

THE RUN OF RED BULL

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PLACE and TIME

A Chapel (**stage right**) denoted by a hanging stained glass window, a dumpster (**stage left**), and between the two a street on which there is a tall statue of Red Bull, initially concealed.

Present.

CHARACTERS

RED BULL, a male actor with the face of a bull and red hair that can cover most of his face when thrown forward.

A NUN.

A STREET VENDOR, with a vending cart.

A YOUNG WOMAN sitting on the street, begging, holding close to her what appears to be a baby wrapped in a blanket.

... in the dialogue indicates a thoughtful break.

SCENE

Upstage center the STREET VENDOR stands behind a vending cart.

STREET VENDOR

[*crying out*] Fresh from the sea
The recovered, blue sea
For a life that will be, and well-nigh half free.
Twelve singles a dozen.
Fresh heads of lettuce.
Hearts of woe.
They're not for sale.
They're just for show.

RED BULL enters from stage left to throw the body of an animal into the dumpster. He then proceeds across the stage to the Chapel, stage right; lights dim; and in a spotlight RED BULL stands before the stained glass window.

RED BULL

Why O God, O Creator of what is good, I ask you:
Why would you allow them to conceive me, and leave me,
Under the Curse of Ogbanje? [Oh BON Jay]
After all the babies dying they had, those empty birth parents of mine.
Why weren't six enough for them? Why me? Am I a golden blind spot in your eye?

He drops to one knee, throws a handful of gold coins toward the window, stands, and leaves.

As RED BULL walks toward downstage center the NUN appears behind him, as out of nowhere. Lights return to normal, and she momentarily catches hold of his sleeve.

NUN

Please pardon me, Sir, but I heard you speak.
I couldn't not hear what you said.
Please, if you will, tell me: What is Ogbanje you spoke of? [Oh BON Jay]

RED BULL

Turns and looks at her a moment before responding.

You wouldn't know, would you? But you should. All of you should:
Ogbanje is endless renewal. To die and be renewed. Daily.
Ogbanje's a gift. Ogbanje's a curse. Ogbanje has a bad eye. [Oh BON Jay]
It's like a tumor on Satan's brain that incessantly plays Wagner in his head.
It's part life, and at the same time part of the life to come. You don't understand, do you?
When one is born, and is born again, and is born again, only to keep dying young,
That's the Ogbanje cycle and an Ogbanje mother. [Oh BON Jay]
A mother tortured over and over with her babies dying. An empty woman.
I am Ogbanje who still lives. [Oh BON Jay]
Living with an affinity for death.
I was born to kill that I may understand the scourge of living.
I breathe in both worlds and choke in both worlds: the land of the living and the land of the dead.
Both smell foul and fair, simultaneously.
And I have no trouble experiencing greed and misery simultaneously.

NUN

At the same time?

RED BULL

I am bound to the spirit of a six times dead child and its mother.
My parents couldn't stop. Weren't six enough? Why me?

NUN

Is it a punishment from God?

RED BULL

Gold is the punishment.

Without it my mind would lose touch with life's insanity.

Without it I would not see my reflection in a mirror upside down.

Without it I would look forward to a normal death.

But normal in my death I will never be, for the gold never stops coming.

RED BULL takes a golden mirror from his pocket, and lies down to stare into it.

NUN

What are you doing?

RED BULL

I'm looking at myself, lying down upside down.

NUN

Have you always been this way?

RED BULL

Most certainly not.

When I was born I was deaf.

I had a clubfoot.

And no hair. At all.

NUN

Oh!!!

RED BULL

We had a dog, and I beat it, but it still loved me, and came back for more.

Until I beat it to death.

Then I could hear.

NUN

Dear God!!!

RED BULL

A neighbor's dog came next; and I could walk.

No more clubfoot I had, had I?

NUN

You killed it, too?

RED BULL

Then a tiger cub came to me.
I don't know how, or why. Or care.
Stolen from the zoo, or escaped I suppose.
And when I slit its throat with my knife, my hair started to grow. See?

RED BULL stands, puts the mirror back in his pocket, and tosses his head so that his red hair covers his face, and then tosses it back.

NUN

How could you do those horrible things?

RED BULL

I *couldn't* do them. I *do* do them. Over and over.

NUN

How?

RED BULL

Because I am so precious they can't resist me.
When I go to sleep at night I feel paralyzed the next morning. Suffocated.
I have to learn to breathe and walk all over again. Like infantile paralysis each morning.
To choke on dark matter that smothers my lungs near to death. Every morning.

STREET VENDOR

[*crying out*] Fresh from the sea
The recovered, blue sea
For a life that will be, and well-nigh half free.
Twelve singles a dozen.
Fresh heads of lettuce.
Hearts of woe.
They're not for sale.
They're just for show.

The STREET VENDOR raises an arm, and thunder crashes offstage.

RED BULL

What water goddess would hide her golden locks in a cloud shaken by thunder?

NUN

Tell me.

RED BULL

Live. Live in the moment. Carpe diem. Live like me.
Without carpe diem life is an enemy, and it will dark and darker grow.

NUN

Life is no enemy, except for those who make it so.

RED BULL

Live to perfect the annihilation of wickedness then.
Or, if you will, to perfect the renewal of wickedness.
In me the wickedness has been perfected so that I can live.

NUN

You're a monster. A hateful, horrible beast.

RED BULL

My mother's concern was I live and be tender,
No matter the price, no matter my gender.
But never she found was an instance to love me,
The curse ever tarried and hovered above me.

Ogbanje I am, and half-tainted my soul,
Where deathless is dying and pleasure, my goal,
Where killing's my need and my purpose to live,
And living's no effort of waste to forgive.

[Oh BON Jay]

Like swine who will feed to a slaughterhouse
I eat of a man and the bones of a mouse.
I choke every day with surprise to see
No hastening death from my malady.

NUN

What you say you cannot mean. What you mean is not real.
What is real you cannot see. What you've seen you do not feel.

RED BULL

When it's done, it's done. No pain. And tomorrow waits without a whiff of regret.

NUN

Think about what you're saying.

RED BULL

Actually, it's better not to think, for purpose can be sicklied over with the pale cast of thought.
Hallelujah! It's better to think of a falling chandelier.

NUN

But you *must* think about it. About what you're doing.

RED BULL

Have you ever thought how one person separates you from another?
From yourself, to be specific, by their lingering presence.
It's a poetic way of thinking. Poetic in the way lightning or bad weather is.

NUN

Poetic? No.

RED BULL

Poetry, as Proust might say: "Insensate lives,
Where the madman deprives himself of all pleasure,
And seeks out the most terrible sufferings,
Are usually the lives that change the least."

NUN

What are you saying?

RED BULL

When you must exert as much effort and finesse as I, just to stay alive,
Life is a black widow's web,
And you have little inclination to smell the roses your web hangs near.

NUN

You remind me of the Persian king, Xerxes,
Who ordered his soldiers to whip the sea with chains, three hundred times,
As punishment for the sea's destroying a bridge he was building.
Like him, you don't know what's real in the world.

RED BULL

I'm a man on a cross; so what's real to me?
But you assume you are living in the one real world, and I assure you that you're not.
There are dozens of worlds far more real.
Consider how time alone has made the realness of your world only temporary.
From machine guns and trench warfare, to tanks, and submarines, and supersonic flight.
From mustard gas, to insecticides, suicides, and genocides.
From land mines and hand grenades, to nuclear bombs, cluster bombs, and drones.
In the future the real world will be dozens of worlds happening simultaneously.

NUN

God created the one real world.

RED BULL

And God created Eve from Adam's rib, so that man would not be alone.
And Adam was never more alone until she died.
What's the purpose in living if not to live? I have my rights.

NUN

You have no purpose in life.

RED BULL

None? I sculpted this.

RED BULL walks the NUN to the screen that hides the statue of himself and pulls it aside.

They then return to the Chapel, where he strangles her with his hands without resistance.

Leaving the Chapel RED BULL sees the YOUNG WOMAN begging on the street. He seizes her "child" from her, and walks to the statue.

YOUNG WOMAN

Wait! Come back!

RED BULL

They bore him barefaced on the bier
Hey nonny, nonny, hey nonny No!

RED BULL, now standing under the statue, looks into the blanket.

RED BULL

It's nothing but a wine sack!!

He throws the bundle to the ground.

The STREET VENDOR again raises an arm, and a bolt of lightning strikes the statue, which topples on RED BULL, hugging it to death.

The YOUNG WOMAN retrieves her "child."

END