

DUKE UNIVERSITY
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The Roadkill Club

A Full-length Play

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Characters

Nan	A determined young woman who seems older than she is. A busybody by nature with obsessive tendencies. She is 28.
Roy	A spirited teenage girl. A seer and believer. She is turning 18.
Dusty	A simple man with a philosophical mind. He is disheveled, sloppy, and gentle. He is early 30s.
Mack Grimm	A fourteen-year-old boy with a steely-eyed glare. He appears ragged, dirty, dangerous.
The Man	A man in his fifties. He wears a rumped, old-fashioned suit that is slightly too large for him and looks like it has been buried in the ground.

Setting

The present. A kitchen, connected to a porch, connected to an expanse of yard.

In the kitchen, a table and four chairs.

On the porch, a six-foot-long hope chest. It's shaped like a coffin.

The porch is surrounded by orange ditch lilies: plastic flowers in real dirt.

The inside and outside blend together.

Author's Note

There is little sarcasm in this play. The play works best when the characters are played with sincerity, and likewise, when irony is underplayed rather than overplayed.

Scene One.

Morning. Nan waters the ditch lilies with a pitcher of water.

On the porch, the radio mumbles Willie Nelson's "Sad Songs and Waltzes."

Roy, her younger sister, sits on the stoop, watching.

ROY

I feel so kin to ditch lilies. First glimmer of spring, they pull the trigger. (*She mimes aiming and firing.*) For my birthday, I want nothing but three of these exact flowers. Promise you won't get me anything else!

NAN

What kind of sister would I be if I listened? I already got your present.

Roy doesn't seem to hear. She admires the flowers.

ROY

Mom once confessed that she hoped I'd be born on Dad's birthday, but then it *was* his birthday, and hours left by train, and minutes hopped the last railcar, and then the whole day ricketed over the horizon!

I came late. One day off. Imagine how different I'd be now if every birthday I'd shared with a middle-aged man. I'd be a jealous person. More jealous than I am now.

NAN

Deliciously jealous! You wouldn't share a thing.

ROY

I love your house but it's the last place on earth I'd ever pick to live. Don't take that the wrong way. It's been a real... *retreat*... but it's not intended for living the whole week.

Too quiet. You get in the routine of thinking. No wonder Joan of Arc heard voices in the French boonies. What else was there to do?

NAN

The deers are getting in my flowers. I'm going insane. Tonight I'll cut your hair and scatter it in the flower bed. They hate the smell of people.

ROY

I don't need my hair cut.

NAN

Your dead ends look pitiful. Hell if I let them deers eat up my hard work.

ROY

This country air infects me. Infects me with a disease of... (*searching*) well-being! Do you feel this way every day?

NAN

I don't think there's boondocks in Europe.

ROY

What else would there be?

NAN

Europe's too small. Too many people. They squeeze into cities.

ROY

Where would they bury people?

NAN

In the walls.

ROY

I know a girl that's gone to Europe. When I get home, I'll ask her.

NAN

You're not going back.

A pause.

ROY

What?

NAN

You're staying here with me.

ROY

I start school on Monday –

NAN

We enrolled you in the high school here. Grandmother signed the papers. You start Monday.

A pause.

We didn't have a choice.

ROY

Anytime people say they don't have a choice, they have a choice.

NAN

We made the least destructive choice. Assisted living.

ROY

I was assisting her living.

NAN

Not really.

ROY

You can't just... (*searching*) uproot my life.

NAN

We're people, not trees. It's impossible *not* to get uprooted.

ROY

Ahhh... head...

NAN

Are you alright?

ROY

My head feels like the top of a burning building.

NAN

Do you want some water?

ROY

Please.

Nan carries the pitcher toward Roy.

She pours all the water onto Roy's head.

Roy sizzles.

ROY

AHHHHHHH.

NAN

Better?

Roy stares at her, dripping wet.

ROY

Let me get my story straight:

The dad is born. Roy is born. The dad dies. The mom lives. The mom dies. Roy is ten. Roy lives with the grandmother. Nan leaves Roy. Nan leaves Roy alone with the elderly. The grandmother goes blind. Roy visits Nan. Nan tricks Roy. Nan lies to Roy. Roy wreaks vengeance.

NAN

Do you remember what happened? After Dad died?

ROY

No?

Nan waits for a response.

A pause.

What happens to Grandmother?

NAN

Someone will take care of her and I will take care of you.

That's the least destructive choice.

ROY

I'm going to run away.

NAN

No.

ROY

I'm going to steal the neighbor's horse and ride it to Florida.

NAN

Please don't.

ROY

I'm going to pick up Grandmother on the way and we're going to pony all the way to Florida where it's WARM AND THE SUN SHINES DOWN ON THE WATER AND THERE'S OLD PEOPLE, THERE'S SO MANY OLD PEOPLE, THERE AREN'T TRAFFIC SIGNS FOR

ROY (Cont'd)

DEER CROSSINGS OR BEARS OR ANY OTHER ANIMALS BECAUSE ALL THE SIGNS SAY WATCH OUT FOR OLD PEOPLE, THE GREAT HOARDS OF OLD PEOPLE GOING TO THE BEACH, WHERE THE SUN SHINES DOWN ON THE WATER AND EVERYONE DIES OF OLD AGE.

NAN

You can't die of old age.

ROY

What?

NAN

It's impossible to die of old age.

If that was possible Betty White would have died like twenty years ago.

Or the one lady from Japan.

ROY

I DON'T CARE ABOUT THE LADY FROM JAPAN.

NAN

There has to be a cause, not just "old age."

ROY

Then how do you explain

the moth

that died of old age

in Mom's hope chest?

NAN

There has to be a cause. Even if it's natural.

ROY

Yeah? And what was the cause for Mom and Dad?

NAN

... Unnatural causes.

ROY

Supernatural causes.

A pause.

And even Grandpa before them.

NAN

I don't know why we were surprised. Death comes in threes. We shoulda seen it coming.

ROY

One two three.

NAN

Death comes in threes like strikes in baseball and rules in jokes and guys in God.

ROY

One two three.

NAN

Death comes in threes like country songs, three chords and a truth –

ROY

What's the truth?

A pause.

NAN

What?

ROY

Three chords and a truth. What is the truth?

NAN

It changes every time.

Anyways death comes in threes so don't know why we were surprised –

ROY

It was Dad and then *his* dad and we thought cousin Rick was the third but he wasn't the real third because *Mom* was the real third. Rick was just a tease for the *real* –

NAN

Anyways skin cancer.

ROY

Who?

NAN

Everyone gets skin cancer in Florida, that's what kills them.

ROY

Not me.

NAN

Okay.

ROY

I'm going to ride the neighbor's horse on the beach so fast the sun can't burn me.

NAN

You're not stealing any horses and you're staying here and you're going to school on Monday.

ROY

I'll hitchhike.

NAN

Stop it.

ROY

I'll hitchhike to the horse store.

NAN

Someday we'll take ourselves a vacation to Florida, how 'bout that? A vacation departing from here. We'll pick up Grandmother and everything.

ROY

One time I read about this hitchhiking hooker who whored herself all the way to Florida. All the way from Michigan!

She brandishes a hitchhiker's thumb.

She ended up a serial killer.

NAN

We can make us a family-thing. A family-thing that takes vacations!

ROY

And who are you, in this family thing? My mother?

NAN

I'm Nan.

ROY

What's that make Dusty?

NAN

He's not anything. He's Dusty.

Roy picks one of the flowers and plucks it apart. She debates.

ROY

If you make us be a family, you be the mom, and I'll be Roy, and Dusty can be the racoon. Dusty's the racoon that sticks around 'cause you keep feeding him.

NAN

UNPACK YOUR CLOTHES.

Roy stares. Nan stares back.

The two sisters engage in a silent and furious conversation.

We hear their thoughts on the radio,

through blips of radio static:

ROY (V.O.)

I'd rather be a tree than a person! My braids would twist down like roots in the dirt and no one could ever pull me up!

NAN (V.O.)

Of course you'd rather be a tree! Anyone with a brain would rather be a tree!

Radio static.

Willie Nelson resumes on the radio just before Dusty enters, from the yard.

Roy glares at him. He shrinks from her.

DUSTY

Hey Roy. I got somethin' that might be of uh interest to you.

ROY

I don't want to see your stupid things!

A pause.

What is it?

He pulls an arrowhead out of his pocket and shows it to her.

DUSTY

This arrowhead might be six-hundred years old.

I might be the first person to touch it in six-hundred years.

That might make me... connected... to a six-hundred-year-old hunter.

Do you think it would?

ROY

How should I know?

In spite of herself, she's deeply curious.

She pushes the arrowhead back into his hand and exits.

As Nan refills her pitcher, Dusty circles the flowers.

DUSTY

She don't like me much.

NAN

She's seventeen.

DUSTY

Whatchu watering them for?

NAN

Needs watering.

DUSTY

They're fake.

A pause.

NAN

No they ain't.

DUSTY

Fake flowers.

NAN

Tell that to the deer.

DUSTY

They're plastic.

A pause.

NAN

I been watering them this whole summer.

DUSTY

Seriously?

NAN

I've been watering them cause they're flowers.

DUSTY

Plastic.

NAN

You think deer are eating up my plastic flowers? Plastic? Touch 'em! Go ahead! Touch 'em and tell me feels plastic.

A long pause as he feels them.

DUSTY

Feels plastic.

NAN

That's how flowers is *supposed* to feel!! Like plastic! That's why they stay in the wild, outta civilization – they're practically trash!

DUSTY

You call this civilization?

NAN

Are you suggesting... someone replaced my flowers... with fake flowers?

DUSTY

I know better than to suggest things to you.

NAN

Suggest things. You're the suggestion of a man.

A pause.

DUSTY

I didn't realize, till right this second...

The mailbox is phony, too.

She stares at him. He regards the mailbox, from a distance.

NAN

You calling it a plastic mailbox?

DUSTY

It ain't our mailbox.

NAN

Then whose is it, might I inquire?

DUSTY

Don't know.

He sits on the porch, bounces.

NAN

You come over here cowshitty... smelling like cow shit... and you got the nerve to affront my mailbox?

DUSTY

I do not have pretentions... to assume... we own a mailbox. That is all. That is the distinction... between you and me.

NAN

Well thank you for your *observation*, your careful... *examination*, your careful... *estimation*, your *research* –

DUSTY

I applied for a job.

A pause.

NAN

A job? ...When?

DUSTY

Now.

A pause.

NAN

You mean –

Now. DUSTY

Where? NAN

Fehrenbacher Cabinets. DUSTY

A pause.

Just now? NAN

Yes. DUSTY

Looking like that? NAN

Like I am. DUSTY

How could you do that???

I walked in. I laid my papers... on the counter. DUSTY

Knowing they'd laugh in your face? Smelling your breath 'fore you opened the door? NAN

Roy reenters. She stops in the doorway, sensing the tension.

Is he breaking your heart? ROY

No. NAN

I can kill him. ROY

No – NAN

ROY

I'll make it look like an accident.

NAN

Roy get out.

ROY

Hogs eat anything you give 'em.

NAN

Did you finish UNPACKING?

Roy hesitates.

She glares at Dusty.

She storms out.

DUSTY

Ain't she cute.

NAN

All those people?? When everybody... *everybody's* gonna hear it? Hear the story how Drunk Dusty Applies for a Job, dudn't know cabinets, dudn't know cows, ain't qualified to slip in the mud –

DUSTY

Don't worry. They will not consider me.

Dusty removes a warm beer from his back pocket, cracks it, drinks.

Probably picked up my papers, dropped 'em in the trash.

NAN

Were you trying to embarrass me? Was that the objective?

DUSTY

I could not control.

NAN

Was that the objective, huh? To make me look like trash?

DUSTY

I walked in.

NAN

To remove me from civilization?

DUSTY

I laid my papers –

NAN

You walked in, laid your papers that ain't how it happened.

Here's how it happened: You thought up the meanest thing you could do to me and you did it.

DUSTY

Not to you.

NAN

Then who? Who did you do it to?

A pause.

Huh? Who?

A pause.

Who?

DUSTY

It wadn't meanness.

NAN

What?

DUSTY

It wadn't mean. It was funny. A little joke. *They* laughed.

NAN

You... cowshit. You... dump. You... dump truck.

DUSTY

It feels so good... to make people laugh.

Nan drops the pitcher, a comical clunk.

She collapses with the pitcher, weeping.

He watches for a moment, amused.

DUSTY (Cont'd)

Oh come on, Nan...

From offstage, faintly, a gunshot. Dusty startles.

Jesus! Is she...?

NAN

It's just the woods.

DUSTY

Is she going to kill me?

NAN

It's the woods. There's always gunshots in the woods. Every woods in the world. You walk past and hear shots. Far-off shots. Why is that? Who's always shooting? ...At what?

A pause.

Why can't you make something of yourself like a regular man?

DUSTY

What do you want me to make?

What do you want me to make of myself?

Silence.

She moves to get up from the floor.

As she does, she finds herself on all fours.

She laughs.

NAN

When I was a little girl... We'd play this game... We'd make faces like animals. Like dead animals on the road. And we'd guess... Deer, skunk... coon... cat, turtle... We'd act out all the maimed animals we pass on the road every day. And we would make little sounds. Deep, ugly sounds, like we spilled our guts over the pavement.

*She gets up and creeps slowly around the stage,
making a face like a dead possum.*

NAN (Cont'd)

Uuuunghhhh. Uuunghhhh.

Dusty laughs, uneasily.

DUSTY

That is real weird.

She acts like a possum.

NAN

Guess.

DUSTY

Cat?

NAN

Uuuuunghh.

DUSTY

Uhh. Dog.

NAN

Uuhhhhhhhhhhh.

DUSTY

Bear?

NAN

I'm a possum. I'm under a tire like a possum. And I'm starting to stink. And I'm gonna stink worse and worse till you can smell it from everywhere. Miles! Miles away! You'll smell me coming, and once you drive past, I'll still reek! In the seats, in the engine fumes, you'll breathe me in the air vents... if you drive all the way to Luckenbach, Texas! I'll stink to Tampa, Florida! No matter how far you get, you'll still smell me, and you'll keep smelling me, forever, till somebody drags us animals out of the road.

DUSTY

I'll drag you out.

I can, little possie.

I...

She creeps toward him, a possum.

As he speaks, she draws closer and closer to his face.

DUSTY (Cont'd)

I thought it might work. Half of me. The stupid half. I half-thought I'd land the job and you would be so proud. And maybe just once I'd be on the receiving end of a miracle. The other half of me *knew*... it would be sort of funny, either way.

She drops, as though dead, on the floor.

Possie?

He stares at her limp body.

Little... Nan?

Growing nervous, he leans over her body.

I'll get you...

With a giant intake of breath, she pops up like a zombie in her grave.

He startles. Her eyes bulge, staring far away.

After a moment, she exhales, collapsing back to the floor.

She lies there, staring at him.

Then, slowly, she pulls his face down toward hers.

She kisses him, passionately.

She sits up abruptly, alert, looking out into the yard.

NAN

Do you smell something?

Dusty smells.

End of scene.

Scene Two.

Dusty disappears.

*Nan picks up her pitcher of water, and as she does,
she notices a Man playing guitar in the distant shadows.*

Her hair stands on end.

She speaks to the Man:

NAN

What are you doing here?

The Man stares at her.

She keeps her distance.

Is it... Roy?

She looks to the hope chest on the porch.

Get inside.

She gestures to the porch.

Please.

She's not supposed to see you.

A pause.

You'll upset her.

A pause.

It's hard enough on her.

Please.

A pause.

Get back where you belong.

Man turns and exits.

End of scene.

Scene Three.

Early evening. Nan cuts Roy's hair, on the porch.

ROY

Ow. You're pulling –

NAN

It hurts to be beautiful.

ROY

I read of a girl in a book once who “fell victim to her beautiful face.” Do you ever feel victim to your beautiful face?

NAN

No.

ROY

You're getting high. *One* inch –

NAN

If you don't get rid of the dead ends they keep splitting and splitting up and up and up. Unravel. Fiber from fiber, like rope, till your whole head goes to dry uneven dead ends. Is that what you want? Do you want a head full of dead ends?

ROY

I don't trust you.

NAN

Check for yourself. But I'm warning you.

Roy gets up and exits inside.

Nan sweeps the hair from the ground and scatters it over her flowers.

As she does, she notices something in the distance.

NAN

Hey you! Boy! Hey! Get over here.

A fourteen-year-old boy, Mack, enters.

He's dirty. We wonder when he's bathed last.

He holds a cucumber with bite marks in it.

NAN

What do you think you're doing?

He stares at her.

Making eye contact, he bites the cucumber.

Who's you? Where'd you come from?

MACK

(Mumbling) Nobody.

NAN

Speak up.

MACK

Nobody. From the bridge.

NAN

Where?

MACK

(He points.) Back there. I live under the bridge. Me and my buddies and my dog. We all lived under the bridge. *(Past-tense "lived")* Live-duh. They was a bunch uh idiots, so I kicked 'em out.

Now it's me and my dog.

NAN

Who do you belong to?

MACK

Nobody.

NAN

What do you know about yourself?

MACK

Listen, lady. *(Confiding)* I don't know a thing more about myself than the man in the moon. I just look for clues. That's all I can put together... *(He opens each hand.)* A clue here and a clue here.

NAN

What's your dad's name?

MACK

Mack Grimm.

NAN

I never heard of a Mack Grimm.

MACK

He's dead. He died.

NAN

I'm sorry. How did he –

MACK

Log. He's a log man. He's loading logs. Didn't have 'em strapped too secure, so he went and died for it.

NAN

Id'n that awful.

MACK

Dead in uh instant.

How instant is what I'd like to know. I crossed the bridge this morning without thinking. My head was somewhere wrong. A semi goes whoosh past. *Whoosh*. Missed me, but didn't miss me 'fore I saw myself, right there, squished flat on the pavement.

I'd call that uh instant. Would you?

NAN

(Sympathizing) One time a wild turkey flew into my windshield. Shattered to pieces.

MACK

Ain't there any men round here?

NAN

What's it concern you?

MACK

Too many women.

NAN

My... *(searching for the right word)* man... works around here.

MACK

Yeesh.

NAN

How would you know, too many women?

He gnaws the cucumber.

You hungry?

MACK

No.

He continues gnawing the cucumber. She watches.

NAN

I got food if you's hungry.

MACK

Don't want none.

He stares down at the cucumber, scratching it with his nail.

Roy reenters from the yard.

She notices Mack and stops in her tracks.

ROY

What's he doing here.

NAN

You know him?

ROY

(Maybe?) Mmm...

NAN

Whose his name?

ROY

What's your name?

NAN

He said he's a nobody.

MACK

I ain't a nobody!

NAN

Then who's you?

MACK

Mack Grimm.

NAN

(To Roy) That's his dad's name.

MACK

It's my name too.

NAN

Why didn't you say so?

MACK

Ain't your business what my name is. What bridge I live under. Whose cucumbers I eat.

NAN

They're my cucumbers –

MACK

Ain't your cucumbers. *(Weightily)* GOD'S CUCUMBERS.

*He gnaws the cucumber,
refusing eye contact from either of them.*

NAN

(To Roy) He's an orphan, Roy.

MACK

My mother's alive –

NAN

(To Mack) We're orphans, too.

Can you be an orphan when you're all growed up? Or is tragedy just for kids?

ROY

I was young –

NAN

Anyways both our parents –

MACK

Ain't there any men around this place?

NAN

What's it to you?

He snorts.

He walks in circles, kicking the dust with his shoes.

Is it Dusty you come for?

He pauses, looking up from his cucumber.

MACK

Got some funny-looking hills back here.

ROY

Angel Mounds.

He squints, not recognizing.

They're man-made hills. A bunch of Indians lived back here and that's where they buried people. Or maybe just the important people. Big stacks of dirt. In the mounds.

NAN

I'll get Dusty.

She exits toward the field.

ROY

We took a field trip when I was a kid. A boy in my class found a snakeskin on the burial grounds, liked it, figured he'd save it for later and tucked it in his shoe. He pocketed an arrowhead too and the cops came to get it back. My teacher went and cried. There's laws on these things. Can't dig for dinosaur bones or arrowheads, not even in your own backyard.

Dusty's got an arrowhead.

Watchu want with Dusty?

MACK

Fix me some food.

ROY

No. You smell.

MACK

I'm hungry.

She examines him for a moment.

She starts to feel sorry for him.

She exits.

Once she's gone, he seems to survey the land.

She reenters with a ham sandwich.

MACK

What's your name?

ROY

Roy.

MACK

What kind of a girl name is Roy?

ROY

It isn't.

He devours the sandwich, making sounds like an animal.

He drops scraps on the ground.

She watches, uncomfortably.

My mother was forty. She only had one child left in her maybe.

They already had a girl. My dad wanted a boy.

I was born.

I was me.

So my mother said, Okay, let's name her Roy.

She pauses.

That makes my existence... essentially... a private joke.

MACK

Lucky you.

ROY

(Agreeing) It's pretty rock 'n' roll.

MACK

No. I mean... That's old to have a kid.

You're lucky you was even born.

A moment.

Nan reenters with Dusty.

NAN

Dusty, this poor orphan child wants to see you.

DUSTY

(Unsurprised) Mack.

NAN

You know each other?

DUSTY

We got... an... uh... arrangement.

NAN

A what?

DUSTY

(Searching for the right words) His big brother, my buddy, is... dying.

MACK

You prob'ly seen him already. You prob'ly seen the sign.

NAN

Huh?

MACK

The sign, by the water tank. PLEASE PRAY FOR JIMMY GRIMM.

NAN

Jimmy Grimm's your brother?

MACK

For the time being.

NAN

God.

DUSTY

He lives with his brother. Or did... until –

MACK

Till he started puking all over the place. Couch, carpet. I kicked him out, sent him to the hospital. Disgusting.

NAN

Ain't you said you came from a bridge?

Dusty shoots her a look. She recalibrates.

You poor thing.

DUSTY

I told him... he could stay... for a while.

NAN

Of course. How long...?

MACK

He'll be a goner any day now.

NAN

Of course. Of course you can stay.

Mack snorts. He kicks the dust with his shoe.

Dusty smiles at everyone, gently.

DUSTY

(Sincerely) This is great.

This is just like a movie.

Everybody being friends and everything.

He turns to exit.

Need a sweatshirt, Mack?

Without looking up, Mack follows him out.

ROY

I don't think he should be here.

NAN

I don't specially want him here on your birthday neither –

ROY

No. I mean, I don't think... he... should be here.

NAN

Why not?

ROY

His dad got hit by a tree.

His brother's gone any day now.

Could be gone already, for all we know...

You do the math.

NAN

Not following.

ROY

One, two, the third one's coming and he's living here.

Third one's coming and it ain't gonna be me.

NAN

Don't be ridiculous. Of course it ain't gonna be you.

ROY

Long as he's gone, you mean.

NAN

It don't work that way! It's about three in the family...

ROY

Is that all family is? Blood and guts?

Genetic secret code? Of course not!

Everybody knows families invade.

Invalidate each other's space.

Invasion is how we love.

And Mack is going to love us!

She sprawls across the ground.

Here I am, loving sister.

Loitering in your yard!

NAN

I am not going to abandon some poor orphan child because of a superstition.

ROY

He probably escaped from Posey County Jail.

In spite of herself, Nan considers the idea.

At the very least, he's gonna steal your stuff.

At the very least, he'll put strychnine in the well.

NAN

We don't have a well.

ROY

At the very least, I might die. Or Dusty!

NAN

(Frustrated) If I took your brains and put them in a cat, the cat would bark.

A pause.

ROY

Will you kick him out?

NAN

No.

ROY

Have it your way, killer.

NAN

DON'T call me that.

Roy sticks out her tongue.

ROY

At my funeral I want rose-colored ditch lilies.

Not orange.

I know they're hard to find.

End of scene.

Scene Four.

The four of them have dinner.

Mack wears Dusty's sweatshirt.

In the distance, the Man plays guitar, like dinner music.

Periodically, during the conversation, Nan glances at the Man, wary.

No one else seems to notice the Man.

NAN

(*Congenial*) So who here's ever been to jail?

DUSTY

In or out of bars?

NAN

Inside, inside.

ROY

Not me.

MACK

Not me.

DUSTY

I have.

NAN

Not me. That's funny. I'm so curious what it's like on the inside!

ROY

Dusty said he's been to jail.

NAN

Oh has he?

ROY

What for?

DUSTY

Trespassing... vandalism... reckless driving... public intoxication –

ROY

I lied.

A pause.

ROY (Cont'd)

I been to jail.

NAN

What? When?

ROY

Today.

A pause.

I'm prisoner of this house.

Dusty steals her plate.

He shovels her food into his mouth, greedily.

ROY

Give it back!

DUSTY

Roy ain't hungry! Roy eats metaphors for breakfast.

He laughs very hard at his own joke.

Roy tries to steal it back, but he evades her.

ROY

Dusty eats Nan's savings for breakfast.

DUSTY

That is a bald-faced lie! I have uh entrepreneurial spirit!

ROY

(To Mack) Dusty makes half a living tending our cows. The other half he doesn't make.

NAN

We forgot to pray.

As she starts praying, everyone awkwardly stops mid-bite:

Bless-us-oh-Lord-and-these-thy-gifts-which-we-are-about-to-receive-from-thy-bounty-through-Christ-our-Lord, please don't take Jimmy Grimm from us Amen.

They resume eating.

I wonder, if Eve knew what she had coming, *really* knew, would she have taken a bite?

A pause.

DUSTY

Bit who?

NAN

No apple. Knowing she'd screw mankind –

ROY

Knowledge –

NAN

would she still of taken a big, juicy bite? Knowing –

DUSTY

God (the sky?) told her don't. Ain't that enough?

NAN

But a snake said *eat* –

DUSTY

She coulda chopped it with a shovel.

ROY

They didn't invent shovels yet idiot.

NAN

How desperate? How desperate are we to know?

If woman saw the bomb to paradise coming,

the full extent of *the bomb* –

the wheelbarrows, the muddy cows,

the vegetables, the shell-shocked cookware,

the sidewalk chalk, the dead sons,

the cargo pants, the relentless epidurals

– would she *still* have bit?

What I'm asking:

If woman had seen a tornado,

a cat thrown into the sky,

NAN (Cont'd)

would she have... bit?

ROY

God was not honest with us.

NAN

He wadn't lying –

ROY

Not lie but he kept the truth in the dark! If Jesus woulda flat-out *said what he meant* we wouldn't be so confused all the time! We wouldn't have the Catholics and God-knows-what. "Let the dead bury their dead." How is that supposed to work??

NAN

Jesus was a poet. Poets never say what they mean.

ROY

Well I ain't no poet.

NAN

Neither am I.

Mack, I don't have any beds to put you in.

Dusty shoots her a look. This clearly isn't true.

Roy just moved in and I wadn't expecting company! Are you okay with sleeping outside?

MACK

You got anything... kinda... bridge-shaped?

NAN

Yes, I'm sure Dusty can find something bridge-shaped for you to sleep under.

DUSTY

A truck?

NAN

(To Mack) As long as you're outside, maybe I'll sleep you with a BB gun.

(To all) The deers are eating up my flowers and hell if I let them finish the job!

(To Mack) I'm engaging in guerilla warfare with the deers.

ROY

Please pass the potatoes, killer.

Nan glares at Roy.

MACK

What's her name?

ROY

Her real name's Nan, I just call her Killer. Killer for short. It's a little private sister joke we have. When we were kids one time she accidentally asphyxiated our horse, so I started calling her Killer.

DUSTY

(To Nan) That true?

A pause.

NAN

I didn't mean to do it!

Dusty gawks.

NAN (Cont'd)

We kept the horse in the garage for the winter, and Mom asked me to warm the car up. I didn't know to open the door... the fumes –

ROY

She didn't mean to do it. Really she didn't! She was so embarrassed. *(To Nan)* Who was it found her? *(To Mack)* The horse's name was Princess.

NAN

I can't remember.

ROY

It was me.

MACK

How long did you leave the car on??

NAN

I can't remember, I was a kid!

ROY

The horse's name was Princess.

DUSTY

How've I never heard this story?

ROY

I was four. I started screaming, “Nan, you killer!” I was upset at the time, see.

DUSTY

How long did that last?

ROY

I’m still sort of upset.

Roy gets up and creeps around the table, acting like a dead horse.

What animal am I, Nan?

NAN

Stop it!

ROY

Guess.

NAN

No.

ROY

When we was little Nan taught me this game called the Roadkill Club. We had membership cards. *(To Nan)* What animal am I?

NAN

Stop it.

ROY

Am I still roadkill if I’m killed by a parked car?

Roy laughs very hard at her own joke.

DUSTY

How long did you call her killer for?

ROY

I don’t know.... The problem is, it’s still funny.

DUSTY

Very *amusing*... Very *haha*... Very *comical* to call your sister a murderer.

ROY

(Correcting) Killer.

DUSTY

Very humorous!

ROY

Oh, lighten up, Dusty. You have to laugh at these things.

DUSTY

Very laughable!

ROY

You have to laugh at these things.

DUSTY

Very haha!

ROY

(Suddenly serious) No.

You have. To laugh.

Otherwise...

Otherwise...

(Suddenly playful) Otherwise you will be consumed!

DUSTY

By what?

Roy considers.

ROY

The joke.

The joke will consume you.

End of scene.

Scene Five.

Late night. Dusty sits on the porch and smokes.

The radio mumbles Willie Nelson.

Nan watches him for a moment, then sits beside him.

NAN

There's holes in the yard.

A pause.

DUSTY

Groundhogs.

NAN

Too big to be a groundhog.

DUSTY

I can set a trap.

NAN

Mounds.

Circles in the dirt.

DUSTY

A... big rodent?

NAN

(*Wryly*) Yeah.

Some kind of rodent.

They look at each other.

Then, they stare out into the night.

DUSTY

When's Roy heading home?

NAN

(*Lying*) A couple days.

DUSTY

That's time. She will like me by then.

NAN

She don't need to like you.

DUSTY

She will.

NAN

She don't need to.

He gives her an ironic look.

Radio static.

DUSTY

What'd you do with all my smokes?

NAN

Whatever I wanted to do with 'em!

A pause.

I buried 'em. Somewhere secret.

DUSTY

Well stop.

NAN

No. I'll steal them and bury them. Don't think you can hide from me, 'cause you can't. I see everything. I am omniscient. All women's omniscient. Not over the whole world, but one square mile a piece, which put together comes damn near close.

A pause.

There's holes in the yard and they ain't mine.

Or, maybe they *are* mine. Whatever's down there belongs to me. My land.

A pause.

I'll steal and bury those smokes till you quit. It's killing you.

DUSTY

Sure.

NAN

And me.

DUSTY

Well.

Radio static.

From the radio, we hear their voices:

NAN (V.O.)

Why do that to yourself?

She watches him exhale smoke.

DUSTY (V.O.)

Force of habit.

NAN (V.O.)

Force of nature. Natural disaster.

DUSTY (V.O.)

Self-destruct mode.

NAN (V.O.)

In an ideal world, there'd be no tornados.

And no sisters. And no parents. And no boyfriends.

In an ideal world, you'd never see a cat in the sky.

I wouldn't like an ideal world.

I wouldn't belong in an ideal world.

DUSTY (V.O.)

To what kind of world do you belong?

NAN (V.O.)

I want to water my flowers every day

without animals digging them up.

Radio static. Willie Nelson resumes.

Nan turns to him.

NAN

If you go back to jail, this is over.

DUSTY

I don't recognize this place anymore.

When I opened the mailbox this morning,

the mail was made of plastic.

Plastic mail in a plastic box.

Letters made in China.

Don't recognize this place at all.

He smokes.

NAN

Why do you do that to yourself?

DUSTY

Reminds me that I breathe.

He exhales smoke.

See?

End of scene.

Scene Six.

Mack sits on the porch in a sweatshirt of Dusty's.

He drinks a can of beer.

The peaceful chill of night air.

Roy enters the porch with a carpet bag,

unaware that he's there.

In the dark, Roy trips over him.

ROY

(Huge gasp) UUUUUUH.

MACK

AHHHHH! What'd you do that for?

ROY

I'm running away. It's a secret.

I'm going to do it before I can think.

MACK

But now you're thinking.

ROY

No I'm not.

She thinks. Radio static.

MACK

You look like you're thinking.

ROY

I'm not.

She thinks. Radio static.

MACK

Okay.

ROY

Stop that! I don't *think*.

She thinks. Radio static.

MACK

Where you going?

ROY

Florida.

(Pointing to his beer) Where'd you get that?

A pause.

Oh.

A pause.

She exits. He watches her go, a little confused.

She returns with a beer.

She sits beside him and drinks.

MACK

My eyes change colors.

ROY

Huh?

MACK

My eyes change colors. Depending how I feel.

ROY

Your eyes...? Like mood rings?

He nods, drinking.

Mood ring eyes.

MAC

What color's they now?

ROY

Brown.

MACK

Oh.

ROY

What's brown mean?

MACK

Green when I'm excited, blue when I'm blue, brown when I'm bored.

ROY

Maybe they do look green.

They look at each other for a moment.

They stare out at the night.

Out here there's always something to hide the horizon line. It drives you insane. Hills or trees or wheat or corn.

I want to live on flat water, where the whole sky's open, and honest with you. I believe the world ought to be about 80% sky. Out here we got all our proportions off.

A pause.

Do you think God will damn me for running off from my very nice sister?

MACK

I find hell very believable but I do not find God very believable.

ROY

That's just because you live here.

It'd be so much easier to feel there's a God if you lived by the water.

MACK

I do not think so.

ROY

What about dinosaurs.

MACK

What?

ROY

Do you believe big lizards ran the earth?

that they got hit by fire from space?

and now they're birds?

He drinks.

MACK

Sure, Roy-girl. Triceratops-girl.

ROY

You believe in dinosaurs and you can't believe in a simple thing like God?

MACK

You're very pretty.

A pause.

ROY

Thank you.

MACK

You are.

ROY

Thank you.

MACK

Don't thank me when I tell you you're pretty.

It ain't a compliment.

ROY

What am I supposed to say?

A pause. He drinks.

MACK

Ain't a compliment. It's just historical fact.

Indisputable.

She examines him.

ROY

Try again.

MACK

You're very –

ROY

(Interrupting) Go to hell.

She beams. She drinks.

MACK

Easier done than said!

ROY

No. I don't think so.

It takes a lot of effort to damn yourself.

ROY (Cont'd)

Most of us don't have the energy.

She drinks.

My grandfather lived through a bomb once. I don't remember what bomb. He walked up and down through a field of bloody, broken bodies with a tin can of water, baptizing the dying. Germans, Americans, whoever. That was his impulse... when he survived.

MACK

So save me why dontcha.

She looks at him, amused.

She splashes her can of beer on him.

ROY

I absolve you in the name of the Father (*splash*) and the Son (*splash*) and the Holy Spirit (*splash*).

Pleased with herself, she sits the can of beer down.

He spits the beer from in his face, stares at her.

Abruptly, he kisses her.

Too hard. It's not a very pretty kiss.

She pulls away, confused, a bit disgusted.

They sit together, for a moment, staring out at the night.

He goes back to sipping his beer.

ROY (Cont'd)

What am I supposed to say now?

A pause.

MACK

Nothing.

Now it's just fact.

A fact of life!

Roy realizes, with horror, what she's just done.

Ain't you supposed to be running?

She exits inside, quickly.

End of scene.

Scene Seven.

Morning. The kitchen. Roy and Nan eat breakfast.

At some point, while the sisters' talk,

we realize that a dark-cloaked figure is crossing,

in a straight line, very slowly upstage.

The sisters do not notice this figure.

ROY

Have you seen my jeans?

NAN

No...?

ROY

My favorite pair? I need them to go with shirt tomorrow.

NAN

Hmm.

ROY

This shirt looks fantastic on me because I am flat-chested like a model.

She checks that no one is around to hear.

(Dryly) You remember to leave out food and water for Dusty?

NAN

Ruff ruff.

She approaches Nan, serious:

ROY

Listen. He's got to go.

NAN

Roy please, he's just a kid –

ROY

Yeah no *kidding* –

NAN

Plus it's only the dad.

ROY

One two three.

NAN

Keep your distance and you have nothing to –

ROY

He's after me.

A pause.

NAN

He's what, fourteen?

ROY

I feel bad.

I feel that he is... (*searching*) good.

Despite the way he acts. And talks. And thinks. And is.

I would want him to have me if I weren't me.

A pause.

NAN

Roy, do you remember what you told me? when Dad died?

ROY

What?

NAN

When Dad died.

Do you remember what you saw?

Mack enters from the yard.

NAN (Cont'd)

Morning, Mack! How'd you sleep?

MACK

Good. I usually don't sleep too good when I ain't under my own bridge. But. It was good.

ROY

That's good.

NAN

That's good, good.

ROY

That's good.

NAN

That's good.

Mack looks them over, a little confused.

Nan offers him cereal.

He pours a humongous bowl of it, with a weird proportion of milk.

The two women watch him eat, silently.

MACK

I had a dream.

NAN

Oh, did you?

MACK

I dreamed that I was a vampire and you didn't know it.

An uncomfortable pause.

NAN

(Trying to be polite) Oh!

He nods, without looking up from his cereal.

Awkwardly, they wait for him to elaborate.

Finally, he does:

MACK

Sometimes I dream that I'm dying.
but then the end comes,
and sight goes out.

I never see what comes next
after I dream die.
I don't think my brain can imagine further.

My imagination dies
in that death
with my dream body.

The end is coming,
and sight goes out:

*The lights on the stage go out.
A faint blue haze.
Another dark-cloaked figure joins the figure onstage.
The figures wander through the haze.
He stands, watching them, gauging their moves.*

MACK (Cont'd)

Out the window,
shadows shuffle
across the field
and I am afraid.
These figures.
They wear black.
They hold nothing.

Mack attacks them.

I attack them
pulling off
their endless masks,
camouflage grins.

*He stops, staring at us – his imaginary mirror.
A bright blue light on his face.*

Inside the mirror,
my face turns blue.
My red hair
hides the blood
but not the itch
of dried crust
on my wild skull.

He turns to Roy.

I'm eating breakfast
with your sister, outside.
What will we do? I ask.
I nod toward the yard.
She says:

NAN

You died last night,
remember?

NAN (Cont'd)

I didn't want
to tell anyone yet.

*The dark-cloaked figures begin to drift offstage at a glacial pace,
as Mack returns to eating his cereal.*

Both sisters watch him, horrified.

NAN (Cont'd)

Well.

A pause.

That is awful!

A pause.

I hope you don't dream that again!

He nods, without looking at her, continuing to eat.

Dusty enters, holding a cell phone.

DUSTY

Mack?

Mack grumbles with cereal in his mouth.

Mack.

Your mom's on the phone.

Mack freezes.

He doesn't look up from his cereal.

Dusty stands there.

Ain't you gonna answer?

Mack continues to eat.

MACK

I don't believe I will.

DUSTY

I don't believe you got a choice, Buddy.

After a moment, he stretches his hand out for the phone.

He answers.

MACK

Yeah.

A long pause. They watch him listen, tensely.

Okay.

A pause.

Okay.

A pause. We see his expression twist.

No.

A pause.

No.

A pause.

Okay.

A pause. We see his expression return to neutral.

Okay, bye.

He hangs up.

The dark figures have disappeared.

Mack resumes eating his cereal.

They wonder whether to speak.

DUSTY

What happened?

A pause.

MACK

That's it.

NAN

What?

MACK

That's it.

A pause.

He drops the cereal and exits.

Dusty follows him out.

Roy stares at Nan.

ROY

One, two.

NAN

Jesus!

ROY

I'm just saying! One two!

Nan stares at her, speechless.

I would run but regretfully I love you.

Nan storms out.

Roy stands in the kitchen, alone.

End of scene.

Scene Eight.

Mack and Dusty in the yard.

Dusty shows Mack an arrowhead.

Mack takes it.

In the distant shadows, the Man watches them.

MACK

That much?

DUSTY

Seriously.

MACK

But who would pay?

DUSTY

Setting aside sentimental value, setting aside location, setting aside shape, setting aside fluting, setting aside material, setting aside culture, they have... value... as educational... *tools*... for children.

MACK

We split 50/50?

DUSTY

Humans started... inhabiting... North America 130,000 years ago. If the average lifespan of an Indian was 40-45 years... imagine how many... of these... you'd make in a life. Imagine how many you'd make –

MACK

How many you found before?

DUSTY

The one... by incident. But there's... burial ground... of the Fort Ancient culture –

MACK

Here.

DUSTY

Right.

MACK

We use a –

Shovel.

Maybe a –

Screen.

You spot a glimmer of –

Yes... but in the woods. Toward dark.

Not legal?

It ain't... *especially* legal.

But the land belongs to her.

She don't own what's beneath the land. Just surface. There's law for you.

Then who we stealing from? The girl?

It ain't stealing. Underground is what you call a public domain. Bones, arrowheads you find in your yard – public property. That makes our digging here what you call a public service. Any money we make for it is just compensation for our service to the public.

A pause.

Can I have that back?

Mack hands it back.

Can't believe anyone's such a sap.

I don't think it's so sappy.

This might be six-hundred years old.

DUSTY

MACK

DUSTY

MACK

DUSTY

MACK

DUSTY

MACK

DUSTY

MACK

DUSTY

MACK

DUSTY

DUSTY (Cont'd)

I mighta been the first person to touch this in six-hundred years.

You alright?

A pause.

MACK

One time I spent the night in jail for stealing a gas station hotdog. I stood there and ate it and walked out and did not pay. I had twenty-three bucks in my pocket.

I am curious, always, to see what I will do.

(Regretfully) I have never truly surprised myself.

What will we do with the...?

DUSTY

Money.

MACK

Cash.

DUSTY

We stop feeling sick for cash, constantly.

MACK

And then what?

Dusty considers, stumped.

DUSTY

I don't know...

I don't think my brain can imagine further.

End of scene.

Scene Nine.

Dusty and Mack disappear from the yard.

The hope chest becomes a coffin.

Nan looks into the coffin.

She stops when she sees the Man, standing in the shadows.

NAN

You're not supposed to be out here.

Please get inside.

The Man stares at her.

You'll upset her.

It's hard enough on her.

Silence.

I was such a mama's baby.

I'd hang on her sleeves,

follow her everywhere.

You thought it was funny.

You'd play this game

where you bounced me on your knee.

I was too big to be bounced on knees.

"Hey inky dinky dinky dinky,

how come you don't like your daddy?"

A pause.

That used to keep me up at night,

after you'd gone so sudden.

I was afraid you really thought so.

That I didn't love you as much as her.

"Hey inky dinky dinky dinky,

how come you don't like your daddy?"

A pause.

You didn't really think that, did you?

After a long moment, the Man approaches her.

End of scene.

Blackout.

END OF ACT I.

ACT II.

Scene One.

Very early morning.

Nan enters with a basket of laundry and hangs a wash line.

She pulls a pair of jeans from the basket.

She admires them.

She hangs them alone on the line.

She exits.

Moments later, she returns with a shotgun, which she loads.

Click click. Bang!

Click click. Bang!

*She drops the gun to her side and swings it as she inspects the jeans,
which are now riddled with bullet holes.*

Mack enters, from the yard, unnoticed by Nan.

MACK

What in –

NAN

AHHHH!

Oh God, I thought you was a deer.

I coulda shot you! Hahaha.

My flowers got it again, wouldn't you know?

That's alright, deers. I can play your little ol' game.

He walks closer.

MACK

Target practice?

NAN

It's Roy's birthday.

*She returns to inspecting the jeans,
as though she's answered the question.*

MACK

Family tradition?

NAN

Oh no! (*She laughs at the thought.*) Roy always talks about those jeans with the holes in them. She's just aching for a pair!

MACK

I see.

NAN

They'll look real cute on her, don't you think? It's her favorite pair.

MACK

Real cute.

NAN

I remember what it was like to want a pair of jeans so bad.

A pause.

Is there anything I can do?

MACK

For what?

NAN

For you. Because you're sad.

He snorts.

I'm sorry. That's never a good question.

Why do we ask that question when bad things happen?

Is there anything I can do?

Yes, you can send me a casserole.

Yes, you can resurrect the dead.

Yes, you can replace my heart with a soup can.

Would that be too much trouble?

Yes, you can find my lost dog.

You can set my house on fire.

If you could set my house on fire, that would be great. Thanks!

A pause.

MACK

Is there anything I can do?

NAN

Hold this.

Nan hands him the gun.

She pulls the jeans off the line and admires them.

Is there anything I can do?

My mom took a whole bottle of aspirin once. When I see her in the hospital, first thing she says: “Nan, whoever tells you you can take a bottle of pills and go to sleep, don’t trust ’em. It’s a bald-faced lie. Hurts like hell!”

She laughs.

She cracks up laughing, then I crack up laughing. Then we both die laughing, right there on the hospital bed. Couldn’t help it. It’s funny!

The nurse walks in, alarmed. These two women, hysterical.

“Is there anything I can do?”

Silence.

Roy enters.

Nan pulls the jeans down and tries to hide them.

She can’t find a place fast enough.

Roy stares at Mack, who holds the gun.

Nan runs up to an audience member:

NAN (Cont’d)

Can you hold these? Thanks!

She hands the jeans to the audience member.

Then swerves around to Roy, who remains staring at Mack:

NAN

It’s the birthday girl!

ROY

What’s he doing?

NAN

He’s just... helping –

ROY

I heard gunshots.

MACK

We got in a fight.

Nan shoots him a look, then recalibrates.

NAN

(Going along) We got in a fight. Real bad one.

MACK

I was so mad. I got my gun. I screamed, "SAY THAT AGAIN WOMAN AND I'LL SHOOT YOU!"

Roy stares, terrified.

NAN

But I said I'm sorry for the bad thing I said so now we're friends.

MACK

Couldn't shoot you even if I wanted to.

NAN

Thank you.

MACK

No, I mean I'd shoot but I'd miss.

NAN

How's that?

MACK

Can't see distance good. I was born blind but nobody believes me.

ROY

You see now, can't you?

MACK

Could not till the age of three.

NAN

What happened at the age of three?

MACK

I got my sight.

ROY

How?

MACK

That is my very first memory. Seeing.

ROY

What did you see?

A pause.

MACK

I do not remember. That is how shocking it was, to see. Did not matter what.

(Confiding) You know, the poets of old was blind!

ROY

That make you a poet?

MACK

Some'm to that effect.

Roy notices the audience member with the jeans.

ROY

Are those my jeans?

NAN

(Interrupting) NO.

An uncomfortable pause.

ROY

There's something I'm missing here.

My whole life I've felt like there's something I am missing here.

The Man enters, upstage.

He plays guitar.

Only Nan notices him. She turns to her sister, afraid.

NAN

What time's he coming to get you?

A pause.

ROY

Um. Eight.

Mack stares at them, still holding the gun.

MACK

Who?

NAN

Her boy.

ROY

He's not... my... He's... a.

NAN

(To Mack) Come to Kramer's Lake with us. There's a bonfire, music.

She looks over his dirty clothes, the same as yesterday.

I'll find you something to wear.

I still got dad's clothes. Men's clothes never change. Men's clothes is such a scam. Every season stores put out the same men's shirts – same ones from last year, new tags. Men's clothes never change.

Nan exits into the house.

Roy looks at Mack, then the audience member.

ROY

(To Mack) Those are my jeans aren't they.

Mack smiles.

She looks at the gun.

Put that down.

He doesn't.

Listen. I'm... sorry for your –

MACK

I ain't. Everybody dies.

ROY

I'm still sorry.

MACK

That's stupid. You figure he's immortal? a vampire?

ROY

No, I just...

MACK

Who's the guy?

A pause.

ROY

He's nobody.

MACK

Nobody! He's a nobody. Nobody's comin' to get you, huh? Nobody's comin' to get you.

He laughs at his own joke.

That don't bother me. No, sir! I ain't bothered.

Mack Grimm ain't bothered, not one bit.

He wags a finger at her, playfully.

I'm comin' to get you, baby.

He takes the gun with him as he exits, into the yard.

Roy watches him go.

End of scene.

Scene Two.

Roy approaches the audience member with the jeans and takes them.

She returns to sit on the porch, holding the jeans.

She fingers the bullet holes as she addresses the audience:

ROY

I hate it when people die young.

I hate it when sudden deaths

get twisted into a lesson for the rest of us,

about how to live and appreciate life.

The Man enters, with his guitar.

He answers her with a guitar riff.

Roy feels the music, but doesn't acknowledge the Man.

I appreciate life just fine thank you

and I don't need a dead guy to teach me.

I listen as wind kisses the field,

wheat tilting like the cheek of earth,

and it's outrageous how much I enjoy it.

Another riff.

Smell the sun!

I'm mad with power!

Another riff.

I refuse to let my death

teach anyone anything.

Another riff.

My grandfather dropped dead at the lawnmower.

That's the death of my dreams.

Another riff.

The death of my dreams.

ROY (Cont'd)

Sometimes I feel my dreams dying.

I don't even dream of my dad anymore.

Another riff. She feels it.

She steps forward, as though embarrassed.

Hello?

She listens.

End of scene.

Scene Three.

Late afternoon. A birthday lunch party.

Roy, Mack, and Dusty sit around the table.

A wrapped package on the table.

Mack wears clothes that look like a middle-aged man.

In the distance, the Man sits with the guitar, watching.

Nan regards him.

She stands away from the table, holding her phone.

NAN

Family pitcher! Everybody smile for the pitcher!

Dusty smiles. Roy and Mack stare.

Roy. Smile.

Mack eats food from the table, off the hook for the picture.

Roy.

Roy smiles without her eyes.

Roy what are you doing.

ROY

Smiling.

NAN

Smile.

ROY

I'm smiling. That's how I smile.

NAN

No it's not.

Roy gives a different weird smile.

Stop that.

Smile regular.

Roy gives a different weird smile.

NAN (Cont'd)

Roy. Smile regular.

Smile regular Roy.

Roy gives a different weird smile.

No stop.

Smile regular.

Roy.

Roy smiles regular.

Roy look at the camera.

What are you looking at?

Roy look at the camera.

Look at the camera.

The camera.

The camera Roy.

Look at the camera.

Roy look.

Look at it.

(Suddenly crying) Why won't you look at the camera?

Roy and Dusty stare.

The smile at the camera, huge and genuine.

Nan snaps the picture. She looks at it.

NAN (Cont'd)

So cute!

If Dad was here, he woulda got out the guitar. One of the only times he ever got out the guitar –

ROY

But he was good!

NAN

He played like Doc Watson –

ROY

If Doc had been a real doc and picked on the side –

NAN

He'd play something amazingly pathetic.

ROY

Yes!

NAN

That's the best country songs. So sad they're funny.

DUSTY

How'd that Willie one go?

*(Sings) I'm writing a song
all about you,*

*A true song as real as my
tears.*

*But no need to fear it. No
one will hear it.*

*Sad songs and waltzes
aren't selling this year.*

*(To Mack) Wanna know
how I learned Willie
Nelson?*

*Strictly osmosis. Direct
from here (gestures to air)
to here (gestures to heart).*

They laugh until they groan.

Mack stares at the floor.

ROY

*Wait wait: (Sings Charlie
Walker) I wouldn't take
her to a dogfight*

*Or any other place I've
ever been*

*I wouldn't take her to a
dogfight*

*Not even if she had a
chance to win*

NAN

*Oh oh! (Sings John Prine)
There's a hole in daddy's
arm*

where all the money goes.

*Jesus Christ died for
nothing, I suppose.*

DUSTY

I could sing the most loser song you ever heard.

NAN

Oh yeah? I dare you.

Dusty thinks for a moment. Radio static.

I dare you to sing a song worse than –

DUSTY

(Swatting) Losers, yes, this is my domain.

I got it.

The Man starts playing Dusty's song.

Dusty sings:

AM I A JUNKIE (OR JUST AN ASSHOLE)?

DUSTY

(Sings) I sold the TV.

My girlfriend got pissed.

*I bought enough weed
to last me for six weeks.*

*A cop tried to cuff me,
face to the sidewalk.
He called in backup
'cause he's got no cock.*

*My girl bailed me out.
She cried when we got home.
I rolled a joint
and played Super Smash Bros.*

DUSTY (Cont'd)

My girl bailed me out.

She cried when we got home.

Am I a junkie,

or just an asshole?

Where's the disease,

my body or soul?

Am I a junkie,

or just an asshole?

Everyone, except Nan, claps.

DUSTY (Cont'd)

Well...? Which is it?

Dusty waits for Nan to answer his question.

She doesn't.

A pause.

ROY

Dusty. Even his name is a losing name.

Dusty looks perplexed.

DUSTY

You don't understand country music.

The songs on the radio – unrecognizable.

NAN

You're awful quiet, Mack.

He snorts.

NAN

(*To Roy*) Why don't you open your present?

ROY

What could it be?

She starts to open it, then stops.

ROY (Cont'd)

Wait! Right now, it could be anything.

This present is everything, all at once in a bow.

When I open it, it'll just be something.

But right now, the possibilities is infinite!

DUSTY

Roy don't need cake! She's full of metaphors!

NAN

Has to be sort of small –

ROY

Small but infinite! Are we ready to destroy our possibilities?

She opens it.

(Fake surprise) Jeans! How cute!

She unwraps them and holds them up to her body, confused.

Are these my jeans?

NAN

You said you liked the jeans with holes in them.

A pause.

ROY

I do.

(Sincerely) They're the most beautiful pants in the world.

She holds them up to her body.

I'd try them on but I know they fit perfect.

End of scene.

Scene Four.

Afternoon.

Dusty pisses on the ground, in front of the flowers.

A gas can at his feet.

Roy enters, wearing the shot-up jeans.

She covers her eyes.

ROY

What're you doing??

Dusty quickly zips his fly.

DUSTY

Nan told me to!

ROY

What?

DUSTY

She said it keeps the deers away.

A pause.

ROY

Why don't she use her own piss?

DUSTY

Ask her.

ROY

Why don't she buy some... repellent?

DUSTY

Good question. Ask her.

ROY

Don't piss in my yard you goddamn cat.

DUSTY

You're only here for the weekend anyways.

ROY

She's making me stay.

A pause.

DUSTY

What's "stay"?

ROY

Live here. She didn't tell you?

A pause.

DUSTY

She did not.

Mack enters. Dusty hesitates.

I got to gas up the truck.

Dusty exits, toward the yard.

He forgets the gas can.

Roy looks at it.

Mack starts to piss in the yard.

ROY

Stop that! Nan can buy repellent.

MACK

I don't give a shit about deers.

I hope they eat the whole damn yard.

A pause.

ROY

CAN EVERYONE STOP PISSING?

He finishes pissing.

Can everyone stop pissing in my dirt.

MACK

Your dirt?

ROY

Yes.

MACK

Your dirt. That a fact?

ROY

Historical.

MACK

Indisputable?

A pause.

The sound of a truck engine starting.

He grins.

Tell me something about Mr. Nobody.

ROY

Stop.

MACK

I heard you and your sister talking.

A pause.

I heard you trying to kick me out.

I hear everything.

I was blind as a poet!

So you see, I hear things miles away.

I hear Dusty's truck crack down the gravel.

He listens close.

I hear your sister in the shower.

ROY

No you can't!

MACK

Shhh.

He listens closer.

MACK (Cont'd)

I hear her hair pile up in the drain.

I hear the soap.

She can't hear.

A pause.

I heard you tell her get rid of me.

I prefer you tell me yourself.

I prefer you tell me a lot of things.

ROY

Stop...

MACK

It would be an honor to know what he does to you.

ROY

You're a creep...

MACK

Mr. Nobody. It would be an honor to know –

Roy starts to exit, covering her ears.

ROY

I won't listen to you!

MACK

Just you remember. Whoever you dance with tonight, whatever joker, you'll be dancing with me. You'll really be dancing with me, and don't you forget it. No matter who. I'll hear the music. I won't even be mad. Because whoever's holding onto you, I'll know it's really me. You'll know it, too. You'll be dancing with me all night, my smell on your collar, and don't you forget it.

Roy moves to exit:

Nobody's coming to get you!

He laughs. She's gone.

End scene.

Scene Five.

Late evening. Nan waters her flowers.

Roy enters.

ROY

Are they gone?

NAN

Where *did* they go?

ROY

He's got to go. I'm gonna puke.

A pause.

Nan gestures to the flowers.

NAN

If you're gonna puke, do it here, it keeps the deers off –

ROY

He may actually murder me.

Or my date?

Or someone?

The odds are... good.

NAN

Boys are more afraid of you than you are of them.

Roy collapses on the ground,

head on fire, flustered.

ROY

I have to tell you a secret.

NAN

What.

ROY

It's bad.

NAN

That's okay.

A pause.

ROY

Yesterday, I saw a possum. A dead possum... On the road.

Another pause.

Nan laughs.

NAN

That's not so –

ROY

A possum on the road, and I looked at it. I didn't want to. But I walked closer, like I had to, like I was sleepwalking. Compelled by secret importance. But the secret was hid from me... Something pulled my body across the asphalt toward it to get a look. I never looked at roadkill up close. I never thought to stare at something awful. I saw its brains coming out through its mouth, like mine do. And then it occurred to me. The secret. It occurred to me that if I looked long enough, at that crushed animal, maybe I'd... (*searching*) cast off my own disgust, like Jesus cast pigs into the water. Maybe then I could see the thing straight on, for what it is. No disgust. No fear. An honest look. I stood there, staring, alone with that possum, and then I started to feel embarrassed... the embarrassment of being alone with the dead. As if you've invaded the privacy of death. The birds came to feed on the animal, and I moved.

During the following, we hear ever so faint birdsong:

And then, last night, I dreamed of it. I'm standing in the field, opposite our house. Our old house. It is so cold the birds have frozen in their trees. I look up at what seems like roadkill, a flattened body of feathers... so I, repulsed, lower my head like a gun to the ground. But I see it all the same. That crushed bird hangs from the tree limb. I circle the tree... a dozen more birds, frozen. They aren't crushed like the first. The other birds shine with frost like ornaments on the winter tree. They lean forward, open-mouthed, mid-song. They froze mid-song. That's what scared me most: the interrupted singing of birds.

The birdsong cuts off.

The Man enters.

He plays a riff on the guitar.

What made me look? What made me look twice? Why should I look, again and again, at what disgusts me?

A pause.

NAN

Then what.

ROY

I lit the tree on fire. Your lighter was in my pocket, for some reason... Your silver lighter from your sad smoking days. The tree went up and when the birds shook the frost, they turned back into dinosaurs, after which those dinosaurs migrated to, I assume, somewhere warm.

But the roadkill bird didn't change. It didn't change into anything when it fell to the ground. It just stayed dead.

A pause.

The Man exits.

NAN

Like Florida?

ROY

What?

NAN

Somewhere warm, like Florida?

A long pause.

ROY

Yeah. Like Florida.

She sits on the porch and stares into the distance.

Radio static. We hear their voices:

ROY (V.O.)

Where's the shotgun?

I wish I had a dad from a song with a gun.

Rocking slowly, shining metal.

"Stay away from my daughter!"

NAN (V.O.)

I'm your shotgun dad.

I'm becoming your shotgun dad.

Radio static. Willie Nelson resumes.

NAN

People are afraid of becoming their parents.

Everything that's wrong with me is how I'm not like my parents.

A pause.

ROY

You're right.

You're not at all like our parents.

You're not like Dad.

Dad used to sit and listen to me.

Sometimes he wouldn't say anything at all.

He'd just sit and smoke and nod.

You, it's the first time you listened.

You, you freeze up mid-song.

How can this be a family if you freeze mid-song?

Nan removes a garden trowel from her flowerbed.

She digs.

She retrieves a pack of cigarettes and a silver lighter.

She sits on the porch and smokes.

ROY

I thought you quit.

NAN

I thought so too. Now I'm not so sure.

Roy sits beside her.

Since you came here everything turned strange. It's the same as the day you were born. For ten years I thought I knew where I fit in this family, and then you came, and I had to relearn, and I do not like to learn. Dad called, and Grandmother brought me to the hospital room. It's a strange thing to see your own mother hold a newborn. It's like watching your own birth.

Roy, do you ever see Dad?

Roy looks at her, surprised.

ROY

What?

NAN

What did you see when Dad died? How did you know?

A pause.

After Dad died... you were about five years old... you told me once that you see him.

ROY

I said what?

NAN

You said, I see him.

A pause.

I said, "Where? Roy where do you see him?" You said, "I see him, when I sleep."

A pause.

ROY

"When I sleep."

NAN

But I don't think that was all.

A pause.

ROY

I wish so bad I could see him in a dream.

A pause.

NAN

I have the same dream over and over. He's standing on the porch. I'm standing with him, but his coffin's on the porch. I beg him to get back inside, back inside before Mom sees, but he don't listen.

In the dream, I'm afraid you or Mom will see him out walking.

(Ironic) A psychologist could analyze me for that.

ROY

Really? What would a psychologist say?

NAN

It's obvious, isn't it?

ROY

No.

NAN

He'd say that Dad died too young. That he wasn't ready.

ROY

What if it's not him, but you?

What if you weren't ready?

Silence.

NAN

One morning, I caved and told Mom about the dream.

ROY

What did she say?

NAN

She made a face.

She said, "That is awful. I hope you don't dream that again!"

ROY

A nightmare's better than nothing.

I wish you would give me that dream.

NAN

I believe in sleep. Your body rests but your mind keeps taking in life... You close your eyes to listen careful and you close your eyes to sleep. Maybe you see what you need to see every night, and then you wake up, and you don't remember what you know.

A pause.

ROY

The birds... at first glance... looked like ornaments.

She exits, into the house.

For a moment, Nan waters her flowers, reflectively.

As she does, Three Deer approach from the yard.

Nan turns and notices them, approaching her flowers.

She straightens up.

NAN

Son of a –

She empties her pitcher on the plants.

She throws down the pitcher.

The deer halt, as though caught in headlights.

For a moment, Nan engages in a psychic battle with the deer.

Then, the deer rush her.

She fights them off. She tackles them.

The fight looks like a dance.

Inevitably, they overpower her.

The deer rip up the remainder of her flowers and ditch the scene.

Exhausted, Nan collapses on the ground.

End of scene.

Scene Six.

Dusty and Mack dig in the woods.

The shotgun lies next to Mack.

They dig on opposite ends of the stage.

They seem to hear something and spring upright.

MACK

What's that?

They listen.

DUSTY

Just deer.

They continue digging.

MACK

We're awful close to the mounds.

DUSTY

More luck.

MACK

And if somebody – ?

DUSTY

No cause to be afraid.

Dusty walks toward the shotgun, picks it up.

Pistols get one shot. Shotguns spray.

He demonstrates, cocking the shotgun.

This sound tells you, Can't miss. This sound tells you, Run.

Mack takes the gun back.

They dig.

MACK

Angel Mounds.

They dig in silence.

DUSTY

Angel Dumps.

They laugh.

The angels took a dump on earth and we said, Fine territory!

MACK

The angels took a dump on earth and that's where we moved in.

(In the dirt) HEY.

DUSTY

Did you – ??

MACK

Oh... wait... Just flint.

Mack sifts through his dirt.

They work in silence.

MACK

(In the dirt) HEY.

DUSTY

Did you – ??

MACK

Oh... wait... Just bone.

That pity stuff 'bout makes me sick.

DUSTY

How you mean?

MACK

Orphan boy.

DUSTY

Don't know how you stand it.

MACK

Don't know how *you* stand it. Those women talk, talk, talk. Never say a thing. If you ever catch a moment's peace on the place you can bet they're dead.

MACK (Cont'd)

(In the dirt) HEEEEYYYY!

Mack continues digging.

OH SHIT. SHIT.

Dusty looks up.

Mack pulls an arrowhead from the dirt.

It's fluted. It's the real...

That's clovis. That's clovis. Shit.

Dusty starts to approach.

Mack grabs the shotgun, cocks it, and points it on Dusty.

Dusty freezes.

They stare at each other for a long moment,

Mack holds.

He drops the gun to his side.

He laughs very hard.

MACK

You shoulda seen your face.

He mimicks Dusty's expression of fear.

Dusty laughs, in relief.

He takes the arrowhead from Mack and examines it.

DUSTY

No shit. Fluted –

MACK

The banding –

DUSTY

Right. It's all right.

They turn over the arrowhead.

MACK

You think he's here somewhere?

DUSTY

Who?

MACK

Our Indian friend. The hunter.

Wandering the woods.

In eternal search of his shit.

Mack laughs.

DUSTY

SHHHHHH.

Mack stops laughing. Dusty listens close.

Listen.

A long pause.

MACK

What.

DUSTY

Shhh!

A pause.

I just. I thought I heard.

MACK

Someone coming?

DUSTY

I thought I heard...

MACK

What?

DUSTY

(Ghost voice) Maaaaaaaack.

Give back my shiiiiiiiit.

He listens, as though to a ghost.

He points to the arrowhead.

DUSTY (Cont'd)

(Regular voice) He says he's gonna shoot you.

MACK

(To Ghost-Dusty) Whatchu gonna shoot me with?

I got your arrowhead.

DUSTY

(Ghost voice) I've got a spare in the baaaaaack.

They laugh.

From the distant woods, the Man approaches them.

They jump.

MACK

Who're you?

A pause.

He takes a step closer.

DUSTY

Stop right there.

He comes closer.

DUSTY

STOP.

Mack cocks the shotgun, pointing at the Man.

The Man stops.

A moment.

The Man takes a step closer.

They run, taking the arrowhead with them.

The Man stands alone.

End of scene.

Scene Seven.

The sounds of a bonfire.

Loud music.

The Man leans against the wall, an observer.

Roy dances with a Faceless Boy.

Suddenly, she realizes she's dancing with Mack.

She breaks away from Mack and exits, running.

End of scene.

Scene Eight.

Night.

Roy enters the front porch, holding a carpet bag.

She takes a last look at the house.

A moment alone.

Mack enters from the backyard, carrying the shotgun, unseen by Roy.

He creeps toward the house.

He looks up at the moon, then howls at it.

MACK

(Howling) OOOOooooooooooooo.

ROY

What are you doing?

MACK

(Pointing) Full moon.

She looks up at it.

He scratches behind his ear frantically, like a dog.

ROY

Put the gun down.

MACK

Are you afraid?

ROY

Why.

MACK

I'm becoming a wolf.

ROY

Ha ha.

MACK

You feel it too?

ROY

What?

MACK

The moon. Makes you crazy.

I'm already crazy, but if you ain't yet, it makes you crazy.

ROY

That's not true.

MACK

Come with me.

ROY

What?

MACK

Come with me, Roy-girl.

ROY

Go to hell.

A pause.

MACK

If you don't, I'll set this house on fire.

ROY

Like hell you will.

MACK

Like hell, that's right. Whole damn thing.

He lights a cigarette, then exhales.

Poof.

ROY

What?

On the radio, we hear Mack's voice:

MACK (V.O.)

Come with me.

Roy turns between the radio and Mack:

ROY

No.

Where?

MACK (V.O.)

You know where.

ROY

Get out.

MACK

We don't have to get mean, Roy-girl. I'm asking nice. Look how nice I'm asking.

On the radio:

MACK (V.O.)

Come with me.

ROY

Stop that! you're crazy!

MACK

I doused the place with gas.

A pause.

ROY

You're a liar.

MACK

Just now. Took Dusty's gas can. I circled the whole house.

He continues smoking.

She stares.

MACK

I didn't want to ask mean.

But see, you give me no choice.

The radio echoes:

MACK (V.O.)

Come with me.

MACK

I made a trail, like a deer through the woods.

(Waving the cigarette) I drop this right here – poof!

ROY

Put it out.

MACK

You first.

ROY

I'm gonna scream.

MACK

You do, I drop it.

A long pause.

She screams

When she does, the Man enters.

Mack drops the cigarette.

The lights turn red.

The radio plays the sound of fire crackling.

Roy runs for Nan's pitcher.

She stops when she encounters the Man.

ROY

(To the Man) Help.

Mack turns to see the Man.

MACK

(To Roy) What do you want his help for?

Why are you afraid of me?

My whole life, people afraid of me. Like a wild animal.

Why are you afraid?

ROY

Help.

The Man approaches Mack.

MACK

(To Roy) Shut up!

(To the Man) You. Back up!

What do you want from me?

(To Roy) Why ain't you afraid of him?

ROY

HELP.

The Man takes a step closer.

Mack wearing the Man's clothes, they look like mirror images.

The Man makes a gesture toward Mack, in compassion.

Mack leaps back.

Mack cocks the gun.

He shoots the Man.

Blood seeps through the Man's shirt.

At the sound of the gunshot, Nan enters.

NAN

NO!

Nan runs past Mack, toward the Man,

who remains standing.

NAN

YOU KILLED HIM.

The Man touches the blood on his shirt.

Nan weeps, hysterical.

The Man stands there, watching her.

You killed him.

ROY

(*To Mack*) Killer.

Mack hesitates.

Dusty enters, from the woods.

DUSTY

Mack?

MACK

(*To Roy*) Why was you afraid of me? I wouldn't of had to shoot if you didn't make me. You made me, so I killed him. I killed him and I don't need nobody's pity! I don't need no pity 'cause I dug an arrowhead cold-blooded and it was nothing, like I dreamed it! I'm a no-good shot but I shot him alright and I don't take nobody's pity, not from you or God or nobody! People afraid of me. There! There's your reason to be afraid.

Mack exits, running.

They watch the Man, who remains standing, bleeding.

NAN

(*To the Man; wearily*) You're supposed to get back inside!

Why won't you just lay down?

It would be so easy.

The Man continues to stand.

Roy hesitates to approach him.

Nan turns to Dusty.

NAN

(*To Dusty*) Where were you?

He pauses.

You were digging, weren't you? Digging for those damned arrowheads I told you not to dig up. That I told you not to disturb. Let them rest in peace, I said, and did you listen?

A pause.

Please leave me alone.

DUSTY

For tonight?

NAN

For as long as we both shall live.

Silence.

DUSTY

I set a trap for that groundhog.

I'll be back to check on it in the morning.

I'll get him. Don't worry. One of these days.

Just a matter of waiting.

He stares at Nan, who refuses to look him in the eye.

He turns to exit. As he goes, he watches the house burn:

It's turning to ash, this place. One puff of smoke.

It ain't even wood, once it turns to ash.

Entirely different substance.

No, I don't recognize it anymore.

Dusty looks at the house, then Nan.

He exits.

For a moment, Roy and Nan watch the house burn.

NAN

(A realization) You snowbird.

You made it where it's warm.

A pause.

You think the fire's spreading?

Roy picks up Nan's pitcher,

She pours the water over Nan's head, like a baptism.

ROY

There. You're safe.

The Man approaches Roy.

Nan observes the two of them, now face to face.

Suddenly, Roy appears struck.

ROY

I remember.

NAN

What?

ROY

You asked what I saw, a long time ago, and it's coming back to me. Like your dream coming back, it's coming back to me... and now it's here. Here, right now, no dream.

A pause.

Mom was at work. Dad was at the hospital for a hernia procedure. Visit scribbled on refrigerator calendar. A routine procedure. You were watching me, the child. I was five. You, fifteen.

Saturday. Routine procedure. I'm playing outside. In the mud, with trucks. Routine. You're inside. TV playing far away, like music in a dream. Child's feet stomping. Glass door punching.

Creak of handle. Handle rusting. Handle shaking. Child screaming. Child hysterical. "Daddy's dead." Heart in ears. "Daddy's dead, Daddy's dead." You scream, "Stop that!" Child sobbing. Out the window. Smell of corn. Smell of only corn. Child wailing. Face swelling. Check for strangers. Check for strange men.

Screaming, "Daddy's fine!" Heart pounding. Sight of corn. Sight of only corn. Child screaming. "Daddy's dead." "Stop that!" Snot dripping. Sweat stinking. You strip off my clothes. Strip off all my clothes. Put me in the bathtub. Water running. Water over legs. Downy legs. Water cooling. Child hiccupping. Face swollen. Eyes flinching. TV far away.

Two hours later. Door closes. Mom home. Procedure gone wrong. Miles away. On the table. Heart attack.

The Man turns to exit.

They watch him go.

Little girl. In the yard. In the mud. Saw. Felt.

You still don't know.

NAN

I believe.

End of Play.