world}

It’s new.

[Rainy slips on something]

Oo! Precarious.

[She hands the baby to CHET and then exits into the new place. **CHET** waits, holding the baby. He looks down at the baby in his arms, then back at the family compound]

**ALL OF THEM OFFSTAGE (in the new place)**

CHET!!

[He exits towards their voices with the baby and into the light. The sounds of a yet-again new world fills the house.]

***END OF PLAY***