

**THE MILLION BELLS OF OCEAN**

**a play  
by**

**Edward Mast**

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## **CHARACTERS**

As few as 5 Actors (3 m, 1 f, 1 m or f) portray:

Dad  
Matthew  
Tracy  
Adam

plus the following masked characters:

Phone  
Doorway  
Earwig  
Sandy  
Marty  
Clerk  
Bus Driver  
Carmen  
Clerk 2  
Neighbor  
Radio  
Refrigerator  
Cat  
Car  
Roy  
Carlos  
Bird  
Spider  
Puddle  
Fish  
Ocean

plus the following Voices:

Mom  
Pilot  
Copilot  
Thunder  
Police

Dad is the only character who does not double.

**SETTING**

Seattle, Los Angeles, Phoenix, and points in between

**TIME:**

July 5, 1993

THE MILLION BELLS OF OCEAN premiered at the American Theater Company in Chicago in 1998, directed by Brian Russell. The play was also produced in 2003 by Moving Arts in Los Angeles, directed by Kim Glann.

## PRODUCTION NOTES

Mainly a bare stage, with suggestions of a garage-turned-workshop. A table, several chairs and a vast motley pile of objects and materials. Dad will create the world of the play--as well as the various scene settings--out of these materials.

Part of the pile are several Attendants, all of whom wear simple eye-covering masks. The Attendants wear these masks while portraying all the characters in the play, with the exception of the four central characters: Matthew, Dad, Tracy, and Adam. When playing these four characters, actors do not wear masks.

The Attendants will also be used as scenery. At first, they are the instruments of Dad's designs. But soon and then throughout, they initiate changes and additions and sound effects and characters of their own. Sometimes Dad will be surprised by this; sometimes he will participate and make additions to their additions.

Dad's creations are inventions, kinetic sculptures, and works of art. They can take any form, can be in any medium the designers choose, but they are not silly Rube Goldberg devices.

When Dad is finished with a particular sculpture, he may take it apart and reuse the materials, or he may push it aside and start over, creating a forest of sculptures--in fact, one large sculpture--as the play goes on.

### Matthew's conversations with Dad:

Throughout the play, Matthew and Dad never make eye contact. Dad sometimes observes what Matthew does. Matthew almost never looks at Dad. They do not avoid looking at each other; they are not invisible to each other; they are simply so accustomed to each other that they don't need to watch one another while talking. The fact that they don't make eye contact--except for one moment specified in the script--must appear casual, inadvertant: they are always occupied with something else, or watching something else together.

## PROLOGUE

(No walls, no ceiling, but maybe an outline suggestion of structure. Maybe a drafting table at which Dad will sometimes sit sketching or planning. We are inside a huge unfinished sculpture, which is made of several smaller unfinished sculptures. The sculpture may be made of a limited palette of materials, or it may be a motley assemblage of different stuff. The materials for the sculpture lie about on the floor, hang from above, are stored all over. Many of them will be used. Some of them will not.

Also several neutral actors, masked.

As the audience enters, an old man--Dad--moves about amid this conglomeration. From the collection of material, the old man creates shapes, machines, things: sculptures, or inventions, some of which may have moving parts. He always has a thick shop pencil behind an ear or in his pocket. Sometimes he uses the pencil to tighten or pry something open; sometimes he sketches, marks or plans with it.

When his huge sculpture is finished, it will fill the stage. It is never, however, finished. He builds one section--which may be, for all intents and purposes, an independent work--and then stands back to look at it. Tries it out: sets it in motion. Observes it for a time. Is dissatisfied. Takes apart the section--or moves it aside--and starts over. Builds another. Finishes it. Observes it. Takes it apart, or moves it aside, and starts again. This goes on during the entire preshow.

He doesn't seem in a hurry. Sometimes he

whistles a little, softly, thoughtfully, toying with his breath as he considers something.

Sometimes he uses the neutral masked actors as part of a sculpture, employing them as any other material. They stand or sit still as he places them.)

**ACT ONE**

(As the house lights go down, Dad is fiddling with one section of a sculpture. He tinkers, and he stands back to look at it, and he tinkers some more, and adjusts one small attachment, and stands with hands in pockets looking at it, then tinkers some more.

He stops tinkering at one point, considers.)

DAD  
Or maybe Pythagoras.

(Thinks for a moment, continues tinkering. Continues tinkering quite a while.)

DAD  
Could be Pythagoras started it. Or maybe he was a link in the chain.

(Continues tinkering. Quite a while.)

DAD  
Kind of a segment himself.

(Continues tinkering. Quite a while.)

DAD  
Length of each segment the sum of the previous two. Three, then five, then eight, then thirteen, so on. The uh. The uh. Anh!  
(annoyed, checks a notebook)  
Fibonacci. Fibonacci series. Builds itself and you get the Golden Section.

(Continues tinkering. Quite a while.)

DAD  
So maybe Pythagoras. Or maybe he got it from somewhere else and passed it on. Then they passed it on. And finally gets to . . . uh . . . what's his name . . .  
(touches his work as if for a clue)  
. . . .Ahmed uh . . . Baba. Sounds like a fairytale name, Ahmed Baba and the Arabian Nights, but it's not. Lotta things sound like fairytales turn out to be true.

(He has turned away from the work to us; but a faceless attendant speaks with a voice we will later recognize as Tracy's.)

VOICE

. . . I can't feel my hands . . .

(Dad stops, sees her. She leaves. Dad frowns. Turns back to his work.)

DAD

What was I uh? Ohyeah. Ahmed Baba. In Timbuktu. Kingdom of. Dammit.. Sorry. Memory's pretty much . . .

(checks a notepad, perhaps at a table)

Songhay. Is that how you say it? Songhay Empire in West Africa, empire the size of Europe back when Europe was burning witches. Major industry in Timbuktu was the making and exporting of books. Gold and salt too, but books. And you never hear about that in school. Why not? Because schools are about control.

(As he begins to rant, he turns more attention to us and less to his work.)

DAD

Not gonna learn about African empires in school. Or the Celtic Empire. Or the League of Five Nations. Anymore than you hear about, what, about what they're doing to people right now in Burma. Or Guatemala, or whatsit, Gaza. All we hear is they burn down the library at Alexandria. Oops. Timbuktu is burnt and all its books are lost. Oops. Burning books in Germany in 1933. Oops. Burning books in New York City in 1957. US government. Guess we were asleep. Guess we were some kind of asleep, huh?

(A faceless attendant speaks with a voice we will later recognize as Adam's.)

VOICE

. . . if I could just fall asleep and wake up somebody else . . .

(Dad has turned to watch. The attendant leaves. Dad turns back to us.)

DAD

Sorry. I get uh, you know. Anyway. Anyway. I was uh . . . what was I . . . oh yeah. Ahmed Baba. Well Ahmed Baba, I mean they were doing eye surgery there, five hundred years ago, in Africa. Well Ahmed Baba, when he lived there and was head of the great library at Timbuktu, before they took him prisoner and he was never heard of again, Ahmed Baba --

(Enter a younger man--Matthew--buttoning the last buttons on his shirt, looking urgently for something.)



MATTHEW

OOokay, OOOokay, OOOOOOOokay, gotta be somewhere, some perfectly reasonably place, no reason to get *tense*, only an *idiot* would get upset over little thing like this.

DAD

Whatsamatter?

MATTHEW

Nothing, nothing. Just my wallet. URGGGGGGH! I just had it!

DAD

Take it easy.

MATTHEW

Just what I'm doing, taking it easy, even though I'm already *late*, even though they're always on my back about it, like it's some chronic problem or something.

DAD

Is it?

MATTHEW

Yeah probably. Come *on!* How many places could it be! I've got a big day ahead but obviously my *wallet*

(for the missing wallet to hear:)

doesn't notice how VERY LITTLE PATIENCE I HAVE WITH THIS SORT OF THING. Dammit! I pulled a receipt out of it, and I set it down . . . there.

(it's not there)

And then it sprouted legs and walked away. Good thing I never get ANGRY about this sort of thing.

DAD

(back at work by now)

Jalook in the kitchen?

MATTHEW

That'd be a stupid place for it. (considers; then:) I'll look in the kitchen.

(Goes to look. Attendant holds up a phone, which rings.)

PHONE

Brrrinnng!

MATTHEW

Sorry, whoever you are.

(He leaves.)

PHONE

Brrrinnng! Click.

(A woman's voice.)

WOMAN

Matthew? This is your mother. Are you there?

(pause)

Pick up please if you're there.

(Pause. Matthew comes in with wallet in hand; stands looking at machine, tapping the wallet on his hand, deciding whether or not to pick up. The attendant holds the phone close to him.)

WOMAN

It's important, dear.

(pause)

Call us right away when you get this. We're at the hospital number. Room 311. Alright? I hope you get this soon, dear. You need to call us right away--

(Matthew decides to pick up the phone.)

MATTHEW

Hello hello I'm here.

MOM

Hello dear.

MATTHEW

Hi Mom, I'm sorry, I was on my way out the door. What's the deal?

MOM

Well dear, the doctors have decided he's. Um. Not going to make it.

(pause)

The surgery was fine, but his lungs are just not strong enough to recover. He hasn't come back out of it at all, not that we're certain of. They've tried and given him every chance, and they just don't think he's going to come through it.

(Dad has taken a brief interest in this, but then goes back to work, working quietly through the following.)

MATTHEW

Oh. (pause) So that's it?

MOM

Yes I think so. We could put him on some kind of machine so he could breathe, but he'd probably be on it forever.

MATTHEW

Like an iron lung or something?

MOM

I guess so. They don't think he'd come out of it anyway. It would just be keeping him alive. So we've pretty much. We'll I've decided not to do it. He wouldn't want that.

MATTHEW  
No, he wouldn't. You're right. Are you okay?

MOM  
I'mmmmm okay. It's hard.

MATTHEW  
Yeah.

MOM  
Pat and Terry are here, and Marian flew out yesterday. So I have lots of help.

MATTHEW  
Good. So. Uh.

MOM  
They're saying 24 or maybe 36 hours, dear.

MATTHEW  
Uh-huh. From when?

MOM  
About now. They can't tell for sure of course.

MATTHEW  
Yeah.

MOM  
He's holding on. He's got a very strong heart, they say. He was mostly in very good health.

MATTHEW  
24 hours. Okay.

MOM  
Can you . . .

MATTHEW  
Hm?

MOM  
Can you come down dear?

MATTHEW  
I uh--

(Matthew suddenly flings something off the phone with a grunt.)

MOM  
What?

MATTHEW

Nothing. How'd an earwig get on the phone? I hate bugs.

EARWIG

You better go.

MATTHEW

What?

EARWIG

Whaddya, too busy? You better go.

(Earwig disappears. Matthew stares after it.)

MOM

Dear?

MATTHEW

Huh?

MOM

Can you come down?

MATTHEW

Yeah. Course I can. Yeah. I don't know how soon.

MOM

Okay dear. They don't know exactly.

MATTHEW

Yeahyeahyeah. How's Pat? And the kids?

MOM

Oh it's very hard for her. They were just getting to know each other, you know.

MATTHEW

Yeah.

MOM

Since we all moved out here.

MATTHEW

Yeah. Alright, lemme find out how soon I can uh.

MOM

Alright dear. I know it's a headache.

MATTHEW

It is a little, but that's okay. I'll call back.

MOM

Matthew, do you want to ummm.

MATTHEW

What?

MOM

They don't know exactly what's going to happen. And we don't know if he can hear us. But it could be any time now.

MATTHEW

Uh-huh?

MOM

If you want, I can take the telephone into the room. If you want to say anything to him.

MATTHEW

Over the phone?

MOM

If you want. He might hear you.

MATTHEW

Hm.

MOM

I've been reading to him for days. I think he probably hears me.

MATTHEW

Hm. Noo, I don't need to, Mom. I'll get there in time.

MOM

Okay dear. I just wanted you to be sure.

MATTHEW

We'll be fine. We had a good talk at Christmastime.

MOM

Yes you did.

MATTHEW

So I'm caught up. I'll just get there, okay?

MOM

Alright dear.

MATTHEW

Alright. I'll call back. I love you.

MOM

I love you dear. I think we're making the right choice.

MATTHEW

Yes you're right. I'll call back. Bye.

Bye. MOM

(Hangs up. Click. Matthew sits. Stares.)

MATTHEW  
Well. Whaddya know about that. What the hell do you know about that. (pause)  
This is a bad time, Dad. You couldn't wait a week? This is a very bad time.

DAD  
(without looking up from his work)  
Think I like it? You don't have to come.

MATTHEW  
Right.

DAD  
Nobody's asking you to come.

MATTHEW  
Whatm I, gonna miss it?

DAD  
Nothing much to see. Just lying there. Tubes up my nose and such. They'll probably takes pictures if you ask.

MATTHEW  
Oh stop. I'm just whining.

(Dad has reached a noisy stage of work.  
Matthew listens.)

MATTHEW  
What's this one called?

DAD  
I dunno yet.

MATTHEW  
How's it work?

DAD  
Redirects the energy through the ah.

MATTHEW  
Field.

DAD  
Yeah.

MATTHEW  
Transmutational field.

Yeah. DAD

So what's it do? MATTHEW

You know how many people go to bed hungry every night? DAD

No. MATTHEW  
(nodding)

About a billion. You know how many species of animals disappear every day? DAD

Unh-unh. MATTHEW

About ten. You know how much Plutonium 239 they've already buried in the ground and dumped in the ocean? DAD

Unh-unh. MATTHEW

Neither do I. Nobody knows. Radioactive for 24,000 years. DAD

Is this the one that's gonna fix all that? MATTHEW

*Something* better. DAD  
(stands back a little, gazes at the work)

Dad? MATTHEW

Hm? DAD

Does it . . . hurt? Or anything? MATTHEW

Nah. Not hardly. DAD  
(thinks)

Are you scared? MATTHEW

DAD  
(pauses)

Maybe. I don't know. Not of, you know.

MATTHEW

Of what then?

DAD

(shakes head a little, at a loss; then:)

Maybe of not finishing. Seems like there's maybe just one missing piece . . .

(Behind and above him, a single, clear, high-toned bell is rung once. Dad looks around, surprised.)

MATTHEW

I'll get there soon as I can.

DAD

Whatever.

MATTHEW

I guess I'm not going in today.

(Matthew stands up to leave, starts walking away. Stops, stands still. Dad notices.)

DAD

What are you doing?

MATT

Being sad. That's all. I think I'll just be sad for a little while.

(He leaves.  
Dad looks after him.  
The high-toned bell rings again, once, from above.  
From above, a Doorway is lowered down onto the stage. Self-standing, open, no door in it. Made of similar material as the rest of the sculptures. When it is on the ground, the bell rings again. Dad stares. He walks toward the Doorway. Stands looking at it. He backs away from it. Turns to us, urgently.)

DAD

Anyway, this Ahmed Baba, in Timbuktu --

(The bell from the Doorway rings once. Dad doesn't turn to look, but instead presses on.)



## DAD

1500 books he had. At home I mean. Not the big library, just his personal library at home. He wrote 40 of them himself. While Europeans were drinking from puddles. All those principles stored in those books. And he travelled of course. He was a link and he passed it on. Dome of the rock, who knows. Chartres and Notre Dame, Stonehenge maybe, who knows? If we find the link, just one more segment

.....

(The little bell rings once.  
The mask is removed from one of the attendants, revealing a Young Woman who sits facing us. She is blindfolded and her hands are wrapped in bandages. Dad turns to look at her. She sits silently. Dad stares, then hesitantly approaches her. Stands near her. Gingerly bends over to see her face. Suddenly:)

## YOUNG WOMAN

Seven hundred twelve divided by fiftysix is.

(Dad jumps back, startled, does not approach again. She sits, silent. Then:)

## YOUNG WOMAN

One. Two. Seven. One two seven . . . one. Twelve point seven one. 712 times 56 is. Thirty five sixty plus. No. Thirty five thousand six hundred plus. I can't feel my hands.

(silence)

Am I supposed to not feel my hands?

(silence)

Three thousand five hundred sixty which is. Thirty eight thousand, thirty nine thousand one hundred sixty. Plus seven twelve.

(silence)

Plus seven twelve is. Thirty nine thousand eight hundred and seventy two.

(silence)

I can't feel my hands. I can't feel my body at all. I don't have a body. I'm bleeding. How can I bleed when I don't have a body? I'm bleeding. I'm bleeding. Thirty nine thousand eight hundred and seventy two . . .

(She is breathing heavily and fast. Dad, frightened, starts to move forward again. But he stops and she suddenly calms down.)

## YOUNG WOMAN

No. It stopped.  
It's over.  
It's all over.

(Her mask is put back on, and she disappears. Dad stares at the empty chair. Enter Matthew, eating with one hand, holding telephone in the other.)

MATTHEW

Mm-hm. Mm-hm. I know. Yeah me too. I'll just have to wait till next time, try to

catch up. Which I hate because I'm already worse than everybody. Oh *who's* worse than me? Story of my life. I'll see ya. Yeah, I'm okay. Thanks. (smiles, chuckles a little) Yeah, he was. I'll see ya.

(doesn't hang up, but dials new numbers )

They've all heard me talk about you, Dad.

DAD

There was somebody here. A woman.

MATTHEW

You being visited again?

DAD

Yeah.

MATTHEW

Still?

DAD

Happens all the time now.

MATTHEW

(into phone)

Be home. Dammit. Where are you?

(dialing new numbers; to Dad)

Whad she look like? Anybody you know?

DAD

She had bandages.

MATTHEW

Huh.

(into phone)

Yeah, it's okay. It's time. He's been sick. Parkinsons. We knew it might happen when he went in. I was gonna go down next week anyway. I was looking forward to it. I need some time to think about stuff. Yeah. Christmas; we had plenty of chance to talk. Mm-hm. Oh, hallucinations, but he was pretty lucid.

DAD

She kept saying she couldn't feel her body.

MATTHEW

Some kind of Isis thing?

DAD

What's Isis?

MATTHEW

Cmon, Dad. Egypt. Looking for the lost body parts of Osiris?

DAD

Oh yeah.

MATTHEW

Did you talk to her?

DAD

I tried.

MATTHEW

Did you ask for a gift?

DAD

I forgot.

MATTHEW

Next time ask her for a gift. Ask her who she is. What she's doing.

(into phone)

We *don't* need to talk anymore. We've talked about it forever. This *is* the time. No. No. Unh-unh no. Unh-unh. *No*, I said. No. Whaddya mean? I *am* being flexible.

DAD

What's the problem?

MATTHEW

Oh, we're deciding whether to endorse candidates or not, and some of them think the paper should stay New Age and non-partisan.

(into phone)

You wanna dink around forever recommending health food co-ops? I thought we said 1993 was the year we were going to put this paper on the map. No I don't think we do. Well how bad does it have to get? How many bonehead fascists hafta get elected? You wanna wait till they start putting schoolteachers in jail? Oh, oh, I'm overstating it. They were overstating it in Germany in 1933.

DAD

(chuckles)

They hate it when you talk like that.

MATTHEW

Well whaddam I sposed to do? Heads in the sand.

(into phone)

Yes we can. Yes we can. Fine, fine. It's *not* too late. Okay okay, I'll talk to you when I come in.

(dials new numbers)

DAD

Do you decide by vote?

MATTHEW

No, dammit. If we did I could probably browbeat enough people into it. But we're a progressive publication so we just recently agreed to settle everything by group consensus.

DAD

Whose idea was that?

MATTHEW

Some idiot, some moron: me.

(into phone)

Dammit. Dammit. Be there. Where *are* you?

DAD

Boss?

MATTHEW

Editor.

DAD

What happens if you don't talk to him?

MATTHEW

(dialing new number)

Oh they'd love that. I'm gonna be gone for the meeting when we decide. So I have to prime him as well as I can. He's clueless anyway; even if I do talk to him he probably won't get it.

(into phone)

Okay, say it back to me. Yes. No, *statewide*. No. Dammit. I'm coming in. It's okay, my flight's not till one. I *do* need to. I can't leave any sooner anyway.

Because it's important. Because I have to make sure you guys are set because I can't be there myself because I have to goddamn leave in the middle of this and it's important and I'm gonna be gone, dammit, Dad, this isn't your fault, there's no way around it, but *fuck death*.

DAD

Kinda talk is that?

MATTHEW

(into phone)

See ya in a bit.

(hangs up.

Thunder offstage. Matthew looks around.)

MATTHEW

The hell is that? Not a cloud in the sky.

DAD

I thought it was always cloudy in Seattle.

MATTHEW

(patiently)

No it is not always cloudy. Especially in July. What am I, hearing things?

(exits, looking at watch)

I sure could go for a 28 hour day.

DAD

Don't cut it too close.

MATTHEW

I won't.

(As Matthew leaves, Dad goes to his table, begins sketching a new sculpture and looking through his notebook.)

DAD

Cut it too close, then you miss it, and you've lost more time that way. Never get it back. That's the trick about time. Only use it once, so take care how you use it . . .

(As he chatters on, two attendants, wearing aprons, begin stacking boxes. One of them now has his mask removed. He is a young man. His name is Adam. Adam and the other attendant--Sandy--build a wall of boxes around themselves as they speak. Dad looks up when they start, but soon goes back to his notebook.)

SANDY

Yknow.

ADAM

Huh?

SANDY

If we're really good at this.

ADAM

What.

SANDY

This.

ADAM

This?

SANDY

Yeah. If we're really good at this, someday--*someday* we could stop stacking boxes and earn big bucks putting cans of applesauce in bags.

ADAM

Hm.

SANDY

And if we're really good at *that*, stuffing, then someday we could earn *big* bucks waving the applesauce cans over the scanners and punching in prices.

ADAM  
Yeah.

SANDY  
And if we're really good at that, then *someday* we could work our way up and make *huge* bucks supervising all the ones who wave the applesauce cans over the scanners.

ADAM  
Hm.

SANDY  
And if we're really really good at *that*, someday, maybe *someday* we could bite and claw and rip our way up, until we were making astronomical bucks *managing* all those supervisors.

ADAM  
Wow.

SANDY  
And from there, well.

ADAM  
Sky's the limit.

SANDY  
Howard.

ADAM  
Howard nothin. Dennis.

SANDY  
Store manager.

ADAM  
Vice President.

SANDY  
Who knows. Someday way off too far to even think about, we could be, you and me, we could be running a grocery store.

(They exchange a sardonic little high 5.)

ADAM  
Whoa.

SANDY  
Yeah.

ADAM  
Awesome. (pause) I hate the fucken future.

SANDY

Me too.

ADAM

Hey why do they have us both scheduled today?

SANDY

Fuck if I know.

ADAM

They expecting some special shipment or something?

SANDY

Like they're gonna start making sense all of a sudden? Probably just one of those power brain moves they make. So Marty'll figure it out and invent some work to cover.

ADAM

"Good thing you were both here."

SANDY

Yeah.

ADAM

Well it messed me up good.

SANDY

Whadja wanna go on a picnic?

ADAM

Picnic. Yeah.

SANDY

Be rained out anyway. Can you believe this in July?

ADAM

Wasn't going on a picnic. Just coulda used the day off. Even the morning.

SANDY

Whyncha call in sick?

ADAM

Oh, yeah, they'd fall for *that* again. I hate this fucken place.

SANDY

There's worse.

ADAM

There's better.

SANDY

Where'd you work better?

ADAM  
I dunno. The Center.

SANDY  
Old people's place?

ADAM  
Yeah. I liked it.

SANDY  
If you don't mind getting drooled on and stuff.

ADAM  
I liked it.

SANDY  
Why'd you leave?

ADAM  
They ran out of money.

SANDY  
Well there you go. This place'll never run out.

ADAM  
Fuck the luck.

(Enter another masked attendant: Marty)

MARTY  
Adam! Hello.

ADAM  
Hey.

MARTY  
What brings you here today?

(Adam chuckles politely.)

MARTY  
What *does* bring you here today?

ADAM  
Whaddya mean? I'm scheduled today.

MARTY  
Nooooo. You were scheduled yesterday.

ADAM  
Huh?



MARTY

Come look in the office if you like: Adam in on Monday. Adam not in on Tuesday. You are Adam Weaver, are you not?

ADAM

Did you change it?

MARTY

Nope. Same schedule you initialed last Wednesday. I suppose you forgot.

ADAM

I was positive it was today.

MARTY

Of course you were.

ADAM

Whaddya think I'm lying? I gave up something really important to come in here today.

MARTY

Well that's unfortunate.

(to Sandy)

Would you excuse us for a minute?

(Sandy moves away out of sight.)

ADAM

What? I'm sorry for the screwup.

MARTY

Adam, it's no good. You are not on the schedule any more.

ADAM

As of when?

MARTY

As of yesterday when you didn't show up for the umpteenth time.

ADAM

It was a mistake.

MARTY

It's always a mistake, there's always an excuse, you've been warned more than once.

ADAM

So that's it.

MARTY

I'm afraid so. I'm going back to my desk. Come talk to me if you want. Uh, there's a message for you anyway.

ADAM  
Who?

MARTY  
I told her you weren't here. She insisted you were coming in today.

ADAM  
Great.

MARTY  
I'll be at my desk, alright?

(Marty leaves.)

ADAM  
Shit.

(Sandy comes back.)

SANDY  
What's the deal?

ADAM  
(taking apron off, turns to go)  
Well that fucks that. That entirely totally fucks that. There goes my glorious future in groceries.

(tosses apron away, turns to go)

SANDY  
Fuckheads.

ADAM  
Hey . . . if you see Mike, don't um. Don't tell him.

SANDY  
What are you into him for?

ADAM  
Just don't tell him I got canned.

SANDY  
Shit Adam, what if he asks?

ADAM  
He won't ask you.

SANDY  
What if he does?

ADAM  
He won't! Just don't tell him.

SANDY  
He'll just come looking at your place.

ADAM  
Then I won't go home.

(He's off.)

SANDY  
Shit. Adam?

(Sandy leaves.  
Enter an attendant as Clerk, with a counter  
strapped on around the waist. Matthew enters  
opposite, stands at counter while Clerk checks  
something.)

MATTHEW  
Fine. Fine. Marvelous. They can't open the door?

CLERK  
The plane is leaving the runway sir.

MATTHEW  
Wonderful.

DAD  
I told you.

MATTHEW  
Thanks Dad. When can I go then?

CLERK  
The next direct flight to Phoenix leeeeeeaves aaaat 11:35 tonight.

MATTHEW  
11:30?

CLERK  
Yes sir. 11:35. Arriving Phoenix 3:50 AM. Will that be in time?

MATTHEW  
Soooorta.

DAD  
Might be dead by then, but pffff . . .

MATTHEW  
Is there a choice that doesn't involve waiting ten and a half hours?

CLERK

I can check indirect routes.

MATTHEW

Please. I'd appreciate it. You know . . .

CLERK

Yes sir?

MATTHEW

Nothing.

CLERK

What's that sir?

MATTHEW

Nothing. Just reflecting that if we didn't live these huge distances apart from each other, we wouldn't be dependant on airplanes.

CLERK

(still checking)

That's true sir.

MATTHEW

Of course, it's because we have airplanes that we travel to these faraway places and *create* these huge distances.

CLERK

I suppose that's true.

MATTHEW

So airplane travel actually creates the need for itself.

CLERK

Hm.

MATTHEW

In spite of the obvious dangers.

CLERK

Safest way to travel, sir, statistically.

MATTHEW

Unfortunately I don't travel statistically. When a car breaks, it stops. When a plane breaks, it plummets.

CLERK

Are you sure you want this flight sir?

MATTHEW

Yes yes please, ignore me, I'm just acting out to avoid conflict.

DAD  
Who ya tryna kid?

MATTHEW  
What?

DAD  
Even if you travelled by horse, you'd still live a day's horseride away.

CLERK  
There is a flight leaving at 1:40 PM for Los Angeles, which would arrive at 3:15 and connect with a 4:00 flight for Phoenix.

MATTHEW  
Great. Let's do that.

DAD  
No.

MATTHEW  
Why not?

DAD  
Not Los Angeles.

MATTHEW  
What's wrong with Los Angeles?

CLERK  
Excuse me?

MATTHEW  
Sorry. Go ahead, that'll be fine.

DAD  
They shoot people on the freeway there.

MATTHEW  
I'm not going anywhere near a freeway. I thought you liked Los Angeles. You said it was paradise.

DAD  
It *was* paradise, fifty *years* ago.

CLERK  
Alright, here's your corrected ticket. Because of your special situation there will be no extra charge.

MATTHEW  
I appreciate that.

CLERK  
Flight 209 leaving gate S7 at 1:40. You'll want to be on time for this one.

MATTHEW

Thanks. I'm not leaving the airport.

CLERK

I hear there's some nasty weather in Los Angeles. But you'll just be passing through.

MATTHEW

It's LA. How bad can it be? Where's the closest phone?

CLERK

Kiosk, sir.

MATTHEW

Thanks.

(Clerk leaves.)

DAD

You just take care of yourself.

MATTHEW

(inspecting ticket)

I'm in Los Angeles Airport for 45 minutes, Dad.

DAD

You're too important to lose.

MATTHEW

Right.

DAD

You've got important work to do. I'd rather you not come than put yourself in some kind of--

MATTHEW

Gotcha. Tell it to the pilot, would you?

DAD

Yeah, just you remember. Alright?

(As Matthew leaves, Dad hears a sound: amplified breathing, through a long tube. Joining that is the sound of rain on metal and glass. Then, a rumbling as of a large moving vehicle. All noises made by attendants, within the sculpture Dad has been working on. He watches with worried amazement as this takes shape: he did not, apparently, plan these sounds.

In the middle of the sculpture, an attendant's mask is removed, revealing the Young Woman we saw earlier. Her name is Tracy.

She sits alone on a chair facing us. Behind her, masked attendants--armed with various megaphones, tubes, and equipment--vibrate the chair and make all the noises and voices for this scene. The breathing dissipates and stops. The rain sound continues. The vehicle sound and motion continue throughout. Tracy speaks haltingly.)

TRACY

563 times 427 is. 7 times 500 is 3500. Plus 7 times 63 is 420, plus 21 is 441 plus 3500 is 3941. 3941 plus two times 563 is. 1126, times ten is 11,260. 3941 plus 11,260 is 14 thousand plus 1100 which is 15 thousand 100 plus 101 which is 15,201.

DAD

(works up the nerve to approach)

Uh . . .

TRACY

Plus 4 times 563 . . .

DAD

What are you doing?

(Tracy does not appear to hear, but nonetheless she stops a beat, then continues speaking, slowly, apparently to herself.)

TRACY

I read somewhere.

BUS DRIVER

(voice over bad loudspeaker/megaphone)

wwwWestern Avenue.

TRACY

Where'd I read that? That we stopped having good memories when writing was invented. Before then, everyone had to remember things. Stories and songs and how to make things and everybody's name. But with writing all that stopped. So maybe our brains are smaller now.

(silence)

I used to read a lot. Not so much anymore.

BUS DRIVER

wwwWilton.

(Dad brings another chair, sits behind her, as on a bus.)

TRACY

I sure would like to keep having a memory. I sure would like to keep having a brain that can at least do arithmetic. Which is really stupid because what do I have to

remember? Used to be one person lost was all those memories lost too. But if I died now. If I disappeared. Would anything be lost forever?

DRIVER

CrrrrrrrRenshaw.

TRACY

I wish I had someone else's past. Even someone's sick awful unhappy past. Something important to remember. Or maybe I wish I lived way back whenever. In one of those villages. When everyone's past was important. Couldn't afford to waste anyone's memory. Not like now. We have calculators now.

DRIVER

rrrrrrrrRossmore.

TRACY

I can't feel my hands. Maybe I don't need to. Maybe this will go on forever. Sometimes I wish that. Sometimes I wish this ride would go on forever.

DRIVER

llllLaBrea.

TRACY

Never arrive anywhere.

DRIVER

rrrrRobertson.

TRACY

Wherever I've been, I'm gone.  
Wherever I'm going, I'm not there yet.

DRIVER

RoooooDeo.

TRACY

Whatever's happened is over. What's gonna happen hasn't started. Or if it has, I'm missing it.

DRIVER

oooverLand.

TRACY

.  
Nothing I can do. Good or bad. No harm. No help. No trouble.

DRIVER

ooooLympic. Sorry for the delay, folks. How about this rain, huh?

TRACY

Like a boat. Floating. Ocean all around.

DRIVER

oooooocean Avenue.



TRACY

Just water. Like glass. Just floating. Just here.

DRIVER

oooooRion.

TRACY

Just here. Just sitting. Just being. Just being.

(As she says this, the chair vibrates less and less until it stops moving. The rumbling and motion sound of the bus grows quiet and quieter until it stops.

All motion stops, except the sound of the rain. Tracy sits, conscious but relaxed and aware. The little bell rings once. Once more. Once more. Once more.

Slowly the sounds of the bus begin again. The chair begins vibrating again.)

DRIVER

ooooooleAnder.

TRACY

Too bad.

DRIVER

ooooViparous.

TRACY

Too bad to. Take that away from anything. Anyone. Forever.

DRIVER

oooooVarian.

TRACY

I feel sick. My stomach. Sick. Shit. Shit. I hope it's not from this morning.

DRIVER

oooooophorEctomy.

TRACY

Maybe I'm dreaming.  
 Maybe I'm being dreamed.  
 Maybe I'm somebody else, making this up, in a dream.

DRIVER

oooooopalEscent.

TRACY

Maybe I'm . . . a pearl diver in Asia somewhere.

DRIVER

oooooriEnt.

TRACY

Maybe I'm a prisoner somewhere, in some dungeon.  
 Maybe I'm making butter in one of those . . . things.  
 Maybe I'm dead.  
 Maybe I've been in an accident and I'm unconscious.  
 Maybe I'm sick. Really sick.

DRIVER

oooooBliterate.

TRACY

Maybe I'm not.  
 Maybe I'm just. Just sick of. Not being.  
 Not being.

DAD

(works up the courage)  
 Who are you?

(The sounds of the bus decrease.)

DAD

Who are you?

(Tracy pauses; then, without looking at him:)

TRACY

What difference does that make?

DRIVER

oooooBlivion. Last stop.

(Tracy gets off the bus. The chair is taken away.)

Dad, somewhat shaken, steps away. The bell from the Doorway rings once. Dad looks at it. He backs away from it, goes over to begin working as the next scene is assembled.

Two people sit facing us: Matthew and a masked attendant. There are three chairs; the two people sit one seat apart. Matthew is writing something; sometimes he concentrates, sometimes he just stares ahead, thoughtful. The other person --Carmen-- reads a book.

Dad continues reworking the sculpture during the following. Matthew stares in silence for some time, listening to Dad working.)

MATTHEW  
What about this one?

DAD  
It's a uh.

MATTHEW  
Transformer.

DAD  
Yeah. It uh. Interacts with the ley lines. Creates a channel. Step inside, you uh.  
You uh.

MATTHEW  
See in a different way.

DAD  
Yeah.

PILOT  
(voice over a bad loudspeaker/megaphone)  
Pacific Ocean on your right, folks. Good view.

MATTHEW  
Will it really work, Dad?

DAD  
What?

MATTHEW  
Do we really have a future?

DAD  
I hope so.

MATTHEW  
Whaddya mean hope so? Don't you know?

DAD  
I haven't kicked off yet, you know.

MATTHEW  
Sorry.

DAD  
Once I do know, I probably won't be able to tell you.

MATTHEW  
Figures. So we just have to keep searching for the lost books.

DAD  
What lost books?

MATTHEW

You know. The 40 lost books of Ahmed Baba.

DAD

Who?

MATTHEW

Cmon Dad. University of Sankore. Burnt up by the Moroccans. Cmon. The lost books of Ahmed Baba.

DAD

Oh! Oh yeah. Dammit. Frustrating.

MATTHEW

I know.

DAD

Yes. The lost books. But remember, we know some of it. Fulcanelli found some, and uh, what's his name. Jewish Arab guy.

MATTHEW

Maimonides.

DAD

(stops working for a moment)

Yeah him. And I mean, here's what I do know. It comes down to this. What it all boils down to is this. At least according to me. And who am I? I mean lots of people have tried to boil it all down. Socrates, Jesus. Look what happened to them. Even Galileo, people like that. Because they were interfering with little people's control. That's why. Ahead of their time. And meanwhile Celts are being wiped out, Aryan thugs are riding down taking over Europe and India, and before you know it four thousand years have passed and half of Poland is being put in ovens, and we're no better, we're no better, look what's happening in South America, look at South Africa, Jesus.

(begins working frantically)

MATTHEW

So what's it all boil down to?

DAD

What's what all boil down to?

MATTHEW

Everything. You were gonna . . .

DAD

Huh?

MATTHEW

Never mind.

DAD  
(remembers)

I hate this. Dammit. Can't get a thought out. Start out, then I forget what I'm saying. Ever since I got sick--

MATTHEW  
You always did it.

DAD  
I did?

MATTHEW  
Start off with a point, then go off in a hundred different directions and forget what you were talking about. Mostly you'd get back on track sooner or later. If we listened long enough.

DAD  
Well that's a relief.

MATTHEW  
You were an amazing talker.

DAD  
Hm.

MATTHEW  
I miss that.

DAD  
Hm.

MATTHEW  
Hey, remember that lady?

DAD  
Who?

MATTHEW  
At your show in Sebastopol. Remember? She came and stood inside that piece you did, and she started to cry. Cried and cried, all afternoon.

DAD  
She was probably allergic.

MATTHEW  
We hadda tell her it was closing time. Remember?

DAD  
Yeah. I spose.

PILOT  
That's Mount Whitney on your left. 14 thousand 4 hundred 92 feet. Tallest peak in the lower 48.

MATTHEW  
So Dad.

DAD  
Yeah?

MATTHEW  
Do you ever get to stop?

DAD  
Stop what?

MATTHEW  
Doing that. Working. Fixing the world.

DAD  
You want me to stop?

MATTHEW  
No, I don't. I just thought there might be some kind of vacation or involuntary retirement or something. You're in a coma, for christsake.

DAD  
Yeah, well, nobody paid any attention when I was conscious, either. Difference does it make? You know how many tons of chemical weapons the US government has stockpiled?

MATTHEW  
How many?

DAD  
(starts to speak; can't remember; has to check notepad)  
31 thousand. Tons. They're still making more. Right now. When *they* stop, maybe I can stop.

(looking in notebook)  
Hey, I figured out something.

MATTHEW  
Hm?

DAD  
He hadda go through Spain. If he went to France, he had to go through Spain. Ahmed Baba. I don't know why I never thought of it.

MATTHEW  
You did think of it, Dad.

DAD  
I did?

MATTHEW

Yeah. He went through Spain, so that's how the golden proportion got to Mexico.

DAD

That's right, you're right.

MATTHEW

Still doesn't explain how it got to you.

DAD

I spose not. Guess we haven't found the key yet.

MATTHEW

Are you sure that matters so much, Dad?

DAD

Whaddya mean?

MATTHEW

Well what's important is the golden proportion, isn't it? Having it to live by. Right?

DAD

Well yeah, that's what it's all about.

MATTHEW

So why does it matter so much that how it got to you?

DAD

Whaddya mean, why does it matter?

MATTHEW

If we've got it, why's it so important to track down some arcane path it followed to reveal itself to you?

DAD

Because nobody seems to know about it, is why.

MATTHEW

Mm.

DAD

People gotta know about it. Hey when ygonna write that book?

MATTHEW

Oh yeah.

DAD

Great story. Got travel, adventure, philosophy, all kindsa countries, all the people he met . . .

MATTHEW

Mm.

DAD

And people gotta know about it.

MATTHEW

(smiles; ribbingly, not accusingly)  
About it, Dad? Or about you?

DAD

What?

MATTHEW

Nothing.

DAD

What's that supposed to mean?

MATTHEW

Nothing. Never mind.

(An Attendant holds a phone in front of Matthew.)

DAD

So what about it? You gonna write that book sometime?

(Matthew considers; picks up the phone, inserts credit card, dials. Carmen looks up from book, watching him.)

MATTHEW

Hi. Is George available?

(pause)

That's fine. I'll wait. No no. Well I'm calling frommm kind of an expensive place, so if you could--thanks.

PILOT

We'll be circling in for our final descent pretty soon here. Weather over LAX is a little turbulent, but we should be fine. Out on your right, we're passing pretty close to the Great Nebula of Orion. We'll let you know when we begin our descent.

(Matthew hears pilot; puzzled, he checks his watch. peers outside. Speaks to Carmen.)

MATTHEW

Did you hear what he said?

CARMEN

(with a friendly smile)

Beg pardon?

MATTHEW

Did he say the Great Nebula of Orion?



CARMEN  
I wasn't listening.

MATTHEW  
Oh. Hm. Sorry.

CARMEN  
It's okay. (pause) Must be an important call, huh?

MATTHEW  
Kind of. I've never used one of these before.

CARMEN  
No?

MATTHEW  
Seems like a lotta money for a phonecall.

CARMEN  
Well, money's for spending.

MATTHEW  
I suppose.

DAD  
She'd sing a different tune if she'd ever been put out on the street.

MATTHEW  
I guess you didn't have Depression parents.

CARMEN  
I did, as a matter of fact. My dad had to earn a living wrestling a grizzly bear on the circuit in North Dakota. Her name was Ginger. Anyway --

MATTHEW  
(into phone)  
Yeah? Uh-huh? Okay. Sure, another minute or so. Thanks. (to Carmen) Sorry.

PILOT  
Out to the east, folks, the Andromeda Galaxy, otherwise known as the Jewel of the Night Sky. Two point two million light years away from Earth. That's thirteen thousand million billion miles.

(Matthew, puzzled again, looks out window past Carmen.)

MATTHEW  
Andromeda Galaxy?

CARMEN  
Hm?

MATTHEW

Nothing. (looks away) I guess we don't get fed on this flight.

CARMEN

Just as well. Airplane food. Pth.  
(without looking up from her book)  
So your dad was a genius, isn't that right?

MATTHEW

Huh?

CARMEN

Devoted his life to opening that door in the top of people's heads. Waking them up.  
Isn't that right?

MATTHEW

I'm sorry? Did you know him?

CARMEN

(looks up blankly)

Hm?

MATTHEW

Did you . . .

(They stare at each other.)

MATTHEW

I'm sorry. I thought you said something.

CARMEN

(pleasantly)

Mm-mm.

(Suddenly their chairs jerk.)

MATTHEW

What was that?

CARMEN

Nothing. Just an air pocket.

PILOT

Uhhhhh folks, we're having a little bit of . . . what? Just a moment, folks.

MATTHEW

Great. (into phone) What? Hi! Hello. Listen, I've only got a minute here--

PILOT

Sorry folks. We're experiencing a little trouble with the weather here--

MATTHEW

(overlapping)

I'm sorry, just a second, the pilot's talking.

PILOT

There's a fair amount of rain coming down, and we seem to be--it's just rain--  
 (arguing with another muffled voice)  
 It's not sleet, it's July for god's sake--Sorry folks, listen, we just need to--

(The chairs jerk sharply, violently; they keep shaking.)

MATTHEW

Uh . . .

CARMEN

We'll be fine.

PILOT

There it goes again. We've got some rain on the wings, I think we'll need to--it's just rain! Put that down--hey!

ANOTHER VOICE

Ladies and gentlemen, please prepare for a forced landing.

PILOT

(apparently grabbing microphone back)  
 Now just relax--

OTHER VOICE

(grabbing it back)

We are making a forced landing due to adverse weather conditions. Please put tray tables up and stow all belongings under the seat or in the overhead compartments.

MATTHEW

(overlapping)

Oh my god. Uh. Uh. I have to go. I'll call you later. Sorry. I have to go.

(hangs up)

OTHER VOICE

Please bring backs to full upright position. Please firm belts.

(Matthew fumbles frantically.)

CARMEN

Oh don't take it too seriously.

MATTHEW

What?

CARMEN

Happens all the time. Can't ride a plane if you don't just trust the pilot.

MATTHEW

Thanks. How about the wingstruts?

CARMEN

Jet plane like this doesn't have struts. You're thinking of the old biplanes from World War I--

OTHER VOICE

Please remove all eyeglasses, pens, pencils, jewelry, sharp objects.

DAD

(urgently, leaning over behind Matthew, who is clutching his chair in panic)  
I told you flying is bad news. Remember that plane load of soldiers coming home for Christmas--

MATTHEW

Thanks Dad.

(Airplane noises up loud. Carmen continues to read her book, and eats chocolates out of a box.)

DAD

You're too important to take risks.

OTHER VOICE

Please place both hands on the seat back in front of you.

MATTHEW

(to Carmen)

You ought to put that away.

CARMEN

It's getting to the good part.

(She offers him the box of chocolates; he shakes his head, grips his own chair as the noises get louder. He starts to whistle cheerfully.)

CARMEN

There now, see? You're not really afraid.

MATTHEW

Actually, I am whistling the proverbial happy tune. Which means I'm about as scared as I get without fainting.

DAD

You've got work to do, remember. You're the one who still has a chance.

MATTHEW

Yes.

DAD  
Important work.

MATTHEW  
Yes.

DAD  
You're important. The world needs you.

MATTHEW  
Got it.

DAD  
Lots of people in the world need you.

MATTHEW  
Got it.

DAD  
You're the one gonna put us on the map!

MATTHEW  
Yes, Dad, yes, thanks, it's kind of hard for me to concentrate on that right now Dad,  
thanks, thanks thanks thanks Thanks THANKS ANYWAY--

OTHER VOICE  
Ladies and gentlemen--

(Airplane noise up to a shriek; a clap of THUNDER; blackout. The thunder continues rumbling through darkness. Large dark clouds are hung above the action, remaining there until the last scene. Attendants stand in place as wall with doorknob. Tracy stands at wall, rattles doorknob.)

TRACY  
Darn it.

(Rattles it again. Another attendant enters as Neighbor, carrying umbrella.)

NEIGHBOR  
Don't bother. They changed the locks.

TRACY  
Pardon?

NEIGHBOR  
I said Don't you keep a spare key in the box?

TRACY

Unh-unh.

NEIGHBOR

Just as well. Can't be too careful. Burglars. Looters. Rapists. Gangs. They're everywhere.

(Thunder.)

NEIGHBOR

Listen to that. There's no electricity in Hermosa Beach. Hermosa Beach! They've got their own police force there and they can't get the lights back on.

TRACY

Huh.

NEIGHBOR

They're coming out, let me tell you. Police can't handle it. Electricity out, power failures all over town, not enough firemen and police to keep the gangs and rioters in control, let me tell you. You have an alarm system?

TRACY

Yah we do.

NEIGHBOR

Much good it'll do'm. Nobody to answer it. Get a hammer. That's what I'm gonna do. Lock all the doors. I'm going inside. You want to come in with me?

TRACY

No thanks.

NEIGHBOR

Don't stay outside.

TRACY

I won't. I can get in.

NEIGHBOR

You and the looters both. Better to stay together.

TRACY

I'll just go on in, thanks.

NEIGHBOR

Okay, you change your mind you give me a call. Don't just knock on the door. I won't open it. Hope the phonelines don't go down. Do you have a CB radio?

(Tracy shakes her head.)

NEIGHBOR

Pray for the phone lines. I think we're not gonna see sunlight for some long time. Y'know?

(Neighbor leaves.  
Tracy turns to the wall, walks around it;  
comes to a window. She rattles the window  
in an accustomed manner until it unlocks.  
She opens it, clambers through it inside.  
Attendants create various rooms in the home.  
Tracy walks through the house. She goes to  
one attendant, turns a knob on him. He  
clicks. She turns a dial.)

#### RADIO

--reported in the Watts-Inglewood region, no final numbers as yet, Kaiser Hospital  
does have emergency power though all their ambulances are on call with several  
reported missing. The police are repeating their advisories: stay inside. The  
unusual amount of rainfall and water runoff has made it difficult for them to--

(she turns the dial)

--Watts, Inglewood, Pico Revera, Compton, Maywood, Downey --

(she turns the dial)

--with the Dead Puppets. You're listening to K-N-O-T Radio, KayNOT, where we  
don't matter, you don't matter, nothing matters. At KNOT we're still broadcasting  
the hits you want to hear because who cares? Next up--

(she turns the dial)

--and some good news: an arson fire in a Southgate textile factory has been put out  
by the heavy rains, a fortunate turn of events since fire control vehicles in the area  
have been commandeered by youth gangs for random looting activities--

(Tracy clicks off the radio. She goes to  
another attendant, opens his arm as a door.)

#### REFRIGERATOR

Hi. What can I get for you?

(She peers into his chest and stomach.)

#### REFRIGERATOR

How about some milk and toast-Os? It's too early for dinner, but not for a snack.  
You could eat a carrot or some cottage cheese, if you're into that sort of thing. Got  
some lovely baloney. Doesn't taste like much, but squishes between your teeth  
really nicely. What would you like?

#### TRACY

Whaddya got for numb hands?

#### REFRIGERATOR

I don't think I can help you with that. How about some chocolate milk? You can  
drink through a straw if the glass is too heavy.

#### TRACY

No thanks.

#### REFRIGERATOR

(hurt)

Oh. Okay. Never mind then.

(She closes the door. That attendant leaves, while another attendant crouches behind her, watching.)

CAT  
Anything for me?

TRACY  
You've got plenty already.

CAT  
How do you know?

TRACY  
I looked in your bowl.

CAT  
(rubbing side against her leg)  
Always use more.

TRACY  
It's full.

CAT  
(turns away)  
Fine. Never mind. I'll just starve till your mom and dad get back in town.

TRACY  
You want to go out or something?

CAT  
Out? What am I, a duck?

TRACY  
Just asking.

CAT  
So how'd it go today?

TRACY  
Okay.

CAT  
You feeling alright?

TRACY  
Yeah. My hands keep tingling and getting numb is all. I was a little woozy on the bus.

CAT  
The bus? Where's Buttface?



TRACY

He couldn't come.

CAT

Whaddya mean couldn't come?

TRACY

He had to work.

CAT

Work schmerk.

TRACY

Anyway I wanted to do it alone.

CAT

Great idea.

TRACY

Have time to think.

CAT

Will wonders never cease. Have you talked to him yet?

TRACY

I called the market.

CAT

And?

TRACY

He wasn't there.

CAT

Knock me over with a feather.

TRACY

Shut up.

CAT

Hey aren't you supposed to be at work?

TRACY

I got the whole day off. Anyway I don't know if I'm going back there.

CAT

Why not? It's a good job.

TRACY

I'm tired of dealing with people all the time. I'd like something different.

CAT

Like what? Mayor?

TRACY

Secretary if I was smart enough. Receptionist if I was pretty enough.

CAT

How about high-profile fashion model?

TRACY

Shut up. I'm just sick of cashiering and waitering. I'd just like to work in a back room somewhere. Like Adam's job.

CAT

Great. That sounds fun.

TRACY

Doncha ever wanna just lay low? Kinda disappear for a while?

CAT

Sure. Then I come back and get fed. I don't vanish for keeps into some stockroom.

TRACY

Like anybody'd notice.

CAT

They'd probably still keep your bedroom ready for you. Dopey humans.

TRACY

Shut up.

PHONE

Brrrinng!

(As Tracy answers the phone, Adam enters, stands with his back to Tracy; speaks into a phone.)

TRACY

Hello?

ADAM

Hey it's me.

TRACY

Hi.

(Pause.)

TRACY

I thought you worked today.

ADAM

Yeah. You called there.

TRACY

Yeah.

ADAM  
I read the schedule wrong.

TRACY  
So you didn't go in?

ADAM  
I did go in but I was supposed to work yesterday.

(Pause.)

TRACY  
You just read the wrong day?

ADAM  
Yeah. I thought it was today.

TRACY  
When did you look at it?

ADAM  
I don't know, last week, when I looked at my schedule.

TRACY  
Did you write it down?

ADAM  
I never write it down, I just remember.  
(pause)  
I'm usually right.  
(pause)  
So today I blew it.

TRACY  
I guess so.

ADAM  
Are you okay? Is everything . . . you know.

TRACY  
It's all over.

ADAM  
Did it go okay?

TRACY  
I'm still alive, if that's what you mean.

ADAM  
Any trouble? I mean did it . . .

(Silence.)

TRACY  
I'm fine.

ADAM  
Do you want me to . . .

TRACY  
What.

ADAM  
I dunno. Should I come over?

TRACY  
Do you want to?

ADAM  
Do you want me to?

TRACY  
Whatever you want.

ADAM  
I'll come over. Is that what you want?

TRACY  
I don't want anything.

ADAM  
What does that mean? I'll come over. Is that what you want?

TRACY  
Why don't you just stay there.

ADAM  
What. Whaddya . . .

TRACY  
Just nothing. Never mind. It's all over. Forget about it.

ADAM  
What--

TRACY  
Nothing. Nothing.

(She hangs up. Adam droops his head a little, leaves. Pause.)

CAT  
Was that for keeps?

TRACY  
I don't know.

CAT  
I can hope, can't I?

TRACY  
Shut up.

CAT  
Yes maam yes maam yes maam.

(The cat slinks away. Tracy leaves.)

Adam walks in the rain. Thunder continues.  
Attendants with spray bottles squirt water on  
his head as he walks furiously in wide circles  
around the stage.)

THUNDER  
fuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuck  
fuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuck

ADAM  
I'm a fuck.  
I'm a fuck.  
I'm a scum.

THUNDER  
fuuuuck

ADAM  
I coulda said Fuck the job, I'm coming with you. But No she wanted to go by  
herself. I coulda gone anyway. She was lying.

THUNDER  
fuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuck

ADAM  
If I hadna called in all those other times.  
If I wasn't such a liar.  
Coulda said Fuck it Letem fire me.  
Fired me anyway.  
Forgot the fucking day. I'm such a fuck.

THUNDER  
fuuuuuuuuk

ADAM  
I didn't wanna go with her.  
I didn't wanna go with her.  
I'm a fuck. I forgot on purpose.

THUNDER  
fuuuuuuuuukkk

ADAM

I'm a fucking coward. Fucking crybaby coward.  
Oughtta wrap me in a fucking blue blanket.  
Just wanna suck my thumb at a fucking job and let her go off by herself.  
Can't even keep a fucking job.

THUNDER

fukkkkkkkkk

ADAM

If I didn't hafta work a fucking stupid job.  
If I didn't hafta stack fucking boxes at a fucking stupid.  
Fucking town.  
If I didn't hafta live here.

THUNDER

Arizooooooooona

ADAM

Coulda gone with them. Shoulda moved to some desert cowtown in Arizona.

THUNDER

fuk

ADAM

If I just wasn't such a fuckup.  
If I just wasn't me.  
If I just wasn't fucking me.  
If I just could fall asleep and wake up somebody else.

THUNDER

fuuuuuk

ADAM

If I just didn't hafta fucking get up in the morning and eat and shit and breathe and be fucking *me* all day.

THUNDER

fKKKKKKKKKKKKK

(A loud thunderclap, and the attendants step in, squirt violently downward on Adam's head: he is knocked off his feet by the force of a cloudburst. The thunder decreases to a rumble.)

ADAM

Jesus.

(As he stands up, wiping face off, a voice over loudspeaker comes up, fluctuating in volume and direction as if on a moving car.)



MATTHEW

You told me.

DAD

In the wrong lane. I swore I would never fly again.

MATTHEW

You told me.

DAD

I'm sorry I yelled back there.

MATTHEW

It's okay. I'm sorry I yelled too. It was a stressful time.

DAD

Not gonna get that book written flying around on death machines.

CLERK

Is that book on your very busy schedule, sir?

MATTHEW

Beg your pardon?

CLERK

I can't book you on anything scheduled tonight, sir.

MATTHEW

Oh. Oh. Wwww . . . why not?

CLERK

We do have flights to Phoenix, but the weather is holding our flight schedule back.

MATTHEW

How long?

CLERK

We can't guarantee sir. This sort of rain makes everything--

(Loud clap of thunder. Walls rattle.)

CLERK

I mean we hardly ever--

MATTHEW

I see. I see. So explain to me clearly please, when may I leave this airport for Phoenix?

CLERK

I recommend you spend the night in Los Angeles sir. This downpour can't keep up.

MATTHEW

Huh. Huh. Well I suppose I shouldn't complain too much insofar as I'm lucky to



be aLIVE and I'm doing my best to handle this post-trauma stress as WELL as I can, but I am probably subject to sudden and unforeseeable impulses of ANGER over which I have no control.

CLERK

We have therapists available if you'd like, sir--

MATTHEW

Thank you no. I don't want therapy, I want an AIRPLANE to take me to Phoenix.

CLERK

Are you certain you want to get right back on a plane in any case sir?

MATTHEW

I am no more scared of airplanes now than I ALWAYS was. Nonetheless I have URGENT personal reasons to be in Phoenix right away.

CLERK

I understand sir. This is a bereavement trip--

MATTHEW

You have that on your computer?

CLERK

Yes sir.

MATTHEW

Your computer knows I'm bereaved. That's sweet. Perhaps your computer has also noticed that I just underwent a forced landing--

CLERK

It was not technically a forced landing sir.

MATTHEW

Oh? You always have your passengers hold their heads between their knees when you land?

CLERK

The pilot did not report it as--

MATTHEW

The copilot did.

CLERK

The copilot has been relieved of duty sir, for reporting sleet.

MATTHEW

Have you looked outside?

CLERK

It's July, sir. This is California.

(Thunder: walls rattle.)

CLERK

Though I do hear that rain has been literally knocking people off their feet. We don't usually get that here. You're probably used to it in Seattle, though, isn't that right?

MATTHEW

Actually it doesn't do this in Seattle.

CLERK

Really? I thought it rained all the time there.

MATTHEW

It rains often but never this hard.

CLERK

Hm. Well sir I really can't promise a flight out tonight. May I suggest Amtrak?

MATTHEW

I don't WANT to stand in another line. I want YOU to take care of this. I'd like it solved NOW. Please. Pretty please.

CLERK

Theeeeeee best I can do is arrange a rental car sir.

THUNDER

ROOOOM FOR TWOOOO

(Walls rattle)

MATTHEW

Did you hear that?

CLERK

The thunder?

MATTHEW

Yeah. Never mind. The car will do. In fact, ground transportation will be great. It's been kind of a screwy day.

CLERK

Let me set that up then. You will want to be careful when driving, though. The police department is putting out advisories.

MATTHEW

For what?

CLERK

Slippery roads.

MATTHEW

I drive wet roads all the time, thanks.

CLERK

Also, if you're going east sir, the Riverside Freeway goes through the Maywood and Rwanda districts. You'll want to lock your doors and avoid leaving the highway. And there's room for two, sir.

MATTHEW

I beg your pardon?

CLERK

I said We'll move you right through, sir. Won't take a moment.

MATTHEW

Huh. Thanks.

DAD

So what about that book?

MATTHEW

What?

DAD

You never answered me. You think you're gonna write the book or not?

MATTHEW

Oh.

DAD

Hm?

MATTHEW

I'm a little busy trying to get to Phoenix at the moment. Do we have to figure this out right now?

DAD

Nah. Don't have to figure it out. Ever.

MATTHEW

Dad, cmon . . .

DAD

I got all the time in the world. Don't you worry yourself.

CLERK

(hands Matt a ticket)

On the first floor, at Ground Transportation, sir.

MATTHEW

Thanks.

(Clerk exits. Dad has come down close to Matt. Matt starts to leave, but:)

DAD

You used to be excited about that book. It was your idea.

MATTHEW

Yeah. It was.

DAD

So?

MATTHEW

(pause)

That was kind of a long time ago, Dad.

(Matthew pauses, then leaves.  
Dad looks after him. Then away. Puts his hands in his pockets. Turns away, upstage, with his back to us. Gazes around at his works. Sad little nod.)

DAD

Yeah I guess so.  
I guess that was all a long time ago.  
All gone now.

(His head droops, his shoulders slump a little. He stares at the floor. Takes his pencil out from over his ear, tosses it away to the floor. Turns toward the Doorway. Glumly, grimly, he starts to wander toward the Doorway -- but stops as the bell rings, and the Doorway is lifted up into the air, still visible but out of reach. Dad stares up at it; then grimaces, slumps back to his desk and sits with his back to us. He doesn't start working. Sits, not working, through the following.)

(On the street.  
Enter Carlos and Roy, two Latinos in bright gangwear. Their uniforms combine streetwear with Aztec finery. They stroll.)

ROY

Zan nican *pinche* temoc chitzli.

CARLOS

Acoc huilz.

ROY

Nalpan?

CARLOS  
An ya, chitzli quixotli.

ROY  
Ninentlamatia.

CARLOS  
In ye oh nihinti chitzotli nictoyahua LAPD? Maya tlayocxti inti inti inti. Yahqui maya huehuetzu.

ROY  
Se.

CARLOS  
In zan huitzolomokai an! an! an! san mokai maya yahqui temocus.

ROY  
Cuicotl.

CARLOS  
Ahyah! Zannoconyapitza ya.

ROY  
Ano. Nicihuanotza. Nimonaman.

CARLOS  
Ton huia, tiish chilemozque.

(Enter Adam. He sees them, stops and stares at them. They regard him.)

ROY  
Ic?

CARLOS  
Axcan. (to Adam) Oye. Tla shihualca?

(They regard him. He stares. Then he holds up two hands, middle finger up, flipping them off.)

ADAM  
How about that?

CARLOS  
Ahmo tinpanahua?

ROY  
Hm.

(Carlos and Roy chuckle. Carlos shrugs.)

CARLOS

Ma zau quiza.

(Carlos gestures "He's crazy". They laugh, turn to go.

Adam runs over, blocks their way.)

ADAM

Maybe you didn't hear me. I said:

(Violently flips them off right to their faces.)

ROY

Intlacom yaz.

CARLOS

(puzzled; to Adam)

Tle ica in teca, Manya?

ADAM

(stares, bewildered; then violently shoves Carlos)

So fuck you! You don't get it? Fuck you! Come on! I'm ready.

(Carlos and Roy exchange a look. They move to surround him, speaking as they do.)

CARLOS

Can yelpa manya tonazque, tla aic timiquizque ma zan ni chalchihuitl, ni teocuitlal.

ROY

In ya hual moyollo motoma?

CARLOS

Ninopolihui.

ROY

Zan yectli yan matic?

CARLOS

(shrugs, nods)

Pinche hon.

(They draw knives.)

ADAM

That's it. You finally got it. Stupid fucks.

(They move toward him. He frowns.)

ADAM

I deserve this. This is what I deserve. This is what I'm good for.

(They are close. Adam frowns, uncertain)

ADAM  
This is it. This is . . . . Shit.

(Carlos has stopped, stands staring oddly at Adam. Roy moves in: Adam suddenly dodges. Roy takes a swipe, Adam dodges again, manages to knock him aside and run madly off.

Roy calmly puts knife away, takes out a long-barreled handgun, aims it skilfully after Adam.

Carlos has been staring peculiarly at Adam; he now pushes aside the barrel of Roy's gun.)

CARLOS  
Han.

ROY  
Tlen mach?

CARLOS  
Xolotzin. Ne lah.

ROY  
(puts gun away)  
Ahmo hultinoco.

CARLOS  
Huaya. Tla.

(Carlos walks off after Adam. Roy leaves opposite.

In a chair, facing us: Matthew, driving. Dad still sits, not even watching Matthew anymore.)

DAD  
Slow down.

MATTHEW  
I'm not going too fast, Dad.

DAD  
Yes you are.

MATTHEW  
There's nobody else on the road.

DAD  
Oh *that's* a good sign. Gonna miss your turnoff.

MATTHEW  
I don't have a turnoff till Riverside.

DAD  
Well don't miss it.

MATTHEW  
What are you in a hurry all of a sudden? Should I go faster?

DAD  
No. Dave always drove too fast. Losing him was bad enough.

MATTHEW  
I'll be fine, Dad.

DAD  
Yeah you'll be fine. You can afford to be careless. Blow it off, throw it away, see if I care.

MATTHEW  
Blow what off?

DAD  
You've still got the chance.

MATTHEW  
Oh. My big deal chance.

DAD  
You can be careless, sure. You don't know. What chance did I ever have?

MATTHEW  
Dad . . .

DAD  
You don't know. You don't know. I never in my life had a garage big enough to hold all the work that nobody wanted. Might as well dig a hole and bury it.

MATTHEW  
C'mon Dad.

DAD  
You come on. Who'd care?

MATTHEW  
I would.

DAD  
You would, sure. When you're not too busy. Couple of family people might notice. Everybody else, might as well dig a hole, or get a bulldozer. Do that for me, wouldja? When the fuss is all over, get a bulldozer and smash the whole shop down flat so it doesn't take up space and catch dust all day.



MATTHEW

I don't think I'll do that.

(Dad rises, walks about looking at his work; starts dismantling some of it About now, upstage behind them, enter Adam, running in slow motion. He also pants and speaks in slow motion.)

ADAM

Shshshshshshiiiiiiiiitt Whaaaaaaaat aaaaaammm IIII ddooooooiiiiiiingng?)

DAD

Makes no difference. Not a scrap, not a weed, not a speck in the world. Might as well spent my whole life twiddling my thumbs. Woulda made more money at it.

MATTHEW

Dad stop it.

DAD

Well slow down then.

MATTHEW

I'm only going 60.

DAD

That's too fast.

MATTHEW

It's 30 below normal in this town.

DAD

(stops dismantling for a moment, staring at Doorway)  
Might as well never been born, for all the difference.

MATTHEW

Jesus, Dad.

(Dad starts dismantling again.)

DAD

Fine, I'll shut up. I been yelling at the air all my life. No reason to talk. Just yelling at the air. Would you slow down!

MATTHEW

Would you stop talking like that! It's garbage, it's bullshit.

DAD

Tell me then! What's different? Name a thing. Is the world better? Is it even getting worse slower? You tell me. You tell me.

MATTHEW

Dad--

DAD

How'm I supposed to give up now? How'm I supposed to stop like this? What am I supposed to do, huh? What in the whole world is left to do?

(Suddenly Adam runs into the road in front of them; sees car as Matthew sees him; both freeze and shout)

MATTHEW & ADAM

Jesus!

(A loud clap of thunder as Matthew's foot goes out to the brake and he spins the wheel; the car--his chair--is spun around and across the floor as Adam is flung to the side and down by the thunder. Matthew's chair bumps to a stop; Adam lies still.)

DAD

I knew it I knew it I knew it Matt! Matt!

(Dad rushes to him, hovers helplessly. Matthew is conscious. Attendants make sounds of a creaky door opening as he pulls himself up, stands up to the side as if getting out of a car. Walks over to where Adam lies motionless on the ground.)

MATTHEW

What in the hell do you think you're doing? Are you crazy? Are you blind? This is a *freeway*.

(shakes his head as if to clear it; looks closer at the body)

What's wrong? Are you okay? I didn't even hit you. *You* made me smash the shit out of my car, however. What the hell were you thinking about?

(He looks down, sees something. Looks closer. Bends down to look at the face. Bends way down; squats, then kneels down, head low to the ground, looking directly into the face.  
Pause.  
Then:)

MATTHEW

Adam?

**end act one**

## ACT TWO

(Music. Drumming.  
 Dad stands watching the following.  
 Enter Carlos, Roy, and one other in full Aztec ceremonial regalia.  
 They bring on Adam, bound and barechested.  
 They place him on a slab of rock.  
 Carlos lifts a stone knife.  
 He cuts Adam's heart out. Lifts it up and displays it, still beating.  
 Carlos turns, steps to Dad, holds out the heart, offers it to him. Dad stares, horrified.  
 Carlos waits; licks his lips illustratively; Dad still just stares. Carlos finally shrugs, turns away, walk back to altar.

They cover the body behind a screen, exeunt.

When they are gone:)

Matt.  
 Matt. DAD

(The screen is pulled away. Matthew kneels beside Adam, who lies on the ground as in the previous scene.)

Yeah. MATTHEW

Adam. DAD

I know. MATTHEW

DAD  
 Guys with feathers. Indian or Mayan or something.

What? MATTHEW

DAD  
 Some kind of human sacrifice. Cut his heart out.

Whose? MATTHEW

DAD  
Adam's.

MATTHEW  
No no no. Adam's right here.

(Dad goes over to look down at Adam.)

DAD  
Is he dead?

MATTHEW  
No. I didn't even hit him, I don't think. He slipped on something and fell. I don't know what to do.

DAD  
His heart was cut out. They wanted me to eat it.

MATTHEW  
You got visited again, Dad. Wrathful visions, sounds like. You're already in a bardo state.

DAD  
A what?

MATTHEW  
Bardo. From the Tibetan Book of the Dead. Visions between death and rebirth. They're just illusions.

DAD  
Does that mean I'm already dead?

MATTHEW  
Nah. You're just ahead of your time. As usual.

DAD  
How do you know about all that stuff?

MATTHEW  
What?

DAD  
Tibetan Book of the Dead. Egyptian stuff. Where'd you learn all that?

(Pause.)

MATTHEW  
From you.

(Dad stares at him, amazed.  
Matthew nods, just a little.  
Without moving, Adam speaks slowly.)

ADAM  
Fuck ya tryna do?

MATTHEW  
Adam?

(Dad steps away, watches from a distance.)

ADAM  
Never drove ona wet road before?

MATTHEW  
Hey. Are you alright?

ADAM  
Drivun hund miles nour n brake alv sudn. Courser gonna skid. Wherja learna drive?

MATTHEW  
Hey. Adam. Are you Adam?

ADAM  
Howja know mname?

MATTHEW  
It's me.

(Adam finally pulls himself over, looks up.)

MATTHEW  
You recognize me or what?

ADAM  
Matt? Uncle Matt?

MATTHEW  
Yeah.

ADAM  
(pause)  
Were you drivun that car?

MATTHEW  
Yeah. Are you hurt anywhere?

ADAM  
I thought you didn't drive.

MATTHEW  
I learned.

ADAM  
Pf. Yeah. You ever drive in the rain before?

MATTHEW  
I live in Seattle.

ADAM  
Roads get oily in the rain.

MATTHEW  
Yeah, then it washes off.

ADAM  
Maybe in Seattle. Whenja getcher license?

MATTHEW  
Bout seven years ago. Adam, are you hurt? Does anything hurt?

ADAM  
I'm a little flipped out. You almost hit me.

MATTHEW  
Hey look at me.

ADAM  
What?

MATTHEW  
Just look here. Now follow my fingers with your eyes.

(Matthew points two fingers at Adam's eyes,  
moves them around together.)

ADAM  
What are you doing?

MATTHEW  
I'm not sure. I think I'm seeing if your eyes cross or something. Paramedics do this. Can you move everything? Can you breathe okay?

ADAM  
(pulls himself up to sitting position)  
My shoulder hurts. I gotta rip in my brand new jacket. Other than that I think I'm okay. How's your car?

MATTHEW  
It's just a rental.

CAR  
(annoyed)  
Honk!

ADAM  
What are you doing here anyway?

MATTHEW

I was driving a car from the airport . . . Hey did you hear about your grandpa?

ADAM

What?

MATTHEW

You knew he was in the hospital?

ADAM

Yeah.

MATTHEW

Well this is it. Twenty four hours.

(looks at watch)

About fourteen hours, if he holds out.

DAD

I'll hold out.

ADAM

Nobody told me.

MATTHEW

You been home today?

ADAM

Some. Not much.

MATTHEW

Hey what are you doing down--

(Enter Carlos.)

CARLOS

Oye. Tla.

MATTHEW

That someone you know?

ADAM

(standing)

Uh. Uncle Matt. We better . . .

MATTHEW

Oh. Great. There's only one of him.

ADAM

He's worth two of us.

CARLOS

(comes toward them, hand in pocket)

Ahmo. Tla cuel.

MATTHEW  
Whaddowe do?

DAD  
Sometimes you can talk'em down.

MATTHEW  
That's for dogs, Dad.

DAD  
I've done all kinds. Try it.

(Matthew takes a breath, steps out and starts talking with smile--as if calming a growling dog.)

MATTHEW  
Hey Hi How ya doin We're just hangin around here Had a little car trouble You know how it goes Me and my uh Just standin around in the rain like a coupla idiots Oughta know better but nope nope Just mindin our own business you know how it goes right right Yeah? Yeah?

(Sure enough, Carlos stops; stares at them; tilts head slightly, regarding them with extreme puzzlement.)

DAD  
See?

MATTHEW  
Now what?

DAD  
Wait for something to happen.

(Silence; then Carlos speaks.)

CARLOS  
Kesco stedes?

MATTHEW  
What if nothing happens?

DAD  
Well . . .

(THUNDER! All are knocked off their feet--except Dad, who turns to us, as the others disappear.)

DAD  
Just as well. I didn't have an answer for that one.



(Enter Adam and Matthew running. They run to the front, then run in place, facing us.)

MATTHEW

This is ridiculous. I can't outrun anybody. I hate running.

DAD

Me too.

MATTHEW

I've always hated running. I have childhood trauma about running. I particularly hate running uphill.

ADAM

Don't slow down.

MATTHEW

The hell were you doing down here in the first place?

DAD

Some kind of stupid trouble probly. Just like his dad.

(A low wall appears in front of them. They stop.)

MATTHEW

Now what?

ADAM

Jump.

MATTHEW

What?

ADAM

Cmon.

MATTHEW

That's twenty feet down there.

ADAM

It's mud. We'll make it.

MATTHEW

I broke an arm from jumping from lower than this.

ADAM

It'll be worse if he catches us. Cmon.

MATTHEW

Swell. Swell. Alright. I'm already wet. Here we--

(They jump.  
They freeze in the act of falling.  
A bird flies up to the frozen Matthew.)

BIRD  
Everything okay?

MATTHEW  
My stomach  
is in  
my head

BIRD  
Where's your brain?

MATTHEW  
Back  
up  
there

BIRD  
Good.

(The bird flies away.  
Matthew and Adam unfreeze and fall to the  
ground behind a low brown screen. Slowly  
Matthew's head appears out of the mud.  
A spider comes up to Matthew's head.)

SPIDER  
How do you feel about spiders?

MATTHEW  
Hate'm.

SPIDER  
Y'know, I could bite your eyeball right now.

MATTHEW  
Y'gonna?

SPIDER  
I donno.

MATTHEW  
Sometimes in my house I could step on a bug. And I don't.

SPIDER  
I'm not a bug. I'm an arachnid. Listen. You're gonna get a message.

MATTHEW  
Huh?

SPIDER  
Do what it says.

MATTHEW  
What's the message?

SPIDER  
Do what it says.

(Spider leaves. Adam's head appears too.)

ADAM  
You okay?

MATTHEW  
Never better.

ADAM  
We better keep moving.

MATTHEW  
Where?

ADAM  
Toward town I guess.

(The screen lowers away as they pull themselves out of the mud.)

MATTHEW  
We're *in* town. This town goes on forever.

ADAM  
You know what I mean. Down town. There's building lights over there.

MATTHEW  
We should look for a phone.

ADAM  
Sure.

MATTHEW  
We could flag down a car . . .

ADAM  
This is Los Angeles, Uncle Matt.

MATTHEW  
Sorry.

ADAM  
Anyway you're the only car I've seen for a while. There's probably a phone under those highrises. Hey: over here.

(Two stools appear.)

ADAM  
Somebody deserted these.

MATTHEW  
I don't know about this.

ADAM  
Come on!

MATTHEW  
I don't know how.

ADAM  
You don't know how to ride a bicycle?

MATTHEW  
Well I rode one once.

ADAM  
When?

MATTHEW  
When I was about 23.

ADAM  
Well we need to get going. Cmon.

(The little bell ring once.)

ADAM  
It's okay, Uncle Matt. I'll be right here.

MATTHEW  
(looks at him; then looks away, takes a breath)  
Ookay. I'll give it a try.

(They get on the bicycles. Adam peddles, leans down as he moves fast. Matthew has trouble getting his legs to do the peddling correctly.)

MATTHEW  
Wait up!

ADAM  
Okay!

(Matthew finally gets the hang of it, leans down as he goes faster.)

ADAM  
See! It's easy!

(Both lean down: sound of wind, rushing past them.)

Hey! MATTHEW

What! ADAM

How do you slow down? MATTHEW

Handle brakes! ADAM

(Matthew tries to slow down: grabs the frontwheel brake too hard: the bike tumbles over forward, pitching Matthew off. Adam wheels around and hops off, goes to help Matthew stand up. The stools disappear.)

You okay? ADAM

Terrific. Have we gone far enough? MATTHEW

Sure. We're almost downtown. I don't think he'll catch us. ADAM

Whew. MATTHEW

You really never used to ride one? ADAM

Unh-unh. MATTHEW

What did you *do* when you were a kid? ADAM

I donno, I was busy. MATTHEW

Busy what? ADAM

Oh, reading and stuff I guess. Getting ready to. . . MATTHEW

What? ADAM

MATTHEW  
Carry on the family tradition.

ADAM  
Which tradition?

MATTHEW  
You know. Saving the world.

ADAM  
Huh. Guess that didn't make it to my part of the family.

DAD  
Can say that again.

MATTHEW  
Just as well. All that happened was the world stayed screwed up and I never learned to ride a bike.

(They start walking.)

MATTHEW  
I never did all sorts of stuff other people did. It's like everybody had a secret handshake that noone showed me.  
(pause as they walk)  
You ever feel like that?

ADAM  
Yeah. Like everybody's got some place to be, except me.

MATTHEW  
Yeah. Well. It runs in the family.

(Thunder clap: both are knocked down.)

MATTHEW  
(as they stand back up)  
Jesus this rain.

ADAM  
You're probably used to it in Seattle, huh?

MATTHEW  
It does not do this in Seattle. Look at the size of that puddle. They still haven't figured out about drainage in LA?

(A low screen or sheet of blue at their feet.)

ADAM  
We can go around.

PUDDLE  
Dollar to cross.

MATTHEW  
Nah.

ADAM  
It looks deep.

PUDDLE  
Dollar to cross.

MATTHEW  
It's a puddle. How deep can it be? Cmon.

(They walk forward. The blue sheet rises, covering more and more of them as they cross.)

ADAM  
Hey this is deep.

(It's up to their necks.)

MATTHEW  
We're halfway across.

ADAM  
Maybe the shallow half.

MATTHEW  
Okay. I'll go first.

(He goes under.)

ADAM  
Matt! Uncle Matt!

(Adam holds his nose, ducks under also. The screen lifts up from the bottom, revealing Matthew and Adam underwater. Fish, octopi, and alligators swim past. Matthew and Adam speak in watergarbled voices; the Fish, however, speaks clearly as it swims by.)

FISH  
Room for two in the car.

ADAM  
Unnnnccccc Mmmatttt!

MATTHEW  
I slslslippedddd!

ADAM  
CCCan yyyou swswimm?

MATTHEW

Sorrirt offff.

FISH

Room for two in the car.

(Screen goes back down.  
Adam and Matthew come back up  
sputtering.)

ADAM

Scared the shit outta me.

MATTHEW

Let's hold on.

(They clasp hands above the water, move  
forward grunting and straining through the  
chest-high water.)

MATTHEW

God I miss this town.

(grunt, strain)

Why do you live in this lousy place anyway?

ADAM

(grunt, strain)

It's not so bad.

MATTHEW

Maybe it *wasn't*. This visit, I'd have to call it So Bad.

ADAM

It's okay.

MATTHEW

Why didn't you move out to Tempe with your mom and those guys?

ADAM

(grimaces)

Arizona? Why didn't you?

MATTHEW

(considers, then grimaces)

Arizona?

ADAM

See what I mean? You never even came down when we all lived here.

MATTHEW

I did too.



ADAM

Your mom and dad used to say "When Matt comes to visit." Instead of "Once in a blue moon" they'd say "When Matt comes to visit."

DAD

He's right.

MATTHEW

I always came down. At least once a year.

ADAM

Or two.

DAD

Or three.

ADAM

You were always busy with stuff, right?

MATTHEW

Yeah I guess.

ADAM

Yeah well me too.

(The puddle has been receding. They climb out, shake themselves off.)

MATTHEW

Yech. I'm an oil slick.

ADAM

At least it's not cold.

FISH

(now speaks in a water-garbled voice)  
Rrroommm forr two inn the ccarr.

MATTHEW

You hear that?

ADAM

What?

MATTHEW

Nothing. Listen. Adam. Why don't you . . . uh . . .

ADAM

(points)

Hey there's a phone booth.

MATTHEW

Good deal. Police still 911?

ADAM

Police won't come. How about the rental company?

MATTHEW

Okay.

(Matthew and Adam trot in a circle upstage to an attendant holding a telephone. Adam sits on the sidewalk as Matthew picks it up. Puts a quarter in. Listens; shakes the phone, rattles the dial; pushes buttons. Hits the phone. Hits it again and again.)

MATTHEW

Doesn't work.

(slams it down)

Fuck! You notice that? Half the payphones you pick up these days don't work .

ADAM

(chuckles)

Hey Uncle Matt. I think that's the first time I've ever heard you use that word.

MATTHEW

Payphone?

ADAM

Fuck.

MATTHEW

Oh. Well. You always saw me around *my* mom and dad.

ADAM

Grandpa swore.

MATTHEW

Not very fucking much.

ADAM

Anything else you didn't do very much around them?

MATTHEW

Oh I don't know.

(He belches. Adam laughs.)

ADAM

Hey you're okay, Uncle Matt.

THUNDER

(distant)

yoooooooooooooooo're oooooooookaaaaaaay

MATTHEW

Yeah well thanks a fuck of a lot, kid. You're oh fucken kay yourself.

ADAM

Well thanks a fuck. Too fucken bad you don't know how to fucken drive.

MATTHEW

Who the rip fucken cracken buttin shit are you telling doesn't the wad bick stucken know how to horken drive?

ADAM

You the crack shitten fucken.

MATTHEW

Me the whack slacken fucken?

ADAM

Yeah the dink pinken you. See the way you whacken almost pack tinken punken creamed my buttin fucken ass on the fucken farken finken freeway?

MATTHEW

Well jinkin pinkin dinkin sluuuurg you and your hork snotten smegmalip freeway.

ADAM

Slurg me?

MATTHEW

Slurg you!

ADAM

Slurg me and my jinkin pinkin smegma freeway?

MATTHEW

Yeah horkin torking borkin snork you all the way back to the plasma magma fucken squirten spurtenvention of the whole torkin snorkin fucken wrappin packin butt crackin universe. And me too.

ADAM

Yeah you too.

MATTHEW

Snork us both. So gimme the fucken trucken ducken secret goddam big snorkin fucken ratshit hairy puscovered deal of a secret brotherhood fucken fucken fucken handshake.

ADAM

Oh fucken kay.

(They spontaneously improvise an elaborate handshake involving hands elbows feet foreheads howling and belching. The pay phone suddenly rings. They look at it.)

ADAM  
Thought you said it was busted.

MATTHEW  
It was. (picks up the phone.) Hello?

PHONE  
Room for two.

MATTHEW  
What? Who is this?

PHONE  
Click. BZZZZZZZZZZZZp.

(Matthew hangs up, staring at it bewildered.  
Picks it up again, tries dialing: no response.)

ADAM  
What was it?

MATTHEW  
Nothing. Broken again. Listen. Adam.

ADAM  
Huh?

MATTHEW  
Why don't you . . .

ADAM  
What?

MATTHEW  
Come with me.

ADAM  
Where?

MATTHEW  
Tempe. Phoenix. Are you gonna come out for Grandpa's I don't know what,  
whatever they do?

ADAM  
I didn't know about it till now.

MATTHEW  
So come out with me.

ADAM  
Your car's broken.

MATTHEW

It's a rental.

(Distant aggravated honk)

They'll bring me a new one if there's a phone that works in this damn town.  
Whyncha come out? Come on. We've got about . . . 13 hours.

DAD

12. 11. (cough, gag) I'm going! I'm going fast! (cough cough gag)

MATTHEW

Very funny.

ADAM

I don't know.

MATTHEW

Why not?

ADAM

I don't know. I don't go out there much.

MATTHEW

Like ever?

ADAM

They probably won't even recognize me.

MATTHEW

I recognized you and I haven't seen you in longer than they have. I'll introduce you.  
Come on. You can ride with me. I've got--

(Enter Carlos)

CARLOS

Oye.

MATTHEW  
(very precisely)

Holy. Shit.

ADAM

I told you.

CARLOS  
(speaks English with some difficulty)  
Hey. Do not go and be running away.

MATTHEW

You got it. Even with my shoes on, I'm toast.

(Matthew starts whistling softly to himself.)

ADAM

Listen. We don't want any trouble.

CARLOS

Have not fear. Nor have you need to obfuscate with your clever prattle.

MATTHEW

Oh. Well. Lucky us. You caught up mighty fast.

CARLOS

I drove your automobile.

MATTHEW

How'd you start it--never mind.

CARLOS

I repeat: have not fear. I have no intent of dismembering or otherwise bringing you injury.

MATTHEW

Why're you chasing us then?

CARLOS

Oye, Adam.

ADAM

How you know my name?

CARLOS

You and I matriculated together. Junior high school. Carlos Ochoa. You have memory?

ADAM

Uh . . .

CARLOS

Chess Club?

ADAM

Oh. Yeah. Hey, Carlos.

CARLOS

You have remembered. We did not pass time together much, outside of chess. I had recognition of you, and I thought to reveal myself and give greeting. (to Matthew) Is he your son, or is he some sort of small horse to you?

MATTHEW

He's my nephew.

CARLOS

Whatever the case may be. (to Adam) Have you been well?

ADAM  
Yeah. How about you?

CARLOS  
Well enough, much thanks. You did not act well earlier.

ADAM  
Oh that was nothing.

CARLOS  
Was it not.

ADAM  
I was just kidding around. You know.

CARLOS  
You are a kidder with testicles, then. Such obscure humor might someday grind your buttocks into the earth.

ADAM  
Yeah. I'll watch it next time. Was that Roy with you?

CARLOS  
You remember Roy?

ADAM  
Sure. Say hi to him for me.

CARLOS  
So I shall. (pause; then to Matthew) Your automobile sits directly over there. It drives OH KAY, but you might desire to drive it with more care in the future.

MATTHEW  
Thanks. I will.

CARLOS  
You will find your steering wheel somewhat difficult, because the right front tire has had very bad sex.

MATTHEW  
I see. Is uh . . .

CARLOS  
Your possessions are intact. I do not make my living by theft, as you seem to expect.

MATTHEW  
Lucky for me.

CARLOS  
We mostly do not. Someone must be prepared to maintain law and order after your civilization collapses. One further note: you will want to train a closer eye on your small horse or nephew or whatever. He seems to desire chalk lines drawn around

him on the pavement, and if he had encountered someone other than myself, he would have succeeded. Be well, Adam. Good fortune.

(He leaves.)

MATTHEW

What'd he mean by that?

ADAM

Nothing.

MATTHEW

The part about chalk lines.

ADAM

Nothing! We just had some big luck. Let's get the car.

(They walk off. Dad has picked up his pencil and begun working again.)

DAD

Just like his dad. Probably never read a book in his life. Probably never listened to Beethoven or Handel. Never travelled anywhere. Grew up without reading books. Doesn't know any better. You know what happens to your brain if you don't read books?

MATTHEW  
(entering)

What?

DAD

Some parts of your brain never come into being. There are parts of your brain, parts of your whole character that just don't get born. That kid. Walking around like all of us on a pile of plutonium with bombs hanging over his head day and night. Father dead. Grandfather half senile, too busy looking for some fanciful key to prove somebody thousand years ago sent him a message . . . can't even remember his own goddamn, goddamn . . .

MATTHEW

I know. I know.

DAD

Never had a chance. But he's luckier than some.

MATTHEW

Why?

DAD

He's still got you.

MATTHEW

Great. Great.



DAD

There's some don't even have that. (pause) I didn't.

(Dad's sculpture has included two chairs facing front. Matthew has sat in one; Adam enters and sits in the other. Matthew drives. The ride is bumpy, since one tire is flat.)

ADAM

Over here. This one.

(Matthew turns, pulls the car over and parks. They sit.)

MATTHEW

This your place?

(Adam shakes head.)

MATTHEW

It's not?

ADAM

Unh-unh. Actually I don't think I wanna go here.

MATTHEW

Whose is it?

ADAM

Tracy's. My girlfriend. Sorta. Can we go?

MATTHEW

Where to?

ADAM

Just go.

MATTHEW

Go where?

ADAM

Please. Just start driving, okay?

(Matthew, puzzled and annoyed, starts driving. They ride their bumpy car.)

MATTHEW

Soooooooo. Where to?

(Silence.)

MATTHEW

Wherever you need. Just tell me.

(silence)

Where do you uh.

ADAM

This has been a real bad day for me, Uncle Matt.

MATTHEW

Something happen?

ADAM

Grandpa was right about me.

MATTHEW

When?

ADAM

He said I was nothing but trouble.

DAD

I never said that.

MATTHEW

When did he say that?

ADAM

He didn't have to. It's what he thought.

MATTHEW

(to Dad)

Is that what you thought?

DAD

(pauses)

Pretty much.

(Matthew pulls over, stops.)

DAD

It's not what I wanted to think.

MATTHEW

(to Adam)

It's not what he wanted to think.

DAD

I think it was because of Dave.

MATTHEW

It was because of your dad. They didn't always get along.

ADAM

What was my dad like?

MATTHEW  
You don't remember him?

ADAM  
I was eight.

MATTHEW  
Mm.

ADAM  
What was he like when you were kids?

MATTHEW  
Oh . . . you know . . . he was . . .

ADAM  
Be honest.

MATTHEW  
Kind of a jerk.

DAD  
Kinda talk is that?

MATTHEW  
It's true.

DAD  
He was your brother.

MATTHEW  
Doesn't make him not a jerk.

ADAM  
What kinda jerk?

MATTHEW  
Oh I don't know. He was bigger than me. I think he had a hard time on the outside and he took it out on me. So he wasn't much of an older brother. He was always in trouble. Our dad got mad at him a lot.

DAD  
At least I didn't call him a jerk.

MATTHEW  
I learned it from you, Dad.

ADAM  
Was he always a jerk?

MATTHEW  
No. Course not. Everybody liked him.

ADAM

Did you like him?

MATTHEW

We didn't have much in common.

ADAM

Would he have changed? Do you think? If he was, you know.

MATTHEW

I don't know. Who knows?

(pause)

If you mean do I think he *could* have changed, then yeah I do. People can change.

ADAM

Is being a jerk hereditary?

MATTHEW

No. (pause) Not liking yourself is. Punishing yourself is. You know, Adam, I think it might be real good for you to come with me. And see those guys.

ADAM

Yeah you said so.

MATTHEW

I didn't exactly say that. I invited you on kind of an . . . impulse. But now I'm saying I think it's a really good idea for you to come.

ADAM

I don't know.

MATTHEW

What's to know?

ADAM

I don't like it out there.

MATTHEW

Too hot?

ADAM

The way they look at me. And they talk to me.

MATTHEW

What, your mom? My mom?

ADAM

My mom's the worst.

MATTHEW

Worst how?

ADAM  
Ashamed of me.

MATTHEW  
She is not.

ADAM  
You don't know.

MATTHEW  
Well I'll be there. I'll tell her different then.

ADAM  
(snickers bitterly)  
No thanks.

MATTHEW  
Why not? I will.

ADAM  
Because I take it back about my mom. She's not the worst.  
(pause)  
You thought I was a pain even when I was a kid.

MATTHEW  
(pause)  
You *were* a pain when you were a kid.

ADAM  
Well there you go.

MATTHEW  
Everybody's a pain when they're a kid. That's what kids are. Jeff was a pain, too.

ADAM  
You liked him better. He wasn't even your real nephew.

MATTHEW  
I was around him more.

ADAM  
'S okay. He needed the attention. He was *really* messed up.

(Pause. Matthew sighs.)

MATTHEW  
So are you gonna come or not?

ADAM  
I don't know.

MATTHEW  
You should. I mean it.

ADAM  
I don't know, I don't know, I don't know.

(Pause.)

MATTHEW  
What were you doing down in Rwanda, anyway?

ADAM  
Nothing.

MATTHEW  
Whaddya mean nothing?

ADAM  
You know. On my way someplace.

MATTHEW  
Where, Disneyland?

ADAM  
I was taking a walk.

MATTHEW  
Nice night for a stroll.

ADAM  
What difference does it make?

MATTHEW  
You know you're a fuckup and you always will be.

ADAM  
What?

MATTHEW  
I said I don't know the fuck why you won't just tell me. What am I, your mom? Am I a cop or something? What are you staring at?

ADAM  
Nothing.

MATTHEW  
So go to hell. Who cares about you?

ADAM  
Whad you say?

MATTHEW  
I said let me help. Is there something I can do?

ADAM  
Did you do that on purpose?

MATTHEW

What?

ADAM

Nothing. I have to go.

MATTHEW

What's wrong? Whaddya doing?

(Adam gets out of the car, walks away.  
Matthew gets out, starts to follow.)

MATTHEW

Adam, wait a second.

ADAM

(turns)

No. Don't follow me.

(Matthew stops.)

ADAM

Tell them all hello. Tell them I'm fine.

MATTHEW

Adam, look . . .

ADAM

Let go of it, Uncle Matt.

(Adam turns, leaves. Matthew stares after.)

MATTHEW

Well. I think I handled that brilliantly.

DAD

(as he works)

You did your best.

MATTHEW

God I hope that's not my best.

DAD

Dave never believed me either.

MATTHEW

About what?

DAD

That he was any good. I told him I loved him and everything. I was proud of him. No matter what. But he always thought I thought he stunk.

MATTHEW

Did you?

DAD

No! Not always. Sometimes I guess. But he was still my son. (pause) Are you still mad at him?

MATTHEW

For what? I don't think so. Maybe.

(bitter, exasperated sigh; peers off after Adam)

Forget it. I give up. He's gone. I did what I could.

(He gets in car, turns the wheel to drive the other direction.)

MATTHEW

Kid doesn't wanna be helped. Nothing I can do.

(drives a moment in silence, bumping as he goes)

What was he doing down there, Dad?

DAD

I don't know for sure.

MATTHEW

What do you think?

DAD

(pause; as he works)

About his age, I was pretty much living on the streets. Breaking into houses and such. Pretty much thought I was crazy. Couple things came along. One was some books. And the other, little while later, was your mom.

(pause)

Without them, I might have uh . . . who knows. I probably wouldn't be here.

MATTHEW

That what you think he meant?

DAD

Got me.

MATTHEW

(in his rearview mirror, he looks at the sculpture)

What's this one for?

DAD

For Adam.

MATTHEW

(considers; then:)

Shit.

(Turns the wheel, drives back in the opposite



direction.

Enter Adam, who runs in place. Police  
loudspeaker over.)

SPEAKER

Repeat. Stay indoors. Stay indoors. Ignore noises outside. Avoid making noise. Do not try to alter the situation. Changing the situation is impossible. You will fail. Your parents failed. Their generation failed. They sold out. Your generation will fail. Nothing you do makes a difference. Do not resist. You are only bringing hardship on yourself. And on those whom you would love if you were capable of love. But you are not. You are only equipped for greed and consumption. You are a decomposing member of a decomposing world. Only the strongest will survive. You should not have come to term. Get out of our way. Stay indoors or get out. Get off. Get over. It's all over. It's all over. It's all over.

(Adam runs off.

Tracy has entered at one side.  
Enter Matthew, behind her. He stands,  
looking at her.)

MATTHEW

Oh. (pause) Well. Does he come here . . . ever?

(Pause.)

TRACY

Sometimes. Not much. My mom and dad don't like him. They're gone this week. But he's not here now.

(turns to look at him)

Which uncle are you?

MATTHEW

Matt. Weaver. His dad's brother.

TRACY

Oh.

MATTHEW

Do you have any idea where I can--

TRACY

How did you find me?

MATTHEW

He uh. We came here and I was going to drop him off. But he changed his mind.

TRACY

Why?

MATTHEW

He wouldn't tell me.

TRACY

He didn't say anything?

MATTHEW

Not about that. Do you know his address? I'd really like to find him.

TRACY

He just changed his mind and walked away and you couldn't find him?

MATTHEW

Pretty much. I don't know how he disappeared so fast. We kinda argued.

TRACY

What about?

MATTHEW

I don't know quite.

TRACY

What were you talking about?

MATTHEW

Oh . . . Arizona. My dad's in the hospital. His grandpa. I was trying to get him to come out with me. We got talking about family.

TRACY

About his dad?

MATTHEW

Yeah, some.

TRACY

How'd he look?

MATTHEW

I dunno. Wet, like me.

TRACY

He gets a look sometimes. He didn't say where he was going?

MATTHEW

Unh-unh.

TRACY

Or what he was gonna do?

MATTHEW

Unh-unh. I think it might be important to find him . . . are you alright?

TRACY

(has been staring at her hands)

I'm. I've been having kind of a hard day, if you really wanna know. And my hands keep. They tingle sometimes. And right now there's no feeling in them. I can't feel anything.

MATTHEW

wwwWhy don't you sit down?

(He leads her to a chair.)

TRACY

I don't get it.

MATTHEW

Have you been sick?

TRACY

No. Not really. I was in sort of a clinic, but they didn't do anything to my hands.

MATTHEW

Uh-huh. Listen, you might be hyperventilating. I used to do it at night sometimes. It makes your blood circulate funny, and that can make your hands and feet tingle. Lemme see.

(He takes her hands, one at a time, and rubs them.)

MATTHEW

Try breathing just deep and slow.

(She does.)

MATTHEW

Is that better?

TRACY

They're tingling.

MATTHEW

I'll bet that's it. Blood's coming back. You want me to open a window?

TRACY

Sure.

(He goes to find a window: opens it.)

TRACY

Are you a doctor?

MATTHEW

Me? Pf.

TRACY

How do you know about blood and stuff?

MATTHEW

Oh I'm packed with irrelevant odds and ends like that. Ask me about fainting sometime. Are you better?

TRACY

(nods)

He just walked away?

MATTHEW

Pretty much.

TRACY

We better find him.

MATTHEW

I'll find him. You should rest.

TRACY

No. I have something I need to tell him anyway.

MATTHEW

You sure?

TRACY

(stands)

Is there room for two in your car?

(Matthew stares at her.)

MATTHEW

Yeah.

(Adam dances on, singing loud brash circus music, maybe in magician's costume. Matthew and Tracy leave behind, as Adam dances all around Dad, though not appearing to see him.)

ADAM

And now, for your entertainment, I will swallow a sword! Handle first!

(starts to do so: stops.)

Never mind. You've seen that one.

(dances again, singing; finds a sawblade.)

So instead: for your *greater* entertainment, I will saw myself in half!

(switches blade's position)

Lengthwise!

(takes a breath, is about to start, but stops.)

You've seen this one too.

(dances again, singin; picks up a can, douses himself with gasoline; lights a match, holds it over his head.)

So the only think left for your *greatest* entertainment is: I will burn myself to a cinder, right before your eyes!

(stands poised, ready to drop match; but doesn't.)

You've seen them all. You know they're all fakes. You know I won't do it. But I've got one more. I was kidding before, but this one's for real. In fact, this one is SO REAL . . .

(sings, dances over to a side of the stage; stops abruptly:)  
that YOU: don't even get to watch.

(He vanishes. Dad stares after him.  
Matthew and Tracy sit in chairs facing us,  
riding bumpily in his three-wheeled car.)

DAD

He means it. Matt?

MATTHEW

Yeah?

DAD

He means it.

MATTHEW

I know, Dad.

(to Tracy)

Can you think of anyplace else?

TRACY

(shakes head)

If Sandy doesn't know then I'm stumped.

MATTHEW

How much does Adam pay for that dump?

TRACY

I don't know. Expensive.

MATTHEW

Easy to break into.

TRACY

I'm used to it. I hope you didn't ruin your card.

MATTHEW

Credit cards are tough. They'll outlast us all.

(Pause.)

MATTHEW

Has he ever actually come close?

TRACY

Never cut himself or anything. He smashed up a car once.

MATTHEW

Does he ever say why? Leave a note or anything?

TRACY

No.

MATTHEW

You think he'd ever really do it?

TRACY

I don't know.

(pause)

Did you ever want to?

MATTHEW

Me? No.

TRACY

You never just wanted to disappear?

MATTHEW

No. (pause) Maybe go into hiding, start over.

TRACY

Same thing.

(pause)

Maybe Adam's afraid he'll grow up like his dad.

MATTHEW

Like I expected him to.

THUNDER

(rattling the car)

ROOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO

(The car rattles.)

TRACY

Some weather.

MATTHEW

(poised)

Mm.

TRACY

You're probably used to it up in--

MATTHEW

It does *not* rain like this in Seattle.

TRACY

Really? Too bad. I like it.

MATTHEW

You do?

TRACY

I went walking in it a while ago.

MATTHEW

Didn't you get knocked down?

TRACY

Yeah. I got back up. It's not even cold out.

MATTHEW

Are you sure you're okay to be driving like this?

TRACY

Yeah. It's no big deal. It's not even a stitch. Probably bad for the car to drive it like this.

MATTHEW

It's a rental.

CAR

Honk!

TRACY

(pause)

I rode the bus home afterwards.

MATTHEW

The bus?

TRACY

I liked it. I was by myself. Nobody knew me. There was a while when the bus was just moving along and I was just sitting on it and I don't know. Time stopped. Time just stopped.

(pause)

Did you ever used to show Adam things?

MATTHEW

Whaddya mean? Like what?

TRACY

When he was a kid. I had an uncle who showed me arithmetic shortcuts when I was little. He used to read with me too, things like that. I liked learning stuff like that when I was little.

MATTHEW

That right? Are you a big reader?

TRACY

Not much.

MATTHEW

You didn't keep it up?

TRACY

My uncle moved to another city. I kept doing it for a while after he was gone, but nobody else at home was doing it so I kinda slowed down. Then I started having to do it at school, so that was that.

MATTHEW

That uncle never visited?

TRACY

Sure. Once in a while. And he'd say What are you reading these days. But I wasn't reading anything except school stuff, so I felt stupid, and he musta figured that out because he stopped asking.

MATTHEW

Hm.

TRACY

So I just thought maybe you showed stuff to Adam.

MATTHEW

Not much. When we all lived together--

TRACY

You did?

MATTHEW

Yeah, for a while after he was born. He needed a lot of attention. Too much attention, for me.

TRACY

You seem to care a lot about him.

MATTHEW

I do?

TRACY

Yeah.

MATTHEW

Hm. Well I guess I thought I was busy those days.

TRACY

Doing what?

MATTHEW

Oh, you know.

MATTHEW & DAD

Saving the world



MATTHEW  
and stuff.

TRACY  
From what?

MATTHEW  
Huh?

TRACY  
Save the world from what?

MATTHEW  
Oh, you know. Poverty. Fascism. Control. It's a hereditary ailment. Kinda dopey.

TRACY  
Maybe. You must care about a lot of things.

MATTHEW  
Hm. Maybe that's hereditary too.

TRACY  
Maybe.

(They drive in silence.  
Dad has stopped working. He moves over  
near Tracy.)

DAD  
You said you had something to tell Adam?

TRACY  
(pauses; looks neither at Dad nor Matthew)  
We didn't think about it very much. What happened today. What I did today. We just decided. Seemed like the only thing we could do. So I've been thinking about it today. A lot. I been doing some figuring.

MATTHEW  
Figuring?

TRACY  
Arithmetic.

DAD  
It's something she does. Relax.

TRACY  
I figured it takes 20 hours a day to take care of a newborn baby. And that drops off to maybe one hour a day when they're grownup. So an average of 10 hours a day over 20 years, just roughly, figure in sleep time and worry time and some other factors, it comes out about 25 complete years. So I figure that's how much of my life I would have spent. And I figure that means. That. I gave myself something

today. Kind of a gift. I gave myself 25 years of my life today. It means that I decided my life and 25 years of it were more important than the who knows what kind of life that. You know. Whatever whoever it woulda been . . . woulda been. So if I'm worth more than that, then that must make me. And my life. Really important. And I better not throw it around. I better make myself worth it. Cuz I can't take it back.

I think that's what we decided, both of us, even if we didn't know it. We decided our lives were more important. I don't know if it's true, but it's done now. So we better be worth it. Whether we like it nor not.

That's what I want to tell him. Before it's too late.

(Silence. Dad looks at Tracy. He pulls his pencil out from behind his ear, lifts Tracy's hand, puts the pencil in it. She does not look at him.)

TRACY

What's this for?

DAD

I finally figured out who you are.

(Tracy stares at the pencil, then speaks.)

TRACY

I know where he is.

MATTHEW

You do?

TRACY

Let's go. What are we waiting for?

MATTHEW

It's a red light.

TRACY

(looks both ways; then at Matthew)  
Are you from Seattle or what?

(The car drives away. Tracy does not leave with it, but instead rises and looks around the workshop. Dad stands near her, but always behind her; without touching, he leads her to move toward the tools and materials. She does not notice as Dad turns to see Adam entering through part of the sculpture. Adam walks tentatively; looks down at the ground. He comes to stand under the Doorway. Looks up at it. The clear bell rings once.)

DAD

Where ygoin?

(Adam stops, looks blankly at Dad.)

DAD

That's for me. Not you. Not your time yet. You've still got work to do.

(Adam looks at him; looks up at Doorway.  
Dad steps over, stands between Adam and the  
Doorway.)

DAD

It's not your time. You need to go back.

(Adam stares. Turns. Stares at Dad. Looks  
down. Walks away from the Doorway.)

DAD

That's it. That's right. Hey.

(Adam stops)

DAD

You were supposed to ask me for a gift. Just as well you didn't. I'm all out. You might try asking somebody else for one. And while you're at it, say thanks to someone. And tell somebody I love you.

ADAM

(has difficulty speaking; trying out the words)

I  
llove  
yy --

DAD

Not *me*. Somebody back there.

(pause)

See ya.

(Adam looks down at the floor. He leaves--  
but not the way he came.)

Tracy has selected some materials. She constructs the next scene: a low screen of blue fabric which can ripple--OR two cutout flats of ocean that move back and forth OR some other simple ocean/waves effect. She kneels at one end, making the ripple.

Attendants enter to help her. When the waves are set up and moving, Tracy leaves; one of the Attendants disappears behind the waves, which keep moving throughout the following scene.

Ocean sounds. Rain sounds.)

TRACY  
(off)

Adaaaam!

(Matthew enters. He's wet.)

MATTHEW  
I said are you sure this is the right place?

TRACY  
(entering)  
It felt for sure. He comes to the beach whenever he can. Me too. Not in the rain, though, I guess.

MATTHEW  
That rain'll screw up those psychic connections every time.

TRACY  
Adam! Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaadaaaaaaaaaaaaaam!

MATTHEW  
Yeah I tried that. Voice doesn't carry very far in this.

TRACY  
We could go farther down.

MATTHEW  
Is there any place else we could look?

TRACY  
Aaadaaaaam! Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaadaaaaaaaaaaaaaam!  
Aaaadaaaaaaaaaaaaaam!

(She moves off, calling out. Matthew shrugs.)

MATTHEW  
Okay, I guess we'll keep looking here.

(He turns to stare at the ocean. Stands silent, staring. Sound of rain and ocean. Long moment. Dad, behind him, also watches the waves. Finally Matthew speaks, softly, still staring at the waves.)

MATTHEW  
Where do you go, Dad?

DAD  
Hm?

MATTHEW  
When you go, where do you go?

Oh. DAD  
 (pause)  
 Got me. (pause)  
 I expect I pretty much, ah, crumble. Your mom says I hover. For a while at least.  
 She's sure of it. (pause)  
 We'll see. She's usually right about that sort of thing.  
 (pause)  
 Question is, where do *you* go? What do you do when I'm gone?

MATTHEW  
 Carry on the work, right? Maybe write that book.

DAD  
 Mm. Maybe. Maybe do sumpm of your own instead.

MATTHEW  
 Mm.

(Silence. They stare at the waves.)

MATTHEW  
 Whaddya suppose that might be, Dad?

DAD  
 I don't know.  
 (pause)  
 What do you do, Matt?

MATTHEW  
 (pause)  
 I stand here.  
 I watch this water.  
 I try to get to some hospital in Phoenix while my dad's still alive.  
 I try to find my nephew while he's still alive. Try to help if I can.  
 Try to stand here. Watch this water.  
 Listen to this ocean.

(They stare at the waves.)

The sound of rain diminishes.  
 The sound of ocean diminishes.  
 The movement of the waves diminishes.

Time stops.

Silence.

Matthew stares at the waves.

The little bell rings once.

Once more.  
Once more.  
Once more.

Slowly, the waves begin to move again.  
The sound of ocean comes up. The sound of  
rain comes up.

Matthew keeps staring. Dad comes to stand  
next to him, staring at the ocean.)

TRACY

(off)

Aaaaaaadaaaaaam! Aaaaaaadaaaaaam!

DAD

What'll you do if you find him?

MATTHEW

I don't know. Talk to him. (with a smile) Save him.

(They share a rueful little chuckle.)

MATTHEW

What would you say to Dave if you saw him?

DAD

(considers)

Tell him I'm proud of him. That he was a good son. No. No, if I had a chance to  
talk to Dave, here's what I'd tell him. In my life, in this world, I only had three things  
that made me happy. Really happy. One was my wife. One was my son Matt.  
And one was my first son David. (pause) A big one.

MATTHEW

You never told him that?

DAD

Sure I did. But I'd tell him again. And then I'd tell him again, and I'd tell him again  
and again and again until he believed me.

MATTHEW

(nodding)

I can picture that.

(Dad gets it, smiles; maybe they laugh a little.  
Pause.)

MATTHEW

Hey. What about working with your hands?

DAD

Okay, four things. Working with my hands, my wife, my son Dave, and my son  
Matt.

(Pause.)

DAD  
What would you tell Adam?

MATTHEW  
(considers)  
Maybe I could forgive him.

DAD  
For what?

MATTHEW  
Nothing, he hasn't done anything. But noone else is forgiving him, and he doesn't know how to himself. I could say Adam, I hereby forgive you for every stupid fuckup you've ever done.

DAD  
Nice way to talk.

MATTHEW  
Adam, I don't care how big of a stupid jerkoff fuckup you've been until now: it's done, it's in the past, that bozo of a kid is dead. You now get to start over clean. Learn from your mistakes, don't fuck up, but you don't owe anybody for the past. Just give yourself a chance. Give *me* another chance, wouldja? Starting now, you are *new*, you are *good*, you are a full-fledged member of the human race with all the rights and privileges appertaining thereto. You are in *good standing*.  
(calling out by now, over the waves)  
Adam Weaver, I have come here, I have dropped out of the sky for the purpose of informing you officially and finally and forever that you are Oh! Kay!

THUNDER  
OOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO KAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAY

(THUNDER!! Loud ocean roar; the waves suddenly leap up high in the air. Matthew and Dad jump back upstage. As the waves reach their highpoint, a body is hurled out onto the ground. The waves subside to normal, the thunder stops suddenly, all the clouds disappear. The moon comes out. Matthew and Dad are astonished. Matthew steps forward, wide-eyed, staring down at the body.)

MATTHEW  
Adam?

(Dad hangs back watching as Matthew drags Adam away from the water. Adam is limp and unmoving. Matthew calls off as he drags.)

MATTHEW

Tracy! (to himself) Okay, okay, breathe twice, then press five. Or three times?  
Traceeeee!

(Tracy enters as Matthew lays him down,  
kneels beside him.)

TRACY

Is he alive?

MATTHEW

You know CPR?

TRACY

Unh-unh.

MATTHEW

Then it's twice and five. Hope I'm right.

(Takes a breath, bends kind of timidly down  
to give Adam mouth-to-mouth; but just as  
he's about to make contact, Adam splutters in  
his face. Matthew jerks back as Adam twists  
and coughs.)

MATTHEW

(wiping his face off)

That's a yes, he's alive.

(Adam keeps coughing. Tracy kneels beside  
him too.)

MATTHEW

Adam? Adam? Did you take anything?

ADAM

(spluttering)

What?

MATTHEW

Did you take anything? Any pills?

ADAM

(stops coughing long enough to stare at him; suddenly pulls away)  
No. What! Leave me alone. I was just out for a swim--

(He heaves over, vomiting violently. Matthew  
holds him. He stops, wipes his mouth.)

ADAM

Whaddaya doin here anyway?



(He looks up, sees Tracy; looks away.)

MATTHEW  
We were in the neighborhood.

ADAM  
You shouldna come.  
(looks up at Tracy again)  
Are you okay?

TRACY  
Mm-hm. Yeah I'm okay. We've been kind of WORRIED ABOUT YOU!

(She flings herself at him and starts hitting him with her fists. Matthew restrains her until she stops.)

TRACY  
Jerk.

ADAM  
That's me.

TRACY  
Are you drowning or anything? (to Matthew) Is he okay?

MATTHEW  
Got me. Are you okay?

ADAM  
I'm fine. (cough, snort)

MATTHEW  
You shivering or anything?

ADAM  
I'm fine! I just took kind of a . . . you know.

MATTHEW  
(to Tracy)  
I guess he's fine.

ADAM  
Donno why you guys wanna make a big deal.

MATTHEW  
(puts his jacket around Adam)  
We probably oughtta get him inside somewhere anyway.

(They start to lift him up so they can walk him, but he pulls away again and drops to his knees, stubborn but weak.)

MATTHEW

Come on Adam.

ADAM

Came out here to be by myself.

MATTHEW

Taking another walk? Long way to Disneyland.

TRACY

Adam, let us take you inside.

ADAM

(to Tracy)

You ever been to Arizona?

TRACY

What?

ADAM

Arizona. Ever been there?

TRACY

No.

ADAM

Not missin much. Cactus. Tumbleweed. You wanna go?

TRACY

Where?

ADAM

Arizona. My grampa's, you know. You wanna come?

TRACY

To Arizona?

MATTHEW

Uh, wait . . . you mean both of you?

THUNDER

ROOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOM FOR THREEEEEEEEEEEE

(All are knocked sideways to the ground.)

ADAM

Wow. What's with that? I thought the clouds were all gone.

TRACY

There's some way over there.

ADAM

Jeezus. Sideways rain? Bet *that* never happens in Seattle, huh?

MATTHEW

(as they pick themselves up)

Well as a matter fact, we do get that sometimes. Weirdest thing. Well actually there are weirder things. Cmon Adam. Let's get you inside, huh?

ADAM

Okay.

(He lets them help him up.

(A huge loudspeaker voice blares out, accompanied by helicopter noise and swirling searchlights. They stare up at it.)

SPEAKER

Your attention, your attention all citizens. Power has been restored. We are restoring order to the streets. The governor has declared a state of martial law, which will last indefinitely within Los Angeles and Orange Counties. Please have photo identification ready. Please cooperate with the Police Department and with special forces. Please stay off the streets. Control is being restored. Control is being restored.

(Searchlights, helicopter move off. They watch it move away. Matthew lowers his head first.)

MATTHEW

Well that's comforting. Hey Tracy: maybe you ought to get out of Los Angeles, while you still can.

TRACY

(to Adam)

Do you want me to come with you?

ADAM

Well . . . do you want to?

MATTHEW

We'll figure it out in the car, huh? You're gonna get cold.

(Ocean noise. Matthew stops.)

ADAM

You coming?

MATTHEW

I'll be there in a minute. I think Tracy wants to talk to you.

ADAM

Hey is this a gift?

MATTHEW

I uh suppose. Why?

ADAM  
I'm supposed to ask for a gift.

MATTHEW  
Says who?

ADAM  
I donno. I'm supposed to . . . (to Tracy) tell you something.

TRACY  
What?

ADAM  
I'll tell you later.

(Tracy and Adam leave. Matthew watches them leave, then turns to look at the ocean again.  
Matthew and Dad stand side by side, looking at the water.)

MATTHEW  
Take us ten hours at least. You still gonna be there?

DAD  
(glances up at the Doorway)  
I don't know. It might be time.

(Pause)

MATTHEW  
That mean the world's fixed?

DAD  
(shakes head)  
It's different. That's all. Than when I came into it. That'll have to do.  
(pause)  
You gonna be okay?

MATTHEW  
Yeah. Yeah.

DAD  
You still gonna come out?

MATTHEW  
What am I, gonna *not*, after all this?

DAD  
I'll stay till you get here, if you want.

(Matthew turns, looks at Dad. Dad looks at

him. They look in each other's eyes for the first time in the play.)

MATTHEW

You do what you have to do. Okay?

(Dad nods.  
They step together, embrace.  
They step apart.)

MATTHEW

I'll be talking to you.

(Dad nods. Matthew turns to go.)

MATTHEW

(as he goes)

Course if this damn car doesn't work we could be stuck here forever. Wish we used horses. Though they could break a leg or die I suppose. I hate travelling.

(He's gone. Dad stands, hands in pockets, looking after him.)

The sounds of ocean diminish.  
The movement of the waves diminishes also.

Time stops.

The clear bell rings once as the Doorway descends into place. The ocean billows away and disappears.

When the Doorway is in place, Dad turns his head, looks at it for a moment.

He nods a little, acknowledging it.

Turns his head away from the Doorway, looking around at his work. Looks away, after Matthew.

Everything is taken away. The sculpture, the materials, everything. Only the Doorway stays. Soon the stage is empty of everything except the Doorway and Dad.

The bell rings once more.)

DAD

I'm coming, I'm coming.

(Dad looks around him, all around, up and down.)

He turns fully to face the Doorway. Stands gazing at it.

The bell rings once more.

Hands in pockets still, Dad walks, casually and thoughtfully, through the door and off.

When he's gone, the bell rings once more.

Silence.

Lights down.)

**end**  
**the million bells of ocean**

**APPENDIX: Carlos and Roy's conversation (pp 56-58) translated**

*Note: This is provided as a guide for actors only. This translation is NOT to be put in a program or anywhere else for the audience to see.*

Carlos and Roy speak a non-grammatical imitation of the Aztec language Nahuatl. This language may be pronounced phonetically, similar to Spanish, with the exception of the letter "x" which may be pronounced "ks" or "sh".

ROY

In the name of fuck I wish this rain would stop

CARLOS

That is a very short-sighted view to take.

ROY

How so?

CARLOS

To me, the rain is like a shower of sweet-smelling flowers.

ROY

Your wisdom is empty.

CARLOS

Does not this unusual and unseasonable rain drive the police forces away? And all white people into the imagined sanctity of their homes? The ancient decrepit ones who once owned this city are withdrawing into their shells.

ROY

This is true.

CARLOS

Does this sun's disappearance not herald the approaching death of this whole decaying fucked up civilization that has so long oppressed us?

ROY

I suppose so.

CARLOS

Then rejoice. Let us blow our trumpets with joy.

ROY

Nonetheless I have not spread open a flower of legs in I don't know how long.

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ROY

I suppose so.

CARLOS

Then rejoice. Let us blow our trumpets with joy.

ROY

Nonetheless I have not spread open a flower of legs in I don't know how long.



CARLOS

Fear not. Let us go and seek these flowers now.

(Enter Adam)

ROY

Who is this?

CARLOS

One of the ancient ones. (to Adam) Hello. Do you have some business with us?

(They regard him. He stares. Then he holds two hands, middle finger up, flipping them off.)

ADAM

How about that?

CARLOS

Is he some sort of idiot?

ROY

Maybe.

(Carlos and Roy chuckle.)

CARLOS

He is crazy.

(Carlos gestures "He's crazy." They laugh, turn to go. Adam runs over, blocks their way.)

ADAM

Maybe you didn't hear me. I said:

(Violently flips them off right into their faces.)

ROY

He is looking for trouble.

CARLOS

(puzzled; to Adam)

Do you know what you are about, white person?

ADAM

(stares, bewildered; then violently shoves Carlos)

So fuck you! You don't get it? Fuck you! Come on! I'm ready!

(Carlos and Roy exchange a look. They move to surround him, speaking as they do so.)

CARLOS

Clearly this is a white boy who, lacking any ceremonial form of acceptance into adulthood in his culture, has decided he is unworthy to live.

ROY

Does he realize that our form of initiation might entail death but not rebirth?

CARLOS

That is not our responsibility, in my opinion.

ROY

Shall we oblige him?

CARLOS

(shrugs, nods)

What the fuck.

[They move in; Adam changes mind, runs.  
Roy aims a pistol; Carlos stops him.]

CARLOS

Wait.

ROY

What for?

CARLOS

I think I know him.

ROY

(puts gun away)

He is yours to do with as you please.

CARLOS

Thanks. Later.

(Carlos walks off after Adam)