

RUMORS OF POLAR BEARS

A full-length dramedy

by Jonathan Dorf

Cast of Characters

DEME, 18, female, survivalist meets teen next door.
ROMULUS, 15 or 16, male, Deme's brother, happy go lucky, a bit punk and sensitive all in one bundle.
ADAM, male, around Deme's age, punk meets beach meets Mad Max.
EVE, same age, Adam's girlfriend and not the sharpest tack.
SCRUBS, 13, hyperactive girl, something of a mascot like Anybodys from *West Side Story*.
IKE, 18, male.
TINA, 18, female, Ike's girlfriend.

Inhabitants of New San Francisco

ANDI, 18, female, their leader, short for Andromeda.
CASSIE, 15, female, her younger sister, short for Cassandra, green meets punk.
DOC, 18, female, a self-styled "doctor."

Noah and Mrs. Middleton's Former Pre-Kindergarten Drama Class
ECHO, an impish boy a little younger than Scrubs.
NOAH, around Deme's age, once a child prodigy musician, could be played by the actor who played Adam or Ike.
MERCURY, mid-teens, either gender, injured member of Mrs. Middleton's Former Pre-K class.

The Bikers

PAN, female, leader of a Mad Max-like gang of bikers terrorizing the West.
KALI, female, the consummate schemer and brains behind Pan.
TEEN CAPTIVE, female, though could be male.

Peoples of the First Nations

NANNURALUK, male, around Deme's age or slightly older, leader of the First Nations tribe.
KINGUYAKKI, female, Romulus' age and younger sister of Nannuraluk, played by the actor who plays Cassie.
UGALIK, male, young brother of Kinguyakkii and on his way to becoming a shaman, Echo's age and played by the same actor.

ENSEMBLE to play the inhabitants of New San Francisco (all female), Mrs. Middleton's Former Pre-Kindergarten Drama Class, bikers, First Nations warriors, flexible in number but preferably 6-8 minimum, with no maximum.

Only Deme, Romulus and Scrubs appear in all three parts of the cycle, so productions wishing to limit cast size are encouraged to use multiple casting.

Cast with Suggested Multiple Casting

DEME
ROMULUS
SCRUBS

ADAM/NOAH
EVE/KALI
IKE/NANNURALUK
TINA/PAN
ANDI/TEENAGE CAPTIVE
CASSIE/KINGUYAKKI
DOC/MERCURY
ECHO/UGALIK
ENSEMBLE

Notes on Names

Some names are fairly obvious in their pronunciations, but others not so much. To that end, below is pronunciation and origin information where I felt it might be useful.

DEME (DEM-ee) is short for Demeter.

ROMULUS (RAHM-u-luss) comes from the Roman myth. When shortened to Romey, while it could be pronounced RAH-mee, I always thought (until the first reading) that it would be pronounced RO-mee (as in Romeo).

KALI (KAH-lee) is named for the Hindu goddess of death.

NANNURALUK (nah-noo-RAH-luke) is one of the names for "polar bear" in Inuit.

KINGUYAKKI (king-oo-YAH-kee) means "Northern Lights" in Inuit.

UGALIK (OO-gah-leek) means "arctic hare" in Inuit.

Setting Notes

Settings can be largely suggested, though the kiddie pool is necessary, and there should likely be at least a few selected set pieces that hint at the recycled nature of New San Francisco. In the Cambridge-Isanti production of the one-act (Act I), they constructed an elaborate city of recycled junk that hung in the air. A good designer should feel free to go to town, as long as the set doesn't prevent the play from moving quickly.

The kiddie pool itself is most likely round and plastic, the kind that parents put in the yard for their small children - making it all the more ridiculous when the teens frolic in it.

Production Notes

In Act I, Scene 1, "freeway" may be replaced with "highway," depending on what suits your production.

It is not impossible for productions to substitute local examples for the geography used in the play, but great care should be taken to find examples that have the same sensibility. Thus, beginning in Act I, Scene 3, you may use something other than "New San

Francisco," but try to find a word that is not only similar in meaning, but also in its musicality.

Similarly, in Act I, Scene 6, productions may substitute equivalent local examples for the Colorado River, California and Nevada, keeping in mind that in the original example, there really is considerable tension over this water. The line that refers to "mass evacuations of coastal regions" could be "shore regions" or "the flood plain" or something similarly appropriate if the location you're using is near a lake or river instead of an ocean.

It is important to avoid blackouts as much as possible between scenes.

Acknowledgments

The one-act version of *Rumors of Polar Bears* premiered at Cambridge-Isanti High School in Cambridge, Minnesota in May 2010 under the direction of Kelly Fairchild-Fahrni.

Special thanks to Jonathan Munoz-Proulx, who directed the first reading of the full-length play, and to Dr. Lawrence Kaplan of the Alaska Native Language Center at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, for his assistance with the Inuit language.

ACT I: OIL AND WATER

SCENE 1

The near future. Somewhere in California, north of Los Angeles. DEME, 18, female, appears in a spotlight. Her clothes are survivalist meets teen next door, but it's better if the light can hit just her face. Her head is well-covered to shield it from the sun.

DEME

I always wanted a baby polar bear. Its fur would be so white, I could hold it in my arms and rock it to sleep at night, and it would be soft and pure next to me. And each day we'd play games, the kind of games that parents and their baby polar bears play, and as it gets older it would know how to be.

(Beat.)

That's how it is with a lot of things. If we only got them when they were babies, maybe a lot of these things wouldn't have happened. And now the polar bears have gone far, far away. Or maybe they're just gone.

Lights up to reveal Deme in a blighted landscape. Nearby, a squatter tent dwelling that has the feel of having been patched and mended repeatedly. ROMULUS, 15 or 16, enters. His clothing has the same survivalist streak, with a hint of punk in his boy next door wear. He has a bag slung over his shoulder.

ROMULUS

Sun's down.

DEME

And?

ROMULUS

Friday night.

(Beat.)

Friday night!

DEME

Don't know how you even keep track.

ROMULUS

(Singing it like a jingle:)

Friday night is party night.

ROMULUS (CONT'D)

(Points at his watch:)

It's magic. The magic watch that never stops.

DEME

It will.

ROMULUS

Sourpuss.

(Singing again:)

Friday night is party night. Make your work week come out right.

DEME

Speaking of work...

ROMULUS

Let's not speak of it.

(Once more singing:)

Friday night-

DEME

If you sing that one more time...

ROMULUS

You'll what.

DEME

Don't push me.

Romulus pushes her super gently,
just to be annoyingly literal.

DEME (CONT'D)

You know that's not what I meant.

ROMULUS

(Singing:)

Friday night-

DEME

Don't-

ROMULUS

(Continuing:)

is-

DEME

Romulus, I mean it.

ROMULUS

(Beat.)

Here.

He pulls a bunch of cans out of his bag.

ROMULUS (CONT'D)

Tuna. Garbanzo beans. Creamed spinach. Creamed corn. Cream of wheat. Score or what?

DEME

You always do this.

ROMULUS

I didn't know cream of wheat came in a can.

(Beat.)

I always do what?

DEME

You always hold a few back until I'm mad, and then they pop out, peace offering.

ROMULUS

I come in peace.

(Beat.)

Is it working?

She hauls off as if to hit him. He flinches, but she runs her hand through his hair gently. Then she grabs his hair hard.

ROMULUS (CONT'D)

Ow!

She kisses his hair and lets go.

DEME

How many cans are left down there?

ROMULUS

Dunno. It's dark.

DEME

More or less.

ROMULUS

Probably less. Come on - it's Friday night. Can't we wait and be end of the world again on Monday?

(Beat.)

What?

DEME

That's such a Mom thing.

ROMULUS

Yeah?

(Beat.)

I think I remember less each day.

DEME

(As their mom:)

Don't be all end of the world, Deme.

ROMULUS

I write in my book, but it just feels less and less real.

DEME

Dad had no sense of humor.

ROMULUS

I don't remember him at all.

DEME

You were three.

ROMULUS

Three should be good for something.

DEME

That was a crowded year.

ROMULUS

I hope he doesn't hate me for not remembering.

DEME

(Beat.)

Why are we talking like this? It's Friday night.

(Singing:)

Friday night is party night.

ROMULUS AND DEME

Make your work week come out right.

ROMULUS

I'm goin' in head first this time.

DEME

Ha.

ROMULUS

One of these days I will. Dive bomber!

DEME

You ready?

ROMULUS

You got the stuff?

Deme pulls a shoulder bag of her own from inside the squat.

DEME

Do you have to ask?

Romulus howls, as if sending a signal to distant friends. He's answered by cawing and barking and howling from elsewhere in the area.

ROMULUS

To the party pool!

Lights dim, except for the spotlight on Deme.

DEME

The year Romulus turned three, I remember a man in a designer pin-striped suit and perfectly polished shoes swinging a sledgehammer at every inch of his Hummer, screaming that he would no longer be part of the problem. And when he's done, he sits on the curb and points at me to come closer and he says he wants to set it on fire, but he can't, because he just can't hurt the planet any more. He grabs my hand and starts to cry, and he says he's sorry he's crying, but he can't help it and isn't there some way he could give back the Hummer and the half hour showers for just one more minute with his wife? And then he stands up, wipes his face, tells me the Oil and Water Wars are all his fault, and throws himself onto the freeway below.

(Beat.)

I made that up. Not the Hummer or the hammer or the crying or him taking my hand or the freeway. But the Oil and Water Wars didn't start for another week, and that's just what we call them now because there's nobody to tell us different.

The lights may go to black if absolutely necessary, but it would be better for them to crossfade and come up on the new location.

SCENE 2

Not far away, and not long afterward. A kiddie pool, empty of water, sits in an otherwise barren patch of ground. A nearby sign used to read "Danger: Keep Out," but danger has been crossed out, and the words "private club" scrawled in graffiti over top. Enter Deme and Romulus.

ROMULUS

We're never first.

ADAM, Deme's age and dressed in a sort of punk meets beach meets Mad Max chic, steps out of the shadows.

ADAM

And you never are.

EVE, same age, his girlfriend and probably not the sharpest tack in the box, jumps out right after.

EVE

Ambush!

DEME

You're just a regular Bonnie and Clyde.

ADAM

Adam and Eve, thank you very much, and we coulda' water whacked you no thing.

ROMULUS

But you gave the signal.

EVE

(Mimicking him:)

But you gave the signal.

ADAM

Maybe we been waiting, watching for weeks, studying your ways...outlaws...

ROMULUS

Yeah, and maybe our parents are waiting for us at the spa.

EVE

What's a spa?

ADAM
Baby, it's not important.

EVE
I hate it when he uses words I don't know.

DEME
(To Adam:)
You're right.

EVE
I'm a poet.

DEME
We shoulda been more careful.

ROMULUS
But-

DEME
Shut it.

EVE
(Continuing her thought:)
Show some respect.

ADAM
Hey, we're here. It's all good.

DEME
Yeah, Eve. Give us one.

EVE
(Beat.)
OK.
(Her poem:)

Day hot sun dry hot
My favorite time is night
Pool of water wet!

DEME, ADAM AND ROMULUS
Amen.

EVE
Let's get this party started!

DEME
Where's Dare? And Tina and Ike?

SCRUBS, the youngest at 13 or 14,
bounds out of the bushes. She's
the Anybodys of their world.

SCRUBS
 What about where's me? I call first into the party pool!

Scrubs races out of her punk-Mad
 Max-tomgirl wear and into -
 considering the elements and
 dangers of exposure - a not quite
 bathing suit lickety split,
 jumping into the empty pool.

ROMULUS
 Hey - it's my turn.

SCRUBS
 Party water!

Romulus races to strip to a not
 quite bathing suit of his own.

SCRUBS (CONT'D)
 (Chanting:)
 Pour! Pour!

ROMULUS
 Wait!

SCRUBS
 Pour! Pour!

Deme pulls a gallon jug out of
 her bag and pours its contents
 into the kiddie pool. The
 resulting "pool" is laughable:
 we're talking inches of water.

SCRUBS (CONT'D)
 Woohoo!

Enter TINA and IKE, about the
 same age as Deme, Adam and Eve.
 They dress about the same, but
 with maybe just a bit more of a
 designer edge. They look gaunt.

ROMULUS
 That's enough, Scrubs. My turn now.

SCRUBS
 Says who?

ROMULUS
 Says me.

I says too. EVE

Where's Dare? DEME
(To Ike and Tina:)

I just started partyin. SCRUBS
 Rock on! Rock on hard! (Her party call:)

Scrubs jumps around and frolics
as if this is the best thing
ever.

He's tired. IKE

You gonna dive in? DEME
(To Romulus:)

Maybe I will. ROMULUS

Romey says he's going to dive in. DEME

Adam tries to push his way past
Romulus, but Romulus blocks him.

It's my turn. ROMULUS

Not if I get there first. ADAM

Tina, you OK? DEME

Ad, let him go. EVE

Adam and Romulus struggle
playfully. Of course, just as
Adam starts to get past Romulus,
he has to stop to strip down to
his swim gear, which gives
Romulus time to block him again.

Not this week. ROMULUS

ADAM
I am the king of the party pool!

SCRUBS
Party, party!

EVE
Adam!

ADAM
I'm just havin' fun with him.
(Beat.)
Fine.

Adam lets go of Romulus, then
feints at him. Romulus flinches,
but stands his ground.

ROMULUS
Blow, Scrubs.

Beat. Scrubs gets out. Romulus
jumps in.

ROMULUS (CONT'D)
Party, party!

ADAM, EVE, SCRUBS, ROMULUS
Party, party! etc.

Adam, Eve and Scrubs dance around
the party pool, while Romulus
frolics in it. Deme studies Ike
and Tina, who looks longingly at
the pool. Beat. Tina can't take
it anymore and runs for the party
pool, pushing the others out of
the way and drinking from the
pool.

ROMULUS
Don't drink the party water.

ADAM
Yeah - if you drink it, what are we gonna party in?

Tina stops drinking.

TINA
Sorry. I was just really...thirsty.

DEME
Where's Dare?

EVE

Yeah. How we gonna party in the pool if you drink the water?
Then we'd have to be sad all the time.

IKE

Dare's tired. He's lying down.

DEME

(Beat.)

Is he lying down, Tina?

IKE

I just told you-

DEME

Tina?

Beat. Tina shakes her head.

DEME (CONT'D)

Romey, get out of the water.

ROMULUS

But we're partyin-

DEME

Get out of the water now!

This time Romulus doesn't
hesitate. He gets out and grabs
his clothes. During this
exchange, the others retreat ever
so slightly from Ike and Tina.

DEME (CONT'D)

(To Tina:)

Where's Dare?

TINA

We thought he just got too much sun - his skin had this
splotch-

DEME

Like all over or in one place?

TINA

One place. Like a dot.

DEME

Like a bite?

TINA

I dunno. And then he got a fever and the sweats and more splotches and we kept givin' him water but it didn't help and then he...

DEME

We have to leave.

ROMULUS

Leave? Why?

EVE

Adam, what's going on?

DEME

Leave for good.

IKE

There's nothing wrong with us.

DEME

And Dare's just tired. Right, Ikey?

Tina can't help herself. She drinks voraciously from the kiddie pool.

SCRUBS

Tina, you're drinking the party water.

DEME

Show us your splotches.

IKE

We gave our part to Dare, that's all.

DEME

I bet you got 'em too.

Until the end of the scene, Deme keeps her distance from Ike and Tina.

IKE

Tina, stop it!

Tina stops drinking again.

DEME

We've gotta go.

ROMULUS

Where?

DEME
I don't know yet. North.

ROMULUS
Why do we have to go anywhere?

EVE
Yeah. We live here.

DEME
(To Eve:)
Nobody says you have to go anywhere.

ROMULUS
So why do I?

ADAM
You can stay with us.

DEME
How long do you think you got?

EVE
Yeah. Stay with us.

DEME
How long til you get whatever they got?

ADAM
We go out there, we get water whacked for sure.

SCRUBS
I ain't gettin' water whacked.

DEME
For what? For our nothing?

ADAM
They don't know that.

DEME
There's no they. When's the last time we even heard a voice?

ROMULUS
(Beat - indicating Ike and
Tina:)
We can't just leave 'em here.

Deme starts to pack. Beat.
Romulus seethes, but he joins
Deme in packing, getting road
clothes, etc. Adam, Eve and
Scrubs follow suit.

DEME

And we didn't.

(Beat.)

I had a string from the place where the cans had almost run out.

She lets the string go, and Ike grabs it. Deme begins to walk, and it unravels until it extends across the stage. Adam, Eve, Romulus and Scrubs walk near Deme, while Ike and Tina walk at the end of the string, with Ike holding it.

DEME (CONT'D)

That was how far they had to be. Romey wouldn't look at me for three days. But none of us caught what they had. And on the fourth day-

Ike lets go of the string, and the lights fade on him and Tina.

DEME (CONT'D)

It could have been any of us. It could have been all of us.

(To Romulus:)

It could have been you.

ROMULUS

Don't expect me to say thanks.

(Beat.)

And now what?

DEME

We keep going.

ROMULUS

What's wrong with here?

DEME

Too hot.

ADAM

It's perfect.

EVE

Yeah. I love it.

DEME

It'll get worse.

ADAM

We're almost out of cans. We gotta restock.

DEME
From where? Got a better chance up north.

ADAM
Yeah - of runnin' out.

DEME
I heard buzzing last night.

ROMULUS
Every time you hear a bug now we move?

EVE
I don't think so.

SCRUBS
You don't even know that's what happened.

ROMULUS
Not for sure.

ADAM
(Running at Eve:)
Buggggzzz... Bzzz...

EVE
(Playing:)
Don't let it get me!

Adam chases Eve around. Scrubs joins in. Even Romulus gets into it, as they run all over the stage, with Romulus ultimately pantomiming a horrible death just as he looks up to realize that he's surrounded by TEENAGE GIRLS armed with makeshift weapons. Your production can use as many women as it likes, but there should be enough that the five characters already on stage appear to be in jeopardy.

SCENE 3

Very theatrically, perhaps almost as a dance sequence - but more hip-hop/street/modern than ballet - the armed Teenage Girls break apart the group, prodding them in separate directions. One by one, they are whirled toward DOC, female, 18 or 19 and wearing a surgical-style mask and gloves, then returned to the middle - all except for Romulus, who disappears completely. Deme, Adam, Eve and Scrubs are left alone on stage.

DEME

How long has it been?

(Beat.)

It's been too long.

(Beat - to the now vanished Teenage Girls:)

Hey! Why you takin' so long on him?

(Pause.)

Hey!

A liquid-filled metal cannister rolls onto the stage. They eye it suspiciously.

SCRUBS

What is it?

DEME

Don't touch it.

SCRUBS

But what is it?

ADAM

Maybe it's a bomb.

EVE

Don't play.

ADAM

I'll protect you, baby.

SCRUBS

(Poking at it very gently:)

It's squishy.

DEME

It's metal.

(Beat.)

I said hey!

SCRUBS

Maybe they killed him, and that's his blood.

Deme leaps at Scrubs, who zips out of the way. Adam and Eve restrain Deme.

ADAM

(To Scrubs:)

You shut up.

(To Deme:)

Come on - you know she's just trouble with legs.

(Beat.)

You good?

DEME

As long as she stays over there.

Adam and Eve let Deme go, though both stay close. Deme feints at Scrubs, who flinches and keeps her distance.

ADAM

If everybody's too creepers to look, I'll do it.

EVE

Careful, baby!

He gets in front of it. Studies it. Beat. He opens it, then gets down and sniffs.

ADAM

Water.

DEME

Sure?

Beat. He tips it toward his mouth.

EVE

Adam!

He sips.

ADAM

Wet. Water.

EVE
They gave us water?

Eve and Deme gather around for their drink, but Scrubs hangs back.

DEME
Save some for Romey.

SCRUBS
(Beat.)
What about me?

Deme gives her a long look, then turns away.

SCRUBS (CONT'D)
I miss the party pool.

Deme steps out of the scene.

DEME
Scrubs is-

Scrubs walks into Deme's "out of time" moment.

SCRUBS
I can talk about myself.

DEME
Scrubs has no sense of boundaries.
(Beat.)
It's *my* monologue.

SCRUBS
So?
(Beat.)
Fine.

Scrubs goes back into the scene.

DEME
That's how she's been since we found her. Yeah, if she does the tellin', she'll leave out the part where she's a stick thin carcass on the side of the road a few hours short of a prophet to send her home. But as cold as the body's headed, the eyes are fire. She shoulda been dead a week before we found her, but those eyes didn't believe they should close.
(Beat.)
Those eyes believe in the polar bears too. Even if sometimes I want to stick my fist so far up that big mouth it's gonna come out the back of her head and wave.

The lights shift.

DEME (CONT'D)

Give her a sip.

(To Scrubs:)

But count to 100 in your head before you swallow it. Slow.

SCRUBS

But-

DEME

100.

EVE

(Sidling up to Deme:)

Do you get more out of it that way?

DEME

I just want her to shut up for a couple minutes.

The lights fade on them and up on where Romulus stands alone.

CASSIE, same age as Romulus and dressed in a green meets punk motif, as are most of the others of her settlement, watches him, cautious but compelled. A pair of Guards from the raiding party stand at a watchful distance.

ANDI (OFF)

Don't go near him.

CASSIE

I'm not.

ROMULUS

Where's Deme?

ANDI (OFF)

You are.

ROMULUS

Where's my sister?

CASSIE

Oh my God - you're right. He's a zombie. Help! He's eating my brains!

(Beat.)

The other ones aren't broken. Why should he be?

Doc, backpack slung over her shoulders, approaches.

DOC
 Only takes one.
 (To Romulus:)
 Turn out your pockets.

Romulus obeys.

ROMULUS
 What are you doing?

DOC
 I'm a doctor.

She shoves a thermometer in his
 mouth.

ROMULUS
 There's nothing-

DOC
 Don't talk.

CASSIE
 He's fine.

DOC
 (To Cassie:)
 Move back.

She pulls the thermometer out of
 his mouth and checks it.

ROMULUS
 You can't be a doctor. You're my sister's age.

DOC
 (Meaning he's not sick:)
 OK.

Doc takes off her mask.

DOC (CONT'D)
 Welcome to New San Francisco.

Lights up on the rest of the
 stage - and the entirely recycled
 set of New San Francisco, which
 can be as elaborate or as
 suggested as your production
 needs. Deme, Adam, Eve and Scrubs
 are there, reunited with Romulus.
 Deme hugs him tight.

Rock on!

SCRUBS

I'm fine.

ROMULUS

I didn't know what-

DEME

I'm fine.

ROMULUS

I'm fine. Really. (Beat - not so harsh:)

Deme nods.

Rock on hard...

SCRUBS

New San Francisco.

DEME

We started with nothing.

ANDI

Each New San Francisco Chorus line is meant to be said by a different individual, though it is possible for your production to experiment with having the same line said by multiple actors at once.

NEW SAN FRANCISCO CHORUS

We love it here.
We like it.

ANDI

Everything is made out of something that was before.

NEW SAN FRANCISCO CHORUS

We have a stream.
We think it's clean.

ADAM

I smelled the water, and it doesn't smell.

NEW SAN FRANCISCO CHORUS

We boil it in case, but we think it's clean.

ANDI

We heat our water with the sun.

NEW SAN FRANCISCO CHORUS

Can't be too careful.
Not after what happened before.

CASSIE

Warm showers.

NEW SAN FRANCISCO CHORUS

A sauna.
We got a spa.

SCRUBS

Rock on.

NEW SAN FRANCISCO CHORUS

We have light here.
Cooking.
And a garden.
Steamed veggies.

ROMULUS

No more fishing in dark holes for cans.

EVE

New San Francisco.

ANDI

And it was good.

CASSIE

As good as it gets.

NEW SAN FRANCISCO CHORUS

Don't forget the windmill.
Two next week.
Then three.
Our carbon footprint...

CASSIE

Invisible.

ANDI

Give more than we take.

EVE

New San Francisco.
Sun, wind, water - starting over.
Makes it feel like home.

NEW SAN FRANCISCO CHORUS

Some of the plants aren't as green as they were.
Some of the plants are turning brown.
There's not as much water as there was.
There's water on the other side of the mountains.

NEW SAN FRANCISCO CHORUS (CONT'D)

Salt water.
 The other side of the mountains is underwater.
 With water we can't drink.

ANDI

Water for the plants.

CASSIE

I see green again.

NEW SAN FRANCISCO CHORUS

Breathe again.
 We can all breathe again.
 Cassie sees it.
 The visions.
 They're never wrong.
 It'll all heal.

ADAM

I could get used to this, baby. Livin' the spa life.

EVE

Spa. Why is everybody so nutty about spa?

ADAM

Compared to before, this is heaven.

ANDI

You help, you can stay.

EVE

Tell me what spa is right now, or I'm gonna scream.

SCRUBS

I want to see me some plants.

FIRST TEEN GIRL

I'll show you.

SECOND TEEN GIRL

We garden.

ADAM

Spa is the most beautiful word in the world.

SCRUBS

Can I garden?

EVE

More beautiful than party pool?

FIRST TEEN GIRL

Rock on, girl.

SCRUBS
 (Recognizing a kindred
 spirit:)

Rock on!

Scrubs exits with the First and
 Second Teen Girls.

ADAM
 Somebody take us to the spa.

EVE
 To the spa!

The Third and Fourth Teen Girl
 (or any others from the New San
 Francisco Chorus) escort Adam and
 Eve offstage.

ROMULUS
 I'll do something. We help we can stay, right?

ANDI
 That's right.

ROMULUS
 What you want me to do?

DEME
 (Sotto to Romulus:)
 We're not staying.

ROMULUS
 Why not?

ANDI
 What can you do?

DEME
 Not the right place.

ROMULUS
 Why not?
 (To Andi:)
 What you need doin'?

DEME
 This valley's dying.

ROMULUS
 You got it flipped. They're bringing it back.
 (To Andi:)
 But you got something for me, right?

ANDI

We got work for everybody that wants it.

ROMULUS

I want it.

DEME

There are no polar bears here.

ROMULUS

Maybe there aren't any anywhere. How do you know they aren't all gone?

ANDI

The water in the valley is headed this way. We're gonna dam it up, use it for the gardens. You can help with that.

DEME

(To Andi:)

Thanks, but we won't be staying.

ANDI

If we can just get the salt out.

ROMULUS

I'll help.

DEME

We'll do what we need for a couple weeks of road food.

ROMULUS

I don't care about stupid polar bears.

ANDI

Polar bears?

DEME

We're going north. That's where they are.

ANDI

Polar bears are killers.

DEME

We'll be safe there.

ANDI

You're safe here.

DEME

Are we?

ANDI

Things are good here.

ROMULUS

I want to stay.

ANDI

(Beat.)

You don't look for a killer - unless you want to die.

SCENE 4

Later that day. Cassie approaches Romulus, who writes in a small, ratty notebook. They shouldn't be lit for us to see them, but Andi and Deme are in their respective corners of the stage.

CASSIE
Dinner's almost ready.

ROMULUS
Not from a can?

CASSIE
Not from a can. What's that?

ROMULUS
Helps me remember things.

CASSIE
What kind of things?

ROMULUS
Things I don't want to forget.

There's an awkward silence.

CASSIE
So...your sister and my sister...meow!

She makes clawing gestures in the air.

ROMULUS
Sorry about that.

CASSIE
Not your fault.

Another awkward silence. There's a hint of attraction in the air.

CASSIE (CONT'D)
What's it like?

ROMULUS
What?

CASSIE
Out there.

Romulus shrugs.

CASSIE (CONT'D)

What's that mean?

ROMULUS

Sometimes stuff just *is*, you know?

CASSIE

Is good or *is* bad?

ROMULUS

How come there's no other guys?

CASSIE

Sometimes stuff just *is*.

(Beat.)

There were, where we used to be. The twins, Matthew and Luke. Then there was John...and Peter. Peter was the funny one. He'd find these dead flowers on the ground, and he'd try to water them with spit and give them to me. One time, his mouth is so dry, there's hardly any spit and what there is can't get into the air - only he doesn't know it. And so he smiles and gives me these dead dandelions and then he realizes he's got this glob all over his chin, and he's trying to get it with his tongue while he's still smiling and bowing and holding out the flowers. I'm like, "Peter, I think the dandelions could use a few more drops." And he says, "I think you're right." And he wipes them on his chin and put them in my hand.

(Beat.)

He was the first to go. Andi says that's so he could be at the gates for us. I don't know what that means. I just know he's gone.

ROMULUS

He sounds pretty cool.

Cassie nods.

CASSIE

And then we left and found this place.

ROMULUS

Why do they say you see things?

CASSIE

Because I do.

ROMULUS

How?

Cassie shrugs.

CASSIE

(Beat.)

I've got some pictures before the - Andi calls it Tipping Day.

ROMULUS

You've got pictures?

CASSIE

(Continuing her thought:)

Like it was happening a little all the time. Just a little. So little you don't even notice. Until one day it just...tipped.

She pantomimes a tipping motion with her hands.

ROMULUS

I want to see the pictures.

CASSIE

It's almost like that here. Like it was before.

ROMULUS

Please.

CASSIE

I can show you.

ROMULUS

I'd like that.

He reaches out and takes her hand. Enter Adam and Eve.

EVE

The spa!

Enter Scrubs from another direction.

ADAM AND EVE

(Rocking out:)

Spa spa spa, etc.

EVE

They've got this glass that makes the rocks hot.

ADAM

From the sun.

EVE

And they steam.

Best ever... ADAM

What about the party pool? SCRUBS

That was good times. ROMULUS

That was nothing. ADAM

What's the party pool? CASSIE

Zero. EVE

The spa is the new party pool. ADAM

Just this place we used to go. ROMULUS

The party pool is dead. Long live the party spa. ADAM

The party spa. SCRUBS

Party spa! Party spa! (etc) ADAM, EVE AND SCRUBS

It looks like they're about to parade off.

Dinner's ready. ANDI

Party spa... ADAM, EVE AND SCRUBS

After dinner! Party spa- ADAM

After dinner! EVE, SCRUBS, ROMULUS

You should come. ROMULUS

I've been to the spa before. CASSIE

But not the party spa!

ROMULUS

All start to dance offstage as the lights dim, except for Deme, who remains, almost reclusive, in one corner, watching the proceedings, and Andi, similarly reclusive, in the other.

SCENE 5

After dinner. From offstage, we hear "party spa, party spa" and other improvised sounds of fun. On stage, Cassie and Andi are in one area, and Romulus and Deme are in another. The conversations are separate, though intertwined.

ROMULUS (CONT'D)

Come on - everybody's there.

DEME

The party spa?

ANDI

This is a bad idea.

CASSIE

Come on - it's just one night.

ROMULUS

(Singing the jingle from
before:)

Friday night is party night.

ANDI

Pretty soon it'll be just one more night and one more night
after that-

DEME

How do you even know it's Friday?

ROMULUS

The magic watch that never stops.

CASSIE

You say you want it to be normal, but you don't want us to do
normal things.

ANDI

The party spa is normal?

DEME

Things don't stay forever, Romey.

CASSIE

Romey says it'll be the most fun I ever had.

ANDI

Romey?

ROMULUS
You always see the worst in everything.

ANDI
(Realizing Cassie likes him -
teasing:)
Romey...well, if Romey says...

DEME
I see what's real.

ANDI
Romey Romey Romey...

CASSIE
(Embarrassed:)
Stop.

ANDI
Romey-

CASSIE
Stop.

ANDI
(Finishes "Romeo":)
-O.

ROMULUS
Your polar bears aren't real.

CASSIE
Did you just smile?

ANDI
No.

DEME
They are.

ROMULUS
They're ghosts. It's like some guy a long time ago said, "I think there's some polar bears up north." Or maybe he didn't even say up north. Maybe your head made that up. Maybe all he said was "I saw polar bears once. At the zoo. Before everything fell apart. Before it all tipped."

ANDI
You still see it green, right?

CASSIE
Green as grass grows.

ANDI

(Beat.)

Go - with Romey.

CASSIE

Thanks!

Cassie gives Andi a hug and starts to go, lingering at the edge of the stage as if waiting for Romulus.

ROMULUS

You should come.

DEME

We need to go.

ROMULUS

Come on - it'll be like it used to be. Only better.

DEME

(Beat.)

I'll look. For a minute.

He meets up with Cassie.

ROMULUS

To the party spa!

They exit, leaving Andi and Deme alone in their areas, perhaps staring across at each other for a beat before Andi exits. Deme stays on stage, unlit, a shadow.

SCENE 6

Enter Scrubs, fresh from the party spa. She should have her own light, and Deme should stay unlit and almost invisible.

SCRUBS

Deme ain't watchin', so I finally get to speak my mind. Whole time we're partyin' it up at the spa, she's watchin' us. I can't barely enjoy the wet hot 'cause I can feel her staring a hole through me, through everybody.

(Beat.)

And while we're on the subject, that part about me being half-dead, that's what we call an exaggeration. For real I'm just sleepin on the side of the road, catchin my breath. Don't let her tell you different. My mom is sleepin too.

(Beat.)

Only reason I even stick with her is that sometimes she teaches me stuff, only I hate all the stuff she teaches me. It's boring and useless. Like the word euphemism. Sleeping is a euphemism for dead.

The lights come up across more of the stage, and Scrubs joins Romulus, Adam, Eve, Cassie and some of the New San Franciscans, all dressed as if they've just come from the party spa - perhaps similarly to their party pool attire of earlier. Deme observes from a distance, and Andi enters sometime during this choral moment. Each of these lines could be said by any of the New San Franciscans, or by anyone but Deme, Cassie, Romulus or Andi.

CHORUS OF NEW SAN FRANCISCANS

She needs to stop staring.
 She needs to stop talking.
 Maybe she's right.
 The ground is turning browner.
 The plants are dying.
 You're imagining it.
 She says it, and now you're seeing it.
 Listen to Cassie, not to her.

(To Romulus:)

Why did you bring her to the party spa?
 She ruined everything.
 The garden is fine.
 Not if we waste the water.
 You sound like her.
 You sound like my mother.

CHORUS OF NEW SAN FRANCISCANS

I miss my mom.
 I miss mine too.
 Breaking news: units of the California National Guard have
 opened fire on Nevadans guarding the Colorado River aquifer.
 The governor of California has denied all responsibility and
 said-
 These units are acting alone.
 Planes are coming.
 Anonymous sources confirm California acted while it still had
 sufficient supplies of oil to carry out an attack.
 Nevada retaliates.
 Mass evacuations of flooded coastal regions are underway.
 People are being left for dead.
 On the side of the road.
 Or worse.
 There is panic.
 Things are falling apart.
 Breaking down.
 It's chaos.

ANDI

Stop!

All comes to a grinding halt.
 Silence. It's as if that choral
 moment never was - almost.

ANDI (CONT'D)

There was a man. A week ago.

CASSIE

What man?

ANDI

A man in the valley. I didn't tell you. He was just passing
 through. No reason to tell you about a man just passing
 through.

(Beat.)

I gave him half my water. He says, "You give me the other
 half, I'll tell you a story you won't never believe, but that
 don't mean it's a lie." I pour him all but one mouthful, and
 he moves real close and whispers, "The polar bears. They're
 real, and I know where they are." No matter what I say, he
 won't say another word. "I've said too much," he says, and he
 takes a swallow, and then he's gone.

DEME

Where did he go?

Andi points north.

DEME (CONT'D)

A week?

Give or take. ANDI

Why didn't you say something? CASSIE

Maybe ten. ANDI

You should have said something. CASSIE

Like what? A man came and then he left. It's not like the world ended. People are out there. ANDI

Not around here. CASSIE

We'll leave soon as it's light. (To Romulus:) DEME

Not me. ADAM

We like it here. At the spa. EVE

You work, you stay. ANDI

Adam and Eve, workers
Party weekends at the spa
Good, better and best EVE

That's it, baby. ADAM

Nobody says you gotta come. DEME

I'm not goin' neither. SCRUBS

Either. DEME

Either way, I'm stayin' here. SCRUBS

ADAM

If we gotta work tomorrow, then tonight...I'm going back to the party spa!

SCRUBS

Rock on!

EVE

Woohoo!

Adam, Eve and Scrubs take off running, along with most of the rest of the New San Franciscans. Beat.

CASSIE

I'll go.

ANDI

(Not expecting this:)

What?!

CASSIE

I said I'm going.

There's more to Act I, but because that script is published by Playscripts, it's not here. But read on for more from the full-length play!

ACT II: URSA MAJOR

SCENE 1

North of New San Francisco. A blighted landscape in the early evening. Deme enters ahead of Romulus and Cassie. All are dressed for the road, their heads well-covered to shield them from the sun. They stop and survey their surroundings. Cassie looks back at where they came.

CASSIE (CONT'D)

I can't see the lights.

ROMULUS

Maybe they didn't turn them on yet.

CASSIE

It's getting dark. They shoulda turned them on.

Romulus taps his watch, trying to get it to work.

CASSIE (CONT'D)

Maybe something's wrong.

DEME

We're over a hill. Two hills. We can't see it from here.

(Beat.)

We'll rest now.

Deme pulls out food from her pack.

DEME (CONT'D)

Don't eat too much.

CASSIE

Took all we could carry.

DEME

Don't know how long it's gotta last.

CASSIE

The fresh'll go bad if we don't eat it.

ROMULUS

I think I can fix this.

DEME

The battery's dead.

I'm gonna fix it!

ROMULUS

You can't.

DEME

CASSIE
(Beat.)
Hey - guess what I brought.

What?

DEME

CASSIE
Romey, guess what I brought.
(Beat.)
Pictures.

ROMULUS
The pictures from before?!

Cassie opens her pack and pulls out an envelope that is wrapped several times. She unwraps it carefully as Deme and Romulus gather around. She presents the first picture.

CASSIE
That's Venice.

ROMULUS
Where's that?

DEME
It was part of Los Angeles...before.

ROMULUS
And now?

DEME
Gone.

(Beat.)
There used to be this place, Muscle Beach. It was famous. All these big, big guys right by the Boardwalk, arms bigger than your legs. *Both* your legs.

ROMULUS
No way.

CASSIE
I think I heard of that.

I never heard of-

ROMULUS

Shh!

DEME

What?

ROMULUS

Deme holds up a hand for silence.
Beat.

DEME
(Quietly:)
There's someone out there.

ROMULUS

I don't hear any-

DEME

Someone's there.

ROMULUS

Maybe it's just a dog.

DEME

When's the last time you saw a dog?

ROMULUS

Why do you never listen to anything I say?

DEME

Try being right once.

ROMULUS

I am too-

CASSIE

I feel it too.

ROMULUS
(Beat.)

What do we do?

DEME

Act normal. Keep talking.

Romulus starts to reach for his
makeshift weapon.

DEME (CONT'D)

Don't.

But-
ROMULUS

DEME
(Forced:)
Show us another one.

Romulus stops himself, but his hand doesn't go too far from his weapon.

ROMULUS
We can't just sit around and-

DEME
(Sotto:)
What do you want us to do?
(Louder:)
Cassie, what other ones you got?

Cassie pulls out a trio of picture postcards.

CASSIE
The world's biggest ball of yarn.

DEME
What if there's ten of them out there?

CASSIE
It's weird. There's three pictures. Always thought they were the same, just shot from different sides or something.

ROMULUS
We just gonna wait until they come?

CASSIE
But one says Nevada, one says Minnesota, and one says Illinois.

DEME
I'm not goin' out into the nowhere til I know what's what.

CASSIE
They can't all be the biggest.

ROMULUS
(Beat.)
You ever just wish you could walk into the postcard?

CASSIE
You wanna walk into the world's biggest ball of yarn?

Romulus steps into his own light
and out of real time.

ROMULUS

I wanna sit on the green grass and feel the wind, and there's no desert dust - it's just cool and clean and it blows through my hair. And the sun is warm, but it's not hot and burning. It's soft and it's...you can feel the grass on your toes. It's soft and spongy and every blade smells green and alive. And it's like this perfect moment: me, the world's biggest ball of yarn that's in Nevada or Minnesota or Illinois, but it doesn't matter and there's this feeling that you just can't explain, only that you don't ever want to leave it. Like my mom's hand on my shoulder.

Lights come back up.

ROMULUS (CONT'D)

Did Mom have soft hands?

DEME

Romey, it's been so long.

ROMULUS

Did she?

DEME

I was six.

ROMULUS

(Beat.)

Deme?

DEME

Her face flutters in and out of my head. Can't lock it in.

ROMULUS

Try to remember. Please.

DEME

(Beat.)

She had...elegant hands.

ROMULUS

Elegant.

DEME

They were pale.

ROMULUS

Were they soft?

DEME

They were perfect.

ROMULUS
I knew it.

CASSIE
(Beat.)
It's only one person.

DEME
How do you-

CASSIE
Because I do.
(To Deme:)
You know the one.

DEME
That one?

CASSIE
That one.

DEME
(Beat.)
You comin' out, or you gonna keep snake slinking behind us?

Beat. Scrubs comes out of the
darkness.

SCRUBS
What you lookin' at?

ROMULUS
Nothin'.

DEME
(Beat. To Scrubs:)
You hungry?

SCRUBS
Maybe.

Deme parcels out some food, but
doesn't give it to Scrubs yet.

CASSIE
Why are you here?

SCRUBS
What you got?

ROMULUS
Why didn't you say something?

CASSIE
 My sister send you?
 (To Romulus:)
 Things come to me when they come to me.

ROMULUS
 What you doin' here?

SCRUBS
 Sittin. What you doin'?

ROMULUS
 Eatin'.

CASSIE
 Is my sister OK?

SCRUBS
 Right as...how's that go? Right as...

DEME
 Rain.

SCRUBS
 What's that?

DEME
 You know what rain is.

SCRUBS
 Ain't never seen it.

ROMULUS
 I ever seen it?

DEME
 When you were little.

CASSIE
 Answer my question.

DEME
 Rain's dried up and turned to spit.

SCRUBS
 She's right as rain.

CASSIE
 Romey, make her-

ROMULUS
 Scrubs, quit the riddles.

I'm hungry.

SCRUBS

Deme pulls the food away.

Tell.

DEME

Scrubs reaches out for the food.
Deme again moves it away.

You heard her.

ROMULUS

SCRUBS
(To Romulus:)

I'm not scared of you.

CASSIE

You will be.

Cassie moves toward her
threateningly. Deme gets between
them.

You will be.

ECHO (OFF)

The others stop their jostling.

What was that?

DEME

What was that?

ECHO (OFF)

You hear it?

DEME

You hear it?

ECHO (OFF)

It's an echo.

CASSIE

It's an echo.

ECHO (OFF)

ROMULUS

Echo don't sound like somebody else.

ECHO (OFF)

Echo don't sound like somebody else.

They pull together so that they
can't be overheard.

ROMULUS
Is it one?

SCRUBS
I hear one.

DEME
Don't mean it's the only one.

ROMULUS
(To Deme:)
You shouldn'ta picked here.

DEME
You were tired.

ROMULUS
Wasn't.

SCRUBS
(Mocking Romulus:)
Oh, Deme, make me a bed and tuck me, I'm so tired.

ROMULUS
Shut it, Scrubs.

ECHO (OFF)
Shut it, Scrubs.

DEME
(To Scrubs:)
One more word I will throw you back into the nowhere.

SCRUBS
Nah you wouldn't.

DEME
Try.

SCRUBS
Try.

ECHO (OFF)
Try.

DEME (CONT'D)
Don't you start.

ECHO (OFF)
Don't you start.

DEME
(Beat.)
Hello?

Hello? ECHO (OFF)

Who's there? DEME

Who's there? ECHO (OFF)

What's your name? DEME

What's your name? ECHO (OFF)

Cassie and Romulus grab their weapons and start to sneak off, but Deme holds up a hand and they stop.

Are you hungry? DEME

Are you hungry? ECHO (OFF)

We don't have enough- ROMULUS

We'll feed him Scrubs if she doesn't shut it.
 (Putting food on the ground nearby:)
 I'm putting it right here.

There's a long silence.

It's right here. Just come and get it. DEME (CONT'D)

Another long silence.

He stopped. CASSIE

I ain't sleepin' with a creeper out in the nowhere. SCRUBS

A creeper like you? ROMULUS

Was not. SCRUBS

ROMULUS
Sneakin' like half a shadow.

SCRUBS
You knew it was me. Can't be creepin' if you knew it was me.

ROMULUS
I didn't know.
(Beat.)
Now what?

DEME
Wait.

CASSIE
Let us go out into the-

DEME
Light's fadin'.

CASSIE
We got time.

DEME
Not for a nowhere we don't know.

Long silence.

ROMULUS
I'm not as happy as I was.

DEME
(Beat.)
'Cause you're older.

ROMULUS
Older is sad?

DEME
Older knows more. Weighs your brain.

SCRUBS
Like rocks.

ROMULUS
I'm starting to forget the party pool. I know it was there. I know we went swimming.

SCRUBS
We went dancing-

ROMULUS
But I can't see it.
(Beat. Half-singing:)

ROMULUS (CONT'D)

Friday night is party night.
 (Not singing:)
 I sang that.

SCRUBS

Bad as bricks.

ROMULUS

(Singing again:)
 Friday night is party night. Make the work week come out
 right.

(Not singing:)

And then we'd get the party water and swim in the party pool-

SCRUBS

And then we left and Tina and Ike went goners and we went to
 the party spa and Adam and Eve stayed and she came with and I
 came back and now we're here. The end.

Enter ECHO. He is no more than
 Scrubs' age, preferably younger
 if your production has access to
 a younger acting pool. He speaks
 with a stutter, except when he
 echoes another character.

ECHO

I-i-is th-th-that a-a-a stuh-stuh-stuh-uh-r-ry?

SCRUBS

A what?

ECHO

A what?

DEME

A story?

Echo nods. Beat as he calculates
 the path to the food and whether
 he can make it there safely. He
 goes for the food and eats like
 he hasn't eaten in forever.

SCRUBS

We gonna watch him eat?

DEME

He needs it more than you.

SCRUBS

How you know?

When I found you-

DEME

SCRUBS
 (Imitating Deme:)
 You was a stick-thin carcass on the side of the road, a few
 hours short of a prophet to send you home.
 (As herself:)
 Heard you til the rain comes.

Cassie glides toward Echo.

It's good, isn't it?

CASSIE

Echo continues to eat, but gets
 jumpy as Cassie draws closer.

I'm not gonna hurt you.

CASSIE (CONT'D)

I'm not gonna hurt you.

ECHO

Cassie.

CASSIE
 (Indicates herself:)

Silence.

Do you have a name?

CASSIE (CONT'D)

Do you have a name?

ECHO

CASSIE
 (Beat.)
 What if we call you...Echo.
 (Points at him:)
 Echo.

Echo.

ECHO

Do you live near here?

CASSIE

Silence. Scrubs starts to yank at
 his dish. He tries to hold onto
 it.

It's OK.

CASSIE (CONT'D)

ECHO
They d-d-don't l-l-et me b-b-be i-i-n-n the stuh-stuh-ry.

CASSIE
Who's they?

DEME
Who doesn't let you?
(Slapping at Scrubs' hand:)
Scrubs!

ROMULUS
What story?

Scrubs succeeds in grabbing the dish. Echo covers his ears and rocks.

CASSIE
Hey. Hey.

DEME
Scrubs, I mean it!

SCRUBS
You said not another word.

Romulus chases after Scrubs.

CASSIE
Look at this.
(Showing Echo the postcards:)
World's biggest ball of yarn.

ECHO
World's biggest ball of yarn.

Romulus chases Scrubs back toward Deme, who grabs the dish back. Scrubs makes herself scarce, getting as far away as possible as Deme puts the food back in front of Echo, who eats.

ECHO (CONT'D)
W-w-what's ya-ya yarn?

CASSIE
Yarn is - it's...
(To Romulus:)
What's yarn exactly?

Romulus thinks, then shrugs.

It's like string.

DEME

That doesn't help Echo.

String?

DEME (CONT'D)

String?

ECHO

Deme searches in her pack and finds some string.

String.

DEME
(Holding it up:)

String.

ECHO
(Examining it:)

Where do you live?

DEME

S-st-string.

ECHO

He runs off with what's left of "his" food. Cassie and Deme run after him. Scrubs is almost invisible in the corner. Romulus steps into his own light.

ROMULUS

Deme thinks I don't remember. I let her think I don't so she'll tell me about it.

(As his father:)

Romulus, stay here no matter what. Unless Mommy or Daddy open the closet door, you stay down on the ground. Julia, Bob Rogers said the Gas Mart on 6th has maybe 60 gallons left.

(As his mother:)

David, it's not safe.

(As his father:)

I have to try. He said there's a room of distilled water jugs.

(As his mother:)

You can't carry them on your own.

(As his father:)

I'm not trying to get them all.

(As his mother:)

We may only get one trip. Deme, Romulus, you stay here no matter what.

(As his younger self:)

ROMULUS (CONT'D)

No, Daddy. Don't go. Mommy, it's dark in here. I'll be good. Please - I'll be so good.

(As his father:)

We'll be back soon.

(As his younger self:)

Don't leave - Deme won't save me. Don't leave me.

Romulus extends his hand, as if reaching out for his parents.

ROMULUS (CONT'D)

Don't go. No. Noooo...

(Beat. As his present self:)

I didn't leave the closet for two days. Neither of us did. Deme thinks I don't remember.

Enter Cassie and Deme.

DEME

He's gone.

SCRUBS

'Course he is. You're slower than quicksand.

DEME

You don't even know what quicksand is.

SCRUBS

I know what it ain't.

DEME

What's that?

SCRUBS

Fast.

CASSIE

It's dark.

SCRUBS

So?

CASSIE

It's *his* dark.

SCRUBS

I can find him.

ROMULUS

If they couldn't catch him-

SCRUBS

He's got feet, don't he?

CASSIE
How's he gonna get away without feet?

SCRUBS
Feet leave tracks, and I'm tops at trackin' tracks.
(Beat.)
I tracked you, didn't I?

ROMULUS
You knew we were goin' this way.

SCRUBS
If I leave now-

DEME
You won't find him in the dark. We don't live in miracle days.

SCRUBS
We're alive. Ain't that miracle enough?

DEME
Wait 'til light.

SCRUBS
How we gonna sleep with him out there?

CASSIE
He's not scary.

DEME
Same as before.

SCRUBS
Looks and is ain't always family.

DEME
One watches, the rest sleep.

SCRUBS
Yeah, but-

DEME
He was out there before.

CASSIE
Truth.

ROMULUS
Always someone out there in the somewhere.

SCRUBS
But-

But nothing. DEME

Nothing to be done. ROMULUS

Dad said that. DEME
(Something sparks:)
You remember that? (Beat.)

I said it. ROMULUS

I never told you that. DEME

Then I must remember. ROMULUS

Nothing to be done. DEME

(Beat.)
Mom and Dad went to this play. Do you remember Amanda, who used to watch us? I was watching TV on the couch with Amanda until I fell asleep, and then Mom and Dad are home and Dad is saying "Nothing to be done" and chasing me around the living room. Run run run nothing to be done! And he catches me and he tickles me and I scream from the tickling and he lets me go and starts all over. Mom is yelling don't wake Romey and Dad just keeps saying nothing to be done and finally we all stop and laugh on the floor.

(Beat.)
I don't remember the name of the play anymore. I don't know if I ever knew it, only that the words meant things would tickle and that for once Dad did something funny.

(Beat.)
One watches, three sleep.

I'm not tired. ROMULUS

Wake me before you are. DEME

Cassie, Deme and Scrubs pick their sleeping spots. Romulus keeps watch. Beat as they settle down to sleep. Once he's sure they're asleep, he pulls out a ratty book - not his writing notebook.

ROMULUS

I found this book. We're going through a squat like we do when we find one that's got nobody in it, which is always. Water food weapons power coin clothes fun and games, always in that order. Stick to the order - it might save your life. And this squat - no, this *house* - is so beautiful I want to live in it forever. They got windows like you wouldn't believe, and a pool that makes the party pool look like a bucket. No, like a puddle. Only the water's gone of course. And they got a giant bed and an almost giant bed and then just a really big bed - they got so many beds you could sleep in a different bed every day for a week. And if I could just get one night in even the really big bed, but Deme says the big dead is right behind and gotta keep moving. So I'm grabbin' everything I can, everything I can fit in every pocket, and I open a door and it's a library. A library. With books. Fancy books with fancy covers and gold and silver writing.

(Beat.)

Water food weapons power coin clothes fun and games. Don't jump the order. No way does a book beat a can of tuna. No way does a book beat a can of anything. I can hear Deme screamin' at me in my head. And I look at all the gold and silver books and I know they're too big and let me just leave now before I- It's so thin and the corner of the cover is folded over, but the cover has these two tiny people and this tree that looks dead and a whole lotta empty, and I just gotta have it, cause it looks like us.

(Beat.)

I read it when Deme's gone. I've read it 17 times. Except for the end. Somebody ripped out the least three pages. So I don't know if the man comes or not.

(From the play:)

Nothing to be done.

(Beat.)

I know I was two when Dad came home from the play, but I still remember. And when I do the play, I feel him watching. I can't remember his face. I know it's not his face I see, but it's my make-believe dad's face, and he's smiling.

Romulus sits, but still keeps
watch as the lights dim.

SCENE 2

The next morning. Deme shakes Romulus awake. There is no sign of Scrubs or Cassie.

ROMULUS (CONT'D)

I was having the best dream.

DEME

Daylight's burnin.

ROMULUS

Let it burn.

DEME

Gonna burn you with it.

(Beat.)

It's dustin' those tracks by the second.

ROMULUS

Tracks to the nowhere.

DEME

Gotta be goin' somewhere. Too small to be alone.

ROMULUS

Lotta stuff shouldn't be but is.

(Beat.)

Just five more minutes.

DEME

How you gonna know five minutes?

ROMULUS

I'll count sheep.

DEME

How you gonna count sheep if you're asleep?

ROMULUS

It's a secret.

DEME

You don't even know what a sheep is.

ROMULUS

I read about 'em in one of those big empty houses.

(Brief pause.)

They looked so soft. This doesn't count in my sheep time.

DEME

There's no time to-

Shhh... I'm sheeping.

ROMULUS

Beat. The lights come up elsewhere on stage. Scrubs, nearby but not close enough to be visible, looks at tracks when Cassie comes up on her.

CASSIE

Deme said don't wander.

SCRUBS

Nobody's the boss of me but me.

CASSIE

And while you're bossin', they're gonna ambush your pretty little face.

SCRUBS

My face is not pretty.

CASSIE

Yeah you got that right.

SCRUBS

Shut up. Aint no ambush gonna ambush me.

CASSIE

Better check your memory.

SCRUBS

You're the one gonna bring 'em down on us.
 (Beat.)
 Why don't you go back to Romey.
 (Mocking:)
 Oh, Romey. Romey.

CASSIE

Least I got somebody.

SCRUBS

You got him?

CASSIE

Yeah. And he's got me.

SCRUBS

And Deme
 (Snaps her fingers:)
 and he'll be gone.

CASSIE

Maybe we'll all be gone and you'll be all alone in the nowhere.

SCRUBS

Suits me.

(Beat. Pointing at tracks:)

This is him.

CASSIE

You sure?

SCRUBS

Sure as sure it ain't gonna rain today.

Pause.

CASSIE

So now what?

SCRUBS

Well, you think she's gonna be more mad I ran off or more glad I found what needs finding?

CASSIE

If I had a coin, I'd flip it.

SCRUBS

Then you better tell her. Tell her and Romey.

(Indicating the tracks:)

I'll keep 'em fresh.

Scrubs makes as if to take cover,
while Cassie walks back to camp.
She stops.

CASSIE

I like Romey. How messed up is that?

(Beat.)

Maybe it's cause he's here and nobody else is. Maybe if I had more choices he wouldn't even be in my top 10. Maybe he wouldn't even be on the list. But he's the only boy I've seen in a long time, and I don't know yet if he's a great one, but I'm pretty sure he's at least a good one.

(Beat.)

I found this old video of my mom and dad, from before. My mom, she's all smiling and giggling and she says my dad's "the one" for her. The one. Maybe that's all there needs to be: one. And in 50 years, I'll be in my video, telling our kids that Romey was the one. The only man I ever loved. Love. The whole idea of loving someone right now seems like the most absurd thing in the world. Maybe that's why we have to do it.

The lights dim, then come up full, as Deme, Scrubs, Romey and Cassie are at the tracks.

CASSIE (CONT'D)

They go off that way.

ROMULUS

Maybe they do, but...

Beat as they realize that they're standing on the edge of a deserted campsite.

SCRUBS

Trackpot.

Scrubs starts to move toward the camp.

DEME

Wait.

ROMULUS

Empty now.

DEME

Empty and gone don't always travel together.

SCRUBS

Can't stand here 'til we're dead!

DEME

I don't like this.

ROMULUS

Empty is empty.

(Starting to go toward the camp:)

Maybe they left some cans.

DEME

Romey, stay.

ROMULUS

I'm not a dog.

SCRUBS

Ruff. Ruff. Here, boy!

Romulus chases after Scrubs.

SCRUBS (CONT'D)

Runs like a dog to me!

He barks at her. She barks back.

DEME

Stop.

They keep up the barking and chasing. It's degenerated into a game.

DEME (CONT'D)

We don't know what's out there.

CASSIE

Deme's right.

Romulus stops by Cassie and nuzzles against her like a dog.

CASSIE (CONT'D)

Stop it.

He doesn't stop.

CASSIE (CONT'D)

Stop.

He wins her over. Beat. She pets him.

ROMULUS

(Playful:)

Ruff.

There's the SOUND OF BARKING DOGS. Beat.

ROMULUS (CONT'D)

What's that?

CASSIE

Scrubs, stop it!

SCRUBS

I ain't 10 dogs at once!

DEME

It's all 'round.

NOAH (OFF)

Don't move.

DEME

Who are you?

NOAH (OFF)
Our dogs are hungry. We'll ask the questions.

Deme and the others form a defensive circle. The "dogs" bark in such a way as to pan around them.

NOAH (OFF) (CONT'D)
Why did you come here?

CASSIE
Those aren't dogs.

DEME
Followed some tracks.

SCRUBS
When you ever heard a dog?

DEME
We thought there might be people.

CASSIE
We had one for a while. Back when there were boys.

SCRUBS
What happened to it?

NOAH (OFF)
If you have weapons, toss them out.

CASSIE
What do you think?

DEME
Dogs or no, there's a whole lotta something out there.
(To Noah:)
We're not lookin' for trouble.

NOAH (OFF)
Then drop your weapons.

DEME
(Beat.)
We got cans.

SCRUBS
Those are ours!

ROMULUS
(To Scrubs:)
How many of them you find?

NOAH (OFF)

What makes you think we can't take them?

DEME

(Pulls a knife and holds it
to a can like it's a
hostage:)

I think we can turn 'em in to trash on the ground before you
get three steps.

Romulus, Cassie and Scrubs all
pull their knives.

SCRUBS

(Sotto to Deme:)

Can't we just eat 'em real fast?

Beat.

DEME

I'm putting a can out.

The barking continues.

NOAH (OFF)

Put your weapons down. Now.

DEME

It's peas.

She opens the can and places it
in front of her, then slowly puts
her knife away. She gestures for
Romulus, Cassie and Scrubs to put
theirs away. Beat. They do, not
necessarily happily. Beat. Enter
a YOUNG TEEN, one of the "dogs."
The Young Teen, eyeing Deme and
the others, moves toward the can.
Two steps forward, one step back,
one to the side, constantly
keeping an eye on Deme. The Young
Teen gets to the can, still
cautious, but then it all breaks
down: enter the other DOGS, three
or four to a dozen or more in
number, looking like something
out of *Lord of the Flies*,
clothing in tatters, not enough
skill to keep them mended. They
race madly for the can. It's
chaos fueled by raw hunger. One
of them, MERCURY, limps and lags
behind the others.

Before Mercury can even get close, the peas are gone. Even Scrubs looks a little taken aback. Beat. As one of the Dogs taps on the can of peas, looking for any last scraps, enter NOAH. He's older than the others, perhaps by a few years - probably closer to Deme's age or even a year older. He has an air of authority, and his clothes were once very nice.

Beat. Deme goes into her bag for a can of corn.

SCRUBS

C'mon - not the corn!

Deme walks slowly toward Noah, as Romulus keeps an eye on the Dogs, his weapon almost out in case of trouble. Deme holds out the can of corn.

SCRUBS (CONT'D)

What's he done for you?

ROMULUS
(To Scrubs:)

What you ever done?

SCRUBS

Shut it.

Noah takes the can of corn with a nod and examines it. Beat. He produces a spoon from his back pocket, then a ratty napkin. All of the Dogs' eyes are on him as he tucks the napkin into his shirt. He takes a spoonful and chews slowly, while his entire crew watches him and stares at the can with lust. Beat. He wipes at his mouth with his napkin, then folds it carefully and puts it and the spoon away. Beat. He puts the can on the ground. The Dogs start for it, but Noah's hand goes up. They stop. He looks at Mercury, who slowly and painfully heads toward the can.

Mercury has one bite, two bites, then backs away. Noah nods, and the Dogs move in and obliterate the contents of the can.

NOAH

If you wanted to poison us, you'd have done it on the first can.

With the corn gone, the Dogs look to Deme.

SCRUBS

Don't you dare.

ROMULUS

Shut it, Scrubs.

(Sotto to Deme:)

C'mon, Deme - didn't you give 'em enough?

DEME

(To Noah:)

When's the last time you ate?

NOAH

Wednesday.

SCRUBS

When was that?

NOAH

Thirty-eight hours ago.

ROMULUS

How you know 38?

NOAH

I looked at my watch.

Beat. Romulus is interested.

ROMULUS

You have a-

NOAH

If you're planning to rob us you'll probably die...of disappointment.

Beat. Noah starts to laugh. The Dogs pick up his laughter. It's unnerving.

SCRUBS

Stop that!

CASSIE
Deme?

ROMULUS
If it makes Scrubs crazy, I'm in.

Romulus starts laughing. The Dogs stop.

ROMULUS (CONT'D)
What?

NOAH
We thought you might be someone else.

DEME
We're headed north.

DOGS
(Part echo, part whisper:)
North...north...north...

SCRUBS
Stop that.

NOAH
With everything you can carry.

ROMULUS
(At Scrubs:)
North...north...north...

DEME
Something like that.

SCRUBS
You'll be sorry.

NOAH
You've come to the right place.

DEME
Why's that?

NOAH
You've come from the south. You're walking in the right direction.

ROMULUS
North, north, north...

Scrubs runs off.

She'll be back. DEME
 Like a roach. ROMULUS
 You should be nicer to her. CASSIE
 Why? ROMULUS
 Because... CASSIE
 Why? ROMULUS
 What's she done? CASSIE
 Why? ROMULUS
 Stop. CASSIE
 Why? ROMULUS
 She hits him. He covers himself.
 Wait. ROMULUS (CONT'D)
 (To Noah:)
 You said you ate Wednesday.
 And...? NOAH
 And that was 38 hours ago. ROMULUS
 And...? NOAH
 That means it's Friday. ROMULUS
 (To Deme:)
 Friday night is party night. Make the work week come out
 right!

DEME
 There's no party pool here.
 (To Noah:)
 You said you thought we might be someone else.

ROMULUS
 They gotta have something, right?

DEME
 Who?

NOAH
 Rumors.

DEME
 Rumors of what?

ROMULUS
 Fun? Party?

NOAH
 Of whispers on the wind.

ROMULUS
 Anyone?

DEME
 Whispering what?

ROMULUS
 (In slo-mo:)
 Parr-tyyy.

NOAH
 That they came up from the far south or maybe the east and
 they burn anything in the way - and what they don't burn
 wishes it did.

ROMULUS
 C'mon.

DEME
 That the is or the maybe?

NOAH
 The maybe may not be far away.

Beat. Echo appears on the ridge.
 The others look restive. Noah
 gestures to a couple of the Dogs,
 who chase Echo off.

NOAH (CONT'D)
 You've seen him before.

On the road. DEME

He's a thief. NOAH

Lights up on Scrubs, elsewhere on stage, away from the others - just over the ridge somewhere. Enter Echo.

Not you. SCRUBS

Not you. ECHO

Stop that. SCRUBS

Stop that. ECHO

I'll hurt you. SCRUBS

I'll- ECHO

Scrubs makes as if to strike Echo, who dodges out of the way. Scrubs chases after him. He's like the fly she can't swat. Their chase takes them offstage. Back in the main camp, Cassie and Romulus have wandered off together.

I don't like this place. CASSIE

You'd like it more if we had some fun. ROMULUS

Look at them. CASSIE

Can I look at you? ROMULUS

Stop. CASSIE

Why? ROMULUS

Don't start. CASSIE

No. For real. Why? ROMULUS

Your sister, all of them... CASSIE

So if it was just you and me... ROMULUS

Sure. CASSIE
(Beat.)

ROMULUS
(Checking around:)
Deme's talk talk talking, they're off in space land, and I'm gonna look at you.

He stares at her. Beat.

Romey. CASSIE

Do you want me to stop? ROMULUS

No. CASSIE

They continue to sit and look at each other. Deme talks to Noah:

DEME
If there's no food here...you can't stay where there's no food.

NOAH
There used to be the most beautiful apple trees. Gala apples, they call them. For two whole months it rained apples. And the deer loved apples - I can cook venison with apples in 17 different ways. But the trees died and the deer left and we've ripped apart everything within three days' walk.
(Beat.)
Amazing the trees survived as long as they did.

DEME
You have to leave.

NOAH
And go where?

DEME
(Beat.)
Come north - with us.

NOAH
We're not like you. When I found them, they were all huddling in what was left of their classroom, still in their uniforms. They'd been living off the vending machines, but they were out of change and somehow even after the Nevada National Guard 41st Air Wing destroyed everything we'd ever known in the space of 23 minutes, it didn't occur to them that nobody'd care if they stole some stale pretzels.

DEME
That was a long time ago.

NOAH
Was it?
(Beat.)
It's like every one of them is Peter Pan pinned to that moment.

DEME
I know that story.
(Beat.)
Is there water?

NOAH
Not much.

DEME
Then how can you stay?
(Beat.)
It's not like you weren't somewhere else before you came here, right? You just do what you always do. What we always do. We move on.

NOAH
It's not that easy.

DEME
Left foot, right foot.
(Beat.)
Come north.

NOAH
We wouldn't make it.

DEME
No choice.

NOAH

(To all:)

Did I hear someone mention fun? We can have fun here, can't we?

DEME

You have to do it.

NOAH

(Beat. To the Dogs:)

Time for the pageant!

The Dogs are suddenly a whirl of activity, going into their tents and pulling out masks and costumes. Depending on cast size, the number of animals could vary: deer, rabbits, mountain lions, snakes, bears.

DEME

You can't keep going while it all turns to nothing.

NOAH

I can't do much, as you can see. But that's one thing I'm good at. I've had the very best practice of all.

(Beat.)

I was playing piano. I used to take lessons three times a week from a woman with the whitest hair you've ever seen and a hand that would shake just a tiny bit, but in another life she'd played Carnegie Hall and been a soloist with every orchestra between Portland and Paris, and when she touched the piano the shake would vanish. I loved my lessons, and unlike almost any other seven-year-old on the planet, I loved to practice. I'd make my parents sit in the easy chairs by the window and play "concerts" for them.

(Beat.)

One time my mother got up in the middle of a movement of Tchaikovsky. I stopped and started banging on the keys like a maniac until she sat back down. And thus I trained my parents to stay until I played the very last note, and got up from my little booster bench.

(Beat.)

And on a beautiful April day, they are sitting there as I regale them with Mozart's Piano Concerto Number 15 in B-flat major, which would be extremely challenging at any age. They're still sitting there as we hear this far away thunder, and I look up from my Mozart and see the hint of a plume of distant dust through the window, but I don't stop playing, so they don't stop sitting, and they are still in their chairs when the entire side of the room by the windows falls away into nothing. I don't know what to do.

NOAH (CONT'D)

A seven-year-old brain cannot process houses and parents winking into never agains, so I finish the 15th, but I am troubled by the middle C, which has gone terribly flat.

(Beat.)

I cry for half an hour - 32 minutes, actually - but when it becomes clear that my piano is irrevocably broken, and that neither my parents nor the woman with the white hair will be coming back to listen to me play or for any other reason, I stop crying, close the cover, and two days later, I find

(Indicating the others:)

them. And we keep on going.

(Beat.)

They're ready.

(Turning master of ceremonies:)

Mrs. Middleton's Former Pre-Kindergarten Drama Class Presents the Pageant of the Animals.

The Dogs turned Animals form a procession, each stepping up awkwardly to deliver their line. It's as if they are frozen in time like a pre-kindergarten class. As they step up, they act out the motions and make sound effects.

VARIOUS ANIMALS

The rabbit hops.

And the squirrel skitters.

The deer runs.

Chased by the mountain lion, which sprints and snarls.

And on the ground, the snake slithers.

And in the air, the eagle flies,

The crow caws,

And the big brown bear lumbers, big and slow.

(Beat.)

March of the animals.

Parade of the animals.

Exodus of the animals.

ANIMAL 1

Away from the hot hot hot...

THE OTHER ANIMALS

(Like an echo:)

To the north.

ANIMAL 2

Away from the dead and the brown.

THE OTHER ANIMALS

(Echoing:)

To the north.

ANIMAL 3

Away from the fire in the sky.

VARIOUS ANIMALS

To a place where they could rest on living land.

North...north...north...

Drink the clear and clean.

North...north...north...

The distant sky turns red. The
pageant halts.

ANIMAL 1

Fire in the sky!

NOAH

They've come.

CASSIE

It's New San Francisco.

ROMULUS

No, it's-

CASSIE

Those are the flares. Those are the flares they fire for the
gatherers.

ROMULUS

It's just a red sky.

CASSIE

Warning flares.

DEME

We have to go.

NOAH

We can't outrun them.

DEME

That's three days away. We move smart, three days is like
months in all this nowhere. Tonight we plan, tomorrow first
light we go.

NOAH

You have to go now.

DEME

First light.

NOAH

The whisper on the wind is that they are not on foot.

Beat. Echo appears on the ridge.
He is dressed in a polar bear
costume.

DEME

(To everyone:)

Take what you can carry.

SCRUBS

Gotta make us disappear into the nothing or it won't do not
good.

DEME

Then make us disappear.

(Beat.)

All of you. You have five minutes.

The Animals look to Noah for
direction. He seems unable to
move.

DEME (CONT'D)

Now!

The Animals spring into action.

CASSIE

We have to go back.

DEME

We can't go back.

CASSIE

My sister-

DEME

She can take care of herself.

MERCURY

(To Noah:)

I'm not fast anymore.

CASSIE

(To Romulus:)

Tell her we have to-

NOAH

I know.

MERCURY

It sucks.

CASSIE

Whether she comes or not.

Cassie goes to grab her pack.

NOAH

I know.

ROMULUS

We can't just leave them.

DEME

Do you think there's a choice?

ROMULUS

If it was you, wouldn't you want me to come back?

DEME

I'd want you to be safe.

ROMULUS

You see anywhere safe?

DEME

There's safe and there's suicide.

ROMULUS

And what about Adam and Eve?

DEME

They made a choice.

ROMULUS

What if it was me?

DEME

It's not.

ECHO

And the bears turned white.

ROMULUS

Would you leave me too?

ECHO

As they marched into the north, the north of the blue sky and the crisp, clean water, the bears turned white.

CASSIE

We have to go back.

ECHO

The white bears live forever in the land of 60 degrees north, 135 degrees west, and the Aurora Borealis dances with joy above their heads.

NOAH

(To Mercury:)

I've always wanted to see the ocean again. Want to come with?

DEME

(To Noah, indicating Echo:)

What is he talking about?

NOAH

He finished the story.

DEME

Is it true?

NOAH

It's a story.

DEME

Where did it come from?

Beat. Noah produces a book. It's
an illustrated series of
pictures.

NOAH

We found it in some house or a shack or by the side of the
road - I don't remember. It was years ago, and it's become
this story we always tell.

ROMULUS

It's just a book. Not even a book.

DEME

Not a book. A map.

CASSIE

(Returning with her pack:)

Romey, it's time.

ROMULUS

It's just a story.

DEME

We have to believe.

CASSIE

My sister is real.

(Beat.)

I'm real.

SCRUBS

(Returning:)

I got it all rigged.

CASSIE

Romey, we have to go.

SCRUBS

Ain't nobody gonna know we were ever.

DEME

Nothing to be done, Romulus.

Romulus picks up his pack. Beat.

ROMULUS

Deme, please.

DEME

We can hide in the mountains if we can get there before it's day.

NOAH

Mercury and I, we'll think of you fondly as we take in the ocean view.

DEME

(Beat.)

I hear it's beautiful still.

NOAH

That's what I hear too. If only we could drink it.

(Beat.)

Mrs. Middleton's Former Pre-K Drama Class, the show must go on, and it's for you to make sure that it does.

ANIMALS

No, no, no, no...

NOAH

There comes a time when the director's job is done.

ANIMALS

No, no, no...

NOAH

You are going on a wonderful new tour.

(Beat.)

At long last, you are going to play the north.

CASSIE

We have to go now. You and me.

(Beat.)

I see us. I see us together on the road back to New San Francisco and we get there in time.

Long pause.

I can't. ROMULUS

Coward. CASSIE
(Beat.)

I am not afraid. ROMULUS

Yes. You are. Of her. CASSIE

Echo, still dressed as the bear,
grabs a pack and goes up to
Cassie.

I am not afraid. ECHO

NOAH
(To the Animals:)
Go with the stage manager. She will keep you safe.
(To Mercury:)
The ocean plays a very special kind of music.

Is it far? MERCURY

Just over that hill, and the one after that. NOAH

Noah and Mercury exit at
Mercury's snail's pace.

Cassie. ROMULUS

Goodbye, Romulus. CASSIE
Let's go. (To Echo:)

She exits with Echo.

Cassie! ROMULUS

Cassie, Cassie, Cassie... ANIMALS

You and your stupid, stupid polar bears. ROMULUS

DEME
I don't care if you hate me.

ROMULUS
Good. Because maybe I do.

DEME
Gotta be alive to hate.

SCRUBS
(Beat.)
So...we goin'?

ROMULUS
You think I won't leave you.

DEME
We're goin'.

ROMULUS
You're wrong.

DEME
We go north.

Everyone left on stage exits with Deme except Romulus. Beat. He follows them. The lights begin a slow fade. There's the distant sound of MOTORCYCLES, getting gradually closer. End of Act II.

If your production plans to have an intermission, it should be here.

ACT III: NORTHERN LIGHTS

SCENE 1

A month after the end of Ursa Major. PAN, late teens, female and with something of a postmodern Hell's Angels look, stands alone in a spotlight.

PAN

The thing about rules is they're made for the people making them. Do this. Don't do that. Do what we say. Do it now. Do it now, Melinda, or we'll beat your scrawny ass until it don't work no more. But then something happens, something that makes the rules go away. The rules that say wear your clothes right side out and go to school, that say don't take this sign, 'cause it's the only one left standing in 200 miles

(Brandishing what's left of a
65 mph speed limit sign:)

and you just gotta have it, are gone. And you're free. Air and sunshine free. Do anything you want free. Do everything you want free.

(Beat.)

But then all that chaos and take take taking gets old. And it hits you like a backhand: you need rules. You been missing 'em and you didn't even realize it. Only this time, you're the one that gets to make them. I'm the Pan, and this is the new Neverland.

Pan disappears into the darkness, and lights up on Deme, Scrubs and Romulus, all dirtier than before, chained up in a windowless room. They are doing their best to sleep. Romulus stirs.

DEME

(To Romulus:)

You awake?

(Beat.)

You gotta talk to me sometime.

(Pause.)

Scrubs, you awake?

SCRUBS

I'm dreamin' about water.

ROMULUS

How's that goin'?

SCRUBS

Great - 'til I wake up.

(Beat.)

Foot's asleep.

ROMULUS

My whole body's asleep.

SCRUBS

Hope they come soon.

DEME

Do you?

ROMULUS

How long you think we been down here?

DEME

Been tryin' to count the count.

ROMULUS

I asked Scrubs.

SCRUBS

This is bad as bad can be, but you two gotta bury it. Wish I was deaf.

ROMULUS

(Beat. To Deme:)

How long you reckon?

DEME

Thirty if I didn't lose it.

ROMULUS

(Not forgiving:)

Don't think we're good.

DEME

Fine.

Beat.

ROMULUS

Las Vegas.

SCRUBS

What's that?

DEME

A place.

(Beat.)

How you know about Las Vegas?

ROMULUS
Ike was from Vegas.

SCRUBS
Vegas.

DEME
He was?

SCRUBS
I like that.

ROMULUS
Yeah.

SCRUBS
Ike from Vegas. Ike from Vegas that made it past the boom-boom-boom and then boom, a bug takes you out.

ROMULUS
He said they lived in the MGM Grand for a month.

SCRUBS
MGM?

ROMULUS
Hotel. He said inside they had no windows.

SCRUBS
No day, no night.

ROMULUS
His dad lost everything right before it was all goners.

DEME
How'd he even remember that?

ROMULUS
How do any of us remember anything? But we do.
(Beat. An out of time moment:)
Funny story. Not ha funny, but weird horrible unlucky lucky funny. Ike's dad, he loses all the money, the house, all three cars, all the all. So he goes into Ike's room, 'cause Ike's computer has a cam, and he records his goodbye, world see ya later and then he takes his .357 Magnum and splatters all over Ike's pillow. Hell's bells gonna ring before Ike sleeps in his dad's blood, so he's safe in the basement when wave one hits.

Romulus rejoins the scene. Enter Pan with KALI, her lieutenant, and a couple of FOOT SOLDIERS.

Good morning. PAN
 There's no reply from Deme or the others.
 I said good morning. PAN (CONT'D)
 Ain't no sun. SCRUBS
 Don't mean it's not morning. PAN
 Where are the others? DEME
 Here we go again. PAN
 (Beat.)
 Don't you have any other questions?
 When will you let us go? DEME
 Any *other* questions. PAN
 (Beat.)
 Tell you what - if you ask me a new question, I might just answer it.
 Got anything good to eat? SCRUBS
 Yes. PAN
 And...? SCRUBS
 (Beat.)
 What? PAN
 Can we have it? SCRUBS
 I love this asking and answering. Let's do it again soon. PAN
 That's it? SCRUBS
 (Beat.)

PAN

This is the bold one, but not the smart one.

(Beat.)

Who's the smart one?

(To Romulus:)

Is that you?

(Pawing him with her stick:)

We have apples and oranges - fresh ones, not from cans - and rabbit and deer and even a fish. Or two.

DEME

What do you want?

PAN

I'm talking to the smart one, not the one who asks the same boring questions every day.

(To Romulus:)

Where were you going, and who's there?

(Beat.)

Think of that rabbit, roasted on a spit, with a pinch of...

(To Kali:)

What we got?

KALI

Thyme.

PAN

A pinch of thyme.

DEME

He doesn't know.

PAN

I don't like her voice.

The Foot Soldiers gag Deme so that she can't talk.

ROMULUS

If I tell you, I get the rabbit?

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