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The Female Writer and Her Female Characters: A Coming of Age Story

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THE FEMALE WRITER AND HER FEMALE CHARACTERS:

A COMING OF AGE STORY

by

STEPHANIE N. GRILO

BA THEATRE, UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO, 2013

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BA THEATRE

MFA DRAMATIC WRITING

ABSTRACT

In this essay, I review my growth and learning as a playwright in this MFA program. I position my play, *Red Dirt*, within the context of psychoanalysis and feminist theory as a study of the behavioral patterns that emerge when female melancholia and violent masculinity collide. I examine the praxis of my writing and research methodologies, as well as the technical, thematic, and academic aspects of my writing practice.

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INTRODUCTION

As a young girl, I remember visiting my Aunt Karla's house in Fort Cobb, Oklahoma, only once. She lived in a Double Wide in a town I wasn't sure was exactly a town because it was nothing like anywhere I had ever experienced. I was born in Sand springs, Oklahoma, a suburb of Tulsa. And it was very much a suburb: Pizza Huts, Piggly Wiggly, and Tulsa Promenade Shopping, although that mall has faded from memory like the rest of my childhood in Oklahoma. But Fort Cobb was very different. I don't remember there being a neighbor's house in sight. The lifestyle felt, even at my young age, desolate and morbid in its loneliness. There was red dirt as far as the eye could see and something mythical about the landscape. My kid-self wanted to mine for buried treasure and the occasional bone or arrowhead. For much of my short stay at my Aunt's home, my boy cousins had convinced me that everything around us was haunted. The cliffs that lined their "backyard" were haunted. The well where they drew their water was haunted. The living room floor where I slept was haunted. Everything. Was. Haunted. And I believed them, even though I never saw a ghost. I just let the stories of what could have been, the magical "what if,"—something I would later learn in a college acting class— give way to my relentless imagination. These frights of ghosts evoked in me my first remembered stories. It would be several years later that my fear of ghosts would turn into a fear of people, and those people were my own family members. Unfortunately, their stories of woe and pain, addiction, and troubled minds, became a broken record. My only respite from these horrific narratives would be to reconstruct them, to re-imagine them for myself as if they could have happened differently; to fix or replace the record.

My mother's father died of cancer when she was nine years old. He was a Veteran, and from the stories we were told as children, he was a kind and gentle man, like I'd imagine John Wayne would be off-screen. My mother was a tomboy and avid sports player, and her father had taught her how to act like a boy so that no man would ever treat her badly. When he died, my mother was devastated, and she may have never fully processed the trauma. As a result of this, somewhere in her mid-twenties, she began letting men and the concept of love get the best of her. Even still, she has yet to relieve herself of this subjugation. As I've grown older, I have realized the traumas my mother faced and the lack of agency she felt in reclaiming those traumas. Although our relationship is still tumultuous and ugly after many years of attempting reconciliation, I am finding new empathy toward her life, her history, and her womanhood.

I recently told a friend that I began writing about my Mother in my plays as a means to an end, a way to “figure her out.” I don't see my mother as a parental figure, someone with the capacity to love and nurture, but rather as the villain in my hero's journey. She has always been the obstacle blocking my path toward happiness and empowerment. Even when she is not directly involved in my life, I do not victimize myself against her, but rather, fight and fight and fight against becoming her. In my family, she and I are often compared. Since I was about nine years old, I have been told, mostly by my father who raised me, “Please don't become your Mother,” or the always dreaded phrase, “You're acting like someone I know.” I never could, despite my best efforts to become my own person, be separated from Her.

The way humans repeat patterned behavior is truly what my play, *Red Dirt*, examines. The play discusses gender politics, incest, religion, mental illness, and the

gamut of *Psychology Today* articles, but every issue stems from the core question of why we do the things we do. Alongside my writing and self-proclaimed vigilante detective work, I consider myself an amateur psychoanalyst. I am always in conversation with not only my mind but others' minds as well. I desperately want to know what makes a person tick. When I was between the ages of six and eight, I wanted to be a paleontologist. Digging up the fractured remains of living creatures in my below-sea-level Texas backyard happened to be the first step in my journey towards artistic discovery. For me, the detective, the psychoanalyst, and the paleontologist have now synthesized into playwright.

In this essay, I intend to balance the personal with the academic. It feels important and necessary to me, as a practicing theatrical and scholar, to marry the two voices.

PART I: BIRTH

“She would give birth for death’s sake.”

—*Julia Kristeva*

I came to writing plays through the death of a past self. Transitional times beg for new seeds to be sown. Before entering the MFA Dramatic Writing program, I worked for a non-profit health advocacy agency in Albuquerque, New Mexico. I oversaw office management, amongst many other responsibilities I had no business taking on, but took on nonetheless. Everyone needs to eat. I found myself resisting my day-to-day routine. I missed the artistic explorations that my undergraduate degree in Theatre provided. This unsatisfied itch I continuously scratched became the impetus to meet with the head of the MFA program at UNM, Gregory S. Moss. We sat across one another at a favorite local coffee shop, discussing art and why we make it. I knew in that moment that the new seeds that needed sewing in my life were those found in the process of writing plays.

And so here I sit. Two and half years later, in Zimmerman Library—a familiar and loved space where most of my undergraduate years were spent—writing about my birth and departure as a playwright in this program. Seems fitting that I would arrive and end in this space a changed woman.

THE WRITING PROCESS

“Art is Violent. To be decisive is Violent.”

— *Anne Bogart*

My plays are often written in a violent fashion. *Red Dirt* was written on a 48-hour bender of coffee, cigarettes, and tears—three rusty necessities to my writing process. I say this with partial cheekiness, but mostly with sincerity; here's why:

The Impulse to Write

Playwright and author Mac Wellman recently spoke in one of my graduate courses. He urged us all to keep a journal of ideas—something tangible. Scrapbooking and arts and crafts journaling are natural to me, but I do not approach writing in the same way. Once written down, ideas seem too solid. Letting visual, olfactory, or auditory sensations ruminate in my mind gives space for natural story patterns to occur. In Lev Semenovich Vygotsky’s psychoanalysis of art, he posits, “one of the most characteristic aspects of art is that the processes involved in its creation and use appear to be obscure, unexplainable, and concealed from the conscious mind” (71). The question that follows is how does one extract the unconscious artistic thought and turn it into practical application?

Each semester in the MFA program, the cohort is expected to enroll in Workshop courses. These courses are meant to address the above-mentioned question. In the following paragraphs, I will discuss the techniques I garnered for translating thought to page.

Limitations...

Are your friend. For example, we often investigated timed writing exercises as a technique for generating material without self-restraint. The criteria changed depending on the course, but a time restraint was almost always present. We were given a theme, we would start writing, and inevitably the writing would have to come to a halt—sometimes abruptly, and often in the middle of a thought. There was never an expectation of perfection during these exercises. Simply, the theme would conjure an impulse from my subconscious, and I had no other option but to write about it in little to no time.

Anne Bogart suggests another method of limitation in her chapter on “Resistance” in her seminal work *A Director Prepares*. She notes that “the compression into restricted space and the patience demanded this containment actually intensifies the life which is revealed in a minimum of activity” (146). I translate this act of containing, limiting, and restricting the use of language in plays. I have often heard from professors and theatre-makers, “How much can you say with as few words as possible?” Concision has never been easy for me. My favorite book in middle school was *A Tale of Two Cities*, I tend to talk on the phone for hours on end with family members and friends, and I love late-night-into-early-morning pillow talk. But I know that is not always the most effective way to communicate ideas, and over-sharing in a play can be the death of imagination. In the latter half of this paper, I will discuss my relationship to language in more depth.

The Bake-Off

In playwriting terms, a “bake-off” consists of a handful of elemental “ingredients,” such as a line of dialogue, a theme, or a prop, which the writers are expected to incorporate into a play written within a 48-hour period. I wrote my first bake-off the summer after my first semester in the MFA program. It was the first time I had

allowed myself to write freely, openly, and without judgment. The constraints of the exercise encourage continuous writing and free association, and there is a certain violence the playwright must enact in order to achieve a completed gesture. Anne Bogart discusses this in *A Director Prepares*, stating, "This act of necessary violence, which at first seems to limit freedom and close down options, in turn, opens up many more options and asks for a deeper sense of freedom from the artist" (47). For me, writing, like any art-making, is the process of impulse and refinement. There is an initial urge, a Yves Kline *Leap into the Void*¹ as it were, to purge oneself of this hankering itch. For *Red Dirt*, that hankering became an analysis of my mother, as mentioned in my introduction. The initial stage of putting fingertips to keyboard for this particular play was electric. Words had never fallen out of me so fluidly, without hesitation, but instead, with a fervor, I could only compare to the act of sex. An embodied sensuality overcame me as I dove into the story, and a Freudian landscape began to emerge within the text. I will also return to sex later in the paper when discussing the performance of gender in *Red Dirt*.

From Repression to Pleasure

For the first few semesters in the MFA program, I was determined to not write autobiographically. I avoided this temptation by convincing myself that those stories didn't need to be told again and that I should instead be writing the stories that have yet to be told. Unfortunately, this rule I imposed on my writing resulted in a series of vapid plays that lacked truth—a term I use to denote the genuine empathetic variable within a

¹ Yves Kline was a French artist and leader of the Nouveau réalisme movement in France during the 1960's. His most notable work, *Saut Dans le vide (Leap into the Void)* is a photograph depicting his 'apparent' leaping off of a building. The photograph was meant to evoke Kline's Zen-influenced perspective on art—a removal of worldly influences and a return to one's own sensibilities as well as a critique on what is considered 'real' and what is considered fake.

² In 2016, Vice President-elect, Mike Pence attended a performance of the Broadway Musical *Hamilton*.

work of art— and consequently hindered my access to the personal. In Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, he posits:

In the course of things, it happens again and again that individual instincts or parts of instincts turn out to be incompatible in their aims or demands with the remaining ones, which are able to combine into the inclusive unity of the ego. The former are then split off from this unity by the process of repression, held back at lower levels of psychical development and cut off, to begin with, from the possibility of satisfaction. (5)

I went into writing with an anxiety, possibly even a fear of the page. Why was I being so protective of my work when I clearly wanted my writing to be violent and decisive? Any psychoanalytical hobbyist would easily point out that the ego in this situation deferred to behavioral patterns that over time built up protective barriers within the mind. This resulted in a “pleasure that could not be felt as such,” a Campbellian refusal of the call (5). Bogart suggests that “we create out of fear, not from a place of security and safety” (83). This part of the writing process is, as I have noticed pedagogically and personally, an avoidance of the personal as political.

There is a fear of the self which resides inside the young writer that is both protecting itself against danger and repressing its potential satisfaction. To defeat this pattern, one must first, as Freud suggests, differentiate between “Fright,” “Fear,” and “Anxiety”. Fear is a response to a substantiated object that poses a real or perceived danger to the individual. Anxiety recognizes the potential for danger, despite being unable to perceive a tangible, present threat, and fright involves the element of surprise

(6). In order to express one's innermost desire, or to allow oneself to be moved to write, one cannot approach with anxiety. To literally be afraid of the page would be ridiculous and impossible, and so one cannot approach with fear. Therefore, it is ideal to approach the writing process with fright, because it allows for more vulnerability and has the potential to produce more satisfaction from the actual process of writing.

The Personal IS Political

Carol Hanisch introduced us to phrase, *The Personal is Political*, in 1969 in her seminal essay of the same title. Almost fifty years later, it remains a buzzword in our post-Obama-era PC culture. Personally, I still consider it not only viable but crucial to the way we view theatre (especially in response to the 2016 *Hamilton* vs. Pence debate²). Before entering this MFA program, I did not consider myself a 'political' person. I used my inability to access cable television as an excuse for my ignorance on current events. As a Texas resident living in New Mexico, I refused to vote based on the inconvenience of the absentee ballot. I even questioned whether a democratic voting process was the right way to govern. Since starting this program, I have educated myself in the political, but during these early stages of the Trump Administration, I find myself fumbling to keep up, stay informed, and be an active advocate for causes I believe in. What I do know is that the process of writing plays is and will always be one of political import.

Having said this, I would not say that my plays have suddenly become overtly political or err on the side of Brechtian didacticism. But, they have introduced a new confidence in my perspective as a playwright. Many of the characters in my plays

² In 2016, Vice President-elect, Mike Pence attended a performance of the Broadway Musical *Hamilton*. After the performance, the cast of the musical went on stage in an informal fashion and addressed Mike Pence directly; asking him to consider all Americans during his Vice Presidency. Later, President-elect, Donald Trump tweeted: "The Theatre must always be a safe and special place. That cast of Hamilton was very Rude last night to a very good man, Mike Pence. Apologize!"

suffered a sort of paralysis as of last November. They allowed things to happen to them rather than pursuing a sense of forwarding momentum. They wallowed, they griped, and they wanted but had no intentions of going after that want. They were two-dimensional and static. Perhaps this was a reflection on myself at the time: relentlessly stubborn and convinced that the universe was to blame for the unfavorable outcomes in my life. The term "broken" was something I used to define myself and others who were incapable of making changes in their behavior because it just was the way things were and would always be. Without this program, without writing plays, and without this election, I'm not sure I would have ever been able to call bullshit on myself. I now more consciously write from my experience and perspective.

As a 20-something female, born into the separation of Baptist vs. Atheist, "Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus," raised in an abstinent, gender-bound, mentally ill, stigmatized, all-male household, growing up broke (still broke, always will be broke, but goddammit if I don't love making theatre), I write from an inherently political point of view.

The Revision Process

My first experience revising was in a course taught by Professor Moss in the fall of 2015. When I took this course, I was still very green to writing plays and had no idea how or where to begin the revision process. I was flooded with questions and doubts: how would I know what to keep and what to discard in my plays? What if I hated revising? And what if that hatred of revision led to me to never write a play again? However, through simple exercises that seemed more like games than rules, I began to open up to the revision process. I continued to push my writing to places I would never have

expected to go were it not for the constant drive to discover new possibilities within the text. By the end of the semester, revision had become my favorite part of the writing process. There are a few strategies I came across in the revision process that helped to alleviate my initial fears.

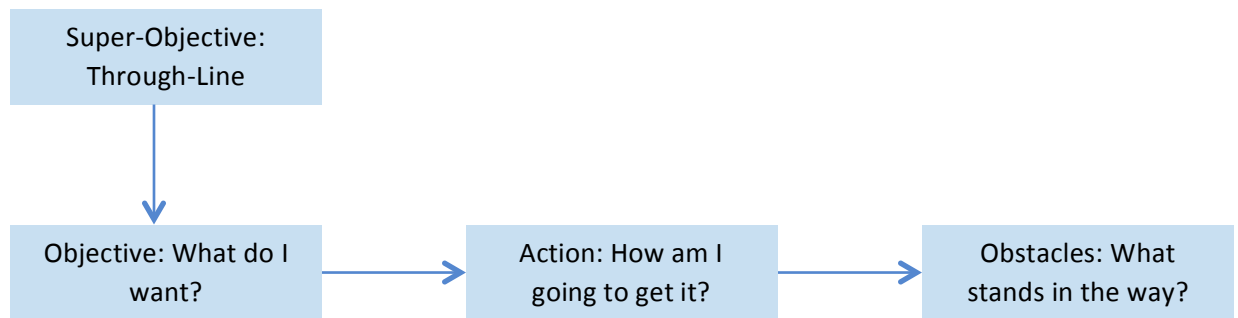
1) The Challenge.

When I am asked to solve a problem, I refuse to give up until the situation is resolved. I do not seek perfection in my scripts, but I do investigate every possible angle with as much attention to detail as possible. In my first few revisions of plays like *A Player's Guide to Your Mid-Twenties* and *Everly Heart and the Dollar and a Quarter Coaster Ride*, I found it difficult to stop revising. I chalk this up to my ever-present feeling of dissatisfaction. A play never feels finished to me, even after it has gone into production. Something I will also discuss further in the staging of *Red Dirt*.

2) Heaps and Triggers.

One method that has transformed my relationship to the sometimes daunting task of revision is David Ball's "heaps and triggers" approach. Ball notes, "Action occurs when something happens that makes or permits something else to happen" (9). The first drafts of my plays are never fully conscious of this *modus operandi*. It is not until several drafts later that I begin demarcating when action occurs and why, as "each trigger leads to a new heap" (12). These heaps and triggers become the mathematics of the play. The very first trigger is the cause, while the first heap marks the effect. The first trigger and heap do not remain isolated in their relationship because "the heap, the second event, [then] becomes a trigger: a new first event of a new action" (12). This technique of writing and script analysis bears a structural resemblance to a familiar acting approach,

the Stanislavski System. Essentially a feedback loop, the Stanislavski System provides the actor with a simple equation to finding motivation for the character's actions, beginning with the character's super-objective—their greatest want during the course of the play—and subsequently narrowing focus, down to their action for each individual line.



3) Adaptation

As a kid with divorced parents, I learned quickly that adapting to the circumstance at hand is far more productive than resistance. This is both my super-power and my kryptonite. From a young age, I have integrated change with a seamlessness that often contradicts what I actually want both in life and in my art, and I can only imagine that this tendency is rooted in a fear of speaking out. Bogart comments on this approach, suggesting that “to be silent, to avoid the violence of articulation alleviates the risk of failure but at the same time there is no possibility of advancement” (49). I am attempting a new phase in my writing process that incorporates more confident vocalization and risk-taking. However, I find myself still struggling with when to say yes and when to say no during the feedback process.

I do love receiving feedback from my cohort members. There is a touch of masochism and a pinch of unabashed narcissism when a group of individuals who care about you responds to your work and vice versa. It is both humbling and dangerous. The feedback I have received for the past year and a half on *Red Dirt* has been integral in my development as a writer.

There is a certain translation required in the post feedback/pre-revision stage. Before diving into rewrites, this translation process begins with the following questions:

- 1) What do I glean from the feedback?
- 2) Is it relevant to the overall dramatic question of the play?
- 3) How do I accept the feedback and adjust while maintaining my voice and integrity of the world of the play?

These questions are a helpful reminder in determining when to say yes and when to say no. As a young girl, and even as a young woman, decisiveness always equaled "too much," and so I repressed my decision-making impulse for fear of coming off too strong. Thank God for my female graduate professors and cohort members, or hell, I'd still be downplaying my womanhood. If it weren't for their revolutionary feminist reading recommendations and personally embodied empowerment as women, I'd still be floundering in a sea of doubt. In the agreeable words of Audre Lorde: "I have always wanted to be both man and woman, to incorporate the strongest and richest parts of my mother and father within/into me—to share valleys and mountains upon my body the way the earth does in hills and peaks" (7). Learning to accept the feminine and masculine within me, the vocal and non-vocal, the decisive and passive parts, is balancing and nourishing to my artistic practice.

PART II: THE FORMATIVE YEARS

*There is one that has a head without an eye,
And there's one that has an eye without a head.
You may find the answer if you try;
And when all is said,
Half the answer hangs upon a thread.*

— Christina Rossetti

Research Methods

When starting the revision process for this play, my embodied knowledge of life in Oklahoma helped to fulfill the thematic and technical requirements of a regionally specific play. From brief stints visiting family in Mustang, Jinx, and Oklahoma City to that one time I lived in Broken Arrow with my mother after running away from my father's home in Texas, I could recall sensations quite vividly. In addition to my personal knowledge of the region, I utilized various research methods, including mining family photo archives, taking road trips, nature walking, listening to my mother's music, and investigating oil rigging and Bible verses as a means to garner new knowledge or evoke repressed knowledge.

Mining Family Photo Archives.

I found myself resisting this method at first. Would it trigger post-traumatic symptoms? Was it masochism for the sake of masochism? Would it really help the playwriting process, or would it prove irrelevant and mostly damaging? Despite these reservations, I pushed forward. Like any new approach, there was an awkwardness in its application to the writing.

I don't actually own a family photo album. It's more like a stack stuffed inside a Ziploc baggy, but the container does not diminish the sentiment. I went through the

memories like anyone dosing up on nostalgia would, but instead of a healthy handful of vitamins, my nostalgia resembled a heroin injection. It feels important to note that I don't reminisce on these photographs often—in fact, I refrain altogether—and so my emotional response to this exercise was seismic. I wept at the sight of my mother holding me in my infant Easter dress. I was reminded of the version of her that seemed to belong in an asylum rather than our beach house rental. I allowed myself to simply sit with each photo for as much time as felt necessary, remembering both the good and the bad. I've realized that taking time and space is sometimes the only way to access untapped creative energy.

Instead of writing immediately after engaging in this research method, I would take a bath, go for a walk, or listen to music. Reflection felt necessary before diving in. The photos were not presented literally or otherwise injected into the play, but rather provided sentiment, feeling, or sensation as previously mentioned.

Road Trips and Nature Walks

The windows of my car are rolled down. I have a cigarette in my left hand, a coffee in my right. I use my knees to steer as my favorite songs play on repeat. Denver to Albuquerque: 450 miles, six and half hours on little to no sleep, a journey through the great Southwest. I drive.

The romanticism was almost too much to endure. Something about road trips activates the *insula*, the small nugget of the brain that the *New York Times* describes as “a long-neglected brain region that has emerged as crucial to understanding what it feels like to be human” (Blakeslee, 2007). The vast landscape, which moves from rugged desert to pastoral greenery and back to the rugged, has a lasting impact on my notions of beauty. I find purpose in what is deemed beautiful.

But, not only do I seek profundity on the road, I also calculate. Perhaps the steady moving vehicle combined with entrapment in a necessary movement and confined space of the vehicle make a perfect recipe for pointed thought. Whatever it may be, I found myself making my way back home from Denver with a beat-sheet metronome ticking in my brain. I do not usually map out or pre-plan plays; —it's more finger-painting than Rembrandt—but. However, the dual nature combination of a strict deadline and six hours in a car forced me into a new process. The praxis between of observation and calculation proved to be a helpful tool in this play's inception.

Like the open road walks in nature became a source of research and inspiration. I grew up a very adventurous child, always seeking the dirt path rather than the paved.

Whenever I found myself stuck during the writing process, usually as a result of being cooped up inside all day, typing away, I would move my mind and body outdoors. I took a liking to Albuquerque's Bosque, where giant trees line the narrow trail along the Rio Grande. For me, many revelatory thoughts are born from this enchanted place by the river. I find myself longing to sink my teeth into the landscape and activate my body. The integration of movement—as simple as walking or as complex as dancing—with an analytical thought has become a very important process, one that I will continue once I depart from this program.

Listening to My Mother's Music

Music has played a major role in my playwriting practice. Often my plays feature specific songs, references to pop-culture icons, or specific musicians. Depending on the piece and what will best serve the writing, I either incorporate the act of listening to music or reject it completely. In the beginning, *Red Dirt* did not pull me toward music. It

was not until subsequent drafts that I started venturing into this method, and the songs I played were not the usual suspects. I found myself listening to Bette Midler's "From a Distance," Carole King's "You Make Me Feel Like A Natural Woman," Barbara Streisand's "Moanin' Low," and Sheryl Crow's "If It Makes you Happy." In any other instance, I would hate this type of music and never admit to listening to it, but I realized I was choosing these songs based on my mother's tastes. Like the family photos, these songs provided an emotional landscape and evocative sensory triggers within the writing, rather than a literal translation of the page.

Investigating Oil Rigging and Bible Verses

Oil rigging and Bible lessons play a major thematic role in *Red Dirt*. Despite growing up in both Oklahoma and Texas, I didn't know a single thing about oil rigging. By researching images and language surrounding oil rigging, I was able to mine some interesting facts about oil rigs and a glossary of the common terminology, including the fascinating sub-cultural linguistics developed within this field over time.

As for the Bible, I knew from the brief time I spent as a child in Southern Baptist churches that the book of Revelation was going to serve *Red Dirt* well. When cracking open a dusty Bible, I wanted to find those moments that evoked fear, tension, and gender divisions. The revelation was the obvious choice for fear: the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, the demons rising from the depths of Hell, renegade angels, and other frightful moments were the perfect ammunition for Lodz, the vitriolic middle brother, to torment his younger brother, Dewey. The book of Timothy addresses gender divisions and the politics of women in the church and in the Bible, often situating women under the rule of men. Timothy 2:11–15 demonstrates the overt patriarchal ideals in the Bible:

Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. (*King James Bible*, Tim. 2:11-15)

I often shy away from writing about subjects I know nothing about. There is a fear that I will bastardize the information, or worse, offend. However, that was a risk I was willing to take in writing this play. I felt confident enough in my personal perspective on the two subjects and the simple fact that I am not attempting to convince anyone that I am an expert in the fields of mining and Theology. And so instead, between the textual analysis of these above mentioned Bible chapters and the oil-rigging research, I found useful new knowledge that served my writing practice and the content of the play.

PART IV: TEEN ANGST

“I don’t know if being nice is my legacy.”

—*Kathleen Hanna*

Founding Editor of *Sassy Magazine* (a short-lived publication for the not-so-Seventeen-Magazine-seventeen-year-old’s of America), Jane Pratt, speaks to the teenage glory days in her book *For Real: The Uncensored Truth About America’s Teenagers*:

My mother’s theory is that being a teenager is so troubling that most people just get through it and then block it out. They make a funny story out of the time they got drunk or dumped, and they romanticize the rest and go on perpetuating the myth that your teenage years are the best years of your life. (xii)

Like Pratt, the angsty-teen trope is something I have lived in for much longer than my actual teen years. It's freedom and bombastic emotions are why I joined my high school Theatre program, to begin with. In the spring of 2007, I ran away from home. Due to a series of retaliations against my father, my Advanced Placement World History teacher, and every boy I ever had a crush on—I decided enough was enough. So, I split. For the remainder of the school year and into the deep summer months, I lived with my Mother in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma. I dropped out of my Texas high school and joined another in this very small town of Oklahoma. I took drugs, stole cigarettes from strangers, and began a series of sexual relationships with a multitude of men. If I was going to rebel—which I did—I was going to do it. Hard.

Two Early Plays

The first two plays I wrote in the program were horribly written examples of what not do in playwriting. But even though they were bad, they were unapologetically bad, and there is ultimately something freeing about that type of writing, and the learning experience it can provide. These were, after all, my teenage angst years in the program. Writing ‘bad’ plays feels pretty punk rock to me. But, despite that anarchic notion, what I gleaned from the writing of these two early plays was my excitement of language and word-play.

On Language: *Fracking on Mars or, How to Combust*

I will never forget writing this play. I had just broken up with my dead-beat boyfriend, moved out of a toxic living situation, quit drinking, and disappeared from social media. Although these all seem like healthy decisions, I was getting frequent anxiety attacks as a response. *Fracking on Mars or, How to Combust* arrived on the page via a strange conversation I found myself having alone in bed one night with an estranged and, more importantly, imagined voyeur. I wondered what it would be like to have my mind split into two factions: the high and the low. I began writing what those two factions might say about me behind my back. I have always felt the paranoia of rumors; growing up, each female friend group I attached myself to would inevitably erupt and dissipate due to gossip. It felt natural to delve into this subject through an abstracted form as the first play I would write—a new take on a familiar form.

The characters High and Low speak both eloquently and sordidly. High is meant to represent the positive, articulated part of a fractured psyche, while Low signifies the basest self:

LOW: What’s up boss?

HIGH: I have to tell you something.

LOW: Okay—

HIGH: I lied to you.

LOW: Oh...

HIGH: Can you ever forgive me?

LOW: About what?

HIGH: About the Meteor

LOW: It wasn't a Meteor shower was it?

HIGH: No, Low. I'm afraid it wasn't.

LOW: What was it?

HIGH: Sometimes people—

LOW: People?

HIGH: (to the audience) Those Things.

LOW: (whispering) The things we live inside?

HIGH: Yes, Low. Those things. Well, sometimes those things...blow up.

These two characters were my entry-way into developing characters through their language tactics. I enjoy the way language can operate in a play for example: giving signals to the audience via subtext, the passage of time, the imbuing of objects or locations when they are not actualized, and simply the musicality language provides.

On Language: *Everly Heart and the Dollar and a Quarter Coaster Ride*

Language is rhythm. Like a musical composition, the language in a play is the time signature. It determines the pacing in a scene as well as how much time passes. For me, language feels like the most control I have over my plays. I have a very basic

knowledge of reading music and can play a few jazz and blues scales on the guitar. In fact, playing the guitar was the first artistic practice I took up as an eleven-year-old who inherited her father's Yamaha from his years in the military. Writing short songs with beginner melodies and repetitive lyrics about love—something I knew nothing about, but wanted so badly—was how I learned about composition. This embodied practice became the foundation for how I would approach writing dialogue for characters.

In *Everly Heart and the Dollar and a Quarter Coaster Ride*, a full-length play I wrote in my second semester of the program, the character, *Everly Heart*, spoke in a heightened language style:

Name's Everly. Everly Heart. Shootin' to kill and killin' to sell. That's what I say. This here's my briefcase and this here's my trusty hat. Been with me since day one of my adventures. Now, let me back up a minute and say, I've never really killed a man, at least that I've been privy to, but killin' just seems a thing everyone's doin' these days. So, I'd be remised if I didn't cheat the ole tongue a little and let out a ruse here and there. Or else I'd be the one doing the dying round these parts. *(beat)* Say, speaking of these parts, those parts, and the all around anywhere parts, you seem lost, Kid. I can tell the lost from the found more than the found from the lost. Easy business when you're in sales like me. So, what'd you say, you lost Kid or are you found? (Grilo 4)

This play was an exercise in generating new language tactics. I have always been fascinated with the aesthetic of circus culture. And so, this play was born from the impulse to find the nuanced linguistic dynamics of imagined circus performers. In the

writing of this play, I discovered a new rhythm of writing the language as well as made-up words.

PART IV: ARRIVAL

RED DIRT

“The woman arriving over and over again does not stand still; she’s everywhere, she exchanges, she is the desire-that-gives.”

— *Helene Cixous*

Red Dirt is a new version of an old story when a stranger comes to town. Amaly, the 15-year-old daughter of a single mother struggling with suicide attempts and mental illness, is dropped off at her Uncle Bucky’s double-wide in the middle of nowhere to live out the rest of her youth. Her Uncle and three cousins, Lodz, Dewey, and Goat, live in a world of suffocating commitment to gender binaries and festering misogyny. In *Red Dirt*, female melancholia and the violence of masculinity collide, resulting in a close examination of the behavioral patterns of the self and of family. In reading this play, it is imperative to establish the female perspective, as the patriarchy is wont to do, in the violence of masculinity. In the following paragraphs, I will analyze the performance of gender in *Red Dirt* through a close examination of the text and of the production elements.

I. Theoretical Frameworks in Red Dirt

Towards the Ecriture Feminine

Helene Cixous introduced the concept of the *Ecriture Feminine*, or Feminine Writing, in her 1975 essay, *Laugh of the Medusa*. Rather than approaching story or character with the ‘Big Dick’ drive, Cixous posits female writing as a constant flow

between action and reflection; for every step forward, there is at least one step backward (891). The *Ecriture Feminine* is not only a more patient approach to writing but also a more intuitive one.

The performance of melancholia on stage can often suffer from inactivity or a lack of dramatic action. Aristotle set the precedent of the dramatic structure by urging a hierarchy of six elements of drama: plot, character, theme, language, rhythm, and spectacle. Later, Stanislavsky suggested the use of 'action' or 'verbs' in his system to deter passivity in the performance of a character. Meisner focused on improvisation first, text second as a means of disrupting the internalization of character. Grotowski and his laboratory moved through spaces with a primary focus on external activity rather than the internal. Although the latter three are mainly acting methods, they all greatly influenced Western theatrical thought and practice. These phallogocentric techniques do not, however, take into account the complexities of feminine thought as a method of creating theatre. The feminine approach is more fluid than that of the male. It is less about penetration and more about cycles.

In *Red Dirt*, Amaly's character is deeply affected by the enigmatic loss of her mother. This loss of the feminine causes an initial depressive paralysis, but through the physical injection of her "otherness" in a male dominated world, Amaly re-emerges into her feminine self. Consequently, the way in which *Red Dirt* is structured and how language and rhythm interact within this structure are all representations of the *Ecriture Feminine*.

Towards a New Character

I return to Mac Wellman to discuss my access point to character development. In *The Theatre of Good Intentions*, Wellman disparages Euclidean characters, dismissing them as “aggregations of explicated motives, explicated past behavior, wholly knowable and wholly contrived” (62). I agree and disagree with Mr. Wellman. In the first few workshop classes of this program, the characters I wrote were more or less non-Euclidean, meaning “the sum total of [their] lives and actions, no more and no less” (63). Paul C. Castagno labels these characters as “on-the-line characters” or “say what you mean [characters]” (56). In writing non-Euclidean characters, I had nothing to latch onto, nothing inspiring me to follow their arc throughout the play. They were vapid and meaningless and left me feeling empty as a writer.

In *Red Dirt*, Amaly’s character is filled with contradictions. In Vygotsky’s analysis of art, he posits:

In any drama, we perceive both a norm and its violation; in this respect, the structure of a drama resembles that of a verse in which we have also a norm (meter) and a system of deviation from it. The protagonist of a drama is, therefore, a character who combines two conflicting affects, that of the norm and that of its violation; this is why we perceive him dynamically, not as an object but as a process. (Page #)

To write a character with an affect balancing between “norm and violation” is the epitome of *Ecriture Feminine*. I find it increasingly important to approach the character with this equilibrium in mind, and this equilibrium mirrors the two

worlds I find myself negotiating in my own life. It is a crucial element of the human experience to live both here and there at once.

Melancholia, Trauma and the Mother

"What about she who is the hysterical offspring of a bad mother? Everything will be changed once woman gives woman to the other woman. There is hidden and always ready in woman the source; the locus for the other. The mother, too, is a metaphor. It is necessary and sufficient that the best of herself be given to woman by another woman for her to be able to love herself and return in love the body that was "born" to her."

— Helene Cixous

One of the major themes throughout *Red Dirt* is the fight against your own heredity. Amaly's biggest fear in life is becoming her mother. And so, what better obstacle to put her in than place her in the home her mother grew up in, surrounded by nothing but dirt, and force her to come to terms with temptation just as her mother struggled to do in her youth? By doing this, I found that Amaly's journey into strength and self-empowerment became the central conflict of the play.

In another text, *Black Sun*, by Kristeva, she discusses the Mother and Daughter relationship in conversation with depression and Melancholia, noting:

For a woman, whose specular identification with the mother as well as the introjection of the maternal body and self and more immediate, such an inversion of matricidal drive into a death-bearing maternal image is more difficult, if not impossible. Indeed, how can She be that bloodthirsty Fury, since I am She (sexually and narcissistically), She is I? Consequently, the hatred I bear her is not oriented toward the outside but is locked up within myself. (28-29)

This comparison between Amaly and her mother is similarly linked to my own Mother/Daughter relationship struggles mentioned in my introduction. In order for Amaly to break free from this comparison and this seemingly external fight, she must internally kill her mother inside.

Amaly's Arrival

Red Dirt begins, in Chekhovian fashion, with an arrival. As Amaly enters the space, she is immediately met with an aggressive distrust from her four male relatives. This distrust can be linked to psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection. Abjection, as Kristeva describes it, is "a 'something' that I do not recognize as a thing" (2). Abjection is a violent rejection of the 'other' in search of the 'self'. In *Red Dirt*, Amaly signifies a source of contention for the men surrounding her. The feminine does not belong in the initial world of this play. Lodz, the play's primary antagonist, is particularly irked by Amaly's presence. In fact, the first words we hear in the play come from his character: "She gotta live with us" (Grilo 1)? This abjection of the "other" is represented in various ways throughout the play, whether through micro-aggressive behaviors or extreme antagonism and violence. Amaly's melancholia becomes a threat to the steadfast masculinity each boy embodies or is striving to portray.

On Sex and Gender

I have often thought, Theatre should feel like amazing sex. When you write for the theatre, there should be heavy breathing, sweat, and the tracing of her fingertips on keys like that of a naked body. When you are on stage as a performer, you should always feel on the precipice of orgasm. And when you see theatre, there should be a surge of electricity during and post-coital pillow-talk after.

Red Dirt aims to provide the writer, the actor, and the audience member with these sensations. In writing this play, there was an inevitable focus on sex when I introduced one female character amongst a cast of all males. Amaly immediately becomes a sexualized creature when she enters the stage. In Ann Daly's analysis of American Ballet choreographer, George Balanchine's *The Four Temperaments*, she posits, "because of her narrative association with the erotic and the demonic, the third theme ballerina is a dualistic construction whose "danger" lies in the unattainable Otherness of her "daredevil" technique. And if she is feisty, her surrender is all the more delicious" (13). In critiquing the male-gaze in viewing dance, Daly deconstructs the many archetypes the female gender personifies in dance and begs the question: "Whose idea of Woman is she" (9)? I pose a very similar question to my audiences of *Red Dirt*. I give no answers throughout, but merely open the floor for the post-coital pillow-talk I mentioned above. I hope to evoke in my audiences a critical perspective on the patriarchy, meanwhile, I maintain the belief that not all plays written by women must adhere to radical feminist thought and action.

Amaly is a deeply flawed character, and that is what real women of the world are: deeply strong, deeply flawed and everything in-between. Yes, Amaly is sexualized. And yes, she pursues Goat's sexualization of her in order to fulfill a deep void in her life: connection. Like all the men in the play, all Amaly truly wants is to feel connected to someone. The fact that her mother abandoned her, leaves Amaly with little to no trust in all people, let alone her own blood. However, Goat provides a sense of comfort and ease for her. While Lodz provides the opposite, danger. In last half of the play, Lodz calls Amaly out by saying, "But, you kinda like both sides of the gun don't you" (Grilo 78).

She is torn between two options: to live life in lightness or to live it in darkness. By the end of the play, we see her settle into the gray area between.

Having said this, it is impossible to view *Red Dirt* through any other lens than a feminist one. Although dominated by male characters, the one female protagonist is who the audience is asked to follow. Through this lens, we are urged to ask the question, “What is this play saying about the female experience?” As mentioned in the quote above from Helen Cixous’ *Laugh of the Medusa*, we are faced directly with Amaly’s choice in *Red Dirt* to return to the source of her mother-other (which provides agency and empowerment) or to remain subservient to the surrounding men in her life. Gloria Anzaldua gives way to the intersectionality of gender and race in her seminal work, *La Frontera*, by situating the Female within the historical hegemony of male dominated cultures:

According to Christianity and most other major religions, woman is carnal, animal, and closer to the undivine, she must be protected. Protected from herself. Woman is the stranger, the other. She is man’s recognized nightmarish pieces, his Shadow-Beast. The sight of her send him into a frenzy of anger and fear (qtd. in Rivkin and Ryan 1019).

This quote synthesis one of the dramatic questions of *Red Dirt*: How can the presence of women positively affect a male dominated world?

On Violence

“Hatred: a heritage, again, a remainder, a duping subservience to the phallus.”

— *Helene Cixous*

Just as women are forcefully spoon-fed signals by society, so are men. Before the millennial gender revolution, there was often no escaping socially-imposed binaries. Thankfully, in today's culture, we are seeing more and more transitional expressions emerging in the mainstream. That being said, there are pockets of America—like the very small pocket of Freedom, Oklahoma where *Red Dirt* is set—that remain a cesspool of hate and violence. This subculture of gender-based violence becomes a predominant theme throughout *Red Dirt*.

As a means of supporting this theme in my writing of the play, I looked to Ian M. Harris' book, *Messages Men Hear*, in order to effectively interpret different male archetypes and messages as well as Slavoj Žižek's seminal work *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections*. In conversation with Kristeva's theory of Abjection, Žižek notes, "Since a Neighbour is, as Freud suspected long ago, primarily a thing, a traumatic intruder, someone whose different way of life (or rather, way of jouissance materialised in its social practices and rituals) disturbs us, throws the balance of our way of life off the rails, when it comes too close, this can also give rise to an aggressive reaction aimed at getting rid of this disturbing intruder" (71). The following analysis of the male characters in *Red Dirt* aims to illuminate the messages they each hear and act upon as men in the world and how violence is often the result of their reaction to these messages.

Uncle Bucky:

In *Red Dirt* the leader of the patriarchal household is the character Uncle Bucky. He is a man of few words and even fewer emotional expressions. Harris interprets the messages this type of man hears as being "[The Law] do right and obey. Do not question authority," and, "[control]men are in control of their relationships, emotions, and jobs,"

as well as, "[President] Men pursue power and status" (13). These messages often lead to such a repression of emotions in Uncle Bucky, that he, in turn, becomes increasingly violent throughout the course of the play. Essentially, Uncle Bucky's arc begins at 'The Law', moves towards 'Control' and ends somewhere between a wounded 'President' and something so emasculated that it becomes merely unrecognizable to him (12-13).

Goat:

The eldest brother, Goat, adheres to a more 'Work Ethic,' 'Superman' and 'Be the Best You Can', series of messages (12-13). Goat is compassionate, but only in regards to his physical attraction to Amaly. His role throughout the play is often to be a source of positivity to her, amidst all of the violence and rubble around her. And yet, when not interacting with Amaly, he falls into the aggression of masculinity that his younger brother, Lodz displays as well as his only real parental figure, Uncle Bucky.

Lodz:

The middle brother, Lodz, displays the 'Be Like Your Father,' 'Rebel' and 'Playboy' trope (12-13). In previous drafts of the play, I wrote several scenes where Lodz was equated to his father, Uncle Bucky. This message remains true all though the exact language has not remained in the most current draft. "Apples do not fall too far from their trees," has become to most direct language motif that addresses Lodz' likeness to his father.

Lodz' rebellion is seen most frequently as retaliation against his father's rules as well as the religious rules of the world inside and outside of his home. His rebellion is also witnessed through his direct interactions with Amaly. She gives him something to

push up against that is unfamiliar. This leads directly to his sexualized nature when around Amaly, as the primal need to procreate becomes desperate and forceful.

Throughout the play, Lodz is certainly the most violent. I attribute this quality to the fact that he is a contradiction to his own self, most of the time. These conflicting messages he hears create the most friction and therefore the most violent action.

Dewey:

The youngest brother, Dewey, is the innocent. He personifies the ‘Good Samaritan’, the ‘Hurdles’ and ‘Nurturer’, messages men hear (12-13). Every character of the play, aside from Amaly, is constantly either dismissing Dewey or aggressively reinforcing their negative judgment of his good-naturedness. Dewey is the closest version of the feminine in a household of very dominant alpha-males. That is why he and Amaly grow to find a commonality, unlike anything he has ever experienced. Dewey is constantly doing or talking about doing "good deeds and acts. Put[ting] others' needs first. Set[ting] a good example," as well as displaying a "gentle, supportive, warm, sensitive and concern about others' feelings" (12-13). However, despite Dewey's more sensitive qualities, he is often asked to "Grow up and act like a fuckin' man"(Grilo 93). This a ‘hurdle’ that he must face, “to be a man is to pass a series of tests” (12-13). There are several tests that Dewey is expected to pass throughout the play, but the greatest test he is given at the end brings him to his untimely death.

II. Production Elements

a. The Staging of Naturalism in Red Dirt

As an undergraduate theatre student, the first character I fell deeply in love with was Nora from Henrik Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House*. While she lacks the agency to impact her

external world for much of the play, I found her inner world to be wonderfully curious and empowered. I had the opportunity to briefly delve into this fascinating and contradictory character in an advanced acting class taught by Joanne Camp Sobel. In *Staging Masculinities*, theatre professional and professor, Michael Mangan points out the contradictions Naturalism in the Theatre brought to the theatre. Mangan notes, “The theme of naturalist plays, time after time, is that in this solid material world all is not as it seems...for naturalistic theatre always looked to go beyond surface realism: to use the solidity of its surfaces to show what lay beneath the surface” (169). This contradiction between the interior motives and surface materiality parallels the aesthetic of *Red Dirt*. While Naturalism relied on Darwinian hereditary fate, it also demanded an exact likeness to realistic environmental staging. The world of *Red Dirt* asks for both a Naturalistic staging and a metaphorical one.

The play begins with the masculine exterior world. Once Amaly arrives, one by one the characters move inside the home. From work to domesticity, from outward to inward, from male to female, the world begins to unravel once the intimacy of the indoors takes precedence. I return to Audre Lorde’s quote, “I have always wanted to be both man and woman,” in order to emphasize the importance of fluidity between gender norms in *Red Dirt* (7). The internal life of the characters takes on the external life around them and vice-versa, migrating toward more impermanent boundaries. Cixous denotes this within a metaphysical context by suggesting, “If she is a whole, it's a whole composed of parts that are wholes, not simple partial objects but a moving, limitlessly changing ensemble, a cosmos tirelessly traversed by Eros, an immense astral space not organized around anyone sun that's any more of a star than the others” (889). There is

something soft and sensual about Amaly's presence, but also hard and punctuated. There are moments throughout the staging of *Red Dirt's* premiere production at UNM's Linnell Festival of New Plays, that reflect this very sentiment.

Director, Caitlin Ryan O'Connell directed the world premiere of *Red Dirt* for the 2017 Linnell Festival of New Plays at UNM. Her vision of the play reflects itself in all aspects of the design. Often times, she and I discussed in the rehearsal room, the impulse to imbue the stage with a feeling of suffocation as well as expansion. This returns again to the notion of contradictions or juxtapositions that continue to come forth throughout the text and production elements of the *Red Dirt*.

Passion Play: Carts

When professor and Linnell Festival producer, Moss, came to see a recent run of *Red Dirt*, he mentioned that the three platforms built as the playing space for the actors resembled that of Passion Play sets. I had an overwhelming sense of Déjà vu, as I looked back on the first Theatre History course I took in undergrad at UNM with Dr. Brian Herrera. I even remember writing in my notebook for that class: *Write a Hellmouth play*. And in a strange subversive way, I did.

In Medieval Studies scholar, Waldo F. McNeir's *Corpus Christi Passion Plays as Dramatic Art*, he describes the set and staging of a Passion Play as the following:

Thus, the cyclic Passion is like the middle span of three arches, rising highest of the three but flanked on either side by companion spans necessary to architectural unity; or it may be compared to the central panel of a triptych, a position in which it is often found in religious art. (603).

Similarly, *Red Dirt* has three moveable platforms, like the Three Stations of the Cross, and high-rising beams overhead that allow for transparency of action. The play itself does not necessarily follow a Passion Play structure, but it is interesting to note that *Red Dirt's* concerns with religion have been represented through its set design.

PART VII: DEPARTURE: CONCLUSION

In reviewing the several drafts it took to arrive at this version of *Red Dirt*, I look upon the process with adoration. I went in scared and fearful and came out with new knowledge and a new sense of self. Like Amaly, my obstacles were met head on in the writing process. They were unavoidable and thus had to be solved.

Red Dirt is the perfect culmination of the theories I studied and gravitated towards in this graduate program, the techniques I learned in workshop classes, as well as the lived experience I was often too afraid to write about, but now have the agency and tools to do so.

My future plans after graduating with an MFA in Dramatic Writing from UNM are to continue honing my craft as a playwright, creating more theatre for diverse audiences, and truly becoming a master of this medium—if that is even possible.

In the words of Patti Smith...

bonsai bonsai
It is better to write
Then die

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Red Dirt

By: Stephanie Grilo

Production Draft

3/31/2017

ACT ONE: ONE

Lights up on the outside of a Double Wide.

This is Freedom Oklahoma. The ground is covered in red dirt that'll stain your skin in a minute. It is warm and boy is it humid. The cicadas are early this year; their mating sounds fill the landscape.

Time stands still in Freedom Oklahoma.

Three boys dressed in matching overalls with waffle cone thermals underneath and Red Wing workers-boots stand in a line facing the audience. These are LODZ, DEWEY, and GOAT. Brothers.

They quietly stare. Are they starrng at us? Or to the greater beyond?

*Enter a tall slender man. He wears the same matching work attire as the boys. This is
UNCLE BUCKY.*

He makes his way to the right of GOAT, turns and joins his rank in line.

They stare.

It is silent for quite some time.

	LODZ
She gotta live with us?	
	UNCLE BUCKY
Yup.	
	LODZ
Shit.	
	UNCLE BUCKY
Language.	
	LODZ
She nice?	
	UNCLE BUCKY
Don't know. Never met her.	

DEWEY

Never met her?

UNCLE BUCKY

Nope.

LODZ

I don't trust no girl I ain't never met.

GOAT

Watch your manners!

LODZ

She ain't even here yet.

GOAT

Don't mean you can sound like a pissin' trough.

UNCLE BUCKY

Hey! You wanna whippin?

The boys freeze.

LODZ and GOAT

No, sir.

The boys give each other an ugly snarl then return to their silent stare.

We hear tires on gravel road.

The sound of a bad break job follows suit.

A car door slams.

The boys shape up.

AMALY enters.

She sheepishly approaches UNCLE BUCKY.

AMALY

...I don't have enough for the cab fare.

UNCLE BUCKY reaches into his pocket and retrieves a wad of dollars and hands it to AMALY.

She exits with the bills.

Again, we hear tires on gravel.

AMALY returns.

(mispronouncing) Now, Amaly/
UNCLE BUCKY

It's Amaly.
AMALY

'Scuse me?
UNCLE BUCKY

Nothing.
AMALY

UNCLE BUCKY
(still mispronouncing) Amaly these are your cousins, Lodz, Dewey and Goat.

LODZ
Hi.

DEWEY
Hello.

GOAT
Pleasure

UNCLE BUCKY
Goat, go on and get her things.

GOAT
Yes, sir.

GOAT breaks from the line and awkwardly accepts the bag from AMALY.

GOAT
Hi.

AMALY
Hi...

UNCLE BUCKY
Goat'll show you to your room.

LODZ

But, there ain't no spare.

UNCLE BUCKY

She's stayin in your room. Best get your things out by supper.

LODZ

That's some crock'a'shit and you know/

Uncle Bucky shoots him that look again.

LODZ

(under his breath) Yes'sir.

UNCLE BUCKY

Goat?

GOAT

(staring at Amaly a little too long) Huh? *(snapping awake)* Oh! Right. Come on Amaly, I'll show you 'round.

AMALY

(to Uncle Bucky) I appreciate your hospitality.

UNCLE BUCKY

...

Goat ushers Amaly off.

Uncle Bucky retrieves a can of Snuff from his back pocket.

UNCLE BUCKY

Don't know 'bout that outfit she got on. Little too forgivin' if you ask me.

LODZ and DEWEY

Yes, sir.

Uncle Bucky stuffs a wad of the Tabaco in his bottom lip.

UNCLE BUCKY

You boys ever see girls her age wearin' anything like that round here?

LODZ

I mean, sometimes/

DEWEY

Lord, no I have not/

Beat.

Beat.

Well...
LODZ

DEWEY
You have??

Beat.

Beat.

UNCLE BUCKY

Figures. Her momma ain't right in the head 'nough to teach that girl the proper way to present herself ladylike.

He spits.

Well, i'mma get on. See you boys at supper.

LODZ and DEWEY

Yes sir.

UNCLE BUCKY exits.

END OF ONE.

TWO

LODZ and DEWEY remain outside while we see GOAT give AMALY a tour of the inside of the Double Wide.

DEWEY
She's pretty for a girl.

LODZ
That don't even make no sense.

DEWEY
She ain't pretty to you?

LODZ
Well sure, but you said "she's pretty for a girl." That don't make no sense.

DEWEY
What'dyu mean?

LODZ
All you had to say was she's pretty. You didn't have to add the "for a girl" part.

DEWEY

Yeah, well I ain't that good at English.

LODZ

No shit. (*Lodz punches Dewey in the gut*) RACE YA TO THE RIG!

Lodz exits with a .22.

DEWEY

Ah hell.

Dewey follows suit, grabbing his gun on his way out.

We see Amaly alone in the Double Wide.

We simply sit with her.

As the silence crescendos, a GUNSHOT offstage.

LODZ and DEWEY run back onstage with a dead animal.

LODZ tosses it in the pile of junk and sits down. Perhaps he cleans his gun, or empties the bullet chamber.

DEWEY

She seems nice enough though, don't you think?

LODZ

You heard Pa, her momma didn't raise her right. You know what I hear? I hear that woman's got a tongue on her—her momma. Used to say some real nasty shit to Pa when they were kids. Real psycho stuff. Like she were gonna kill him and all kinds of fucked up shit.

DEWEY

Kill 'em?

LODZ

Yup.

DEWEY

Nu-uh.

LODZ

Yes'sir—ee.

DEWEY

You're just pullin' wool, Lodz!

LODZ

No I ain't. Honest to God truth. I even heard she took one o'her baby dolls and...CUT the head clean off on account of she thought it were talking to her. Sayin' these DEMON kinda things.

DEWEY

Demon...kinda...things?

LODZ

"The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair, the whole moon turned blood red, and the stars in the sky fell to earth, as figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind."

DEWEY

Revelations...

LODZ

"And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the WOMAN being deceived, fell into transgression."

DEWEY

Timothy...

LODZ

2:14.

DEWEY

You been reading the Bible, Lodz?

LODZ

Just the parts I like.

DEWEY

Then you shouldn't be lyin' so much.

LODZ

Ain't read those parts.

DEWEY

You should.

LODZ

Who says I'm lyin'?

LIGHTS FADE IN ON AMALY AND GOAT inside her new bedroom.

There is a twin-size bed that appears to have gone unmade for months. It smells. Like worse than just feet and pre-deodorant wearing pubescent boy. Like something... yup, something has definitely died and rotted in this room. Maybe it's Lodz' soul.

GOAT drops AMALY's duffle bag beside the bed.

GOAT

Home sweet home.

He notices the stench.

Holy Shoot! WOO-EEE!! That's just. That is one ripe bowl of something right there.
(beat) We'll have to air it out in the morning.

AMALY

You don't have to do that.

GOAT

Can't be livin' with that smell for too long.

AMALY

It's fine.

GOAT

Start to burn your brain cells after a while I'd imagine.

AMALY

Fine.

GOAT

...Fine as in...fine you'll let me air it out? Or fine as in you'd like me to shut up now?

He should probably take his cue to leave, but he doesn't.

Soooo...not much to do 'round here. Might be a bit boring for you.

AMALY

I don't bore easily.

GOAT

Oh. Ok then. So...*(searches the room for conversation)* What'd you like to do for fun?

AMALY

Fun?

GOAT

Yeah that thing people do sometimes when they want to feel happy and stuff.

AMALY

I know what the word fun means.

GOAT

Alright.

AMALY

I don't really know.

GOAT

You like...music?

AMALY

Yeah, I guess...

GOAT

Well that's real interestin'.

AMALY

(she lets out a little giggle)

GOAT

What?

AMALY

Nothin'.

GOAT

Pa doesn't really let us listen to much other than 94.1 Christian station. But even then some of the rock and alternative is a little too loud and has that/that/what's that grungy guitar soundin' thing?

AMALY

...Distortion?

GOAT

Yeah. That.

AMALY

Huh.

BACK to LODZ and DEWEY outside.

DEWEY

So, you think she's like...like all—

LODZ

Fucked up in the head?

DEWEY

Well, I wouldn't have said it like that. But, you know, more like—*(whisperin)* suicidin' is a sin, Lodz.

LODZ

Sure is.

DEWEY

You don't think Amaly...

LODZ

Apples don't fall too far from their trees.

DEWEY

Huh. *(beat)* Well, that's alright. Now that she's here, God'll surely find his way into her heart. She won't want to be sad no more. And maybe she won't even want to kill herself on account of all that bad inside'a her. Cuz God'll love her for just the way she is.

LODZ

You better not be puttin' that God Radar on me. I hate that shit. Point that thing at her. See what kind'a evil lies within.

DEWEY

That ain't very Christian like of you, Lodz.

LODZ

You're the one shootin' Jesus lasers!

DEWEY

I ain't judgin' for the sake a judgin'. I'm sharpenin' my Missionary skills.

LODZ

You know, if'n it were me, I'd have let her Momma do it.

DEWEY

Do what?

LODZ

Kill herself. She wants to so bad. Go on already. Just do it! Save us the talk about it.

DEWEY

You ain't gotta be so grotesque!

LODZ

You even know what that word means?

DEWEY

Shut up.

BACK TO GOAT and AMALY.

GOAT

Soooo...school ain't started yet.

AMALY

...

GOAT

We're home schooled.

AMALY

...

GOAT

Guess no one told you about that part.

AMALY

Nope.

GOAT

Well, I'm sure you don't gotta be homeschooled with us if you don't wanna be. The public school...well...it's a fine school. You'll be/you'd do/I think public school is right for some people and ain't so right for others.

AMALY

...

BACK TO LODZ and DEWEY.

DEWEY

I think it's kinda sad.

LODZ

Sad my ass.

DEWEY

But what if Momma thought about/

LODZ

What have I told you about bringing her up?

LODZ goes to exit, agitated.

DEWEY

(stopping him) Hey...hey, Lodz...

LODZ

What?

DEWEY

Can I ask you something?

LODZ

Not if it/

DEWEY

It doesn't! I swear!

LODZ

(annoyed) What is it then, Dewey?

DEWEY

Been meaning to ask you for you a while/

LODZ

Just spit it out already!

DEWEY

Uhhh...nevermind.

LODZ

No, you started it, now finish it.

DEWEY

You...ugh...you ever kiss a girl before?

Beat.

LODZ cracks up.

DEWEY

Hey now! That ain't fair. I didn't ask you so you could laugh at me. That was a real honest to god question!

LODZ

(composing himself) You're right, you're right.

BACK TO GOAT and AMALY.

GOAT

You don't like talkin' much do you?

AMALY

...

GOAT

Well, supper is usually at six. Our dad, he likes havin' family supper. *(beat)* So, hope you can join us.

AMALY

....

Goat goes to exit.

Amaly stops him.

AMALY

Thank you, Goat. I'll see you at supper.

GOAT

(a little over excited) That's great! Okay well I'll let you get settled in. *(He goes to exit)* See you at six.

AMALY

See you at six.

GOAT nods with gusto.

He exits.

BACK TO LODZ and DEWEY.

DEWEY
Well...? Have you?

LODZ
Maybe.

DEWEY
Nu-uh, who?!

LODZ
I ain't tellin' you! You're like them stories 'bout them town criers. Always wailing on about this and that.

DEWEY
Nu-uh.

LODZ
Yes-huh. And what about you? I ain't never seen you talk to a girl 'sides Amaly and you said one goddamn word to her. Hell, you could hardly do that without shittin' your britches.

DEWEY
That's not true! I talked to Mary Ellen that one time at bible school.

LODZ
And then she told the whole church you picked your boogers and ate em'.

DEWEY
I don't do that no more!

LODZ
Looky there. Look who's becoming a man.

BACK TO AMALY.

She takes it all in; looking around the room with an attempt at easing into her new future, then flops onto the bed.

She is immediately met face to face with a pair of disgustingly unwashed boxers.

AMALY
(screams)

She flings herself off the bed and does a sickened dance that goes from innocent and to be expected to an almost toddler-like temper tantrum.

Her outburst leaves her balled up and silently sobbing.

Suddenly—

GOAT (O.S.)

Amaly? You alright in there?

AMALY

(quickly composing herself) I'm fine! I just slipped is all!

GOAT (O.S.)

(beat) Do you need a...Band-aide?

AMALY

Don't worry! I'm fine!

She waits till she knows for sure he's gone, then goes to her duffle bag and retrieves a crusted up envelope. It appears to have never been opened. We watch her as she sits with the envelop; a weighted decision to open it or leave it sealed for eternity.

BACK TO LODZ and DEWEY.

LODZ

(punching Dewey in the gut) Don't want to be late to supper!

DEWEY

(doubled over) Ah hell!

LODZ runs off.

Dewey follows suit.

They push and shove.

We see AMALY put the envelope on the nightstand and change into a pair of "found" pajamas.

LIGHTS FADE OUT.

END OF TWO.

THREE

LIGHTS FADE IN on a large wooden table.

DEWEY, LODZ and GOAT sit on one side, picnic style. UNCLE BUCKY sits at the head of the table.

Four bowls of soup sit in front of them accompanied by four glasses of milk. The fifth bowl and glass of milk rests alone on the other end, awaiting Amaly's arrival.

The boys wait patiently for some time. They don't touch their food. They simply wait.

Finally, AMALY enters.

Are those my clothes? LODZ

I forgot my pajamas... AMALY

Take em' off! LODZ

(kicking him under the table) Lodz! GOAT

Boys. UNCLE BUCKY

They quiet.

(still mispronouncing) Amaly/

Dad, you're saying her/ DEWEY

(aggressively) What have I told you about interruptin'? UNCLE BUCKY

Sorry. DEWEY

UNCLE BUCKY

(to Amaly) Why don't you have a seat and join us.

AMALY sits.

All besides AMALY bow their heads and clasp their hands in prayer.

She watches.

UNCLE BUCKY

Dear heavenly father, we thank you for this bread in which we are about to eat and for all that you do for our hearts. In your name we pray/

ALL

Amen.

They begin eating quickly in silence.

AMALY watches and occasionally toys with the idea of eating, but mostly fiddles with the spoon.

AMALY

Real nice place you got here.

DEWEY

Ain't it?!

LODZ

(under his breath) If you like the smell of cow shit and tar.

Uncle Bucky shoots Lodz a cutting look.

They all return to their silence and continue eating.

GOAT

(to Amaly) Maybe I could show you 'round town tomorrow.

UNCLE BUCKY

You're Chainhandin'.

LODZ

Nu-uh! It's my turn!

UNCLE BUCKY

Lodz, I do not want to hear it. You're not ready.

LODZ

Pa, I busted my arse on last week's hitch. It's time I get a chance callin' the shots.

UNCLE BUCKY

You call piggin' bustin' butt? I said, you're not ready. You keep your eye on Goat and maybe in a few weeks you can Chainhand.

LODZ

I'm not a fuckin' Ginzel!

UNCLE BUCKY

Watch your tongue, boy. You are testin' my patience mighty hard.

DEWEY

(to Amaly) A Ginzel's like the crap-on-the-bottom-of-your-boot-kinda-job. Nobody wants to be a Ginzel.

Amaly giggles.

LODZ

Dewey, I will stick this spoon straight down your throat 'till you never speak again.

UNCLE BUCKY

Don't talk to your brother like that.

LODZ

(under his breath) Least I ain't no worm.

GOAT

Shut up and eat your soup, Lodz.

LODZ

Alright, Big Brother.

GOAT

You're such a little shit.

AMALY

You guys fight a lot.

Uncle Bucky, Goat, and Lodz all drop their spoons in the soup. They've never been called out by a girl her age, much less any girl.

LODZ

We're men.

You're boys. UNCLE BUCKY

Why fight? AMALY

(clears his throat) UNCLE BUCKY

Good question... DEWEY

Could try to be kinder. AMALY

Good luck convincing him. GOAT

Now, Goat/ UNCLE BUCKY

I like being a boy. DEWEY

Ha! Good luck tryin'. LODZ

Enough, boys/ UNCLE BUCKY

Takes more effort, you know? AMALY

Bein' a girl seems hard. DEWEY

To be kind than hateful. AMALY

Amaly, I think/ UNLCE BUCKY

Your momma teach you that? LODZ

LODZ! GOAT

LODZ
Cuz' far as I'm concerned, your momma was put in that looney bin for being nothin' but hateful.

You don't know her. AMALY

She's family. LODZ

(grunts) UNCLE BUCKY

LODZ
But, what about all them stories you told us 'bought Amaly and her Momma?

UNCLE BUCKY
...

LODZ
What about them?

AMALY
Doesn't your Bible say something about not talking shit about other's behind their backs?

UNCLE BUCKY
Dewey, clear the dishes.

DEWEY
Yes, sir.

DEWEY gets up and begins gathering everyone's bowls.

When he gets to AMALY, she abruptly rises.

AMALY
I think I'd like to go to bed now.

Beat.

DEWEY
You ain't gonna eat that?

AMALY
Wasn't very hungry.

DEWEY
It's real good. Our dad makes it.

LODZ
(sarcastically) Yeah and it ain't even from the can.

DEWEY
It's from scratch!

UNCLE BUCKY
Dewey. Dishes. Now.

LODZ
(to Amaly) So, are you some kinda anorexic, or what?

GOAT
LODZ!

UNCLE BUCKY
ENOUGH!

Beat.

AMALY
I'm not anorexic. I'm just not hungry right now. *(to Uncle Bucky)* Thanks for making dinner and everything.

UNCLE BUCKY
Just food. Persons gotta eat.

As she exits:

UNCLE BUCKY
If you need to wash up before bed there's fresh towels in the hallway closet. *(beat)*
Boys, say your goodnights.

LIGHTS DIM on the KITCHEN.

END OF THREE.

FOUR

LIGHTS FADE IN on AMALY's new room.

During the following we see UNCLE BUCKY shuffle around in the kitchen cabinets. He pulls out a bottle of Wild Turkey. And sits at the table staring at it.

Dewey and Lodz are seen in Dewey's bedroom. Lodz is making a barricade between his "new" side of the bedroom and Dewey's. Dewey just watches him.

All the while, Amaly is seen putting away her clothes in the small dresser from before.

A soft knock on her door is heard.

AMALY

...Come in?

GOAT enters. He's in silly boxers and no shirt. A toothbrush dangles from his mouth.

GOAT

Hey.

AMALY

Hey...

GOAT

D'you take a shower?

AMALY

Bath.

GOAT

Oh.

AMALY

...

GOAT

Warm enough?

AMALY

What?

GOAT

Nothin'.

AMALY

Did you need something...?

GOAT

What?

AMALY

You knocked...And now you're standing in here.

GOAT

Oh. Right. There's an extra blanket in the hallway closet if you need it. You know, 'case you get cold. Can get a little drafty in here.

AMALY

Oh. Thank you.

GOAT

Bed comfortable?

AMALY

Yup.

GOAT

Okay then. *(beat)* Welp. I'll let you get your beauty rest/I MEAN/rest. Just rest. Gotta get them 8 hours in, am I right? *(beat)* Okay. Night then, Amaly.

He goes to exit.

Meanwhile, UNCLE BUCKY untwists the cap of the Wild Turkey, takes a whiff, slams the bottle on the table, takes a long hard look at it, then puts the cap back on and returns it to the cabinet.

As Lodz's back is turned to Dewey, Dewey attempts fate by rushing the barricade, grabbing his favorite stuffed animal and returning to bed before getting caught.

Lodz catches him.

I'm happy you're here livin' with us.

GOAT

...

AMALY

Well. Pleasure talking with you.

GOAT

Night, Goat.

AMALY

Amary crawls under the covers.

(going to exit) Want me to turn the light out?

GOAT

Sure.

AMALY

He does. It is DARK.

Beat.

He flips the lights back on.

(beat) Maybe tomorrow we could/

GOAT

Night, Goat.

AMALY

He flips the lights back off.

...Night.

GOAT

He exits.

UNCLE BUCKY exits the kitchen.

Amary sits up in bed and flips the switch on the lamp next to her.

She goes to her duffle bag and pulls out a disc-man and headphones. She curls up on her new bed as the muffled sounds of indie-rock come through the headphones.

Meanwhile DEWEY and LODZ return to their respective sides of their newly shared room.

LODZ

(like scolding a dog) STAY! STAY! Good, boy. That's a good, DEWEY.

DEWEY goes to throw his pillow at LODZ, but realizes he might not ever get it back. So, he clings on instead.

LODZ

Pussy.

DEWEY

Thought I was a dog.

LODZ

Whatever.

DEWEY

I think Amaly's right.

LODZ

...

DEWEY

Bought us fightin' all the time. Seems kinda—kinda—kinda/

LODZ

Kinda like we got dicks and she don't. We know how to use ours for the right sort of need. Can't do nothing with her parts, really. Just take it.

DEWEY

I ain't never seen those parts before...what'd'you think they're like?

LODZ

What do I THINK?

DEWEY

You mean...

LODZ

Maybe.

DEWEY

Weird.

Faggot. LODZ

See! DEWEY

What? LODZ

Coulda said ANYTHIN' else, but you had to say that. DEWEY

Say what? LODZ

I ain't gonna repeat it. DEWEY

Afraid you might be one. LODZ

No!/I mean/It's not like/You know what I mean. DEWEY

LODZ

Deweeeeeyyy! We. Are. Men. We fight! We fuck! We build the world up and then tear it down. We are infinite and mighty. You should be proud to bleed our blood. Its black and blue like the bruises we get on our hands from workin' em raw. Or like the ones we give when we're giving each other hell. Pa raised us as men without an if/and/or but, about it. So, unless you want a raw-hide belt struck on that Gerber baby bottom of yours, I suggest you look at that Amaly for what she is.

They continue their chat as we see AMALY open the envelop from earlier.

She reads, but before too long, UNCLE BUCKY enters and interrupts.

UNCLE BUCKY

...

AMALY

...

UNCLE BUCKY

...

AMALY

...

UNCLE BUCKY

That from your momma?

AMALY

Uh-huh.

UNCLE BUCKY

...

AMALY

Gave it to me before she was admitted...

UNCLE BUCKY

My son's just having a hard time adjusting to your/

AMALY

You never called her. Never came to visit. She could'a used some family, Bucky.

UNCLE BUCKY

Don't call me that. Ain't proper.

AMALY

What stories could you have told them?

UNCLE BUCKY

Look here, Missy. We are doing you a favor.

AMALY

Oh thanks, Mister. I'll make sure to bite my tongue and abide.

Uncle Bucky starts to chuckle.

UNCLE BUCKY

Just like your momma.

AMALY

....

UNCLE BUCKY

A tornado. A revolver. A Tansania/Tasmer/-what-ever-you-call-it-Devil—she was something else.

AMALY

IS.

UNCLE BUCKY

...?

AMALY

IS something else. She's not dead...yet.

UNCLE BUCKY

Wasn't all so bad. Growing up here. Least' not for me, I guess. Somehow, I keep prayin' to God that she still gotta a few good stories up in there to hold onto.

AMALY

Not enough.

UNCLE BUCKY

Believe it or not, she was a funny kid. Always crackin' us up with her little "skits." Always was one for the spotlight.

AMALY

And now she hogs it for boozy incantations and world renowned attempts at/

UNCLE BUCKY

I'd prefer it if you didn't bring those sorts of things up while you're livin' with us. They belong in the past. 'Sides, this is a house of God and talk of...well, them specifics aren't necessary. We all know what she did. No need to harbor on it.

Back in LODZ and DEWEY's room—

DEWEY

I like bein' a nice person, Lodz.

LODZ

Don't get nothin' out of this world bein' "a nice guy." Just a bunch of sissy jobs and a whole lot of women tellin' you, "You're so sweet, but I'm not interested."

DEWEY

Well, it ain't about women.

LODZ

It's always about women, Dewey.

Back on AMALY and UNCLE BUCKY—

AMALY

This family's so fucked up, it's hard to imagine anyone livin' past a certain age before walking off the edge of those cliffs. Sorta becomes an expectation. Like going to church every Sunday.

UNCLE BUCKY

I'll let you get some sleep.

UNCLE BUCKY exits.

We return to LODZ and DEWEY.

GOAT enters.

(to Lodz) Where's all your stuff? GOAT

(shrugs) LODZ

Pa told you to clear out your room. GOAT

I will. (beat) Eventually. LODZ

You're just gonna let Amaly live in your filth? GOAT

Yeah, why not? LODZ

Lodz. GOAT

LODZ
Don't "LODZ" me. It ain't your room she's populatin'. I'll get my shit out when I'm good and ready.

GOAT rushes to LODZ's bed and pulls him out of it.

GOAT
Get out of bed and go to get your things. Now.

Don't tell me what to/ LODZ

NOW! GOAT

Lodz huffs off.

Silence.

Goat notices the barricade.

(gesturing to it) What's/ GOAT

(pointing) His side. My side. DEWEY

Idiot. GOAT

He exits.

Back in Amaly's room. She continues reading the letter.

Suddenly, the door flings open, and Lodz enters.

Excuse me...? AMALY

Don't get your panties in a wad, I'm just getting' my shit "out of your way." LODZ

Can't it wait? AMALY

Apparently, not. LODZ

I'd like it if you'd knock next time. AMALY

I'm not knocking on my own bedroom door. LODZ

AMALY

I didn't ask to take over your room.

LODZ

I didn't say you did.

AMALY

Then stop acting like it.

Lodz stops moving momentarily to deliver the following.

LODZ

Oh. My dad says I gotta apologize to you or else he'll kick my ass again. So, sorry I guess.

AMALY

Wow. Great apology.

LODZ

Yeah, well I ain't some faggy speech giver. So, there you go.

AMALY

Did I do something to you?

LODZ

Not yet.

AMALY

Little unfair.

LODZ

Well, I don't like you.

AMALY

I noticed.

LODZ

Good. So, let's keep it like that. You stay out of my way and I'll stay out of yours.

AMALY

I'm not looking for you to be my brother.

LODZ

What?

AMALY

I don't need siblings. I'm not looking for a family. I just need a bed.

Well, then you'll get along just fine. LODZ

Okay. AMALY

Okay. LODZ

Lodz remembers the "doll" from his story.

He stops collecting his things and begins searching.

Thought you were gettin' your shit out. AMALY

Already breaking rule number one. LODZ

What's rule number one? AMALY

I just told you. Stay out of my way. LODZ

I'm just observing. AMALY

I'm not some rat in cage. LODZ

You sure? AMALY

Shouldn't you go call your momma or something? LODZ

Beat.

That's what I thought.

I get it. AMALY

LODZ

No you don't.

AMALY

Sometimes apples don't fall too far/

LODZ

From their trees. Yeah. I know the expression.

AMALY

Just a barren land filled with dirt. Dirt for miles. Dirt from here to Kalamazoo. And ain't nothin' ever gonna change that.

LODZ

'The hell you talkin' about?

AMALY

My momma's blood's buried deep in that dirt. So's her momma's and my great grand mammas and all the wretched mommas before us.

He looks to the note in her hands, and rips it from her.

AMALY

HEY! GIVE IT BACK!

LODZ

(reads) Dear Baby Girl. *(an aside to Amaly)* In'that precious...

AMALY

Give it to me.

Amaly rises and attempts to retrieve the note from Lodz.

LODZ

(dancing about Amaly while reading) I wonder how it's changed. Pro'lly not much. Place got a way'a trappin' time/

AMALY

Give me the fucking letter.

LODZ

Oooo she gotta that fire in her too!

AMALY

Give it back!

LODZ

All the women in this family spittin' fire like they think they dragons.

AMALY

Give it!

LODZ

(reading) My momma used to say all this red dirt was God's reminder of our sins. That no matter how much we tried to wash ourselves in the riverbed, it'd keep coming back; darker, redder, every time. And that the only way to keep clean was to never venture farther than His Word. That's the devil's territory.

Lodz crumples the letter and approaches Amaly with it.

He slowly takes her hand, she flinches, he pulls her closer to him.

AMALY

I'm starting to like the sound of rule number one.

LODZ

Good.

AMALY

...

LODZ

You're afraid of me.

AMALY

No I'm not.

LODZ

I think you are.

AMALY

I think you're wrong.

Lodz is now mere centimeters from her lips, when he is just about to kiss her, he pulls away, and deposits the crumpled up note in her hand.

He exits.

AMALY collapses to the floor, hugs her knees to her chest, and rips the letter to shreds.

BLACKOUT.

END OF FOUR.

FIVE

EARLY MORNING LIGHT FADES in on the long wooden table from before.

DEWEY is sitting at the table shoveling ice cream into his face from a freezer carton. He's still in his PJ's.

AMALY enters and sees him.

He sees her.

He drops the spoon and scrambles to put the ice cream carton back into the freezer.

You don't have to put it away. AMALY

You weren't supposed to see that! DEWEY

I love ice cream for breakfast. AMALY

Really? DEWEY

Yeah. AMALY

Amaly goes to the kitchen drawers.

Spoons? AMALY

On the left. DEWEY

She grabs a spoon and joins DEWEY.

During the following we see Lodz return to his old bedroom; this time with a large empty garbage bag.

He begins picking up his belongings and throwing them into the bag.

AMALY

My mom and I used to have mornings like this. Sunday's for Sunday Morning we'd call it.

DEWEY

Our momma liked ice cream too. Pa doesn't really let us have it. Only on nice occasions and funerals. And, well, last night was meant to be a nice occasion, but we left out the ice cream part on account of Lodz, and Goat, and Pa goin' at it. *(beat)* Did you sleep good?

AMALY

I slept alright. How'd you fair?

DEWEY

Fair?

AMALY

How'd you sleep?

DEWEY

Like a stone at the bottom of a lake!

AMALY

(giggles) Good!

Back in Lodz' bedroom, we see him open one of the drawers to the dresser revealing a magnificent pile of lacey girls underwear.

He quickly closes the drawer, goes to the door to make sure no one is coming, and returns to the dresser like he has discovered the secret to life.

DEWEY

Got a big day ahead of us.

AMALY

That so?

Lodz opens the drawer slowly.

DEWEY

Got more oil'n we got pales for at this point. Upgrading to barrels!

And pulls out a soft-pink-lacey thong.

AMALY

You're an oil rigger too?!

DEWEY

Yeah.

AMALY

Huh.

DEWEY

I'm a man.

Amary cracks up.

DEWEY

OH, GREAT. Now you're gonna make fun of me too?

Lodz doesn't know what to do with it. Should he sniff it? That's what Rangely down the street said he did with Mary Ellen's drawers. Or maybe he should put it back. NO! Finders keepers.

Lodz shoves the panties into his pants and exits the room.

AMALY

No, no, no. Dewey. I'm not making fun of you. I like you. You have spirit. I like that.

DEWEY

Spirit? Like for Cheerleaders?

AMALY

We better put this away before your daddy catches us.

DEWEY

One more bite! One more bite!

He pulls out his spoon with a mound of ice cream piled atop.

Amary throws the tub of ice cream back inside the freezer.

LODZ enters.

He gathers a bowl, a box of Raisin Bran, milk, and a spoon all the while ignoring the other two.

He sits down and begins eating quickly.

LODZ

Keep on chattin' away. I ain't gonna bite.

AMALY

...

LODZ

(to Amaly) Unless you want me to.

AMALY

...

DEWEY

Ew.

LODZ

You've got ice cream all over your shirt.

DEWEY

Do not! *(he checks)* Ahhh Dab it!

AMALY

(to Lodz) Are you always so mean at... 6 am?

LODZ

You always so nosey?

UNCLE BUCKY enters in his boxers.

AMALY quickly looks away.

UNCLE BUCKY

Ah hell, I didn't expect her to be—I'll just —

He exits quickly.

LODZ cracks up.

DEWEY fearfully begins sopping up the ice cream on his shirt with whatever he can find.

UNCLE BUCKY re-enters wearing a heavy coat.

LODZ chokes up on his own laughter.

UNCLE BUCKY

'Sall I had.

He pours himself a glass of milk.

He downs it in one huge gulp.

Amaly, Lodz, and Dewey just watch.

When he's finished he lets out a big exhale accompanied by a milk belch.

UNCLE BUCKY

(to Amaly) You...ugh...gonna do anything special today?

AMALY

Special?

UNCLE BUCKY

You got plans?

AMALY

...No. No plans.

UNCLE BUCKY

You're welcome to come help the boys and I work in the fields.

AMALY

Doing?

UNCLE BUCKY

Diggin' up new plots.

AMALY

Ah.

UNCLE BUCKY

Could use the help.

AMALY

I don't think I'd be much of a/

UNCLE BUCKY

Nonsense. Ain't rocket science.

LODZ

Her? On the rig?

He busts up again.

Uncle Bucky shoots him that murderous look of his.

Lodz straightens up right quick.

UNCLE BUCKY

(to Amaly) You talk to your Momma since you—you know I think I'm gonna have a cup of coffee. You want one?

AMALY

Don't really drink the stuff.

UNCLE BUCKY

Good for you. All that caffeine'll kill me one of these days. *(beat)* You know, maybe I'll skip on it today.

AMALY

You don't gotta do that on account of me.

UNCLE BUCKY

No, that's alright. I could learn a thing or two from your being here. Little change never hurt no one.

He is a little thrown by the disruption of his routine and fumbles on what to do with himself next.

Welp, Rome wasn't built in a day. Best be gettin' to it. *(he catches something glistening on Dewey's bottom lip)* Dewey?

DEWEY

...Yes'ir?

UNCLE BUCKY

(stern as ever) Come here.

DEWEY

...

UNCLE BUCKY

Dewey.

Dewey obeys.

UNCLE BUCKY
What'd you have for breakfast?

DEWEY
Cereal...

UNCLE BUCKY
What kind?

DEWEY
Umm...*(welping up with tears)* Umm...what Lodz had?

LODZ
Did not you little/

UNCLE BUCKY
Dewey...

DEWEY
Thou shall not lie, I know, I know, but I didn't I swear/

Uncle Bucky goes to the freezer and grabs the carton.

AMALY
It wasn't him! *(beat)* I snuck in this morning and had some.

LODZ
Did not!

AMALY
Dewey had Raisin Bran.

LODZ
LIAR!

UNCLE BUCKY
Lodz you see your brother eating Raisin Bran this morning?

LODZ
(beat) No sir, I did not.

UNCLE BUCKY

(shoving Dewey into a chair) I want you to finish this whole carton before you join us on the rig, you hear me? Then we'll see how much you love eatin' ice cream for goddamn breakfast.

AMALY

But you can't just make him/

UNCLE BUCKY

Na-ah-ah-ah. I don't wanna hear it out of you, missy. Dewey needs to learn his own lessons.

He goes to exit.

UNCLE BUCKY

Lodz, you make sure he finishes that.

LODZ

Yes'sir.

UNCLE BUCKY is gone.

AMALY

Dewey, you don't have to eat all that.

DEWEY

(through tears) Yes I do. You heard him.

AMALY

Then I'll help you.

Amaly goes to grab a spoon, Lodz catches her by the arm.

LODZ

Not so fast. You heard what my Dad said, Dewey needs a little tough love. Don't you Dewey?

AMALY

He's gonna get sick.

LODZ

Serves him right.

AMALY

He's your little brother.

LODZ

And a chubby little liar. Boy needs an ass whippin' in my opinion.

DEWEY

Amaly eats ice cream for breakfast too! Her and her momma. Tell him, Amaly.

LODZ

In't that sweet.

Amaly sits and starts quickly eating the ice cream with Dewey.

Lodz yanks the spoon from her hand and keeps a tight grip around her wrist.

LODZ

What'd I just tell you?

AMALY

Let go of me.

Amaly struggles to break free from his grip.

Lodz is clearly enjoying this.

Dewey starts crying. It goes unnoticed for quite some time.

Amaly finds her way into an escape, knocking Lodz to the floor, and by doing so reveals her pair of panties sticking out of his waist band.

They freeze.

Dewey's crying softens.

Amaly and Lodz just stare at one another. Confused by the feelings they are experiencing.

LODZ gets up and exits as GOAT enters.

GOAT

Sounds like you guys been wrastlin' in here since the crow cried.

He goes to the fridge, pulls the gallon of milk out, takes a big chug and puts it back in.

As he exits—

'Mornin' Amaly.

He is gone.

There is silence for some time between Dewey and Amaly.

DEWEY

You don't think I'm fat, do you?

AMALY

No. No. You're not fat.

DEWEY

I shouldn't have snuck it. I shouldn't have/

AMALY

Listen to me, Dewey. Sometimes we just really really want something. And sometimes other people think it's not good for us. But, if it makes you happy, then you deserve it. Okay?

DEWEY

Okay. *(beat)* But...what if I hate ice cream for forever after this?

AMALY

One Sunday morning I put too many scoops of ice cream in my bowl, loaded it all up with chocolate drizzle and whipped cream and my mom said to me, "there's no way you can eat that whole thing." And I said, "you wanna bet?" Well. I did. And I threw up for two hours after and swore I'd never have another spoonful of Rocky Road the rest of my life. The next Sunday morning came around and you know what I had for breakfast?

DEWEY

Rocky Road?

AMALY

That's right. And this time? With sprinkles on top.

Lodz re-enters half-way dressed for work; he's still buttoning up his work jeans and boots are untied.

LODZ

(violently) Dewey, go and grab your gun. We're goin shootin.'

DEWEY

But, we gotta be down at the rig/

LODZ

I said go get your gun.

DEWEY

But, Dad'll/

LODZ

Oh, fuck him.

DEWEY

I don't wanna!

LODZ

You gonna be a little pussy or you gonna man up?

AMALY

Don't call him a Pussy.

LODZ

Shut up!

AMALY

Fuck you!

DEWEY

(wipes away his tears) I'm a man! I'm a man!

LODZ

Then prove it, puss.

AMALY

Dewey, don't listen to him.

LODZ

He's not your brother!

AMALY

So, what?

LODZ

So stop protecting him.

AMALY

Well no one else is!

DEWEY

Fine! I'll go shootin! But only to the mesquites and back. I don't want to get in trouble.

LODZ

Trouble's the fun part.

AMALY

Dewey/

DEWEY

Sorry, Amaly. I gotta be a man right now.

Dewey exits with a slight adjustment to his posture, attempting a manlier stride.

Lodz lingers.

He reaches into his pocket and pulls out Amaly's panties.

He extends them to her.

She goes to take them, but he draws back.

LODZ

(softly) I could keep them. *(beat)* If you wanted me to.

AMALY

...

LODZ

Do you want me to?

He moves in closer to her. She reciprocates.

Just as they're about to kiss, he grabs her by the back of the hair and yanks.

Slowly, he breathes down her neck with a sensual aggression.

Amaly accepts with mouth agape; a gasp for air.

Lodz releases his grip on her.

He gives her the panties back.

LODZ

I'd like to see these on you.

He exits.

A soft smile comes over Amaly's face.

Then—

A flood of tears.

LIGHTS FADE ON HER.

END OF ACT ONE.

ACT TWO: ONE

LIGHTS FADE IN on the oil-rigging field.

One lone oil derrick stands erect in the middle of the field bobbing up and down.

Two shovels, a tool box, and a lunch tin sit next to the derrick.

UNCLE BUCKY and GOAT enter. Their clothes accented in patches of black tar.

UNCLE BUCKY

Check on that counterbalance, will yeah? Somethin' ain't right with it. We may need to add some weight to get that sucker rod deeper in the well.

GOAT goes to the derrick and adjusts a few levers which causes it to come to a halt.

He climbs up one of the beams and checks a bucket filled with weight overhead.

GOAT

Says we're at 1,450.

UNCLE BUCKY

Well, that's regulation. *(beat)* You sure it says 1,450?

GOAT

Yeah, Dad, I'm lookin' right at it.

UNCLE BUCKY

Ahh, we'll give it a few more pounds. Ain't nothin' wrong with that. *(beat)* Why don't you come on down from there. Don't know where'n the hell those boys are. Lodz can forget workin' his way up if he keeps pullin' this shit.

GOAT climbs down.

UNCLE BUCKY takes a bright red apple out of a tin Lunch Box and a pocket knife from his waist belt.

He slices the apple.

Goat plops down in the dirt next to him.

UNCLE BUCKY

Gonna leave a stain.

GOAT

(looks down at his clothes) Think I'm pretty stained as it is. *(beat)* Soooo... wha'd'u think of that Amaly?

UNCLE BUCKY

Little on the edge if you ask me.

GOAT

As to be expected, I guess.

UNCLE BUCKY

Ain't nothing in this world so bad you need to act like a little bitch.

GOAT

(muffled) She's not a/

UNCLE BUCKY

Just like her mother.

GOAT

Were you too close?

UNCLE BUCKY

Hardly.

GOAT

That's a shame.

UNCLE BUCKY

Shame is how she lost touch with reality.

GOAT

What do you mean?

UNCLE BUCKY

Son, there are folks in this world who feel the weight of life like everything is trying to crush them to death. Them people aren't the kind of people you want around. Martyrs. They think they're supposed to feel pain. Sadness. Just a bunch of horseshit. A cop-out, if you ask me.

GOAT

But, I hear you're supposed to process your thoughts and feelings.

UNCLE BUCKY

And who the fuck told you that?

GOAT

Just...nevermind. *(beat)* Think Amaly's like that? All melancholic 'bout life and such?

UNCLE BUCKY

Like I said. Just like her damn mother. Fightin' 'gainst the world even when there's nothin' left to fight but themselves

GOAT

Amaly's different.

UNCLE BUCKY

They got a world of anger inside them. Ain't even God can set free.

GOAT

I don't want to go crazy like that, on account of life.

UNCLE BUCKY

You won't.

GOAT

How do you know?

Suddenly, AMALY enters. She wears a pair of overalls, a band-tee, and a pair of converse.

GOAT

Well hey there, Amaly. Didn't think you'd join us.

AMALY

You said you needed help. I'm here to help.

GOAT

How was your morning?

AMALY

Huh?

GOAT

Oh. Just. You sleep alright?

AMALY

Sure.

GOAT

Listen to any music or anything?

AMALY

Huh?

GOAT

Just thought maybe you...might have...well, you know, you said you like to listen to music on occasion. To make you happy.

AMALY

No.

GOAT

Oh.

AMALY

I might have last night.

GOAT

Oh yeah? Well, what'd ya listen to?

AMALY

Just this band.

GOAT

A band? Well, that's real interestin'.

AMALY

You like that word, don't you?

GOAT

What word?

AMALY

So, doesn't look like you guys are doin much out here.

UNCLE BUCKY

Would be, if it weren't for them other two cousins of yours. Them idiots are eatin' into my work day.

Bucky goes and tinkers with the derrick.

GOAT

You ever work on an oil derrick before?

AMALY

Uhh, no.

GOAT

Well then, you are in for a surprise!

AMALY

Didn't know it could be so exciting.

UNCLE BUCKY

(over his shoulder) Hard work. Good for ya though.

ENTER DEWEY AND LODZ.

LODZ is carrying a dead squirrel.

LODZ

Wooo-eeee!! Look what we got!

He tosses the squirrel in front of AMALY.

That's dinner right there. Mmm mmm good. Tastes like chicken.

GOAT

Don't be nasty, Lodz.

LODZ

(to Amaly) What'r you doin out here? Come to give us boys some lemonade in this god forsaken heat?

AMALY

Nope. Just came to help.

LODZ

Help what? (*realizing*) On the rig? You?

GOAT

That's what she said didn't she?

UNCLE BUCKY

Alright, knock it off. Get to it, Goat. (*beat*) Amaly you go ahead and join them.

Lodz scoff at this.

None of them move.

Did I stutter?

LODZ, DEWEY and GOAT

No, sir.

Uncle Bucky exits.

GOAT

Alright, Dewey you go on and get the wheel burrow. Lodz follow him and start pickin' up rocks along the way—

Dewey exits.

LODZ

—Ughhh—

GOAT

Lodz!

LODZ

What she gonna do?

GOAT

Help me.

LODZ

Do what?

GOAT

None of your business.

LODZ

I bet she can hardly lift a five pound bag of bird seed over her head.

Amaly climbs up the rig.

Oh, geez. What's she doin? LODZ

Hand me that tool box. AMALY

What? LODZ

You heard her. GOAT

Lodz grabs the tool box and hands it to Amaly in the air.

Amaly grabs it, lifts it over her head then climbs down from the rig.

'Reckon that weighs about thirty pounds. If I had to take a guess. AMALY

Whatever. LODZ

He exits.

Goat grabs a shovel and throws Amaly the other.

She catches it mid air.

Show off. GOAT

Oh you too now? AMALY

I'm just playing with you. *(beat)* Start digging. GOAT

Here? AMALY

Yes ma'm. GOAT

They dig.

So, why you so tense all the time?
GOAT

I'm not.
AMALY

You look like your holding in a shit brick.
GOAT

(can't help but to laugh) What?
AMALY

You know, when you got a rock hard one stuck up in there and you feel like you'll never get it out? That means you got yourself a shit-brick. Makes you have that grumpy looking face.
GOAT

I don't have a grumpy face.
AMALY

Says the girl holding in a shit brick.
GOAT

Hey!
AMALY

She flings dirt on him.

Watch where you're pointin' that thing! You might get my purty clothes all stained red.
GOAT

She chuckles at this.

What's with all this red dirt anyway?
AMALY

It's called Hennessy Shale.
GOAT

Fancy name for just a bunch of dirt.
AMALY

Lotsa stories 'bout this dirt.
GOAT

AMALY

Don't I know that.

GOAT

You may know SOME of them stories, but probably not the spooky ones. Them's the ones that'll give you chicken bristles at night.

AMALY

YEAH. Okay.

GOAT

You always so cynical?

AMALY

Just when I call bullshit.

GOAT

You think I'm full of it?

AMALY

Yes, sir. I do.

GOAT

Alright. Just you wait and see. One of these nights you'll be seein' ghosts up here and when you come to me for comfort, Imma tell you I told ya so.

AMALY

Ghosts? Really?

GOAT

Really.

AMALY

Like Mulan ghosts or like some Sixth Sense kind of shit?

GOAT

What's that?

AMALY

Mulan? Sixth Sense? Have you ever watched a movie?

GOAT

Life of Christ.

AMALY

Of course.

GOAT

Well, you ain't never worked an oil rig.

AMALY

That's different.

GOAT

Not in my book.

AMALY

That's like a skill. A craft. Something you train to do. These movies just exist in the world. Just like music, and apparently, you've never heard good music either.

GOAT

Well then, teach me.

AMALY

Teach you?

GOAT

Yeah, 'bout your musical tastes and things.

AMALY

I'll get right on that.

GOAT

Like what's your favorite musical group?

AMALY

Musical group? Ummmm you mean band? Like a band? I like a lot of bands.

GOAT

Yeah, but you gotta have a favorite.

AMALY

There's like SO much music out there.

GOAT

Which one makes you the happiest?

AMALY

Ha!

GOAT

(serious) That funny?

No. Not...funny. Just... interestin'.
AMALY

Oh, I see. You're makin' fun of me.
GOAT

Just a little.
AMALY

You still didn't answer my question.
GOAT

I don't know!
AMALY

On the count of three, say you're favorite band.
GOAT

That's ridiculous. No.
AMALY

One...
GOAT

Oh come on, really?
AMALY

Two...
GOAT

I'm not playing this game.
AMALY

Two and a half...
GOAT

I can't think of one!
AMALY

GOAT
THREE!
AMALY
U2!

Pause.

GOAT

That's a band name?

AMALY

Oh my God. I can't believe I just told you that.

GOAT

So?

AMALY

It's just...

GOAT

Your happy place?

AMALY

(chuckles) Yeah...maybe.

GOAT

(suddenly) Oooop!

AMALY

What?

GOAT

There was a smile. I saw it! *(beat)* But, now you're back to holdin' in that shit brick.

AMALY

JERK!

AMALY flings dirt at him again.

GOAT

What was it like back home, where you lived?

AMALY

You know, what's with the 20 questions? How'd you like it if I grilled you?

GOAT

I like questions.

AMALY

Ok fine. Why do people call you Goat?

GOAT

Used to be good at guttin' em.

Gross. AMALY

(laughs) You asked. GOAT

Ok. Why do you still live in this po-dunk town? Aren't you like too old to be living with your dad still? AMALY

Hm. Couldn't tell ya. Guess I just never left. GOAT

Well if I were you I'd get the hell out of here as fast I could. AMALY

So why don't you? GOAT

Can't. Court orders. AMALY

So you'd be breaking the law if you skipped town? GOAT

Pretty much. AMALY

Guess you're stuck with us. GOAT

Yeah, thanks for the reminder. AMALY

They dig.

I like them overalls. GOAT

Oh...I didn't mean to/ I just saw them and/ AMALY

Guess they were your mommas? Been in that drawer for years. GOAT

Oh. AMALY

Look good on you. GOAT

Thanks. AMALY

I know this isn't, well...you know, ideal and all for you. But, we're happy you're here with us. GOAT

Pretty sure you're the only one. Well. You and Dewey. 2 out of four, not bad. AMALY

Look, I know Lodz can be/ GOAT

An asshole? AMALY

Yeah, pretty much. GOAT

And you're Dad well he's/ AMALY

A tyrant? GOAT

I was gonna say a shit-bag, but Tyrant sounds pretty accurate too. AMALY

We all have a...complicated relationship. It's just a phase. I'm sure we'll snap out of it. GOAT

Wish I could say the same. AMALY

You and her/ GOAT

I don't really want to talk/ AMALY

GOAT

I'm just really sorry that your momma is sick. That's all.

AMALY

She's not sick. She's just. *(as if quoting him from earlier)* She has a complicated relationship with life. It's probably just a phase. I'm sure she'll snap out of it...I hope.

GOAT

Huh.

AMALY

What?

GOAT

Too scared to live with em, too scared to live without em. *(beat)* Just hard to change that kind of stuff. 'Sorry you gotta live with us jerks cuz of it.

AMALY

You're not jerks. Well, at least some of you aren't.

GOAT

I think I detect a likin' out of you.

AMALY

Well ain't that real interestin.'

Lodz and Dewey re-enter with rocks piled up in a wheelbarrow.

LODZ

Quit makin' out already and give us a hand.

Lodz gives Amaly a little kissy face.

AMALY

God, it's hot!

GOAT

You'll get used to it.

AMALY

My mom said it was hot, but this is like melt your insides hot.

DEWEY

Our momma used to love the summer days out here. Kickin' up dust with her snake-skin boots in all. She always looked real nice even when she was helpin' Pa on the rig.

AMALY

Sounds like she was a pistol whip. Just from what I heard.

GOAT

She was somethin' else, alright. Kinda angel like. Well. In her own way, that is.

AMALY

How long she been gone?

LODZ

Hey, I don't know about ya'll but, I'd like to get this shit done so we're not out here pickin' and grinnin' in the moonlight.

AMALY

I just thought maybe I'd try and get to know more about/

LODZ

About what? About how our mom up in left us after Pa hit her upside the skull too many times? Or how she snuck into town and went about fuckin' every Derrickman she laid her dead eyes on? Or maybe when her meth kick got her so high she took me out of bed one night and drug me down here so I could watch what she had done. Oil everywhere. Sprayin' up in the sky like a theme park ride. When that oil spits down on you, your skin becomes toilet paper in a heap of flames. It coils and turns to ash before you can drop to the dirt and snuff it out. And Oh, she was so proud of what she had done. Told me God sent her a vision in her waking life, sayin' to let it blow! Let it blow! Let it all blow! *(beat)* That what you wanted to know more about?

Lodz takes a rock, shucks it across the field, and exits.

A silence sweeps past the remaining three.

DEWEY

Goat?

GOAT

Mhm?

DEWEY

How come no one ever told me that story?

GOAT

We gotta lotta' work to do.

Goat, Amaly, and Dewey create an assembly line of loading weight overheard on the derrick. This should be done in silence, however in their silence their gaze says everything.

LIGHTS FADE OUT.

END OF ONE.

TWO

Lights fade in on AMALY in the kitchen a few hours later.

She stirs a pitcher of lemonade.

A faint Christian Worship song can be heard through a roughed up boom-box sitting next to her.

Amaly has her headphones in, rockin' out to something a little different than "Our God is an Awesome God," or what have you.

Suddenly, DEWEY comes running in sobbing. He runs toward Amaly, wraps his arms around her, and clings on for dear life.

AMALY

(turning her music off) Hey, hey, hey. You're okay. You're okay.

DEWEY

No I'm not!

AMALY

What happened?

DEWEY

I, I, I, I, I/

AMALY

Take a deep breath.

DEWEY

(he breathes) I just miss my mom.

AMALY

Oh, sweetheart. I know. I know you do.

DEWEY

All them things Lodz said. I don't wanna believe 'em. They ain't true. They can't be, I just know they can't.

AMALY

Dewey, honey. Listen to me. It doesn't matter if they were true or not. What matters is that you're/

DEWEY

But I want her love back. Can't get none of that 'round here without her.

AMALY

...

DEWEY

She ain't comin' back is she?

AMALY

I don't know, Dewey.

DEWEY

You miss your momma?

AMALY

It's...

DEWEY

What?

AMALY

Just a little complicated.

DEWEY

Was she mean to you?

AMALY

Sometimes.

DEWEY

But, you had ice cream for breakfast on Sunday's. That don't sound so mean if you ask me.

AMALY

People make up for their mistakes with little treats like that.

DEWEY

I like treats.

AMALY

And you deserve them. You're a good guy, you know that Dewey?

Dewey goes in like he's going to kiss her, but it more resembles a suffocating fish face.

AMALY

(stopping him) Dewey, honey. I'm not going to kiss you.

DEWEY

But you said I deserved a treat!

AMALY

Not that kind of treat. You're not old enough for that kind of treat.

DEWEY

But, I ain't never kissed a girl before and this seemed like the right kind of moment someone would do something like that.

AMALY

You're right. It was a tinder moment. I will give you that. But, there's more you have to take into account when you're about to kiss a girl for the first time.

DEWEY

Really?

AMALY

First, you need to know if she wants to kiss you back.

DEWEY

Oh. That sounds difficult.

AMALY

It is, but it's worth it. If she does want to kiss you back, you'll just know. It's a feeling. Like—like/

DEWEY

Like when you're at worship at the church and you see them people put their hands up over the heads to praise God? Like they're gettin' closer to him by doin' that?

AMALY

Yeah, sorta like that.

DEWEY

I like it when those people do that.

AMALY

It's delicate.

DEWEY

Delicate?

AMALY

You have to be careful.

DEWEY

Oh.

AMALY

If you kiss too soon, you might not feel that feeling. That closer to God feeling you're talking about. And then, you just keep on kissing, because you don't know how to stop. But, something doesn't feel right. Somewhere inside of you knows that this thing you're doing is not right for you and maybe not right for the other person. It's like an addiction.

DEWEY

You can get addicted to kissin'?

AMALY

My momma always had men in and out of the house.

DEWEY

Our Pa, he used to be addicted to Wild Turkey. It's an alcohol drink. "Dewey! You hide my bottle?"

AMALY

"Us girls we used to hang out at that Jiffy Lube down the corner from Ace, and OOOoooo!!! Those boys would come outta' that engine shop smelling like oil and rust. Hair all slicked back smokin' Pall Malls and drinking Pop on their lunch break."

DEWEY

"If you hid my Turkey, Imma' kick your little ass, boy!"

AMALY

"We used to sneak out after dark, drive in his Datsun to one of them ole' Bridges sunk down into the Red River, and we'd be there till sunrise kissin' and the like not carin' if we got caught."

DEWEY

"Look at me. I'm drunker than a skunk! Had me a bottle before supper and a bottle after."

AMALY

"I never had nothin' but my know-how. And I knew how. Only thing that could keep my mind off all the bad stuff. Don't take long to learn right quick. Just takes some heavy breathin' and a .50 cent cherry lip-gloss."

DEWEY

"Now I'm gonna fall down in the front yard butt-naked and howl at the moon."

Dewey howls at the moon.

AMALY

(joins him)

They howl.

Then giggle.

Then lull into a silence.

DEWEY

I don't think I'd like to get addicted to nothin.'

AMALY

Makes you mean.

DEWEY

I don't like people being mean.

AMALY

I think you're a pretty smart man.

DEWEY

Man?

AMALY

Would you like some lemonade?

DEWEY

Yes, please!

Amaly pours Dewey and herself a glass from the pitcher.

(drinks) Mmmmmm!! Amaly!

DEWEY

Yes, Dewey?

AMALY

I think this is the best darn lemonade I ever tasted. How'd you make it so good?

DEWEY

It's a secret.

AMALY

Ahhhh man/

DEWEY

You really wanna know the trick?

AMALY

Yes, mam.

DEWEY

I put real lemons in there. That powder stuff is crap.

AMALY

They sip and howl at the moon as LIGHTS FADE.

END OF TWO.

THREE

LIGHTS FADE IN on the wooden table.

Family supper. It's soup. Again.

ALL are present. Everyone's heads are bowed in prayer, all but AMALY.

DEWEY

Lord, please bless this soup with your holy spirit so that we may be healthy and strong. Please let our oil rig produce the most oil so we may prove Rangely and his stupid brother/

UNCLE BUCKY

Dewey!

DEWEY

Sorry, Lord...One more blessing and then I'll let you go back to doing your Godly thing. Please bless our cousin Amaly's momma who's ill and needs your help more than any of us.

UNCLE BUCKY

In your name we pray

ALL

Amen.

The boys and Amaly begin eating.

UNCLE BUCKY

I noticed you don't join us in prayer, Amaly.

AMALY

(finishing her bite) That's because I don't pray.

The abrupt clinking of spoons on the porcelain bowls.

UNCLE BUCKY

Your momma prays.

AMALY

She does. And I don't.

She continues to eat.

UNCLE BUCKY

But, you were baptized yes?

AMALY

Against my will I was. So yeah, I guess.

DEWEY

But, nothin's against God's will.

AMALY

How do you know that?

DEWEY

Well you know how old you are right?

AMALY

Yes.

DEWEY

So it's like that. No matter how old you get you know how old you are.

LODZ

(sarcastically) Great lesson, Dewey. Where'd you hear that one?

DEWEY

Scripture on tape.

AMALY

Sorry, but I just can't believe in that stuff.

LODZ

Then you're a sinner.

AMALY

Excuse me?

LODZ

Not believin' is sinning.

GOAT

Lodz, just drop it.

AMALY

I can't be a sinner if I don't believe in your kind of God.

DEWEY

Well there ain't no other KIND of God.

AMALY

I'm sorry, Dewey, but I think you might be a little too young to understand what you're believing in.

LODZ

No he ain't, so why don't you just shut up?

AMALY

I'd like to see where in the Bible it says it's okay to go and steal a girl's pair of panties from her drawer when she's not lookin.'

Silence.

LODZ

You bitch.

UNCLE BUCKY

Son, what's she talkin about?

LODZ

She's lyin' out her teeth.

UNCLE BUCKY

Young lady, are you lyin' to us?

AMALY

No! Why would I lie about that? I saw it. Dewey was there too!

She looks to Dewey, but Dewey is much too afraid to fess up.

LODZ

You think you're so high and mighty. Comin' into our house, lyin' and flirtin' and messin' everything up. You ain't got no right to do that!

AMALY

I didn't want to come here in the first place!

LODZ

Then go! Get on out. We don't need you.

AMALY

Fuck you!

UNCLE BUCKY

Hey! We don't talk like that in this household.

AMALY

I'm sorry but I wasn't raised in this household.

UNCLE BUCKY

Well you live here now and you will obey the rules we have here. You hear me?

AMALY

...

UNCLE BUCKY

I said did you hear me?

AMALY

...

UNCLE BUCKY

Damnit! Go to your room. Now!

AMALY

You're not my fucking dad.

UNCLE BUCKY

I SAID, get to you room.

AMALY

Or what? You'll hit me? Do it I dare you. The courts'll really love that. Poor girl fostered to her abusive Uncle. That's a case if I ever heard one. You think you're so pure and holy.

LODZ

She's just like her crazy ass mother, ain't she Pa?

AMALY

Don't you ever call her crazy, or I'll kick your ass!

AMALY throws her glass of milk at LODZ.

UNCLE BUCKY

Now I've had it with the both of you! Clean up your supper and go to bed.

AMALY storms off leaving her dirty dishes behind.

LODZ clears his dishes.

LODZ

She started it, and you know it!

UNCLE BUCKY

OUT!
He exits.

Silence.

Goat, Uncle Bucky and Dewey hang there for a minute.

DEWEY

You guys wanna play chicken foot after/

UNCLE BUCKY

Not, now. Dewey.

Uncle Bucky storms off.

When Goat knows the coast is clear, he goes to follow after Amaly.

Where you goin? DEWEY

Nowhere. GOAT

Can I come? DEWEY

Not, now. Dewey. GOAT

Goat exits.

Dewey is left alone with a pile of dishes and no help.

LIGHTS FADE OUT.

END OF THREE

FOUR

LIGHTS FADE in on the cliff wall illuminated in red, stars twinkling overhead.

AMALY runs in sobbing.

GOAT runs in after her.

Amaly? GOAT

Go away, Goat. AMALY

Look, I'm sorry he said all those things. He didn't mean it. He's just/ GOAT

AMALY
He's just what? He's just an asshole? So it's fine. Everyone around here is just an asshole and it's fine.

GOAT
You don't think I'm/
AMALY
No. *(beat)* No, you're not.
GOAT
Well, if it means anything...I'm glad you live here with us.
AMALY
Yeah? Seems like I'm fucking everything up.
GOAT
You're not..."F-Wordin" anything up. *(beat)* I like your company.
AMALY
You don't even know me.
GOAT
But, I'm getting' to know you.
AMALY
Not the real me.
GOAT
Then what's the real you like?
AMALY
Trust me you don't want to know.
GOAT
I think I do.
AMALY
Must be nice to be so naïve.
Beat.
Sorry. I didn't mean that.
GOAT
I know you don't think I'm all that smart or "cultured" I guess, but I know I enjoy havin' you around and I'm not totally sure why—you're different. Not much different 'round here, so I guess I like that. Yeah, I like that you're different.

AMALY

How is it that I can get dropped off in the middle of nowhere and still not escape that woman?

GOAT

I think maybe our Momma's caught the same bug.

AMALY

Bug?

GOAT

The I-don't-wanna-be-a-momma-bug. Hear it's pretty contagious.

AMALY

She always used to tell me, "No one wrote a Bible for motherhood. Unless you count Chicken Soup for The Mother's Soul—And what a load of crap that was." Well at least the mommas in that book tried. Or gave a shit about their daughters. All my life I have been constantly compared to her like she and I are the only women in this world and so of course, we must be the same, right? *(beat)* You ever think that maybe our family just wasn't meant to be a family?

GOAT

...

AMALY

Like we've been randomly selected like Price is Right or something just to be stuck together for the rest of our lives? Stuck. Just trying to figure out how we actually relate to one another. It's like a stain that keeps showing up and we don't know how to wash it clean.

GOAT

Amaly...I think you're perf/

She kisses him.

They retract. Look at one another. Then, go in for another kiss.

The repeat this once more until a final lasting kiss.

There's about a 1,000 mile distance between them and it's closing in fast.

They begin an undressing of one another. It is pure. The purest thing they might ever know.

Their embrace takes them down to the dirt as the stars twinkle and fade

on them.

LIGHTS FADE OUT.

END OF FOUR.

FIVE

MOONLIGHT FADES IN on the KITCHEN.

AMALY and GOAT quietly sneak inside. There is perhaps some whispered laughter between the two.

They embrace.

GOAT exits.

AMALY lingers in her risky behavior. She is charged. Perhaps she goes to the Freezer to have some Ice Cream, or pours herself a glass of milk, or maybe she even just swigs from the gallon. Fuck it. She is awakened.

At some point during this, LODZ steps out from the shadows.

LODZ

How'd he taste?

Amaly freezes.

LODZ

Was it good? Bet he was sweeter than I'd be. But, you kinda like both sides of the gun don't you?

AMALY

Stop it.

LODZ

You still afraid of me?

AMALY

I never was.

LODZ

Show me you're not then. Show me.

He advances on her.

She pushes him away.

You're drunk. AMALY

I had a drink or two. LODZ

You've never been drunk before have you? AMALY

You don't fuckin' know that. LODZ

He advances on her again.

Lodz. AMALY

She shoves him away.

He pulls her into him.

So, you'll fuck him but not me? LODZ

This isn't a pissing contest. AMALY

I wanna see em. LODZ

See what? AMALY

You know what. LODZ

Did you buy them? Do you wear thongs? How 'bout this. Next time you decide to sneak into my room/ AMALY

Your room? LODZ

AMALY

Yeah. My fuckin' room.

LODZ

Ha!

AMALY

And steal from me? I will spend the rest of my time in this house making sure that your Dad continues to beat the fuck out of you. So, that maybe, MAYBE, you will get it through your tiny fucking brain that you are not as mighty as you think you are. And that your "manly" front is nothing but that, a fuckin' front for a scared little boy who lost his mommy. Well join the goddamn club, because the rest of us are making it work despite our losses. Despite our lack of mothers or who we think we may become. Or—or...ourselves.

She goes to exit.

However, a sound comes out of LODZ that has never been heard before. Tears. Crying. He has been broken.

Amaly stops, but does not turn to face him.

AMALY

I'm not falling for it.

Lodz doesn't respond. He just continues to weep.

Eventually, Amaly turns to him.

AMALY

Whiskey sucks.

LODZ

Yeah it does.

AMALY

You're gonna throw up soon.

LODZ

Really?

AMALY

It's better to throw up and get it out of your system.

LODZ

I don't know why I did it.

AMALY

Because we all want to be addicted to something.

LODZ

It's stupid. It's fuckin' stupid.

AMALY

Feels good when you're doing it, I guess. It's that part after where you realize/

LODZ

You and Goat?

AMALY

I know.

LODZ

Why?

AMALY

I don't know.

LODZ

Are you gonna keep/

AMALY

I don't know.

LODZ

Please don't.

AMALY

Sometimes we just want things we're not supposed to have.

LODZ

You can't. What about Dewey? You said yourself he needs somebody. He needs somebody good, Amaly. You're the closest thing to something good he may ever have.

Amaly takes the bottle away from Lodz.

AMALY

Let's get you to bed.

She pulls him up by the arm and hoists it over her shoulder.

LODZ

Please. Just be good.

They exit off together.

LIGHTS FADE OUT.

END of ACT TWO.

ACT THREE: ONE

LIGHTS FADE IN on the wooden table in the early morning light.

The Christian station plays again from the old boom-box.

DEWEY and UNCLE BUCKY are seated at the table eating bowls of cereal accompanied by tall glasses of orange juice.

DEWEY

Heard our rig is producin' more oil than anyone else' this side of Red River.

He waits for a response from UNCLE BUCKY.

This goes on for a while.

You hear, pa?

UNCLE BUCKY

Hear what?

DEWEY

Tucker and Ranglely said/

UNCLE BUCKY

Those two knuckleheads don't know what's up from down.

DEWEY

Yeah, but they said/

UNCLE BUCKY

I heard you, but I don't believe in all that gossip nonsense. Acting like goddamn women, I swear. They're just chalking things up to bigger proportions than they ought to be is all.

DEWEY goes back to his cereal disappointedly.

AMALY and GOAT enter opposite.

UNCLE BUCKY

(scoffs) Nice of you to join us.

GOAT sits and pours himself a bowl of cereal with hurried determination.

AMALY goes to pour herself a cup of coffee

UNCLE BUCKY

Thought you didn't drink coffee.

AMALY

Guess I changed my mind.

She doctors it up with sugar and loads of milk.

She stirs.

UNCLE BUCKY

You boys hear anything late last night?

Amaly and Goat freeze inside but we continue to hear the clanking of the spoon against the coffee mug and the slush-slush-slush of milk into the bowl.

DEWEY

Not me. I was dead'r'n a doornail!

UNCLE BUCKY

Huh. *(beat)* Goat?

GOAT

Wha?

UNCLE BUCKY

Boy you pour anymore milk in that bowl, it's gonna overflow.

Goat snaps to and stops pourin.

UNCLE BUCKY

You hear anyone restlin' around our property last night?

GOAT

No sir.

UNCLE BUCKY

Hm.

Amaly is still stirring fervently.

Goat is slamming his spoon into his cereal bowl as he represses the angst inside.

UNCLE BUCKY

(noticing) You two better be careful.

AMALY

Careful?

GOAT

Careful?

UNCLE BUCKY

Bought them dishes from Walmart. Ain't gonna last too much longer if you keep pounding on 'em.

Amaly stops.

Goat stops.

AMALY

Oh.

GOAT

Oh.

DEWEY

Jinx.

GOAT

What?

DEWEY

You owe Amaly a coke.

GOAT

Oh. Right.

Lodz enters still in his pajamas. He looks like shit. And feels even worse.

UNCLE BUCKY

You better get dressed. We ain't got all fuckin' day, boy.

Lodz ignores him and goes to the coffee pot.

UNCLE BUCKY

I'm talking to you, son.

LODZ

(grunts)

UNCLE BUCKY

(rising) You ignore me one more time, I will slap around this kitchen till you are blue in the/

AMALY

He's not feeling well! Look at him. He's clearly not well this morning.

UNCLE BUCKY

Now, Amaly/

DEWEY

Dad, she's just trying to help.

UNCLE BUCKY

GODDAMNIT! YOU ARE THE FUCKIN' CHILDREN! *(beat)* And you will do as I say. Got it? *(beat)* Got it?

GOAT

Yes, sir.

LODZ

Yes, sir.

DEWEY

Yes si/

AMALY

No.

Silence.

AMALY

My mother and you may have had a fucked-up childhood livin' in this piece of shit trailer, but that doesn't mean we have to.

UNCLE BUCKY

Little missy, you better/

AMALY

I swear to God— *(to the sky above)* Yeah! I said it! I swear to GOD! If this man right here calls me Missy one more time *(back to earth)* or if you dare break Dewey's spirit, rob Goat of his future, or bruise Lodz until he rots— we will leave you in this godforsaken place to die. Alone.

Silence.

UNCLE BUCKY

Big day ahead. *(beat)* I'm gonna/

He rises slowly, grabs his coat, and exits to the fields.

Dewey gets up to follow.

AMALY

(stopping him) Dewey, you don't have to/

DEWEY

I don't think he should be alone.

He exits.

Amaly and Goat are left.

GOAT

Hey.

AMALY

...

GOAT

Amaly?

AMALY

...

GOAT

You okay?

AMALY

...

GOAT

Thank you.

AMALY

...

GOAT

Look, about last night.

AMALY

Something about this place. Just don't want to let us free. All those stories 'bout them ghosts you've been talking about? I don't think they live in the cliffs, I think they live right here. Inside these walls.

GOAT

Amaly, I/

AMALY

You don't want to be late for work.

Silence.

He gets it.

He exits.

LIGHTS FADE OUT.

END OF ONE.

TWO

LIGHTS FADE UP on LODZ in his room.

He holds a hat-box in his arms filled with photos. A few photographs are scattered on his bed.

MEANWHILE, DEWEY and GOAT are seen on the oil field.

They dig.

There are big ominous clouds above.

AMALY enters and knocks on LODZ's half-opened door.

AMALY

Can I come in?

LODZ

Sure.

She does.

LODZ

Found something that belongs to you.

AMALY

You been going through my underwear again?

He pulls out the porcelain doll, head intact. This is the first we've ever seen it. The myth is both denied and revealed at once.

LODZ

It was your mommas.

AMALY

Can't escape her.

LODZ

Mine either.

Amary goes and sits next to him.

LODZ

(laugh cries a little)

He hands her the doll. She holds it, looks at it, but is more taken by the photos on the bed.

AMALY

She's beautiful.

LODZ

These are the good ones. I burned the rest of em.

AMALY

I ripped up the letter mine wrote me.

LODZ

Guess we're not so different.

AMALY

Guess not.

LODZ

Where's Goat? Thought you'd two go runnin' off together.

AMALY

He and Dewey followed your, Dad.

LODZ

Sheep.

Scared. AMALY

Scared little sheep. LODZ

Can you blame em? AMALY

So, are you and Goat? LODZ

No. AMALY

Thank you. LODZ

Amaly rises with the doll.

Think Dewey might like a doll? AMALY

Probably. Little fa/ LODZ

Amaly shoots him a look.

Add it to his collection. LODZ

Amaly sets it on Dewey's "side" of the room.

AMALY
You're good, Lodz. It's in there. Sometimes we just gotta dig a little fuckin' harder than most people to find it.

LODZ
I'll make you a deal. I won't go through your panties anymore, if you give me back my room.

AMALY
(chuckles)

LODZ

Dewey only farts in his sleep sometimes.

AMALY

HA! *(she rises)* We'll see.

She exits and returns to her room.

During the following between DEWEY and GOAT, AMALY gathers her things with haste as if she will be caught at any moment and begins stuffing them into the duffle bag.

She stops. Hesitates. Begins Again. Stops. Repeats. Until finally—

Exiting (does she bring her bag with her? Does she leave it? Are there traces of her possible return? Let's find out)

Lights fade out on LODZ and UP ON THE OIL FIELD.

DEWEY and GOAT are still digging.

DEWEY

(looking up to the sky) Look like rain to you?

GOAT

...I don't know, maybe.

DEWEY

You didn't even look.

GOAT

(reluctantly looks up) Yeah, sure, maybe. I don't know.

DEWEY

Jeeze. Alright. You're startin' to act like/

GOAT

Don't say it, Dewey. Just don't.

Silence as they dig.

DEWEY

I don't know. Those really look like rain clouds to me. Maybe even/

GOAT

(looking up) Yup! That's rain! Probably come to pour down on us. Wipe us fuckin' out just like Noah and his fuckin' Arc.

DEWEY

Are you mad at me?

GOAT

What? No.

DEWEY

You sure are actin' like it. Is this because'a/

GOAT

Not now, Dewey.

DEWEY

I like Amaly's being here. Been nice.

GOAT

...

DEWEY

Goat?

GOAT

Huh?

DEWEY

Been nice havin' her around.

GOAT

I guess.

DEWEY

I don't want her to go away.

GOAT

Why would she do that?

DEWEY

Amaly said you ain't supposed to kiss no girl without her wanting it back. Goat, what if she didn't want that back?

GOAT

She—She...

DEWEY
She what?

GOAT
Nothin.

Thunder rolls in.

It starts to rain on the boys.

DEWEY
Thou shall not/

GOAT
Lie. Lie. Lie! I know! I know. *(beat)* I gotta go find her.

He drops his shovel and runs off stage.

DEWEY
GOAT!

Dewey watches him off.

The wind begins to howl.

DEWEY
GOAT! GOAT! DON'T LEAVE ME HERE ALONE!

Beat.

I CAN'T DIG THIS HOLE ALL BY MYSELF!

Beat.

GOAT!

Beat.

I'm scared...

DEWEY continues to dig.

THUNDER CRACKS.

Ah hell.

DEWEY digs faster.

LIGHTS FADE OUT on DEWEY and up on AMALY's bedroom.

She is nowhere.

LIGHTS FADE IN on LODZ in his bed.

GOAT rushes in.

Where's Amaly?
GOAT
I don't know.
LODZ
You were the only ones in the house! Where is she?
GOAT
(rising) I said I don't know!
LODZ

They both rush to AMALY's room.

LIGHTS FADE OUT and BACK UP ON THE OIL FIELD.

The storm grows wild.

DEWEY is still shoveling furiously.

UNCLE BUCKY enters.

UNCLE BUCKY
WHERE THE HELL ARE YOUR BROTHERS?!

DEWEY
I DON'T THINK WE SHOULD BE OUT HERE!

UNCLE BUCKY
OHHH, QUIT YOUR BELLY-ACHING!

DEWEY
I'M NOT! LOOK AT THE SKY!

UNCLE BUCKY

FIRST SITE OF LIGHTIN' AND WE'LL HEAD BACK. 'TILL THEN WE GOT WORK TO DO.

DEWEY
THEY SAY IT MIGHT TURN INTO A TORNADO, THOUGH!

UNCLE BUCKY
(threatening) YOU WANNA GO? GO! BE MY GUEST.

Beat.

WELL?

DEWEY continues to shovel.

THAT'S WHAT I THOUGHT.

UNCLE BUCKY tries to jostle a lever loose on the derrick. It's stuck.

UNCLE BUCKY
GODDAMN PIECE OF SHIT! BREAK LOOSE WILL YA?

Back in AMALY's ROOM, the boys stand in what feels like an empty space.

Amaly is gone.

Thunder.

Lightning.

LIGHTS BACK UP on the OIL FIELD.

UNCLE BUCKY is still struggling with the lever on the derrick.

UNCLE BUCKY
DEWEY, COME HELP ME LIFT THIS DAMN LEVER, WILL YA? IT'S ALL JAMMED UP!
AGGGHHH!!! *(beat)* GONNA GO GET YOUR DAMN BROTHERS!

UNCLE BUCKY exits.

DEWEY drops his shovel and goes to the derrick.

He works at un-jamming the lever.

Just as he releases the jam—

DEWEY

I DID IT! I UN-STUCK IT! PA, I DID IT/

A STRIKE OF LIGHTING bursts down from the sky shooting a surge of electricity through the derrick.

DEWEY jolts to the ground, lifeless.

LIGHTS FADE OUT on the oil field and FADE IN on AMALY standing under a lone street light. She waits.

LIGHTNING STRIKES. THUNDER FOLLOWS.

LIGHTS FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE.

EPILOGUE

LIGHTS FADE IN on the long wooden table.

Uncle Bucky, Goat, and Lodz are present. They are dressed in funeral attire.

They sit at the long wooden table starring at a fresh carton of ice cream.

It is silent.

Until—

Amaly enters, also dressed in funeral attire.

She goes to the cabinet, retrieves four spoons, and joins the men at the table.

They all eat together from the carton silently.

LIGHTS FADE OUT.

END OF PLAY.