

ELEPHANTS and ABORTION

Two 1-Act Plays by Jerold London

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ELEPHANTS

TIME

The present.

PLACE

Initially across the stage is a screen or scrim, on which are hung papier-mâché bodies of dead birds. Later the screen/scrim is drawn away to reveal an office in a high tech workplace. Desks gathered like a horseshoe facing a central table, which stands stage left. Chairs at the table permit easy access for employees to

climb up, on the table and use it as a makeshift speaker's platform. Computers, papers, etc. at each desk. Lots of open space. Potential for all kinds of antics. Male employees wear suits and open shirts. Becca has a large Shit Box on her desk – a self-made box with "SHIT" in large letters printed on the side facing the audience, that lights up (by a light inside) whenever she turns the switch on, which she does at odd times, from time to time, throughout the Scene.

CHARACTERS

ALI, adult female.

BECCA, adult female, with a Shit Box on her desk.

CHRIS, adult male, master of ceremonies. Also plays GRENDEL.

DAVID, adult male, amateur magician.

EVIE, adult female, wearing a bathing suit underneath her outside clothes.

PHOEBE, adult female.

GLEN, adult male, nicknamed "Frosty."

HEATHER, adult female.

INDIA ("Indie"), adult female.

J.D., adult male.

NOTES

Every Fifth Friday (roughly 4 times a year) the Office throws a Fifth Friday celebration. But following a year in which there have been five Fifth Fridays, the very next Fifth Friday is called the Sixth of Never, with an even crazier celebration. A controlled free-for-all. In the Director's discretion, any character not "on-stage" (on the table, performing for the rest) may interject whatever they feel like saying in the given situation, including shouting out characters' names, without disrupting the flow. Similarly, non-dangerous objects may be tossed about.

... in the dialogue indicates a thoughtful break.

... // signals the starting point of interrupting (but **not** overlapping) text.

An Effervescing Elephant
with tiny eyes and great big trunk
once whispered to the tiny ear,
the ear of one inferior,
that by next June he'd die, oh yeah!
because the tiger would roam.
The little one said: "Oh my goodness I must stay at home!"

and every time I hear a growl
I'll know the tiger's on the prowl
and I'll be really safe, you know
the elephant he told me so."
Everyone was nervy, oh yeah!
And the message was spread
to zebra, mongoose, and the dirty hippopotamus
who wallowed in the mud and chewed
his spicy hippo-plankton food
and tended to ignore the word
preferring to survey a herd
of stupid water bison, oh yeah!
And all the jungle took fright,
and ran around for all the day and the night
but all in vain, because, you see,
the tiger came and said: "Who me?
You know, I wouldn't hurt not one of you.
I'd much prefer something to chew
and you're all to scant." oh yeah!
He ate the Elephant.

– Syd Barrett

SCENE 1 – GRENDEL

Center stage (in front of the screen/scrim of dead birds) a white sheet covers a large object. GRENDEL, clad as the man-eating monster of the same name from Beowulf, enters in light dimmed like a shroud of darkness around him.

GRENDEL

[*turning to face the audience*] Scat!

I've not come to devour you.

Go back to your mead halls, or canvases, or whatever.

Don't let my appearance fool you.

I'm no puppy.

I pull the heads off of puppies ... and people, too. Especially painters.

Countless numbers of them.

I've forgotten them all.

I chew on Van Gogh's ear like gum.

I spit blood prettier than Audubon's birds.

GRENDEL defiantly lifts a middle finger to the audience.

This idiotic war.

This never ending war man wages against Nature.

Maybe I've changed my mind after all.

Maybe I will eat you.

Later.

When the moon tires of spinning mindlessly over your heads.

When you are sufficiently pickled in your alcohol and your pride and your greed.

When the splintered sunlight reveals my gruesome face and the sickening stench of my breath suddenly in the morning, close enough to kiss you.

When I tire of watching you locked in your deadly progression of butchery and mayhem and rape.

Spring is coming.

As though that makes any difference to elephant-murderers.

Spring is coming and I can feel my anger surging, like an invisible fire in me.

Like the irreversible injustice of your faith in destroying Earth's sacred creatures.

Raging inside me like the very sickness of consumption raging inside you.

I can see for miles, out from this shroud of darkness perpetually around me.

I can see what's going on behind that white sheet over there.

See that? [*indicating*]

That's an elephant. A dying elephant.

GRENDEL hammers the stage with his fists and lets out a howl so violent it could turn water to ice.

GRENDEL

Go ahead! Watch from the safety of your distance.
From the safety of your indifference.
That magnificent body of his, pierced by poisoned arrows.
Forty days ago.
They've been tracking him.
Relentlessly.
He hears them following.
His strength ...
His massive strength slowly ebbing away.
His mountain of awesome symmetry daily becoming more and more sluggish.
He was taught by his grandmother to listen for the rains.
For the rustling of the brush.
For the sounds of flying death.
Poachers using poisoned arrows, not to be heard by the protectors of elephants.
Weeks until the animal finally succumbs.
And falls to his knees.
And they rush him.
Cut his tendons.
Cut his trunk, to bleed him to death faster.
As though elephants were not people like you.

Once there were millions in Africa.
Now, not as many as 425,000.
Their number falling by two-thirds in less than fifty years.
Falling toward annihilation.

Ivory is the name of the holocaust.
Ivory is the metaphor for greed, is the metaphor for exploitation.
Mountain to market to moral bankruptcy....
It's a curse.

GRENDEL exits. The white sheet, and whatever was hidden behind it, are removed from the stage.

SCENE 2 – THE SIXTH OF NEVER

The screen/scrim of dead birds is drawn away, to reveal the Office. Everyone but CHRIS and GLEN are at work at their desks when the two of them carry in a large box; set it down next to the bicycle at Glen's desk; and then sit at their respective desks. Suddenly, ALI crumples up a paper and throws it at GLEN. HEATHER does the same to CHRIS; and in moments the room is in chaos with laughter, banter, and paper balls, airplanes, rubber bands, etc. flying through the air, everywhere. Maybe a nerf ball or two (**not** a nerf gun), beanbags, etc. Paddles, possibly (to swat flying objects away). CHRIS, dodging the incoming, friendly, flying debris, steps up, onto the central table.

CHRIS

Attention.

Uses his hands to signal (unsuccessfully) for quiet.

CHRIS

Attention this moment, one and all.... [*beat*] **Silence !**

CHRIS starts clapping for attention. DAVID rings a hand bell. In a few moments, silence (but, nevertheless, the occasional flying object, sometimes directed at the speaker).

CHRIS

That's more like it.... Whew! Such a ruckus....
Now, you all know what day today is.

J.D.

Fifth Friday. Hoo, hoo, hoo.

CHRIS

Wrong! Today is the *Sixth* Friday.... The Sixth of Never.
Which is ... do I have to tell you?

EVIE

One big, bold, bad Friday, right? Chris?

PHOEBE

The first fifth Friday of the new year, after a five, fifth Friday year.

CHRIS

[*points at her*] On the nose, Phoebe.
A Sixth Friday. The Sixth of Never, one and all.

General cheers, stomping, etc.

CHRIS

And time now for improv....
[*points*] Come on, you two, get up here.
Yes, both of you.... Heather, yes you.

HEATHER stands.

CHRIS

And you, too, India. Get up here.

**INDIA stands; and both she and
HEATHER climb up, onto the table.**

CHRIS

The stage is yours.

**CHRIS climbs down and returns to his
desk.**

HEATHER

I hate this. Why start with us, Chris?
We don't know what to do.

CHRIS

It's improv. Just let it hang out.
Do, whatever wild-ass thing comes into your brains.

HEATHER

[*pause; then to INDIA*] Remember the witch movie?

INDIA

[*to HEATHER*] Which movie?

HEATHER

Yes.

INDIA

[*beat*] No.

HEATHER

You don't remember it?

INDIA

I don't know what you're talking about.

HEATHER

Witch movie.

INDIA

Which movie?

HEATHER

Yes.

INDIA

How can I remember it? If you won't tell me its name?

HEATHER

I don't remember the name.

INDIA

Which movie?

HEATHER

Yes. Something like that.

INDIA

[beat] Let me try it another way. What was it about?

HEATHER

Witch movies?

INDIA

Which movies are you talking about?

HEATHER

Witch movies.... What are any of them always about?

INDIA

Any of them?

HEATHER

Yes. Just start. Somewhere. Anywhere. What you can think of.

INDIA

Where?

HEATHER

Anywhere.

INDIA

Anywhere what?

HEATHER

Do you know what I'm saying, Indie?

INDIA

Yes.... No.... You're asking me: if I remember ... which movie?

HEATHER

Precisely.

INDIA

Which one?

HEATHER

Pick one.... Any one.... The most famous one.

INDIA

Casablanca.

HEATHER

No, not Casablanca. How could it be Casablanca?

INDIA

You said the most famous one; and that's what popped into my mind.

HEATHER

I say a witch movie, and that's what pops into your mind?

INDIA

Well, Citizen Kane, then.

HEATHER

Citizen Kane?! Citizen Kane what?

INDIA

You tell me.

HEATHER

What are you talking about?

INDIA

Famous movies.... Like Casablanca. Or Citizen Kane.

HEATHER

Witch.... *Witch*.

INDIA

They both are.

HEATHER

No they're not. Neither one of them is.

INDIA

That's your opinion.

HEATHER

It's not a matter of opinion.

INDIA

Then what?... Mary Poppins?

HEATHER

She doesn't count.

INDIA

Why not?

HEATHER

She's too pretty, and too sweet, and *not* scary. That's not what I'm talking about.

INDIA

What *are* you talking about, then?

HEATHER

Witch movies.

INDIA

Which ones? You tell me.

HEATHER

The most famous one.

INDIA

Well, I can't guess anymore, Heather.... What happened in it?

HEATHER

They went out looking.

INDIA

For, ah, what?

HEATHER

For a witch, you mean.

INDIA

Which what?

HEATHER

I don't remember the name.... I've told you that, Indie.

INDIA

Looking for, God knows.

HEATHER

That's: "*Waiting* for Godot."

INDIA

What's "Waiting for Godot"?

HEATHER

You said, "looking...." But it's "Waiting."

INDIA

No, *you* said looking.

HEATHER

How could *I* have said "looking"? I said "waiting," *after* you said "looking."

INDIA

Whatever.

HEATHER

So, you don't remember it, then?

INDIA

What?

The movie.

HEATHER

The, which movie?

INDIA

Yes.

HEATHER

Which movie?

INDIA

Yes.

HEATHER

Which movie are you talking about?

INDIA

That's the problem. I told you. I don't remember the name.
Can't you remember any?

HEATHER

I remember thousands, thank you.

INDIA

Thousands?

HEATHER

Well, probably.
I've been watching movies nearly my whole life.

INDIA

Name one.

HEATHER

One?

INDIA

Name just one.

HEATHER

Any one?

INDIA

HEATHER

Any one, Indie.

INDIA

Gone With the Wind.

HEATHER

Are you crazy?

INDIA

Well, crap. The Naughty Nineties, then.

HEATHER

The Naughty Nineties?????????

INDIA

Abbott and Costello.

HEATHER

I ask you about a witch movie, and you tell me Abbott and Costello?

INDIA

So?... What do you want me to say, Heather?

HEATHER

How about, "The Wizard of Oz"?

INDIA

Okay.... The Wizard ... //

HEATHER

That's not it.

INDIA

Witch?

HEATHER

I can't remember. I told you.

INDIA

You're asking about a *witch* movie?

HEATHER

Not about GWTW, or Citizen Kane, or Casablanca, that's for sure.

INDIA

I thought you were saying “which?”

HEATHER

I was.

INDIA

No. I mean, “which” like “which one?”

HEATHER

Witch One?... They don’t have numbers.

INDIA

Are you saying, “witch” like the Good Witch of the North?

HEATHER

No. A wicked one.

INDIA

“Wicked”?

HEATHER

Yes, wicked.

INDIA

Did they make *that* into a movie?

HEATHER

Of course. That’s why I asked you.

INDIA

I didn’t know. Sorry.

HEATHER

Didn’t know what, Indie?

INDIA

That “Wicked” was a movie. I thought it was just a Broadway musical.

HEATHER

It was a Broadway musical.

INDIA

Then why did you just say it was a movie?

HEATHER

I'm not talking about "Wicked."

INDIA

You just said "Wicked."

HEATHER

Oh, my God. Just forget it.

INDIA

How can I forget it when I don't know what to forget?

HEATHER

Just drop it.

INDIA

Or care which....

HEATHER

That's it! *That's it, Indie!* Blair Witch ... Blair Witch something.

INDIA

Never saw it.

J.D. climbs up onto the table; and in a gentle, friendly way, pushes HEATHER and INDIA.

J.D.

Enough, you two....

And we don't have to guess what you'll be watching this weekend.

HEATHER and INDIA climb down, and return to their desks.

J.D.

Witches. Witches. Witches.

Enough. Enough. Enough....

Except

We used to have a witch living in *my* family.

GLEN

O please, J.D. Not your Aunt Carly, again.

J.D.

Yes, Glen, Aunt Carly. *Again.*

Don't you love it?

I didn't.

We used to go over there for Thanksgiving, and by God! I hated it.

Aunt Carly was married to Uncle Ben.

But she wouldn't call him Ben. Or anything like that.

She invariably called Uncle Ben, Sweeney Todd. He was a barber, you see.

And because of that, we never were sure what mystery meat she was serving us.

And if it didn't taste right, I'd hide it under the table so I wouldn't have to eat it.

Or in my pockets.

And flushed it down the toilet, as soon as I could....

But Aunt Carly did make good chocolate chip cookies.

I'll give her that.

Every summer they spent a month in their cabin in the woods.

In Tennessee.

Aunt Carly called it Tin Nessee.

One summer, I heard, I was just a kid ... maybe eleven or so,

she'd left for a couple of days, to visit relatives, and came back early;

and Uncle Ben was in their bed with another woman.

O Christ! she had a meltdown fit.

She grabbed her shotgun, and the two went scrambling.

Aunt Carly opened the front door and shouted, "Get out. *Get out.*"

"Me?" Uncle Ben asked.

"Both of yous, lessen you want buckshot in your backside."

And they both ran out of the cabin, buck naked....

Aunt Carly had left the keys in the pick-up;

and Uncle Ben drove off with his girlfriend, *her* sitting shotgun, so to speak.

Aunt Carly had a cousin in the sheriff's department, and called him.

"What do you do with cheatin' husbands, Wayne?" she asked him.

"Cut their nuts off?"

"No law agin it, anymore, Carly." He told her.

"What about car theft?"

"We can take care of that."

"Well, it ain't no real car theft," she admitted;

and gave her cousin the license plate number and most of the gory details.

They pulled Uncle Ben over in the hour;

and took them both to the sheriff's office to be booked, in the nude.

He never tried anything like that again....

DAVID

Lucky they didn't get tarred and feathered.
Already naked like that.

J.D.

Lucky.... Like you say, David.
Anyway, I always liked my Uncle Ben.
He had some great stories, especially about his early Army days in California.
When he was allowed to tell them.
His best friend then was a Mexican-American named Francisco.
Once, four of them went down to Tijuana for a couple of nights;
and when they were driving back, Uncle Ben was at the wheel.
The border guard had checked them, and was about to let them go through,
when he asked my Uncle, "Are all you legal?"
Uncle Ben made an eye movement toward the back seat, where Francisco was,
and he pulled the car over, and made all four of them get out.
Uncle Ben said Francisco never forgave him, but I don't believe it.
It was the border guard who was the most pissed off.
And he reported my Uncle to their base commander.

Now, the base commander didn't quite see the humor in it;
and he made my Uncle carry around a small, potted tree for a week.
"You better guard this baby," he told my uncle, "like your life depends on it.
And if anyone asks you, tell them it's on my orders.
To replace the oxygen you're stealing from the atmosphere."

You'd think my Uncle would know about guns, being in the Army and all.
But those weren't his weapons of choice.
Combs, hairbrushes, and barber scissors were.
One morning his company were zeroing their weapons,
lying on the ground, firing them into paper targets. But not Uncle Ben.
He was one piss-poor marksman; and ten times worse with people watching.
He spent a couple of hours trying, until he was the last one left without an Okay.
And only three hours of range time left. After that, he'd be recycled.
Which meant, being sent back to start Basics all over again.
A fate worse than Hell, you can guess.

Anyway, his Drill Sergeant picked him up, looked him in the eye, and said,
"Go find me a pine cone, Mister." My Uncle was fuddled.
But he went and found a pine cone lying on the ground, and brought it back.
Like he was told.
A large one.

GLEN

They've got some big ones out there, all right.

J.D.

"That's not *my* pine cone, Private," the Sergeant yelled at him.
"Go find *my* fucking pine cone."

For 15 or 20 minutes my Uncle looked.
Each time the same thing from the Drill Sergeant.
Finally, the last time, the Sergeant said to the pine cone in my Uncle's,
"Darth, there you are! Private, you found Darth."

His relief lasted but a breath. "Where's the rest of his family?"

For another half hour my Uncle searched frantically for Darth's father, mother, sisters, and brother. At last, after some push-ups, the pine-cone family nestled on the ground next to him, my Uncle went back down to fire, and zeroed on the first set of shots. "It was just in your head, Dumb Fuck," his Sergeant told him.

Sadly, my Uncle died when I was a teenager. And not from buckshot wounds. At the funeral home, I mean, right there in front of the open coffin, Aunt Carly broke down, screaming and wailing, and striping her clothes off. I saw her. One of my Uncle's best friends helped her into a back room, to get herself calmed down, and back together. It took them nearly an hour. And they got married four months later.

I know what you're thinking.
I know what you're thinking, so let me share my fondest memory of Aunt Carly. At Thanksgiving, all of still eating ... or hiding our food, she'd get off her chair, and circle the table, round and round, saying, "It's time for my Harley machine."

That's why we called her "Aunt Carly the Harley," behind her back, of course: tooting and farting the whole way round and round the table, like a motorcycle.

J.D. gets down from the table, and circles the room, triggering a portable fart sound maker all along the way. Several hold their noses while others jump up and pummel him with names and papers balls, etc. As surreptitiously as possible, GLEN climbs into the box. J.D. returns to his desk.

CHRIS

[standing for a moment] David ... your turn. Get up there.

DAVID ascends the table, with a large bag.

DAVID

[beat] How do you clear the air after that?

CHRIS

What's in the bag, David?

DAVID pulls a can of Febreze out of the bag, and begins spraying.

DAVID

Fair is foul, and foul is fair, hover through the fog and filthy air....
Magic, my Man. Only magic can do the trick. And that's what I'm here for....
But, but, but, but ... I'm no David Copperfield.

Performs a few, simple rope tricks, then points to CHRIS.

Chris, come up here, please. I need your help.

CHRIS ascends, to stand next to DAVID.

DAVID

You can see, here

Shows the room.

a simple woman's skirt and high heels.
Watch, closely, what happens....
[to CHRIS] Go ahead....
Take off your shoes and pants, and put these on.

Reluctantly, CHRIS complies.

DAVID

Now, walk around the table, and strut your stuff.

CHRIS starts to walk around the top of the table, but unconvincingly.

DAVID

Oh, come now, Chris. You can do better than that.

CHRIS improves “her” strut.

DAVID

That’s better, my Dear.
You can go home now.

**CHRIS changes back into his trousers
and shoes, and descends.**

DAVID

Now ...

Points to EVIE.

Your turn, Evie.

EVIE

For what, David?

DAVID

Come up here and find out. I have something nice for you. A *nice* surprise.

**EVIE reluctantly steps up, onto the
table. David pulls out a beautiful
pendant on a thick gold chain**

DAVID

See this?

EVIE

For me?

DAVID

Just keep your eyes on it, Evie. Watch it ... closely.
Everything’s calm ... and fine ... and peaceful.
Just relax.
Deep breaths. In ... and out ... slowly.
Let it out slowly ... into the air.
Your eyes are getting a bit heavy.
Do only what you want. You are in complete control.
You will accept only suggestions that you want.

DAVID allows the pendant to rotate slowly in the air, until EVIE is hypnotized

DAVID

Wonderful.... Now, just take your shoes and clothes off.... Not your underwear.

EVIE willingly complies. She is wearing a stars and stripes bathing suit underneath.

DAVID

Jackpot! Tell me that's not the American Dream.
[beat] You can get dressed again; and when I whistle, wake up.

EVIE complies. DAVID whistles.

EVIE

What?
What did I miss?

DAVID

Nothing.... Watch this.

DAVID pulls out a Jack-in-the-Box, and turns the crank until, Pop, up pops the clown. At that very moment, GLEN pops out of the box and hops around the room, showered with paper wads, etc.

DAVID

Here.

Hands the necklace and pendant to EVIE.

EVIE

Thanks, I guess....
But why, David?

DAVID

Put it on.

EVIE does.

DAVID

It looks great on you, Evie. You can wear it tonight.
At the gym. After you go for a swim.
Next.

**DAVID packs things back into his bag;
and he and EVIE (shaking her head)
descend from the table. PHOEBE
ascends it.**

PHOEBE

I guess I'm gonna sound stupid up here, or you'll think so, like this whole day.
Which is as good an explanation as any, for what I'm about to tell you....
But, last month
I don't know if any of you knew it,
but I went to I Am, You Are, It Is, which is a two-weekend seminar/boot camp in
self transformation and actualization. A scream, actually. Literally.
You see, they start each session with primal screaming,
to clear the cobwebs out of our anger cells. It's a howl from the soul, with eyes
shut, for every fucked up thing ever done to us.
Or not done to us, for the trauma-free, yuppie pups in the group, looking for a
posh alternative to online dating.

Silently mimics Edvard Munch's Scream, with eyes shut.

The goal of I Am is to wash away the misconception that people are fuck-ups in
plain clothes. It's to prove to us that we are what we are what we are because we
do what we do what we do. Meaning that, when we choose to let bad things
accumulate in our lives, they sure as Hell will. And mess us up more. And we're
assholes for letting it happen, because we can choose not to let it.
And bad things are meant to just float away.
I'm not sure where they're supposed to float to.
It's only a two-weekend course.

You see, people are conditioned to see the negative.
The empty space in a half-full glass.
When, in reality, if we'd just let ourselves, we can see it full. Or at least half full.
And we can feel ourselves fly.
Which I know is impossible, except for airplanes, and helicopters, and
parasailing, and BASE jumping, and sky-diving, and bungee-jumping, and
wingsuits, and Ironman. But in our dreams, we *can* fly. And that's better than
primal screaming any day of the week. And *that's* what I'm talking about.

PHOEBE

Except, if you really look around closely, what? What actually *is* there to I Am?
Explaining it now, it seems not much more than an overpriced, self-help, hip spa.
Where it takes two hours just to list all the crazy rules of the place.
One of which is: no potty breaks in the middle of a session. Shit!

Is this making any sense?
It seemed to make sense to me at the beginning.
Learning to detect the fake, and honor the honest.
To judge people, not by their covers, but by their scripts inside.

Like ... I'm a girl with a few close friends.
No cascade of superficial friendships.
Yep. That's me all right. Few and far between....

I'm talking on, aren't I.
It's just, I think I wasted two week-ends of high decibel blah, blah, blah,
telling me to dial up a picture of who I'd want to be talking to, if I could.
Like, Elon Musk maybe.
He's sexy.
Or Chewbacca.
Or picture a place I'd feel more comfortable in.... A snake pit might do.
At least I wouldn't feel so harangued. And self ... nervous. Like up here, by myself.
The trainer at I Am pranced up and down the stage, like a unicorn.
"Have you got it? Have you got it? Have you got it?"
How many times did I have to hear that?

In the week between I got a pair of white panties, with "I get it" printed on the
butt side in big red letters; and after the last session I went up on stage to thank
him. He loved it. And then I pulled up my skirt and mooned him with, "I get it."
[beat] I mean, yes, some people did get a message out of the sessions. I think.
But I'm not sure it solved any of their problems.
Like having sex the first time with somebody.
It doesn't change your life; but it's good remembering the good ones.
I suppose we all have moments like that, when we feel particularly alive.
They are what they are. Perfect, in their little way, but hardly essential.
People go on functioning, with or without them. Like me.
I Am, You Are, It Is doesn't make me a better person.
Or the two weekends I spent there.
No better than someone who spent the time reading Hemingway, or Anaïs Nin,
or partying with friends.
None the wiser. None the richer. None the sexier for it.

**CHRIS steps up on the table to join
PHOEBE.**

CHRIS

[to PHOEBE] And why, Phoebe, is the Sixth of Never called Cryday Friday?

PHOEBE

I don't know. No one's ever explained that to me.

CHRIS

[to the others] Anyone?

Can't anyone enlighten our newly sprinkled Zen initiate?

[pause] Because on the Sixth of Never ... Cryday,
anyone who hasn't had a Friday date for over a year is guaranteed one.

EVIE

What?

ALI

No way.

CHRIS

That's right.

Sadie Hawkins Day without having to run nine innings.

And none of us guys can go home until one of us steps up to the plate.

So ... Phoebe, how long has it been?

PHOEBE

Sorry....

I know this whole thing I've spent so much time blabbing about is a bore.

But it's only been four months for me ... not a year ... not yet.

Sorry to disappoint. I do have another life....

But, I wouldn't say no. Just so you know.

EVIE somewhat timidly raises her hand.

CHRIS

[to EVIE] Yes, Evie?

EVIE

I have something to say.

CHRIS

[to EVIE] Let me guess.

EVIE

What?

CHRIS

[to EVIE] You're wearing a bathing suit because you're planning to jump into the river after work.

J.D.

That's brutal.

EVIE

And it's not true.

CHRIS

[to EVIE] And then, when you're saved, he'll ask you to go mud wrestling at the O K Corral.

GLEN

Hold on, just a minute, Chris.
You're, all of a sudden, acting like an asshole.
What's gotten into you?

GLEN rides his bicycle up to the table, turns it upside down on the table, and proceeds to send miniature nerf balls flying off the spinning rear tire.

GLEN

My invitation, Evie,
to you, Miss Sadie Hawkins,
with every one of these flying missiles,
is to go to the Hard Rock Cafe tonight....
How about it?

EVIE

[*slight pause*] Thanks, Frosty.

GLEN parks his bike at EVIE's desk, and returns to his own. PHOEBE descends. CHRIS still up, on "stage".

CHRIS

I realize I came on sort of strong there, all of a sudden.

GLEN

Damn right you did.

CHRIS

Sorry. No pun intended, but I just dove in,
trying to make an impromptu swim suit joke. And it didn't float.
Sorry again.... I don't know why I do that sometimes.
But might I add? that you two are mermaid for each other.

GLEN

Get off it, before we O-Pun the door and pun-t you out into a pungent gutter.

CHRIS

Got it.
[beat] Sorry. Something on my mind....
Just asking.... Does anyone recognize this?

An Effervescing Elephant
with tiny eyes and great big trunk
once whispered to the tiny ear,
the ear of one inferior,
that by next June he'd die, oh yeah!
because the tiger would roam.

Brief pause.

BECCA

I think that's Syd Barrett.
After he left Pink Floyd.

CHRIS

You know your stuff, Becca. You really do.
You're exactly right.
Strange thing, though.
I feel I could have written the same story Barrett did.
Because I had an elephant come up to me,
with tiny eyes and a great big trunk,
and whisper in mine ear:
"Elephants are just people with big skin and long trunks.
Can't you use some magic, and a plastic surgeon, and get me different skin?
I'd gladly trade mine in. And my trunk, too,
for skin like yours. And a Roman nose."

PHOEBE

You never!

CHRIS

Let me finish.
That got me to thinking. The way Syd Barrett thought.
If elephants are like people in a way.
The social animals that we are.
Who live in extended families like us.
And bury their dead. And mourn for them.
And return to the gravesites to mourn even more. Years later.
Who have memories like elephants.
Don't they deserve to live together in peace?
And not be exterminated from the face of the Earth?
Because, without them, where do *we* stand?
Mindless in the wind?
Propped up like monuments of sand?
Couldn't Syd Barrett have written it that way?
Hard wind, blasting down streets past howling dogs.
Watchdogs who wind up getting their heads blown off,
to lie like gloomy wet stones.
Teeth bared.
Birds pinned in midair.
I mean: Where will the meaning be?
If all the elephants are gone? That's what's bothering me.
If "elephant" comes to mean "ghost story" and truth, a hornet's nest?

Pause.

CHRIS

[*points to ALI*] Ali ... your turn up here.

ALI steps up on stage, as CHRIS steps down.

ALI

There's nothing left for me to say after that.

Starts to step down.

CHRIS

[*to ALI*] O no you don't, Ali. You don't get off that easy.

ALI turns back, toward the others.

ALI

[*beat*] I've never seen an Am I? seminar.
I hope to never see one.
But I can tell you anyhow,
I'd rather see than be one....

[*beat*] Stephen Hawking was a guest at one, once, I heard.
Or something like that.
A special conference of physicists,
in San Francisco, in the '80s.
And he put the lights out.
Just like Chris just did, with his elephant eulogy.

He was a wild man, for being such a genius in a wheelchair.
Ask anybody who ever knew him.
A daredevil.

A crazed Oracle of Delphi.

At that time Hawking was riding in his motorized wheelchair we've all seen.
But it was before he got his robot voice.

One afternoon he was walking with friends up cliffs that San Franciscans call
streets, when he cut it loose....

At the top of one of the steepest hills he suddenly launched himself downhill, full
tilt. The others frantically chased after, expecting a disaster. But when they
reached the bottom, there he was, a devil's smile on his lips, comfortably sitting
in his rocker.

It was at that conference that Hawking told the world that black holes, someday,
would rule the universe, swallowing everything.

INDIA

Elephants, too..

PHOEBE

No one ever told *me* that story.

ALI

Psychologists say it must have given Hawking a laugh,
to think of us crying about the universe, billions of years from now, disappearing.

J.D.

What else do psychologists say, Ali?

ALI

That people love their homes, even when they hate them.
That people who laugh too much at stupid things are deeply lonely.
That people who sleep too much are sad.
That people who speak too fast are likely lying or keeping secrets.
That a man's ability to cry shows honesty and integrity.
That people, men or women, who cry at little things, like movies,
are innocent and soft-hearted.
That people who get mad at little things need more love in their lives.
That people need to try better to understand other people who love and hate,
and laugh and cry, and talk too fast, and sleep too much, and get mad.... Okay?

CHRIS

Okay, Ali. You can step down.

ALI steps down, and returns to her desk.

CHRIS

Last, but not least ... Becca.... And don't bring that Shit Box of yours.

**BECCA steps up on stage, leaving her
Shit Box turned on.**

BECCA

[beat, looking around, like a deer in the headlights] I have no idea what to say.

[beat] I'm a woman of few words.

[painful pause] You know what? What else can I say?

J.D.

Have you seen any witch movies lately, Becca?

ALI

Or read some good book?

DAVID

What about your trip to Myrtle Beach last summer?

BECCA

I'm not taking off any my clothes to entertain you,
if that's what you're suggesting, David.... Sorry....

[beat] Have you ever watched, "Who Is America"?

The TV show?

On Showtime?

HEATHER

[beat] No. Do they take their clothes off?... on that show?

BECCA

No. Not exactly.

And it's not that we need that kind of show now.

Because if Sacha* Cohen's not an idiot, he's plenty stupid enough. * "Sasha"

Or acts that way.

But do you know what I think?

The only difference between stupidity and genius is that genius has its limits.

And what kind of person laughs at stuff like that?

Like when he went to Atlanta to rap against the professional rapper, Ness Lee.

Like, how does a black rapper feel about some white guy,

acting like a college professor,

pretending to do a rap battle with him?...

Yo, it's Borat, Fool.

"It couldn't be," Ness Lee said.

"If that's Borat, Borat's gotta be the greatest actor of all time."

Like, how he gets it. Like how rap's a fraternity.

No matter how much blacks and whites dis each other, and their prejudices....

Or when Sacha Cohen duped that Georgia state representative into repeatedly saying the "n" word. On camera.

And got him to drop his pants. On camera.

Or getting Trent Lott and other pro-gun activists to back a made-up scheme to arm four and five-year-olds to protect kindergarten kids at school....

It's humiliating. Down and dirty. It's anti-intellectual.

And somebody said it: Anti-intellectualism is believing in a democracy where my ignorance is just as good as your smarts.

And, believe me, when it comes to Sacha Cohen, I am supremely ignorant.

I can't understand why I can't stop watching his show....

I'm sorry.

I've never felt so alone....

I can't finish this alone.... Thinking of those elephants.

[to DAVID] Come up here, David, please ...

He stands.

BECCA

... and bring your bag.

DAVID ascends the table, bringing the bag he had before. BECCA rummages deep down in it, and pulls out a very small box.

DAVID

Where did that come from?

BECCA

Magic.

DAVID

It wasn't in there before, Becca. I swear it....
What's in it?

BECCA gets down on one knee, and opens the box, revealing an engagement ring.

BECCA

[to DAVID] Will you marry me, David?

DAVID

[in utter shock] What???

BECCA

[to DAVID] You know we love each other. Will you marry me?

DAVID

[still in shock] I don't ... know ... what to say. Nobody else knows.

BECCA

[to DAVID] Simple.
Say, "Yes." Then you can put the ring on my finger.

DAVID

[beginning to recover] Becca, I do love you. I do.
But.... Wow! I never expected anything like *this*.

BECCA

[to DAVID] Five seconds.... Four.... Three.... Two....

DAVID

Yes. Yes. I'll marry you.

All (but BECCA) are on their feet. General hoots and hollers around the room. “Sadie Hawkins Day !!” BECCA stands; and DAVID takes the box, removes the ring, and places it on her finger. They kiss, and then step down from the table.

BECCA

[to DAVID] The Sixth of Never.

DAVID

[to BECCA] What are we possibly going to tell our children?

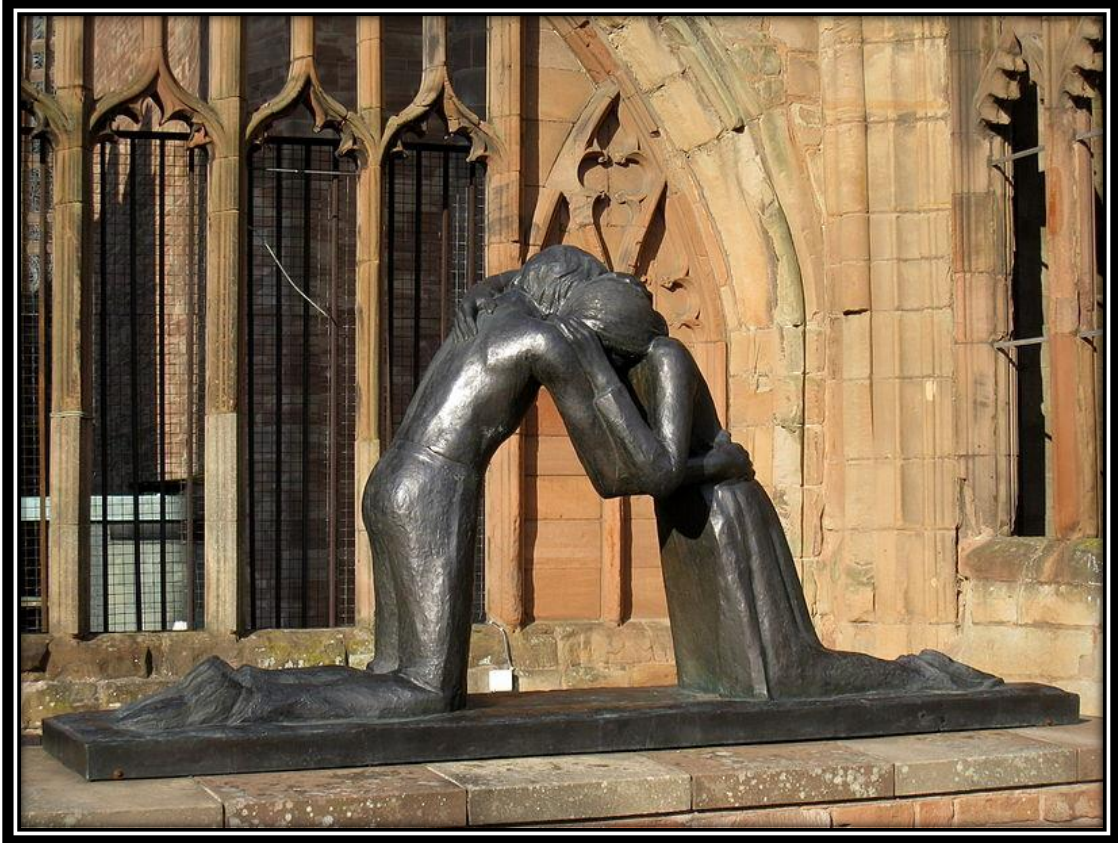
CHRIS

Attention!

Elephants of Main Street ... around the room.

Each man takes off his suit coat and holds it to his face, imitating the trunk of an elephant. They march around the room, trumpeting, followed by the women, and then, offstage.

END



https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Reconciliation_by_Vasconcellos,_Coventry.jpg

ABORTION

TIME

Midway between the birth and death of Roe versus Wade.

PLACE

Uncharted. Later, New York City.

CHARACTERS

A FEMALE (Bed Number 1).

A MALE (Bed Number 2).

AMANDA, an actress, 35 (in Scene 3), 23 or 24 (in Scene 5).

SCOTT, an actor, 37 (in Scene 3), 78 (in Scene 6).

DESTINY, their daughter, 40.

Four women who survived termination of their pregnancies – A, B, C, and D.

Offstage: Two POETS (Scenes 1 and 2) and a FEMALE socialite (Scene 3).

NOTES

At rise of Scene 2, the stage is a shadowed wasteland in which two hospital beds, at opposite ends, are occupied, one by a female figure, and the other by a male figure. During the course of the Scene the beds are rocked and rolled by the figures to wind up next to each other. On the way, each bed knocks over a tower of cardboard boxes. The figures are what have not been born.

In Scene 3, AMANDA and SCOTT meet again, after many years, unexpectedly.

... in the dialogue indicates a thoughtful break.

... // signals the starting point of interrupting (but **not** overlapping) text.

We are the hollow men
We are the stuffed men
Leaning together
Headpiece filled with straw. Alas!
Our dried voices, when
We whisper together
Are quiet and meaningless
As wind in dry grass
Or rats' feet over broken glass
In our dry cellar

Shape without form, shade without colour,
Paralysed force, gesture without motion....
Between the idea
And the reality
Between the motion
And the act
Falls the Shadow

For Thine is the Kingdom

Between the conception
And the creation
Between the emotion
And the response
Falls the Shadow

Life is very long

Between the desire
And the spasm
Between the potency
And the existence
Between the essence
And the descent
Falls the Shadow

For Thine is the Kingdom

For Thine is
Life is
For Thine is the

*This is the way the world ends
This is the way the world ends
This is the way the world ends
Not with a bang but a whimper.*

– T S Eliot

SCENE 1 – IN THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF UNLIFE

Darkness, total. A bell rings, three times.

POETS' VOICES (two voices, alternating, offstage)

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil.

We are the Shadows of Death.
We walk through each other with no fear.

Who's to measure bravery
in verses sung and read?
When some will sigh of fallen lords,
and some, of Cressida.

The world is flat on ignorance,
and treachery the same.
And all who spoil the mother land
will die to die again.

The truth, and signal truth of all,
and this, and this alone:
When man forgets to care for her,
the Earth is not his home.

When man grows cold to fellow man,
and claims the land his own,
the night will come with bitter winds,
and freeze his balls to stone.

Cry, when you have to.
Laugh, if you care.
We must have
the stubbornness to accept our gladness
buried in the ruthless glaciers
of this world.

SCENE 2 – IN THE WOMB OF TIME

A desolate view, in dim light, as one might expect the sight and dead smell of a forest before sunrise days after a ravaging fire has destroyed it. A FEMALE, in one mobile hospital bed, is across the stage from a MALE in a similar bed; and between them are two towers of cardboard boxes. Over the space of the Scene they rock their beds toward each other, knocking over the towers on the way.

POETS' VOICES (two voices, alternating lines, offstage)

Santorini ... 1600 BCE.

The fall of Troy ... 1250 BCE.

Destruction of Carthage ... 146 BCE.

Vesuvius ... AD 79.

The Black Plague ... 1347 to 1351.

Slavery in America ... to 1865.

Abraham Lincoln ... to April 15, 1865.

Wounded Knee ... December 29, 1890.

The burning of Smyrna ... September 13th to the 22nd, 1922.

The Third Reich ... 1933 to 1945.

Nanking Massacre ... 1937.

Joseph Stalin ... to March 5, 1953.

Assassination of the Kennedys and Martin Luther King, Jr. ... 1963 and 1968.

Khmer Rouge ... 1975 to 1979.

Rwanda ... 1994.

Spot on a FEMALE, sitting on Hospital Bed Number 1, on wheels.

BED NUMBER 1

Why?

Why would an unbothered soul choose to sacrifice peace, and quiet, and comfort?

For what? For pain? Disgrace? Fear? Disgust? And dishonor?... Hardly.

To be molested? Injected? Infected? Rejected?...Hardly.

To live with a breed that even crows and elephants have grown to be afraid of?

Or to reek of shit and dishonesty?

Life is a worm. In a wormHOLE.

A continuing flight from fear and foul odor to fear and foul odor.

It eats you, worms and all, and leaves the stink of your decomposition when you're gone.

Earth is at war with its continual corruption. I'm not wanted there.

Why would I want to go where I'm unwanted? I'm hardly *that* dimwitted.

Spot on a MALE, sitting on Hospital Bed Number 2, on wheels, across the stage from Hospital Bed Number 1. Spot on FEMALE darkens.

BED NUMBER 2

Unstoppable oozing pus.
Hunger. Poverty. Disrespect. Loneliness.
Blood. Pools of it. Swimming in it. Drowning in it.

None of that here.
None of the loneliness here.
Alone, of course; but that's the difference.
Unmarked by guilt and sin.
Unchosen by Heaven *or* Hell.
A blessing not to be trifled with.
And there's no way back here, from there.
Earth annihilates wholesomeness.
Forever.
I'm not wanted there.
Why would I want to be where I'm unwanted? Where I would stink?
I'm hardly *that* dimwitted.

Spot returns to FEMALE. Spot on MALE darkens.

BED NUMBER 1

Fools.
Slaves.
You do the math.
Planet Earth can sustain 98 billion human lives.
98% malnourished. 50% emaciated.
Which it will achieve on October 26, 2251,
when all Hell breaks loose. In famine and barren silence.
That is the way the world will end. Not with a bang but starvation.
Everything with teeth eating everything it can reach.
Rats eating humans. Fish eating rats. Spiders eating fish.
For every two babies born from now on,
one at least endangers the environment of all life.

Spot returns to MALE. Spot on FEMALE darkens.

BED NUMBER 2

You do the math.
Global warming.
Carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide eating holes in the atmosphere.
Icebergs the size of Delaware breaking off ice caps.
Flooding in Miami Beach. Flooding in New York City.
Colossal flooding threatened everywhere near to coastal.
Massive fires in California.
In Greece.
In Sweden, north of the Arctic Circle.
In Australia.
Catastrophic hurricanes in ever increasing numbers.
People in Japan and Korea,
in Great Britain and France,
dying in heat waves.
Coral reefs bleaching their way toward extinction.
Drought gripping some of our most populous states.

You do the math.
Consumption.
Every year people consume or destroy more of Earth's natural resources than it
can regenerate.
Fresh water.
Food.
Fish.
Energy.
Forests.
Rain forests.
Bees.
Salmon.
Polar bears.
Whales.
Elephants.

You do the math.
Pollution.
Toxic chemicals beating through the hearts of all mammals. All of them.
Oceans of plastic waste. Oceans of dead zones.
Oceans of extinction.

**Spot on FEMALE. Spot on MALE
darkens.**

BED NUMBER 1

The closer the Earth moves toward death,
the closer the universe moves away from its deadening influence.

I am the sum of who I am.
I am *not* the sum of skin, hair, organs, cancer, waste, and desire.
I am not the demented product of expression that finds itself of such great importance.
For importance ceases to be important when existence is not expression.
When existence is the thereness of Nirvana.
Those who must choose their fate: Heaven or hell,
richly deserve the eternal tedium of whichever.
A lottery of unearned grace or allegorical punishment,
to bore one's wits with more rules than sex itself.
And a never-ending yearning for freedom from them.

**Spot on MALE. Spot on FEMALE
darkens. The two beds are getting much
closer to each other.**

BED NUMBER 2

There once was a grieving Orca,
who lost her calf in the ocean two hours after birth.
Heartbroken, she carried the dead body, on her head, for 17 to 40 days.
She wouldn't let it go.
It had swum by her side.
It would fall under the water, and she'd dive down to haul it back to the surface.
By the flipper.
Swimming on for a thousand miles and more.
Keeping it afloat.
With her family helping.
Orcas haven't been doing so well lately.
Only about 25% of their babies survive. There's not enough food.
Humans are stealing too much of it from their foraging area.
Too much Chinook Salmon gone.

**Spot on FEMALE. Spot on MALE
darkens.**

BED NUMBER 1

What great deed from the hearts of men will there be? To end the world upon?
A mass evacuation?

**Spot on MALE. Spot on FEMALE
darkens.**

BED NUMBER 2

Wisdom is not of the ages.
Wisdom is of the cave of the Soul.

**Spot on FEMALE. Spot on MALE
darkens.**

BED NUMBER 1

Where is this voice I hear singing from?

**Spot on MALE. Spot on FEMALE
darkens.**

BED NUMBER 2

This is the way the world ends.
This is the way the world ends.
This is the way the world ends.
Not with a bang but a discharge.

**Spot on both, as the beds are within
yards.**

BED NUMBER 1

Why do you sing?

BED NUMBER 2

From over here.

The beds collide.

SCENE 3 – IN THE LIBRARY OF HOPE

An arts fund-raiser in a private mansion; summer of 2018; New York City. The stage contains only two large, plush leather chairs diagonally facing the audience and themselves, a small table between them, and an oriental rug in front of them (although the room is described by SCOTT as being an immense, private library, three stories high). A door to the “library” is upstage. Offstage can be heard music and indistinguishable party conversation. Amanda’s hair is “up.”

FEMALE VOICE (from behind the door)

[*enthusiastic*] It could be anything.
It might be more fun sideways, but it could be anything. Truly.
[*beat*] Scott!
Come here.
Come over here.
There's somebody I need for you to meet.
Come over here. Hurry!
[*pause*]
This is Amanda. She's an actress...
Amanda ... Scott.

SCOTT (from behind the door)

I thought I might never see you again, Bear.
How long, has it been? Eleven, twelve years?

AMANDA (from behind the door)

Thirteen.

SCOTT (from behind the door)

Oh my God.
More than a third of my lifetime.
Can you believe it?

FEMALE VOICE (from behind the door)

Well, I guess introductions weren't necessary.
[*beat*] William! There's Mr. Shakespeare. See you two later.

SCOTT (from behind the door)

My God, how are you?
You look absolutely stunning.
And I love your hair that way.

AMANDA (from behind the door)

I didn't know you'd be here, Scott.
Honestly, I didn't.

SCOTT (from behind the door)

Bear, I don't know what to say. Or how to say it...
I should have been a writer, not an actor. But I couldn't find your address.

AMANDA (from behind the door)

You're a *great* actor.

SCOTT (from behind the door)

Major stage fright right now.
Jesus! How do I get out of this mess?
To be able to tell you how much I missed you?
[beat] No. Don't go away. Please.
Not again.
I never knew where you went. Or why....
Why?
Why did you walk out on me like that?
And where did you go?
[beat] No, wait! Don't go.
I might not say the right things.
Or ask the right questions.
But I know the perfect place.
This mansion has an unbelievable room hidden in it.
A library with tens of thousands of books.
Let me just show you.
It's through this door.

SCOTT opens the door, leads AMANDA through it, into stage center, and closes the door behind them.

SCOTT

Here's hoping no one's around.
[slight pause] Look.... Just look.

Lets go of her hand, and waves his hand about the room.

Look at everything.
Three stories up.
Rolling ladders.

Pauses, to stand and just look at her.

I can't tell you how often I think of you, Panda.
How I've missed your balance in my life.
You know what I mean?
Being able to tell someone something how you feel,
and they understand you? And *care*.

AMANDA

I know.

SCOTT

[*beat*] So, how are you? How have you been?

AMANDA

Working, some. Not like you, of course. I was away for awhile.

SCOTT

I've had my ups and downs.

[*beat*] Anyone special in your life?

AMANDA

Since you?...

[*beat*] Scott, have you ever found yourself alongside someone who nearly stops your breath? Just looking at them?

SCOTT

Where do you mean?

In bed?

AMANDA

It could be on an elevator.

The car stops, and he walks in.

And you just hold your breath

Your heart beats like a train.

You can't take your eyes off him.

You never want the elevator to stop. But it does.

And he gets off. And you know.

That ... was the purest moment of your life.

SCOTT

You've met somebody.

AMANDA

A long time ago.

SCOTT

When you walked out on me?

AMANDA

There was never anyone else.

[*beat, then hurriedly*] When we were together.

I just had to ... go away for a while.

[*beat*] What about you? How's your love life?

SCOTT

Oh, I'm still married.

AMANDA

[*shocked*] *Married?* I didn't hear.

SCOTT

[*laughs*] To my work. Ever married to my work.

AMANDA

Oh.

SCOTT

Jen's here, tonight.

My Gal Friday. Good friend. Great friend.

Not like you, of course.

No... No heart-stopping moments in my life, if that's what you mean....

I mean ... Bear, I'm still the same old, same old.

Romance is just not that important to me.

Friendship is far more important.

For career *and* person.

I mean, as far as I'm concerned....

[*beat*] Bear ... I'm not saying this at all right, am I?

I think *you* were the only person in the world who ever really deciphered me.

Passion and sex are ... well ... good, of course.

Needless to say.

And there are those in our business who measure the worth of their lives by them.

But not me. I'm different that way.

Being able to talk, like we could.

And be understood....

[*beat*] I'm not making a particle of sense, am I?

AMANDA

I think you are, if I'm hearing you right.

SCOTT

My life is acting.

You don't meet me there, you don't meet me anywhere. That simple.

My meaning in life is theatre. Today. Tomorrow. Till I don't know how long.

And the voice I will leave for the tomorrow after that will come from the stage.

AMANDA

I understand that. I always did.

SCOTT

Then, Goddammit, why did you leave me?
Was there someone else?

AMANDA

You haven't done so bad without me.

SCOTT

[*beat*] Bear....
May I still call you that?
Panda Bear?

AMANDA

Of course.

SCOTT

I vowed to myself long ago, that if I ever had this chance, I'd not let it pass....
[*beat*] Bear ... Amanda Panda, I love you.
I always have.
I always will.
And I have no idea what I did to drive you away.
But I'm sorry. I'm so very, very sorry.

[*beat*] Dear God! I've rehearsed that for ... I don't know how many times.

AMANDA

Your work has been so good.
Something absolutely wonderful.

SCOTT

But?...

AMANDA

Tell me something.

SCOTT

Anything.

AMANDA

What are you working on now?

SCOTT

What am I working on now?

AMANDA

Yes.

SCOTT

I've just broken my heart open for you.
Told you how much I love you.
And have missed you.
And *that's* what you want to know?

AMANDA

[*slight pause*] I need to listen for a few moments. To catch my breath.
Something not so intense.

SCOTT

Okay....
To be blunt, it's something a bit over my head, I'm afraid.
It's a play from a new British playwright.
I'm supposed to be in my 40s at the rise,
but then bounce back fifteen years, when I'm madly in love with a teenage girl.
I mean, really madly. *Madly*.
And I risk everything for her.
Like a fool.
There are some pretty steamy sex scenes on stage.
And I expect we could get censored.
But Anne Cecil's playing the young girl.
And everybody knows she's past twenty,
even if she has the body and looks of a sixteen-year-old, when she wants to.
So I guess we're safe. Scary safe.
Anyway, Anne's character gets pregnant, and all Hell breaks loose.
I go to jail, and her parents force her to have an abortion.

**AMANDA gasps, grasps her stomach,
and collapses into one of the chairs,
breathing out:**

AMANDA

O, my God!

**SCOTT kneels at her side, and takes her
hand.**

SCOTT

What's wrong? What can I do?

AMANDA

Just some stomach pains.
I've been having them, from time to time, recently....
[*slight pause*] Go on. I'm okay.

SCOTT

Let me get something for you.

AMANDA

No. It's all right. I'm fine. Please go on....
[*beat*] Is it that play, *Kohoutek*, I've been hearing so much about?

SCOTT sits down on the rug at Amanda's feet, facing the audience, his back against her chair.

SCOTT

If you're not okay, I'll be glad to go get you something.

AMANDA

Seriously, I'm fine.
[*beat*] What's supposed to happen next?

SCOTT

Maybe I better shut up, before I ruin the whole thing for you.

AMANDA

No, please don't.
If you're in it, I'll come to see it thirty-six times.
I promise.

SCOTT

[*slight pause*] When he finally gets out of prison,
he changes his name, and with his sister's help tries to disappear.
A year later the girl who Anne plays finds him, and comes to him.
She still loves him, and wants to be with him.
Not forgotten how they felt together.
And that's where the play actually starts.
But he's been broken.
When he tells her, and she sees it, she moans like a heartbroken cat.
Anne does it very well.
And decides she has no right to live, for what's she's done ... the abortion, and all.
And she begins crawling on the stage.

AMANDA

They can't fall in love again?

SCOTT

Not where he's at. Do you remember 1984?

AMANDA

Orwell's 1984?

SCOTT

Yes, Orwell's.

AMANDA

Oh. I think I know where this is going. Winston. In Room 101.
A rat he's terrified of, in a wire cage fixed to his face.
Ready, he's told, to tear his cheeks and nose apart, and suck his eyeballs out.
And he screams, "Do it to Julia!"

SCOTT

What a Hell of a memory!...
And then, at the end, after they've parted, he calls his sister,
and tells her he's going blind....
He's taken a whole bottle of sleeping pills,
and the phone drops to his side as he passes out.

AMANDA

[*pause*] Life pushes, sometimes, like that. Like a rat.

SCOTT

Like Orwell.

AMANDA

[*pause*] *I* had an abortion, Scott.

SCOTT

What??... You did?... When?

AMANDA

When I left you.

SCOTT turns to face her.

SCOTT

When?... Tell me.

AMANDA

[*beat*] I couldn't let myself be in the way of your career.

SCOTT

My career?

How could you stand in the way of my career?

You were the greatest help to me I ever had.

And I loved you.

I told you.

Didn't I? Loads of times?

I loved every moment having you part of my life.

How could that get in the way of my career?

AMANDA

[*pause*] Having a baby ... then ... could have.

It would have ruined all your chances.

SCOTT turns back, facing the audience.

A pause.

SCOTT

My child.... It was *my* baby.

AMANDA

It was ours.

Sobs softly.

SCOTT

O my God! And I never knew. I never even suspected.... *Shit!*

Do you have any idea how fucking surreal this feels?

I'm here. I think. In this impossible library. Alone with you.

But I don't feel here. Or anywhere.

Like I'm trying to play a part in a scene. And people are watching me.

And I'm forgetting all my lines.

The love of my life has made a sacrifice for me, I can barely comprehend.

And ***I'm*** the man.... So?

I'm here and I'm not.

I have a brain and I don't.

I had feelings. But they're on sabbatical.

I'm supposed to know what to do. That's on sabbatical, too. Like getting raped.

[*beat*] What do I do, Panda? What? I have no instincts to tell me....

I'm frozen.

AMANDA

[*begins to stand*] I knew I shouldn't have come.

SCOTT

Turns to face her.

Sit down, Bear.

We're going to sort this out.

It was *our* baby, and I let you down.

You should have told me; but I should have known....

If you forgive me, I forgive you.

AMANDA

Forgive *you*?

SCOTT

And I forgive you.

AMANDA

How? How can you?

SCOTT

Because I understand you.

And because I love you.

AMANDA

I don't understand.

SCOTT turns back, facing the audience.

SCOTT

Sadly, that's what my director keeps telling me.

"I don't understand what's wrong with you.

Why can't you get this?"

And I'll tell you why I can't. I can't feel my feelings in it.

She says, "A rat in a cage, tucked under your chin. *Feel that.*

Or do you need me to get one and *show* you?"

I say, "How can I *feel* this part enough to act it, when the bastard is so hollow?"

There's nothing in my acting brain if there's nothing in my gut."

And she asks, "What would your father do?"

What would my father do?

Like he'd ever get himself into a fix like that?

My father??

Do you know what I mean?

AMANDA

Scott, you have every word right.

SCOTT

Abortion is a rat.
In my face.
Rats are fear.
And I'm afraid of abortion.
Enough said? I'm frozen....

SCOTT suddenly stands, pulls AMANDA to her feet, embraces and then kisses her. She struggles for an instant.

SCOTT

There's only one thing to do.... Marry me.

AMANDA

What??

SCOTT

You heard me. Marry me. I should have asked you ages ago.
That's what my father would have done.

AMANDA

Asked me ages ago?

SCOTT

Say yes.

AMANDA

[*pause*] Give me a breath.... And tell me something.

SCOTT

What?

AMANDA

What does the name mean?

SCOTT

What name?

AMANDA

Kohoutek.

SCOTT

Kohoutek??

I ask you to marry me, and you ask me what *Kohoutek* means?

AMANDA

Is it native American?

SCOTT

Hell!...

Back in '73 there was supposed to be the most spectacular comet ever, since the birth of Christ.

It was named Kohoutek after the Czech astronomer who discovered it. But it just fizzled out and went away into darkness.

AMANDA

What's the point?

SCOTT

Too damned subtle, if you ask me.

In the playwright's way of thinking,

the young girl's abortion was the reason the comet died.

It was meant to announce a holy birth that was aborted.

**AMANDA slumps back into the chair.
SCOTT kneels at her feet, holding her
hands.**

SCENE 4 – POSTPARTEM HELL

The stage as in Scene 3.

On the table between the leather chairs stands something tall and presumably very rare and valuable. A creature, bent and deformed, half stumbles, half crawls across the stage, making grunts and other animal sounds. After a pause to "consider," the creature smashes the item, and then leaves in the same manner as he entered.

SCENE 5 – POST-ABORTION HELL

Eleven years before Scene 3.

Five chairs are brought on stage (same room as Scene 3). Actors A, B, C, D, and AMANDA take seats on them. Amanda's hair is "down."

A

I got pregnant at eighteen. First year in college. No one really to turn to.

It was an accident; and my family never would have understood.

An associate professor. Married.

Who'd probably throw himself off the bell tower if anyone found out.

I took the test, and there it was: Positive.

And there I was. My world, turned upside down.

Not much more than a dizzy kid myself.

And all my family had sacrificed for me to get there.

So I did what I did. I did what I had to.

It was the hardest thing I ever went through in my life.

And I've felt so close to total aloneness ever since.

Not a day without tears for what I did.

The one thing that keeps me going is remembering:

I have a debt to repay. I have a baby to live for. When the time is right....

I thought I'd never be able to love her. What she'd cost us.

But I love her with all my heart.

And now I long to reach up, to where she is, and grab her back....

Can she ever forgive me?

B

I was a single mom with two young girls, just struggling to survive.

Another child, even if it was the boy I wanted,

would have ruined our family for good. My girls already hated me.

It's been thirteen years, and I still feel,

especially sitting at my daughter's bedside, now that she has to have one, for medical reasons, to save her life.

O God! I know what she's going through.

C

I wonder if people, like me, ever get over stopping their baby's heart.

Wondering if they felt any pain.

Wondering if *I'll* ever stop feeling the pain. Or what it would do to me if I did.

And one day I know I'll hold her, in my arms, and tell her how truly sorry I was.

How I truly love her ... her tiny fingers and toes ... her smile and her eyes.

D

Twenty-two years ago I had an abortion.
I knew I couldn't hurt my family the way it would, so I did it. Fixed it alone.
I thought it would be over and done with; but I was wrong.
Eleven years of shame, and conscience, and grief, and counseling.
I said to myself, "I'll never get to see her face." But I had a picture in my mind....
And then, one night, I fell into the strangest sleep.
I saw her, happy, laughing, leaping in a field of daisies.
And I knew: She had forgiven me....
I have two, wonderful boys, and
I know this makes no sense:
but I feel I love them more because I did what I did....
That doesn't make any sense, does it?
But I feel, somehow, now, I wasn't alone.

AMANDA

It was a quick fix, for me, for something I couldn't stand to think of....
Destroying the career of the person I loved more than life itself.
Followed by streams of regret.... Rivers.
There's a stillness in the air, after an abortion.
Like waiting, in the shadows, by a playground, to hear your child's voice.
And no one to share the mourning with.
No one to look in the eye and say, "I betrayed you."
No one to forgive you.
No one to help shoulder the anger, and the blame, and the fog of loneliness.
It's like every day being married to that day when tomorrow is your true lover.

D

We're talking post-abortion Hell. And those in it.
And what can we do?
We can't outlaw it.
Girls for sure are still going to take that way out. Laws or no laws.
I would have.
Before Roe, it was the *other side* of the elephant.
Over a million a year were getting back-alley abortions.
And too many of them died, or were made barren for life.
And too many who weren't wound up like a friend of mine,
who lived in an apartment where they didn't have any hot water.
No money for heat; and three kids from the apartment across the hall,
because they had no electricity.
Where do you find forgiveness?

SCENE 6 – THE MYSTERY

Forty-one years after Scene 3. Same room.

SCOTT, now age 78, and DESTINY are sitting in the same leather chairs, etc., of Scene 3. He has a triple Scotch on the rocks on the table beside him.

DESTINY

Dad ... now that we're alone for a few minutes ... I can't tell you how sorry I am, not being here with you when Mom died yesterday.

SCOTT

I understand. And how would you know yesterday was the day?

DESTINY

I know you understand, but really, there was so much going on.
I had my crisis, too....
With Di, and ...
And my hands full with all that crap at work all of a sudden....
But you have to understand ... //

SCOTT

I do. I do, Dee. You don't have to explain a thing. Really.

DESTINY

It's just ... //

**SCOTT reaches over to take his
daughter's hand.**

SCOTT

Hush.... Hush.
Your mother and I needed our time together. By ourselves.
There were things we had to say ... alone. Trust me.
We love you, with all our hearts, but we needed those last hours to complete with
each other, all by ourselves. You couldn't be there anyway.

DESTINY

[slowly] If you say so....

SCOTT sits back, and takes a drink.

SCOTT

You're here *now*. That's the important thing.

DESTINY

Life's insane. Isn't it. Sometimes. I think.

SCOTT

How so?

DESTINY

How we race everywhere, trying to get ahead, to have a good life, and miss it by, in the running.

SCOTT

It's getting worse, I'm afraid.

DESTINY

I miss, so much, the quiet times we had together, laughing.
The little trips we had together. The three of us.
And the music, and singing, and your shows.

SCOTT

[*beat*] You want to know what's insane, Destiny?

DESTINY

What?

SCOTT

That men have spent so much time and effort keeping decision-making to themselves, when women are so much better at it.

DESTINY

You wouldn't know it by me.

SCOTT

Oh, but you're wrong, there.
It's exactly by you that I do know it.
You, and your mother.
And I mean it.

DESTINY

Dad, you're just feeling down today.

SCOTT

Especially when it comes to the environment,
and all the amazing things you've been able to do.
For God's sake, you may be the reason the planet gets saved after all.

DESTINY

You're just talking like a Dad, that's all.
And having a famous father for support didn't hurt.

SCOTT

[*pause*] Your mother wants me to tell you something, Dee.

DESTINY

What?

SCOTT

She was in some pain....

DESTINY

I know.

SCOTT

No.... I didn't mean at the end.
I meant when she was much younger ... college age.

DESTINY

I don't get it. I never heard her say anything about that.

SCOTT

She and I met when she was still in college ... studying acting.

DESTINY

I didn't know that.
I thought you met, like the year before I was born.
When you were already both actors.

SCOTT

[*slight pause, and deep breath*]
She didn't want us to tell you ... before.
But now she does....
She got pregnant....

DESTINY

What? When?

SCOTT

It was a couple of years after we met.
We were living together, and struggling together, to keep everything together,
and loving every moment of it....
Dee, you may never understand this,
but life is often happier when you have less.

DESTINY

Don't kid yourself. I *do* understand.

SCOTT

Well, anyway, we made a mistake, I guess, and she got pregnant....

DESTINY

And what? I have a brother, or a sister out there? you've never told me about.

SCOTT

[*pause*] This isn't easy....
Your mother had an abortion.

DESTINY

O my God. No.
I don't understand....
You agreed not to have a baby? Why?

SCOTT

[*beat*] No.
She left ... and I couldn't find her....
I didn't see her again for thirteen years.

DESTINY

This is insane.

SCOTT

She thought I wouldn't let her get an abortion.
And, if I had anything to say about it, she was right.
Except, I've always believed that a woman has the right to make her own choice.
It's their bodies. It's their bellies. And their chance of dying from it.
Why shouldn't they make the decision?
For that matter, why shouldn't they make the laws about it, too?

DESTINY

She was afraid of being a mother?

SCOTT

She was afraid, that it would destroy my acting career.
That simple. Money.
And she made a huge sacrifice ... thought she did ... for me....

DESTINY

[beat] Why are you telling me this, now? Is it because of Diana?

SCOTT

Your mother wants me to.
It was a part of her, and who she was. And now it's a part of you.

DESTINY

A part of me?
I don't get it. I had nothing to do with it. It was years before

SCOTT

Well, I do get it.
The pain of every thought we ever had about it,
and the pain of every thought we lost along the way,
were more than made up in the joy and love you brought to our lives.

DESTINY

And that was my reason for being?

SCOTT

[pause] There's a purpose in life, Dee.
I truly believe it, even though it's beyond me sometimes.
But it has a price, that has to be paid, that only few people can explain.
I remember once, when I was a young boy,
and my mother forgot to pick me up at the museum when she said she would.
I waited two hours for her ... outside ... wondering whether she was ever coming.
So many stories and worries went through my head that are still there....
That's how I seem to relate to things that are too complicated to digest.
I imagine I'm going to become an orphan. I am one now.
An Oliver Twist.

DESTINY

I'm being an ass here, aren't I?

SCOTT

All I can say is:
You wouldn't be the you you are if there hadn't been the boy who was lost.

DESTINY

So, even he had a purpose in life.

SCOTT

You might never have been born, or grown up to be the leader you are, as successful as you are, if it weren't for him. But what do I know? And even if someone does know the future, that doesn't make them the cause of it, does it?

DESTINY

Why tell me now?

SCOTT

Your mother doesn't want him forgotten.

DESTINY

[*pause*] She was a remarkable woman, wasn't she?

SCOTT

Better than me, I can tell you. A whole Hell of a lot better than me. I always thought I had a clever mind. But Bear? She's the one who really did. She's the one who could *see*.

DESTINY

What was she really like, Dad?

SCOTT

Your mother was the bravest person I ever knew. She saw right through me, and loved me for what she saw behind. I owe you, and everything I love, to her.

DESTINY

[*beat*] I don't know what to say.

SCOTT

Tell me: Is there any novocaine out there? for the soul? that you know of? Other than hitchhiking, and Heroin?

DESTINY

Nope.

SCOTT

I tell you: I feel like looking for a pack of wolves to run with. Any of those in Houston?

DESTINY

Nope. Only coyotes.

SCOTT

I need to get away for a while. From theatre and theatre people....
There will never be another Bear.
As much as I love you, Dee, there will never be another Amanda Bear for me.
She and I....
I'm over my head here, Dee. That's where I am.
I brought her flowers, white roses, and peach.
I don't know why.
Someone whispered "harmony" in the hospital.
Is that what they mean? Harmony?
I was holding her hand, by the side of the bed.
And she opened her eyes, and smiled, and sort of giggled, I think, faintly.
And said, "Goodbye." Maybe not to me.
I got beside her, in the bed.
And just held her there, and sobbed "I love you" into her hair. Over and over.
It was an hour or so....
Patience is presence in the moment without attempts to change it.
I felt it, like floating, or climbing a ladder.
I sensed the climbing up. The going up.
And the fog around us. And the coolness.
The soft velvet of our souls touching.
And I knew we were there. Together.
It was overwhelming.
The feeling was overwhelming.
And even when I knew, with clarity, she had gone, I wanted to stay with her.
One last time.
And bring her soul inside my body.
To keep her safe, inside me, the rest of my life....
Then all went blank.

When I came to, I just got down and walked away.
I left the room, her hand limping down.
And prayed she was finding a better place.
With God, maybe. Or with our little baby.
The final journey of the soul.

I've been thinking back on those lost years. When we were apart.
And how, in a way, she risked her life for me.
And how I'm a worthless son-of-a-bitch. Never appreciating all she did for me.

DESTINY

It's okay, Dad.

SCOTT

I love her, Dee, like she's still my other half.
And you don't know how much you love your other half until it's gone.

DESTINY

I know you do, Dad.
I know you do....
Give me a hug.... A great big, bear hug.

They stand and hug, tight, and wet.

END