

**Eulogy for a Freight Train**

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For the people whose lives  
I have so roughly plagiarized,  
with gratitude  
and regret.

## **Advice to the Players**

Thanks for playing.  
A few things:

### **Style / Stage Directions**

The play is shot through with magical, absurd elements. They should be magical and absurd.

There are a handful of utterly unstageable things in this play. Be imaginative.

The stage direction *Something* appears many times. Be imaginative.

The stage direction *Dumb Show* appears a few times. Be literal, or be imaginative.  
One idea is dance. Another is large, projected shadows.

### **Punctuation**

When a character is interrupted, his line ends with a slash. Like this:

Rosencrantz: I can't believe you let the monkey /  
Guildenstern: O shut up.

If however the slash appears in the middle of a line, she has abandoned her old thought and is beginning a new one, but with no rhythmic break. No breathing. She has interrupted herself. Like this:

Rosencrantz: You're a blithering idiot and one day I swear / Hey where did we put the rocket launcher?

Whereas an ellipsis indicates a diminishing of momentum, a dash is has forward momentum. When found at the end of a line, the character has not been interrupted; she has simply stopped speaking. Like this:

Guildenstern: Isn't it just like that time in Cabo? I think if we –  
*Beat.*  
Guildenstern: On second thought perhaps no.

O is a sound. Oh is a discovery.

### **Plagiarism**

Because the people in this play do not exist in a vacuum,  
I have had them appropriate chunks of other people's work,  
oftentimes knowingly, sometimes not.

Namely (at least):

*The Prophet*, by Kahlil Gibran

*Hopping Freight Trains in America*, by Duffy Littlejohn

*On the Loose*, by Terry and Renny Russell

*Wintertime*, by Chuck Mee

*The English Patient*, by Michael Ondjate

*City at the End of the World*, V.B. Price

Several songs by artists referenced in the play and in the character descriptions.

## Characters

### **Saul**

23, A punk rocker at the end of a long rope.  
Think *Against Me!*. Think *Violent Femmes*. Think *Bad Religion*.  
Old combat boots. Crossbuster Bad Religion shirt. Maybe a short, shaggy mohawk.

### **Ariel**

21, an artist, dangerously in love with the process of living.  
Think *Ani*. Think *Melissa Ferrick*. Think *Indigo Girls*.  
Headwraps, sarongs.

### **Grace / Animal**

21, a generous girl with a heart of gold and a can of mace.  
Think *The Fugees*. Think Salsa. Think *The Shins*.  
Unfussed, urban. Could belong in Brooklyn.

### **Mary**

23, a Taos cowgirl with an unshakeable sense of humor and large tracts of compassion.  
Think *Ani*. Think *Modest Mouse*. Think (pre-pop) *Liz Phair*.  
Cowboots, skirt. A wickedly curved, beat up straw hat. Jean jacket. No makeup.

### **Jude / Vaquero**

20, a christian. Earnest, contemplative.  
Think *Bouncing Souls*. Think *Bob Dylan*. Think *Johnny Cash*.  
Beat up black suit, converse. Also, work clothes.

## Settings

### **The Studio**

The back porch of a house somewhere in the northern New Mexican mountains.  
The idea is one big room with a kitchenette, bathroom, loft, and porch.  
On the porch, a couch or futon and a chimineya.  
Above the porch, a roof that actors can stand on.

### **The Desert**

Other places in the desert. Represented simply, or not at all.

### **The Train**

Various freight trains.  
Maybe the rooftop could function this way.

### **The Church**

A decrepit adobe mission.

## **Blood Moon Rising**

*Feast of the Transfiguration / Hiroshima  
The Studio.*

*The full moon is just beginning to rise, out. Sound of a train. Appropriate music drifting out of the house.  
In the darkness, a match strikes, a cigarette lights.*

*Saul sits on the roof, drinking whiskey out of the bottle, professionally. He swigs it into his mouth, holds it,  
swishes it around like mouthwash, holds, and swallows. He is also smoking. He watches everything happen.*

*Ariel enters, running, in dazzling white. She is painted entirely gold, and has sparklers. Some dance moves.  
Magic.*

Ariel:           Then said Almitra, Speak to us of Love.  
                  And he raised his head and looked upon the people, and there  
                  fell a stillness upon them. And with a great voice he said:  
                  When love beckons to you, follow him,  
                  though his ways are hard and steep.  
                  And when his wings enfold you yield to him,  
                  Though the sword hidden among his pinions may wound you.  
                  And when he speaks to you believe in him,  
                  Though his voice may shatter your dreams as the north wind  
                  lays waste the garden.

                  For even as love crowns you so shall he crucify you. Even as  
                  he is for your growth so is he for your pruning.

                  Like sheaves of corn he gathers you unto himself.  
                  He threshes you to make you naked.  
                  He sifts you to free you from your husks.  
                  He grinds you to whiteness.  
                  He kneads you until you are pliant;  
                  And then he assigns you to his sacred fire, that you may  
                  become sacred bread for God's sacred feast.

*Mary comes out of the house, as a cat, or dinosaur, with sparklers. Ariel sees her.*

Mary:           Roar.

*Swig, swish, swallow. Ariel gasps/giggles/squeals, runs away, around the house.*

*Mary cat/dinosaur stalks around the other way to meet her halfway. Enter Grace. A happy scream from the other  
side of the house, both emerge, hunter and prey reversed. Chase into the house, blind to Grace and Saul.*

*Saul sees Grace. Grace sees Saul. Swig, swish, swallow.*

Grace:           Hey shithead.

Saul:            Hey little one.

Grace:           *(in reference)* What's going on?

Saul:            The usual, it seems.

Grace:           That bad?

Saul: My working theory?

*He points: the moon. They look.*

Grace: I missed you.

Saul: Hail, hail, the gang's all here. She missed you at her opening.

Grace: Yeah well. Call of duty. How was Ariel's stuff?

Saul: Brilliant.

Grace: You like it?

Saul: Art. Fucking Art.

Grace: What's wrong with you?

Saul: Hey: Jude's coming.

Grace: What?

Saul: Should make you happy. Are you two still... stupid? With each other?

Grace: Dude what?

Saul: Are you guys... What are you guys? You fuck him yet, or what?

Grace: What?! Whoa. Whoooooa, no. Siblings, like. You know. But no: definitely no. Sibling.

Saul: Mom was pregnant? Shit / Who's the father?

Grace: Okay ha ha shut the fuck up.

*Climbing down, he polishes off the whisky. Breaks the bottle on the side of Ariel's house, tosses her the jagged neck.*

Saul: Here shove this down her throat for me.

Grace: Jesus, Saul. Where are you going?

Saul: I don't know, drive my car off a cliff or something.

Grace: Fuck you gimme your keys.

Saul: I'm not driving anywhere drunk.

Grace: Not this time you're not.

*Saul offers to wander off. She pulls a can of mace on him.*

Saul: Jesus is that real?

Grace: You think your sister is a personage of such character as to carry ingenuine mace? Keys, shithead.

*He gives her his keys. She hugs him.*

Grace: Whose throat?

Saul: See this is why I love you, little one.

Grace: I'm serious. Who?

*Ariel and Mary come out, arm in arm, giggling.*

Saul: O Pick one.

*He turns to go.*

Ariel: Saul, where did you go? We miss you.

Mary: Come try the honey sangria.

Ariel: We've perfected it.

Mary: Raspberries!

*Saul sings: Frente, Bizarre Love Triangle. His singing should be unskilled, but not comic. He sings through, not stopping for other lines. He should get to "I'm waiting for that final moment you..." before stopping abruptly. Things can overlap.*

Every time I think of you  
I get a shot right through into a bolt of blue.  
It's no problem of mine  
but it's a problem I find  
living a life that I can't leave behind.  
There's no sense in telling me  
the wisdom of a fool won't set you free.  
But that's the way that it goes  
and it's what nobody knows  
and every day my confusion grows.

Every time I see you falling, I get down on my knees and pray  
I'm waiting for that final moment you...

Grace: *(at "blue")* ¡Oye! ¿Como ...va? You're painted gold. Why are you painted gold?

Mary: Hey Grace.

Grace: Hey. Why the hell is she painted gold?

Ariel: Why aren't you?

Grace: Was your big Santa Fe art showing spectacular? Our mother told me it was spectacular, and she's a bitch.

Mary: Baby, where you going?

Mary: Saul, baby, come here -

Grace: What's in your studio? New stuff? Anything special?

Mary: I want to talk to you -

Ariel: There's a mirror.  
Mary: The one with the mirror is amazing.  
Grace: Saul, god, shut UP!  
Mary: Saul, okay, let's go for a walk, we'll look at the stars,  
Ariel: The stars up here are beautiful.  
Grace: Wait – I'm sorry, this is distracting – tell me again why you're painted gold?  
Mary: Dammit Saul!  
Saul: Every time I see you falling, I get down on my knees and pray  
I'm waiting for that final moment you–.  
FuuuuuuuUUUCK!

*Saul wanders off. Beat.*

Mary: O christ.

*Beat.*

Mary: Grace why are you holding a broken bottle.  
Grace: Oh it's a present.  
Ariel: For who?  
Grace: Hm. I'm gonna get a drink, see your stuff, you mind?  
Ariel: Feel free /  
Mary: What?  
Ariel: On your left. Raspberries.

*She goes in.*

Mary: I'll call you tomorrow from Albuquerque.  
Ariel: You're not sober enough to drive.  
Mary: I will be by the time we finish fighting.  
Ariel: Don't go. It's perfect here.  
Mary: I have to.  
Ariel: I thought things were okay.  
Mary: Look I'll be back if I can. I love you, OK?

*They touch.*

Ariel: Promise?  
Mary: I promise / I'll call you. I'm so glad for your opening / I can hardly believe it, life is being so

superflously beautiful to you. Four national museums coming to see your work. Hijola.

*Grace re-enters on them, unseen, with beer.*

Ariel: I can't believe you painted me gold.

Mary: It fit.

Ariel: Kiss me.

Mary: I'll come back if I can. I have to find Saul.

Mary: Te amo.

Ariel: Te quiero.

Grace: Mary wait up. *(Mary)* Happy birthday.

*Gives her the bottleneck.*

Mary: What?

Grace: Ask my brother.

*Mary goes, and Ariel watches.*

Grace: Tell me she painted you with breathable paint, at least.

Ariel: We found it.

Grace: You know sometimes I wonder whether you people are real or whether the part of me that dies every day at work is finding outlet by making you up. I really do wonder.

*She goes.*

*Ariel climbs up the ladder, stares at the moon.*

Ariel: And a Poet said, Speak to us of Beauty.

*She laughs. Repeat dance moves. While she does, enter Jude unseen with a pineapple, suit outfit. He watches her. She sees him.*

Ariel: Hi.

Jude: Hello.

Ariel: Welcome.

*pause*

Jude: I brought a pineapple.

*she laughs*

Jude: My mom lived in France for a long time: she taught me never to show up emptyhanded to someone's house. And God only knows what this guy was doing out there at this time of night selling pineapples and oranges but there he was. And I wondered briefly if I was going to get axe-murdered or something, but I figured hell: it's the feast of the Transfiguration today, so I stopped. Of course then I saw the glint in his eye and his gold tooth and I remembered that the feast of the Transfiguration is also the anniversary of the bombing of

Hiroshima and I wasn't so sure anymore, but turns out he was just selling pineapples and oranges on a dark mountain road in the middle of the night. Like you do. It's out of season, it's probably terrible. But anyway it's all a very complicated / or not complicated but clumsy / Man, I don't know how /

Ariel: Pineapples have no season in New Mexico.

Jude: Ah. So they don't. What are you doing up there?

*Enter Grace, unseen, with lit cigarette and newspapers. She freezes.*

Ariel: Considering the possibility that I can fly.

Jude: I see. Have you considered the reality of gravity?

Ariel: No.

Jude: I see.

Ariel: I have better things to do with my time.

Jude: Aren't you afraid of hitting the ground?

Ariel: Aren't you afraid you'll never fly?

Jude: You're gold.

Ariel: You're in a suit.

Jude: Oh. It's Thursday: I wear suits on Thursdays.

Ariel: You're in a suit, I'm painted gold. It's Thursday: I can fly.

Jude: Fair enough.

*Beat. Something.*

Grace: *(as if just having come out of the house)* VAQUEROOOOOO!!!!

*She tackles him. After some business, she winds up on top.*

Jude: Well. Hi Grace.

Grace: How the HELL have you been? Are you really moving out here to build a goddamn church? You should move out here to build a church.

Jude: Um. Ow? You tackled me! Who tackles? Who tackles a man in a suit?

Grace: Oh god / Shit I did! Was I / Did you wear an / Oh no! I'm sooo sorry / I didn't even think

*she lets up*

Jude: No no, no problem, don't worry. It's the risk I take. I think it comes in the "friends with Grace" package. Anyway it's a crap suit.

Grace: Shoes are a dead giveaway.

Jude: I know.

Grace: But this suit – you're sure this is a crap suit?

Jude: Total crap.

Grace: In which case (*back under her foot*) how the HELL have you been you goddamn crazy kid?

Jude: Erp. Good. You?

Grace: I've been okay but tired and really sick of my dead end job / But you should seeeee the pieces in there! Ariel some of them are really good. How come they weren't in your opening?/ You never answered my question.

Jude: I told you. I've been good, you /

Grace: Other question!

Jude: What question, what the crap are you talking about? I can't breathe you psycho female!

Grace: Do it! Do it! Come up! Build the church, live in the church, do it, Vaquero, do it!

Jude: What did you just call me?

Grace: Your new nickname. Vaquero. Because you're going to be a cowboy soon camping out in an old Spanish Mission.

Jude: You're not a human being, you know that?

Grace: Yes.

Jude: Your new nickname, hereby and forevermore in retribution therefore will be Animal.

Animal: Omygod you should really see the stuff she's working on. Today was her opening. People were here from all over the southwest. The papers raved.

Ariel: No they didn't.

Animal: BullSHIT! (*reads*) "The Definitive Voice of a New Wave in New Mexican Art." "A mature, profound artist has emerged." "The best thing to hit Santa Fe galleries in fifteen years!" And so this curator lady from/

Ariel: She just wants to talk to me.

Animal: I heard the whole / don't interrupt me when / there's this ambiguously european curator lady from/

Ariel: Shhhh...

Animal: So this lady is going to pick up one of her pieces for display in Chicago or New York or Paris or wherever and make Ariel famous and pro-foundly funded. Why didn't you ever tell me you were a genius?

Ariel: Because I'm not.

Animal: O god.

Jude: Can I get up yet?

Animal: Do you have any idea how big a Deal that is, Vaquero?

Jude: Um no, can't say as I do.

Animal: It's a HUGE fuckin deal! Go see her stuff. Go.

Jude: Listen, Animal. If it's okay I wanted to talk to /

*Animal does something mildly painful to him.*

Animal: GO!

Jude: Holy Jesus, I'm going already.

*He goes.*

Animal: Should I tell him to leave?

Ariel: No.

Animal: I will, if it would be better. Serio.

*Beat.*

Animal: What is with you?

Ariel: Look. The moon.

*She looks. Enter Mary, rapidly.*

Mary: Is there a flashlight here?

Animal: What?

Mary: A flashlight.

Animal: Where's Saul?

Ariel: Baby what's wrong?

Mary: Oh. You scared me. Ariel is there a flashlight in your house?

Animal: Are you okay?

Mary: I just need to find a flashlight. Is there a flashlight?

Ariel: I don't know. Maybe in the box back there.

Ariel: Baby what's wrong?

Animal: Where's Saul?

Mary: He's mad. And drunk. Really drunk.

Ariel: Let him sober up. He'll come back.

Animal: Not getting far without his keys. What do you need a flashlight for?

Mary: He's out somewhere, I don't know... I followed him out to that ridge over there and he bolted. Split. In all my born days I never saw him run like / Jesus, batteries don't work. Why do the batteries never work?

Ariel: Is there a spare in the box? Maybe under the fireworks?

Animal: That is the biggest goddamn flashlight I ever saw.

Mary: Here hold it.

Animal: There's a goddamn safety on it! What kind of a flashlight needs a safety?

Mary: Stupid shitforbrains is going to break off his foot in a prairie dog hole or something.

Animal: He just took off?

Ariel: Are you okay?

Animal: Which way did he go?

Mary: I don't know, it's dark. I'm lucky I found the house again. That way maybe. Pendejo's actually hiding from me.

Ariel: Mary -

Mary: I'm fine. It's just going to be a longer night than I thought. Much longer. Jesus, finally. Alright. Goodbye.

Ariel: Be safe! Call me!

*She is gone. Animal whistles, slugs on her beer. Enter Jude.*

Jude: Holy mother of God.

Animal: Jesus you scared me.

Jude: Ariel -

Animal: What did I tell you, right? Genius. But don't bother telling her. She's not hearing any of it tonight.

Jude: Why not?

Animal: Meteorological phenomena. I don't know. Crisis of some kind in the desert.

Jude: Crisis? Can I help? What kind of crisis?

Animal: I wash my hands of it. Ariel you're an angel!

*She goes in*

Jude: You did that stuff? It's great.

Ariel: It's not finished.

Jude: I'll try. I mean I already love them. The one with the mirror.

Ariel: I didn't make it up.  
"And a poet said, speak to us of beauty.  
and he answered:  
People of Orphalese, beauty is life when life unveils her holy face.  
but you are life and you are the veil.  
beauty is eternity gazing at itself in a mirror."

*They gaze at each other. Brief mirror effect. Intentional?*

Jude: What is that?

Ariel: The Prophet.

Jude: Which prophet?

Ariel: The Prophet. It's a book. By a man. Named Kahlil Gibran.

Jude: You have it memorized?

Ariel: Parts of it are marked on my memory. Come up. UpupupUp here you can fly. How lovely. You have a pineapple.

Jude: I do.

Ariel: You were saying about it?

Jude: Oh. Yes. Before the tackling. Ariel I - . Whooooo. (*Beat*) Okay. Okay. I am sorry. And this is a pineapple. These are two things that are true. They are also the same thing: this pineapple is me being sorry. It was the only liturgy I could muster up. I have been an idiot. To you. Teenagers. They oughta be put in a barrel and fed through a bunghole until they've properly matured. I should have, anyway. So. Symbols have, liturgy has the power to transform us. Without them we are incomplete. Please. Take the pineapple.

Ariel: I forgive you.

Jude: Because i don't want to come here knowing/ You know, and with /

Ariel: I forgive you.

Jude: Really?

Ariel: Poof.

Jude: Here. Catch.

*He throws the pineapple up, grabs the axe from the side of the house, climbs up.*

Jude: It might be a little bruised.

*Through the following, he chops off some chunks of the pineapple using the axe. They eat. It is good.*

*She looks at the moon.*

*He looks at her.*

*She looks at him.*

*He looks at the moon.*

*They both look at the moon.*

Jude: How are you?

Ariel: You don't want to know.

Jude: Um. May I beg to differ.

Ariel: O, we should leave it at the pineapple, Jude. The moon.

Jude: Hey. Friendship does not live on pineapple alone.

Ariel: What if it can?

Jude: It can't.

Ariel:            Okay.  
                  My Father walked in the living room three weeks ago and said to my Mom:  
                  "It's nothing personal, Dear, but I'm getting a divorce."  
                  And now my little sister shakes.  
                  My art opened today in Santa Fe –  
                  it went as they say well but  
                  most of it was trite  
                  and meant nothing.  
                  People came from all over the state.  
                  Some museum representatives from other states.  
                  Neither of my parents came.  
                  "Nothing personal."  
                  My kid sister just got her first period, too early, and she thinks  
                  mummy and daddy are yelling because she's bleeding.

*She smiles.*

Jude:            Well. I'm so sorry.

Ariel:            Tell me about building the church.

Jude:            I'll pray for you. You and your family.

Ariel:            Please don't. You're welcome to my studio. Jesus - is not.

Jude:            ...Okay.

Ariel:            I didn't know you were in construction.

Jude:            My uncle Fransisco is restoring an old, sort of broken down church for some monks who want to live in the desert. Its an old Mission. You know: unfortunate history with the Indians, and so on. He's living in it. I don't know. I'm visiting him.

Ariel:            Of course you're going to do it. It's beautiful. You should stay here sometimes, you're so close. You can sleep in my couch on the porch. All the time. You could move in with me. Instead of the church. Don't stay at the church, that's awful. You could help me with my work.

Jude:            Me?

Ariel:            Of course.

Jude:            O, no. I have no art. I can barely manage mud bricks.

Ariel:            Promise me /

Jude:            You don't want me, really, it'll only hurt. I promise you, /

Ariel:            There. Done. You promised.

Jude:            No no / I meant I promise that you don't /

Ariel:            Too late. A promise is a promise is a guarantee forever.

*Something*

Jude:            I begin to have the strange sensation that this all makes some kind of sense. The church, the art, standing on the roof. My pineapple. You painted gold.

Ariel: It's the crazy moon.  
Look at it.  
Red as the night is long.  
Have you ever seen such a thing?

Jude: No, never.

Ariel: That moon is my life.  
I could go crazy tonight.

Jude: You're not from this planet, are you?

Ariel: We don't get much.  
A mouthful of beautiful moments –  
just this once and  
poof.  
You can't keep any of it.  
Art. It's hopeless.

Jude: Nothing is hopeless.

Ariel: Blood moon like that should mean something.  
Generations gone would fear it,  
worship it.  
Go crazy.  
Sacrifice. Ritualistic orgy.  
Yes.  
And nobody would trouble so little a thing as someone painted gold  
because the moon is the color of blood.  
The moon is the color of blood!  
Not like now. Now. Today.  
It's smoke. A scheduled forest fire got out of hand. Smoke. Optical illusions.  
My pores will clog up.  
Heartless.

Jude: No. Don't give up. Because of today: it's the feast of the Transfiguration.  
The Transfiguration is when the disciples finally finally saw two things at once:  
The son of man and the son of god.  
The whole feastday is on one level preposterous:  
they saw Jesus on a mountain dressed in white.  
That's all.  
But also, to them, he was dazzling, silver:  
The Son of God.  
So it's smoke. So your pores will clog.  
But also...

Ariel: Poof.

Jude: Poof.  
Maybe we can fly tonight.

Ariel: Come here.

Jude: Is that safe?

Ariel: No.

*They stand with their toes hanging over the edge of the roof. They are flying.  
Enter Saul, much more drunk than before. He carries a bottle with a bandana sticking out the top. He sings:*

*Against Me!: We Laugh at Danger and Break All the Rules.*

Saul: Maaaaary! there is no hope for us!  
If this blue Volvo don't make it across the state lines  
We might as well lay down and die:  
If New Meeeeexico takes us  
We're taking everyone down with us  
Where we're coming from  
Will be the death of us!

*Mary comes from off, another direction, as he throws the burning Molotov Cocktail at the house.*

Mary: Saul? Is that you?

*It explodes in flames. Pandemonium. The fireworks in the box where Mary got the flashlight go off. He continues singing. He should get through all of the following during the pandemonium that ensues. Meanwhile, Jude jumps off the roof onto the ground, searches madly for a hose. Saul laughs, or throws himself into the fire, at the house and backs off, repeatedly, or he throws rocks through a window. Everyone talking at once.*

Saul: And I could not help but hold on to  
a head full of times  
when what was spoken was revolution in itself  
and what we're doing was the only thing that matters.  
And how good it felt  
to kill the memory  
of nights spent holding your shirts for the smell.  
I used to cry when you'd make love to her.  
But this train will roll on  
Cause all we can do is what we've always done  
And on and on on and on on and on on and on on and on on and on...

Jude: Holy fucking shit!

Ariel: ohgodohgodohgodohgod

Jude: Holy, holy / Holy shit.

Mary: Oh -

Jude: Hang on / Just / Is there a hose?

*Enter Animal.*

Animal: Holy shit. What the fuck is going on?

Jude: Saul threw a / Shit, where's the hose? He threw a bottle –

Mary: Saul, calm down, please /

Animal: Hey why is Saul singing again? (*notices the fire*) A la Madre! / Water / Who has water / Why is  
Saul /

Jude: I don't know / He just / A bottle, a bottle with a flaming rag /

Animal: A fucking Molotov Cocktail?

Jude: Where's the spigot?

Mary: Saul, stop singing.

Animal: God damn! It's around under the thing, over past /

Jude: It's dark back here!

Mary: Saul!

Animal: Jude, I'm coming, Saul, you chill the fuck out.

*She goes. Ariel, at the edge of the roof, stares at the fire. Saul falls silent. They look at each other for a while.*

Animal: Okay go!

*Enter Jude, hose running at full blast.*

Saul: (sung) Maaaaaary! There is no hope for us!

*Does Saul throw something, a rock, maybe, at Ariel? He misses. Jude is dousing the fire. Saul sees Jude, lets out an animal yell and tackles him.*

Ariel: Oh my / Jude! Jude!

Jude: Fuck! Saul! Fuck!

*Saul has him down, the classic pose. He hits him across the face, hard. Mary gasps. Ariel screams. Saul is about to repeat the gesture. Animal kicks him off of Jude and maces him. Saul screams, running off. Through the following, Jude puts out the fire completely.*

Mary: You maced him!

Animal: Vaquero, how's your face?

Mary: You maced him!

Animal: Your boyfriend is psychotic.

Ariel: Is it / The fire, is it /

Mary: Who carries mace?

Jude: My face is okay. It's okay. The fire is okay. It's going out. I think my face is okay.

Animal: Who throws Molotov cocktails at houses?

Ariel: O god.

Mary: I have to find him - Saul!

Ariel: Mary, no!

Animal: Like hell you do what are you nuts?

Mary: I have to find him. He's going to do something really stupid if I don't.

Ariel: He's going to hurt you, Mary.

Animal: What do / This does not qualify as stupid?

Jude: I think this qualifies as stupid.

Mary: Something more stupid

Animal: I just maced him, he's not doing anything anytime soon but reflecting on the nature of pain.

Mary: I can't believe you maced him. He's your brother.

Jude: Remember the hitting?

Animal: He'll be fine in an hour. Anyway I took his keys, he'll be back.

Ariel: Mary: stay here.

Mary: He's in pain. I'm going.

Animal: Wait. Okay. Traintracks. Follow the arroyo.

Mary: Why? He went that way.

Animal: Just -. Trust me. Traintracks.

Mary: Why should I believe you?

Animal: Our Dad, remember?

Mary: Give me the keys.

Animal: Take the mace.

*Animal drops the keys in the broken bottle. Does Mary take the mace? She goes. The fire is out.*

*Stunned silence*

Animal: Christ.

*She goes in. Jude climbs back on the roof.  
She kisses him, her right hand on his breast. It leaves a gold print. Sound of a train?*

### **Trainhopping to Damascus**

*The same night.  
The desert.*

*Train tracks. At some point a freight train starts rolling through.*

*Saul watches the desert. Does he sing Red River Valley? If he does, it starts while Jude and Ariel kiss, or just after, with "Come and sit by my side if you love me."*

*Mary sweeps the giant flashlight across the space a few times. Saul throws a rock, away. She follows the sound. She is very frustrated, cannot find him, and sits down. Saul throws another rock, this time at her - gently. He hits her or comes close.*

Saul: Hey.

Mary: Fuck you. I had a fuck of a time finding you.

Saul: Well I wasn't trying to make it easy.

Mary: I noticed. What is with this bottle? Grace told me you would explain it to me? I fell over and nearly stabbed myself on it chasing you.

Saul: Man I love Grace.

Mary: Well, I don't. You could have torched the whole place.

Saul: Yeah.

Mary: Can I come sit with you?

*Beat.*

Mary: You were ridiculous.

*Beat.*

Mary: I hate it when won't talk to me.

Saul: I want you to know that I've sobered up a lot.

Mary: What?

Saul: It could become important and I want you to know that I think I'm more or less completely sober now. The walking, and the cold.

Mary: And the mace?

Saul: You, would, not, believe. How painful mace is. I'm sorry I drank so much.

Mary: I don't like it when you drink like that.

Saul: Neither do I.

Mary: Even when you don't try to light things on fire I don't like it.

Saul: Neither do I.

Mary: So don't.

Saul: My grandfather was an alcoholic. They say my dad was drunk when he died. They say it runs in families, like Schizophrenia. Said he wrecked the train cause he was drunk. Or suicidal, or both. My grandfather had schizophrenia, too, they say.

Mary: You aren't crazy, you were drunk. You never would have done that sober.

Saul: True. But did I drink so I could do it? Maybe. May be. Who knows.

Mary: Dammit Saul. Are you still drunk?

Saul: I don't think so. I don't know.

Mary: How can you possibly not know?

Saul: I've actually got a lot going on right now, it's kind of hard to sort out.

Mary: How much did you drink?

*This should build, as it does in the song: Kiss Off, the Violent Femmes. His singing is more or less continuous over her interjections.*

Saul: I drank one.

Mary: One?

Saul: One cause you left me

Mary: I did not leave you.

Saul: And two two two for my family.

Mary: Saul...

Saul: And three three three for my heartache.  
And four four four for my headaches

Mary: I know the words to the song.

Saul: And five five five for my lonely  
And six six six for my sorrow

Mary: I didn't come out here for you to sing at me.

Saul: And seven, seven, n-n-n-no tomorrow  
And eight, eight, I forget what eight was for,

Mary: Saul! Saul I want to talk to you.

Saul: But nine, nine, nine for my lost god,

Mary: Stop! Stop!

Saul: And ten ten ten ten is for everything everything everything everything!

Mary: What the fuck is with the god damn singing?

Saul: O, come on, Mary!, get a little more creative with your powers of contextualisaton.

Mary: I have very creative powers of contextualisation. I understand the importance of juxtaposition, and I understand the value of context in quotation, but I do not understand the singing. Because I am not prepared to chase you through the metaphysical landscape of a half-cocked mix tape; I am worn through already from chasing – and possibly (I hope not but possibly) losing – my psychotic boyfriend, who I love very much – in the middle of a distinctly not-meta physical desert in the middle of the night. So. Please just explain the singing. I'd like to get to the Molotov Cocktail, but we can start with the singing. I'm only trying to get us in the same conversation here. Okay? Anything.

Saul: Life is unreasonable. It doesn't come with a user guide. There is no customer service department. It doesn't even guarantee it's usefulness or fitness for any given purpose. I certainly never guaranteed my usefulness and especially not fitness for any given purpose.

Mary: Bull shit.

Saul: Says who.

Mary: For three years running now you have told me  
you love me.  
That is a promise / That is a guarantee  
for fitness for a given purpose, Saul:  
that you will not descend into drink and break my heart.

Saul: I disagree.  
I challenge the terms of the guarantee.  
My guarantee to you was to be the sort of person who is unreasonable when betrayed in love.  
To throw rocks through windows, try to set houses on fire.  
When betrayed in love.

*Beat.*

Mary: I know. I keep fucking up Saul, but I'm trying not to. I wish I didn't.

Saul: Was your grandfather an alcoholic too?

Mary: You could try giving me a reason not to fuck up, you know.

Saul: *(sings, softly: Ache, Jawbreaker.)* I believe in desperate acts - the kind that make you look stupid.

Mary: Please. Stop with the singing.

Saul: *(Sung)* Just keep reinventing ourselves. It's move, or die.

Mary: Please.

Saul: Fuck you. You've always been smarter than me. Figure it out, slut.

*Beat.*

Mary: Fine. For the record, I came. I chased you through the desert, and I found you. I want that on the record. Ariel's studio is back that way. By the time you crawl back you might be sober enough to operate a motor vehicle. Have at least the decency not to wake Ariel up. One supposes she won't want to see you after you tried to light her house on fire. Here.

*She offers the keys. After a moment he takes them. She offers to go.*

Saul: Don't go. Please. I'm sorry I drank. I'm sorry I'm being an asshole. I'm choking on shit.

I understand how it is for you. I sympathize:  
I mean what happens if there is a person –  
a person so full of the love of living  
so full of – I don't know –  
maybe even fucking innocence.  
Someone who lives from the heart  
who puts her heart out into the world  
so attuned to every little breath of life  
such a sensitive vessel,  
a person deserving real love in return because of that,  
but in her own way  
even if it is not your way –  
what happens if this person loves you,  
kisses you, seduces you?

What do you do?  
You fuck up.  
You can't fight gravity.

Mary: I'm trying.

Saul: No, you're not.

Mary: We've been here before.

Saul: Mary I will make a lousy drunk.

*Saul laughs, cries, or both. Maybe he screams.*

Saul: O, when did this all become so stupid?

Mary: I can't remember.

Saul: I want to shave our heads. Forget everything but love – walk out of these clothes, lose all the shit that weighs us down. Ride off into the sunset / Happily ever after. Free. Unstoppable.  
Like.  
Like I don't know, like.

*Beat.*

Saul: Like that freight train.

*Beat.*

Mary: Saul?

Saul: Hell with it. Let's go. Don't you ever just – want to take off?

Mary: All the time. That's the problem.

Saul: Let's go.

Mary: Where?

Saul: I don't know. West.

Mary: Okay. Let's go get your car. We can make it to Canyon de Chelley by lunchtime.

Saul: Not the car.

*Beat.*

Mary: Are you serious?

Saul: Never been more serious in my life.

Mary: You are not talking about hopping trains.

Saul: I'm talking about love. Look, this is stupid. Why are we even fighting?

Mary: Because I keep fucking up.

Saul: And I'm an asshole.

Mary: We're suffocating.

Saul: Let's just go.

Mary: Are you out of your mind?

Saul: Possibly.

Mary: Don't be an idiot, Saul.

Saul: Don't be bourgeois, Mary.

Mary: Saul stop, you're making me crazy!

Saul: Hey! That makes two of us / Let's go / We don't have much time.

Mary: Where is this train even going?

Saul: Hell if I know, fucked if I care. Away.

Mary: It's dangerous.

Saul: Everything is dangerous, babe. Otherwise life wouldn't be worth living.

Mary: Saul, stop. We could be killed.

Saul: Life is a series of inexplicable and traumatic events from which none of us ever escape alive.

Mary: Just think for a minute, Saul. Calm down and think for one minute.

Saul: We don't have one minute left. Only so many more cars. You have about twenty-five seconds to make this choice. This is the wild heart of living rolling by, and it is happening now. If you pass on this you will regret it for the rest of your life.

*Beat.*

Saul: Hell, for all we know this train stops in Grants, and we can hitch back before morning. Come on. I'm not asking everything to change. I'm not even asking that you stop sleeping with Ariel. I'm not asking for anything but that you get on this train with me. Right now.

Mary: Don't leave me.

*Saul offers to board.*

Mary: Wait –

Saul: The caboose is coming.

Mary: For God's sakes, Saul, please!

Saul: I love you.

*Beat. He hops the train and is gone.*

Mary: Saul! Saul! Goddammit, Saul, GET OFF!

*Two or three final cars roll by. Will she hop on? The train is gone. Sound of a train, loud, dangerous.*

Mary: Shit. Shit shit shit.

### **Coming Back**

*The same night.*

*The studio, sunrise.*

*Mary comes back. Ariel and Jude are asleep on the porch, in one another's arms. She considers them for a time.*

*She talks to them, asleep.*

Mary: It's funny.  
I can't stop thinking tonight.  
About the greeks.  
What a funny thing to be thinking about.  
My life is falling apart  
and all I can think of is ancient Greece.  
The Greeks.  
They thought that the human heart was a fire.  
The lungs bring it air, see,  
so it won't go out.

I used to have nightmares that my heart was going out.

Remember?

And then, you.

You and your desert. God. What a thing.  
Clean. Open. So much sky.  
Me with my devoted boyfriend and little suffocating heart, and you with the desert and open air.  
I was in love with someone else I said. And you said (it is marked on my memory):

I hate words.  
I desire that no more words ever enter me.  
I desire the individual language of living to fill my body and blood.  
Look,  
you said.

*Gestures to the desert*

I don't love you  
with words. I love you  
like that.  
The desert of our pleasures is not owned or monogamous,  
and cannot be explained.

So why is my heart going out again?

*Ariel wakes up.*

Ariel: Oh. Hi.

Mary: Yeah.

Ariel: Were you talking to me? What were you saying?

Mary: That I love you.

Ariel: Where's Saul?

Mary: Well. Funny you should ask, actually.

Ariel: Why? Baby what's wrong?

*She extricates herself from Jude, who does not wake up.*

Mary: I should go. Happy opening.

Ariel: Stay. What happened? Did you find Saul? Stay.

Mary: I just came back for my things.

Ariel: You didn't find him. He'll be back for his car.

Mary: No, he won't.

Ariel: What do you mean?

Mary: He's not coming back for his car.

Ariel: Mary, you're scaring me.

Mary: Oh, no / Not-. No, not-. No.

Ariel: We're in the middle of no / What happened?

Mary: I don't know what you call what happened. He hopped a freight train west. Poof. Go west, young man.

Ariel: A freight train?

Mary: A freight train.

Ariel: Just like that?

Mary: Just like that.

Ariel: O baby. You should stay.

Mary: O no. If there's one thing I definitely shouldn't be doing it's – anything, anything here.

Ariel: I'm sorry.

Mary: I know. I thought you'd given up men.

Ariel: I'm not so sure I haven't.

Mary: I always thought you two would make the most aesthetically pleasing couple.

Ariel: Who said couple?

Mary: Ariel, look at him. Good. Now look at yourself looking at him. Some people kiss and it's just this thing that happened. Other people kiss, the earth stops. You're painted gold: You are not some people; you are other people.

Ariel: Come inside. He'll sleep there. It's warm. Or he'll wake up and drive home.

Mary: You should tell him. About us. About the desert. Don't wait. Tell him about the individual language of living. I waited. I shouldn't have waited.

Ariel: I will.

Mary: Good.

Ariel: Don't go home. You'll go home and cry and be lonely. It will be awful and you'll ask yourself cruel questions. There aren't answers to those questions. Sleep in my bed. It's warm. It's big.

Mary: O. Hell. I want to. Fuck. I shouldn't. I won't.

Ariel: You can be here instead. With a friend.

Mary: A friend?

Ariel: Yes.

Mary: Because I don't think /

Ariel: I won't. Promise.

Mary: You are an angel.

*Mary initiates a light, platonic kiss, on the lips.*

Mary: And you should snap him up.

Ariel: He is kind of beautiful.

*They go in together, creeping past sleeping Jude. The door makes some noise when it shuts behind them, and Jude wakes up. He is alone. He is confused. Where is Ariel? What time is it? Should he open the door? Should he knock? No. He shouldn't.*

### **The First Letter of Saul to the New Mexicans.**

*The train.*

Riding the rails is a real kick in the pants.

You leap on board this hulking amalgamation of metal weighing tons and tons and tons,  
and you take off  
across the great American Wilderness  
on the back of a giant steel dragon.  
And once you get over the fear,  
there is giddy abandon  
at the blind, happy stupidity of what you just did.

Whole cities  
are cut in half  
while the dragon rattles and smashes through / And you stop  
for nothing.  
There is no uncertainty  
in her relentless, inevitable rhythm.  
Wheels beat down on the ribbons of steel  
and your own little heartbeat is completely  
obliterated.

The rattle, boom, bang of the big wheel  
pounding the rail  
is like two lovers' impassioned kiss,  
repeated again and again with ardent fervor,  
and forgotten.

There is only the train and your skin tasting wind.

Freight trains are *the* best way to see america.

**Lay in a Manger**  
*Christmas Eve*  
*The Studio*

*Jude is lighting luminarias. The more the merrier. He lights the last of them, steps back. He is clearly enjoying himself. Perhaps he whistles. At some point, he goes in.*

*Ariel comes on. She does not see the luminarias.*

*Jude comes out.*

Jude: Feliz Navidad. Hay posole adentro.

*Is she crying?*

Jude: Hey, hey, hey, what? What is it?

Ariel: I have had the most unbelievably stupid day.

Jude: I can't believe they held court for divorce on Christmas Eve. It's not human.

Ariel: It's a shitty world.

Jude: No it isn't.

Ariel: Yes, it is. My father's Texas cousins want to weasel a bed and breakfast out of my family's wreckage. Out of my studio. Those fat, shiny, those oily those soulless Texan manikins sat themselves in the pews all day and watched. You could smell their drool. And I thought: if that's the sociopathic kind of pusspocket that's buying up the land in these mountains, sell the studio. Good riddance. I want to live as far away from them and their kind as I can get.

Jude: Don't say that, love.

Ariel: He tried to hit her. My dad tried to hit my mother. In court. My sister gave about half her testimony and the shit hit the fan.

Jude: What kind of person tries to hit his wife in court?

Ariel: She was screaming through closed teeth. I swear to God, if she had spit, it would have been green. My sister is in police custody. Judge wouldn't let her stay with either parent. The words Foster Home have been used. I said she can live with me, let her live with me, she can live with me, but my father said he didn't want me poisoning her against him. He said I would poison my little kid sister. I have to move out of the studio, Jude. It'll be a bed and breakfast.

Jude: No.

Ariel: O yes.

Jude: You really have had an unbelievably stupid day.

Ariel: I'm never getting married. Did you say there was posole?

Jude: My world famous.

Ariel: You are the world's best lover.

Jude: I'll get you some. You relax.

*Kiss. He goes in.*

Ariel: Then Almitra spoke again and said, "And what of Marriage, master?"  
And he answered saying:  
Love one another but make not a bond of love:  
Fill each other's cup but drink not from one cup.  
Give one another of your bread but eat not from the same loaf.  
Give your hearts, but not into each other's keeping.  
For only the hand of Life can contain your hearts.

*She sees the luminarias.*

*Something.*

*Mary comes on, as cat, or dinosaur, with thermos.*

Mary: Roar.

Ariel: Hey.

*Mary tries to play with her. It doesn't work.*

Mary: O poo on you.

Ariel: I can't, Mary. Look at it.

Mary: Pretty.

Ariel: Jude did them. Touristas will just love it. Kitschy paintings of coyotes and saguaro cacti everywhere.

Mary: Saguaro don't even grow in New Mexico.

Ariel: Tell that to Texas.

Mary: O, nothing's going to happen to the studio. And do you know why? Because you are too pretty. And, they are too stupid.

Ariel: Ha. Thanks for that.

Mary: I brought cider. It's good. Got raspberry in it.

*Jude comes out, with posole.*

Jude: Oh. O hello Mary.

Mary: Hi Jude.

Jude: I didn't know you were coming.

Mary: I didn't know you were coming.

Ariel: You did these?

Jude: It isn't right: to go without, Christmas Eve.

Mary: It's so homey. So comfortable.

Ariel: Yeah, well, don't get used to it.

Jude: You want to know what I think? This mysteriously accented curator lady from the Museum is going to come back to see your works again, take one look at your piece and /

Ariel: Know I'm a ridiculous Kahlil Gibran plagiarist.

Jude: You are not. You'll get the money for the piece. And do you know why? Because Almitra is... the work you've done on it this advent is... staggeringly beautiful.

Ariel: O for God's sake don't talk to me about beauty. We live in a stupid, cruel world where people invent nuclear bombs and put their own children in police custody.

Jude: But you create something else. You create something more decent with your work – something more true. And through that experience, even in the face of the absurd stupidity of the world, we can /

Mary: Blow up the courthouse, shoot the sheriff, pull a train heist, and flee to the safety of Mexico.

Ariel: Yes, please!

Mary: Now take off those ridiculous shoes.

Ariel: Thank you, both. You two are too much.

*She goes in. Beat.*

J: I'm gonna go in and, um. I think she needs some /

M: Give her some time in there with her piece. She needs it. It has more to offer her right now than we do. I mean. Pfft. Words? For what she's up against? Give her some time.

J: It's really amazing, isn't it?

M: Mm.

J: I never saw anything so true. Nothing ever to so encapsulate the good things in life. This place, somehow. This desert. You. The three of us.

M: Me?

J: Nevermind, I don't know.

M: Hm. She's obsessed.

J: Yeah.

M: She's given it a name. Almitra.

J: Oh yeah?

M: The woman who asks the Prophet about love. In the Prophet. Have you read it?

J: No.

M: She can't figure out how to put you in, she says. She can only get bits of you at a time. Your freckles, the holes in the backs of your old t shirts. She's toying with the idea of putting in your church.

J: She hates Jesus.

M: No she doesn't.

J: The last time she was in a church, she told me, she vomited in the baptismal font.

M: Really?

J: Yeah.

M: Awesome. I guess she never has been big on Faith. Eat my body! Drink my blood! Christmas: Birth of the Virgin-spawn! Easter: Revenge of the Zombie Virgin-Spawn!

J: Christmas is not about who got fucked and who didn't, okay? And Easter is not about the resuscitation of a corpse. Faith. It isn't witchcraft, for fuck's sake.

M: Whoa there, caballo.

J: I mean why do intelligent people around here consistently lose all sense of metaphor when Jesus gets mentioned?

M: I'm sorry, Jude.

J: No, I'm sorry. It's just - . Faith. It's in her piece already. This New Mexico thing, this whatever it is. Painting each other gold. The Prophet. It's in the chile.

M: Mmm, chile.

J: O shut up, because I am basically not kidding, okay? It is my firm belief that there is something amazing about this place - I mean this specific place, yes, but also Northern New Mexico - there is something about this place which is not just a place, right?

M: I could get there, yes.

J: Yes: this isn't just a place: it's essentially a kind of dream: the fully realized life. You should maybe understand this. This generous hedonism, this wild, this uninhibited joy in the process of living. You know? It is my firm conviction that this dream is somehow laid into the physical geography and landscape, the culture, the food, the people of this state. The desert. The chile: begin the day with fire in your belly. Grasping at goodness with forward momentum. Openness.

M: Dirt?

J: Yes: possibility.

M: Love.

J: No. Beauty. Belief in its power, in its goodness: this is faith. Not Zombies and mutant pregnancies.

M: I told her you two would make an aesthetically pleasing couple.

J: It's not me, it's her. That piece - Almitra. All of it is in there. You see it, right?

M: I know.

J: So don't make jokes about it, okay? Flippancy - cynicism - that's easy. But it doesn't mean anything.

M: I am not a cynic.

J: Train heists, Zombie resurrections?

M: I've loved her a lot longer than you have, Jude.

*Beat*

J: Fuck.

*Enter Ariel*

Ariel: Here, Mary. Posole. It's real good.

Mary: Thank you. Ariel we really like the new stuff.

Ariel: Not that it's going to matter.

Mary: It doesn't matter if we like it?

Ariel: I'm sorry. I'm falling apart. I can't focus. Between my family going to pieces and that... thing in there. Almitra with her mirror, staring at me. It's awful. I hardly know what day it is anymore.

Jude: It's Christmas Eve.

Ariel: She never leaves me alone. I can't sleep anymore. She wakes me up in the middle of the night and I just start working. I'm sick of it.

Mary: I'll chain you to the bed: you'll sleep better.

Ariel: No, it's fine. Tomorrow's Christmas, you should be with... your family.

Mary: Christmas. Pfft. Birth of mutant virgin-spawn. I think I can manage to stay, really.

Ariel: Really?

Mary: I don't see why not.

*Mary goes in. Silence. In the silence, a clicking, barely audible. Something.*

Ariel: Baby what?

Jude: Nothing.

*Silence, with clicking. Distant sound of a train. Mary comes back, with cider.*

Jude: What do you think that sound is, Mary?

Mary: The train?

Jude: No. Listen:

Mary: Oh. Bark beetles. They're eating the piñons. Here. Have some cider. Size of a grain of rice. Ordinarily an innocuous undertone to the high desert ecosystem, the bark beetle, which feeds on piñons, has survived this year due to lack of precipitation.

Ariel: You should teach ecology.

Mary: Maybe on Sesame Street. What was that song?

*Mary sings the Sesame Street song. Ariel joins her.*

Mary: "One of these things is not like the others,

Ariel: One of these things just doesn't belong,  
Can you tell me which thing is not like the others  
By the time I finish this / "

Jude: Well I'm happy we could welcome you back. I should go.

Ariel: No, why?

Jude: I should. I should just go.

Mary: Why?

Ariel: Don't.

Mary: Stay, Jude.

Jude: I have to be up in the morning. Christmas is after all a holiday in the Christian faith. I have to be up in the morning. You should come sometime and see what I'm building. Both of you. I'm surprised you haven't come already.

Ariel: Of course.

Jude: Merry Christmas.

Mary: Feliz Navidad.

Ariel: Call me tomorrow, baby. Or come by.

Jude: Yeah. A dios.

*The two girls are alone.*

Ariel: That kid is so sweet. He really believes in me. He really does.

Mary: He reminds me of myself. About two years ago. So serious. Basically on the right track, but soooo serious. Liiiiitttle heavy handed.

Ariel: Keep working on him, he'll come around.

Mary: Also, he knows, you know.

Ariel: I told him.

Mary: Did you.

*Kiss*

Mary: Good for you.

Ariel: Did you talk about it?

Mary: No. He talked about how brilliant you are. Beauty.

Ariel: If this kills me – this divorce /

Mary: It won't.

Ariel: I know. But if it does, I want you to bury my heart up here. Okay? Because my parents are going to want to put my body in that graveyard in Albuquerque on Edith and Menaul next to the freeway. But I want my

heart buried here. Okay?

Mary:            Okay.

Ariel:            Look at it. The desert. What a thing.

*Soft clicking.*

### **The Third Letter of Saul to the New Mexicans.**

*The train*

Jumping trains probably isn't much like what you think it is.

It's a thrill, sure.

But listen:

First off, it's a lot of work.

You're climbing over and jumping up on chest high platforms all the time.

Grease and rust everywhere.

You'll get sidelined for hours while they couple and uncouple cars.

You'll have to sleep in the rain, and

you'll get the flu.

The awful racket keeps you from sleeping.

You shit in the corner of your boxcar and try to pretend it doesn't smell.

You end up filthy,  
sick,  
exhausted,  
lost,  
alone,  
stranded  
in podunk nowhere.

Parts of it are fun.

*He sniffs two or three times.*

But the price you pay is a real sonofabitch.

### **Holy Family**

*Epiphany*

*The church, lunchtime.*

*Jude has been laying adobes: a low exterior wall. He is about to eat his lunch. Enter Mary, unseen, with tacos.*

Jude:            *(quickly, habitually)*  
Our father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.  
Thy kingdom, come,  
thy will be done  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread  
and forgive us our trespasses -  
*(less habitually)*  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation

but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom -  
and the glory.  
Forever and ever.

Jude / Mary: Amen

Mary: Don't eat that. These are better, I guarantee.

Jude: Hey.

Mary: Hey.

*Beat. Something.*

Jude: She told you what she told me, didn't she.

Mary: Sure did. Which I guess means we should make some words.

Jude: I guess so.

*Silence*

Mary: Any idea how we go about that?

Jude: Not a clue.

Mary: Me neither. I brought tacos. Best in New Mexico, I think. And by extension, the world.  
Vegetarian. Replete with three kinds of salsa.

Jude: Did you know I was a vegetarian?

Mary: I guessed.

Jude: Thanks.

Mary: De nada.

*Taco business. Awkward for Jude.*

Mary: So you've been thinking a lot lately: About what all of this means. You've been trying to sort out a big wet tangle of questions. Like if you love her or not, and if she loves you, and if she loves me, if I love her / But mostly and most importantly whether she loves you, and if so, what that even means to her anyway in the context of these other questions, and why nobody told you for four months, and whether you and me can still be friends, or ever really were, if I could betray you like that, and some more but those are the big ones. Yeah?

Jude: Yeah, I think that about covers it.

Mary: Well, what do you think?

Jude: I don't know, actually. I was hoping you'd have some sort of definite position that I could react to.  
Work with a little.

Mary: Are you jealous?

Jude: Wait. So are you – . If we... If -. This is a mess.

Mary: Yep.

Jude: Fuck me.

Mary: Well. I hadn't thought we'd gotten there yet.

Jude: Oh. Not – . Oh fuck you.

Mary: Like I said –

Jude: Oh fuck off.

Mary: Third time's the charm.

Jude: Knew I'd get it.

Mary: Any anyway I'd say no thanks. No offense meant. I just don't think we need a repeat of what happened between Saul and Ariel.

*Beat.*

Jude: What?

Mary: We don't need a repeat...Shit. She didn't tell you that part.

Jude: What part?

*As she tells the following story, we see the studio. Jude watches this action:*

*Dumb Show:*

Mary: O, hell.  
Last summer. Just before Saul hopped a train into the sunset, never to be seen again,

*Saul comes out of the studio.*

Saul and I were staying up at the studio with Ariel. All three of us were sleeping in her loft.

*He reaches under the couch for a fifth of whiskey.*

Well I hadn't told him, but I think he was starting to figure it out.

*Ariel follows, silent, watching.*

And then, while I was sleeping – .

*He opens it, sees her. Swig.*

Well.

*She approaches. Swish.*

You can't fight gravity.

*She kisses him, her right hand on his breast. They both swallow. She draws him inside.*

I heard them downstairs. I guess I could have been extremely angry. I could have been jealous. Why bother? I love them both. So I went down and I loved them, both. But for him, you know – it was different. You cannot imagine what a strange, wonderful, terrifying thing it was. We were so far out of our league. Consumed, swept away in a hurricane. Saul wasn't blind. I mean when two people have been intimate together before, it shows. That was how he found out.

And, O, man, right when we were laying around – having so obviously just had a threesome,  
*A (semi-)live, headless chicken runs on and falls over.*

Grace walks in, right?

*Grace picks up the chicken.*

In one hand she's got the body of a chicken – the other hand she's got this axe and the chicken's head.

*In one hand she has the body of a chicken. In the other she has the axe and the chicken's head.*

I mean the chicken was still bleeding.

*The chicken is still bleeding. She goes in.*

She sees us. Blood is spurting out all over the floor. She turns right back around.

*She comes out, spits, goes.*

To this very moment I have no idea what was going on there.

*Beat.*

So I think all things considered, *you* found out the right way.

*Long silence.*

Jude: Did you – ? While you were / You and Ariel, the three of you – . Did you love him?

Mary: I think maybe I always will.

*Silence*

Jude: I feel like everything's been rearranged. (Ha. Ha, ha.) Taken out of context we must seem so strange.

Mary: We'd make such an interesting statistic.

Jude: Somebody should study us now.

Mary: Somebody's got to be interested in how we feel.

Jude: Just cause we're here

Mary: And we're real.

*A look. And suddenly, in perfect unison, they start singing the song. It is Ani D's Fire Door, the version from Living in Clip. The singing need not be good, but can be.*

Mary / Jude: And oh, how I miss:  
substituting a conclusion a confrontation with a kiss.  
And oh, how I miss  
walking up to the edge and jumping in  
Like I could feel the future on your

*They try to go into Amazing Grace. They can't manage. Dissolve into laughter.*

Mary: I didn't know you were an Ani fan .

Jude: Huge.

Mary: O good. Oh! So the international museum lady saw Almitra yesterday. (She named it Almitra, how cheesy is that?) I love it. You should have seen the look on her face. Money!

Jude: High enough to buy the mortgage?

Mary: Probably not. But with time, with the kind of exposure this could get her, grant money.

Jude: God damn.

Mary: I know, right? MOMA and The Art Institute of Chicago are actually fighting over three of her smaller pieces. It's like nothing out of her wildest fantasies. Ariel (of course) says Almitra isn't finished. She can't put her finger on it she says, but something has to change. "Something big."

Jude: Of course.

*Beat.*

Jude: This is a relief. I thought we were going to start avoiding each other. Or, you know. Kill each other.

Mary: Pfft. Rules.

Jude: Poof.

Mary: I'm not a threat, you know. She loves you. You'll think about me a lot, I'm sure, in the future here. about me and Ariel, about you and Ariel. So maybe she also loves me, too. But don't forget that she loves you. Don't forget that.

Jude: We must have a lot in common, when you think about it. Two people love the same girl, they must love a lot of the same things. We must have acres and acres of stuff in common.

Mary: We should start a farm.

*Enter Animal.*

Animal: Sup Locos.

Mary: Hey.

Animal: Hey. Well. Don't you two look friendly. Oye Vaquero.

Jude: Hey Animal.

*Beat.*

Animal: What?

Jude: What are you doing up here?

Animal: Um. I'm visiting? What are you doing here?

Jude: Having lunch.

Mary: Have a taco.

Jude: They're good.

Mary: They're cold.

Jude: But they're good.

Animal: Kay.

Mary: Here.

*She takes a taco.*

Animal: Chingame: these are good tacos. Wait. Wait. These are goddamn fucking hippyvegetarian tacos, aren't they?

Mary: They are. You would prefer... chicken?

Jude: Some of the best god damned fucking hippy vegetarian tacos I've ever had.

Animal: Mm. Both vegetarians. Aren't you. You NEED MEAT! It's the way of the world.

Mary: Well that seems unnecessarily cruel.

Animal: Vegetarianism is a sleepy, dangerous form of hypocrisy.

Mary: Really, Grace, the things that come out of your mouth.

Animal: Don't hate me because I'm honest. Hate me because I'm beautiful.

Mary: I'm late, I gotta go.

Jude: You should check out the interior before you go. Say hello to my uncle.

Mary: No, I gotta go. Prior engagement.

Jude: I promise you you should check it out. Take you thirty seconds. You'll regret it if you don't.

Mary: Okay. But you're making me late.

*She goes. Animal looks at him. Beat..*

Jude: Are you going to tackle me?

Animal: No. You look funny.

Jude: I feel funny. We've just had the strangest conversation.

Animal: Oh. Oh.

Jude: You knew?

Animal: Um. Shit, kid, I'm sorry. Who told you? When?

Jude: Ariel. About three weeks ago. You knew.

Animal: I can't believe Mary has the balls to bring you tacos.

Jude: I'm glad she did.

Animal: Shit I'd have taken the pointy end of your framing hammer to her head.

Jude: Grace, Jesus. She's my friend.

Animal: Then you need better friends. Friends don't fuck your girlfriend.

*Mary returns, grabs her keys.*

Mary: Okay you're right, I have to come up sometime and appreciate it more fully. But now I really gotta go.

Jude: Alright. Good to talk to you.

Mary: Bye friend. Bye Grace. Don't forget, Jude. Really.

Jude: Yeah. Sure.

*She goes. Something.*

Animal: What.

Jude: Nothing.

Animal: Don't you fuckin lie to me. What are you gonna to do?

Jude: What do you mean?

Animal: What are you going to do about Ariel and Mary?

Jude: Do? I'm not going to do anything.

Animal: Don't make me tackle. I can tackle.

Jude: Careful. Four months of adobe laying, right here.

Animal: Dodge.

Jude: Fuck dodging, I'll pin your ass.

Animal: Not what I meant. You dodged the question.

Vaquero: So I did. Thank god for you.

Animal: You're miserable.

Vaquero: No. Conflicted.

Animal: You have to do something.

Vaquero: Why?

Animal: Don't be stupid. You can't go on like this.

Vaquero: It's complicated.

Animal: No it isn't.

Vaquero: What am I supposed to do? Command her to break it off?

Animal: Well, I mean, that's one thought. Yeah.

Vaquero: Break what off?

Animal: Don't be ridiculous.

Vaquero: Being ridiculous is the farthest thing from my mind.

Animal: You look ridiculous.

Vaquero: Animal please. I'm taxed. Of course I'm taxed. I've been praying like a madman / My uncle says we should pray ceaselessly. Paul's letter to somebodyorother.

Animal: Tellin you, the Bible doesn't work.

Vaquero: Shut up.

Animal: You don't need to pray, you need to do something constructive.

Vaquero: I've been trying to reconcile what I've been handed with what I've been told and they don't fit. I have to throw one of them out. Monogamy is an idea, /

Animal: I think it's a pretty good idea.

Vaquero: whereas love is something you can touch, something you can keep. So I'm throwing out monogamy. Nothing else makes any sense.

Animal: I wouldn't be too particular about what makes sense. You're dating a lesbian.

Vaquero: She is not a lesbian.

Animal: I think you are dating a person who is essentially a lesbian.

Vaquero: Evidence suggests otherwise.

Animal: Okay. Primarily then, if not essentially. I think she's primarily a lesbian. You think she's bisexual?

Vaquero: I think she's... omnisexual.

Animal: She has a girlfriend.

Vaquero: She has a boyfriend.

Animal: Your girlfriend has a girlfriend. Are you really okay with that?

Vaquero: They're not girlfriends.

Animal: O no?

Vaquero: No.

Animal: Oh. No. ?

Vaquero: That's not what she said.

Animal: What did she say?

Vaquero: Friendship.

Animal: Friendship?  
Vaquero: Friendship!  
Animal: Friendship.  
Vaquero: Friendship.  
Animal: How do you figure your way into calling it a friendship?  
Vaquero: Because it is.  
Animal: Ridiculous! You had sex with Ariel, right?  
Vaquero: Well.  
Animal: Right?  
Vaquero: No.  
Animal: Holy hell and testicles! You've been with the most voraciously sexual girl on the planet for four months and you're still a virgin?! And are they still fucking each other?  
Vaquero: Don't be ugly.  
Animal: Are they?  
Vaquero: I don't know.  
Animal: Wait what?  
Vaquero: Well she gave me the broad outline.  
Animal: Waitwaitwait.  
Point of clarification: you have now rehearsed at some length the subject in question with each of the parties concerned, and you do not have a working knowledge of this most basic fact?  
Vaquero: We were talking about /  
Animal: You are unbelievable.  
Vaquero: Animal, let me tell you /  
Animal: Do you know or don't you?  
Vaquero: No.  
Animal: Okay then. Okay. Okay. We are forced to work with assumptions of intent. They're not exactly dead set against the concept, are they?

*Beat.*

Animal: I make a point, yes?  
Vaquero: You make a point.  
Animal: Point. For Animal.

Vaquero: No. You make a point, you do not win a point. You have proven no argument. You have shown only that I am in a confusing situation and thusly and reasonably confused and more than a little hurt. That's an observation, not a conclusion. I concede no point. And even if they are, why should it matter?

Animal: A ridiculous question. Of course it matters.

Vaquero: Why?

Animal: Because you love her, and she's sleeping around on you.

Vaquero: Look it isn't as simple as that. I've been doing a lot of thinking. Sex is – . What makes it intrinsically any more – proprietary than – foot washing, for example. Or wrestling? Tackling? The actual act of sex itself – . Is ludicrous. Superfluous. A bizarre accident of evolutionary biology.

Animal: Considerations of evolutionary instinct, Vaquero, borders on the absurd: they're both girls, and can't reproduce. .

Vaquero: Just so. Even more arbitrary. And anyway Jesus said /

Animal: Please. Do not quote the Bible at me. I was raised by raving atheists. I am a raving atheist. I will rave.

Vaquero: Shut up / Utterly without regard to whether or not there is a god, Jesus made some interesting points from time to time. Jesus said that if you have sinned in your heart with a woman, you have sinned.

Animal: Sin, in this case, referring to adulterous sex.

Vaquero: Exactly. No act necessary.

Animal: Sin referring also in other places to homosexuality. Disobeying your husband. Eating pork.

Vaquero: Derail.

Animal: Not at all. I merely present the reminder that the Bible is full of shit. Character of the witness.

Vaquero: Then you're missing the point. Yes the Bible tells us in a couple of obscure places that homosexuality is a sin / The most famous instance of which appears in Leviticus, Chapter 18 / Incidentally my favorite verse in that chapter is the moral ban on cotton-poly blends, which /

Animal: There's a ban on cotton-poly blends?

Vaquero: Leviticus, Chapter 18.

Animal: Damn.

Vaquero: Don't you dare try to tango with me on the Bible, little girl; you're a raving atheist; you were raised by raving atheists; whereas I was raised in Sunday school, at a church, and have been furthermore building a church for four months with precious little to do in the desert but meditate on the broad themes and individual metaphors contained in the Holy Scriptures. The point is not about the Bible's antiquated and highly contextual purity codes (against which Jesus himself rebelled on numerous occasions, so shooting the messenger here is misguided anyway) but that Jesus wisely pointed out that the absurd act of sex is actually fairly unimportant when dealing with with the phenomenon of love / Hah! Tango with that. Point?

Animal: Vaquero, please. You're embarrassing yourself / You are smarter than this: I tell you they're having sex, you present the defense that you don't think they are having sex, and then you proceed to provide me with scriptural evidence suggesting that they don't need to be having sex to be sinning in their hearts? Point. And that one's your fault.

Vaquero: No point. You missed the point.

Animal: I don't think I did. Point.

Vaquero: No point.

*Beat..*

*Suddenly, he tackles her. They wrestle playfully as they argue.*

Vaquero: See, this / this is a lot like sex, actually.

Animal: Ow! maybe really bad sex, /

Vaquero: Speaking on a strictly physical level, add a few details, and it's sex. And yet we tackle one another on a semi regular basis, and it is not a problem. No problem.

*He is on top.*

Animal: Actually, this could be pretty good sex.

Vaquero: Why not? Because it the physical details of intimacy are arbitrary. No problem. So my point: so what if they're having sex? In what way should those handful of changed details threaten Ariel and I?

Animal: The taxonomy of physical acts is not the point. The point: Something would be different if we did. Kiss.

Vaquero: Maybe.

Animal: Maybe?

Vaquero: Maybe.

Animal: Okay then.

*Sudden flip. She is on top.*

Animal: Kiss me.

Vaquero: What?

Animal: You heard me.

*Beat.*

Animal: Kiss me. Passionately.

Vaquero: What?

Animal: We can make out. It'll be hot. Come on. I've always wanted to. I have sinned in my heart. So sin on my body. You can feel my boobs. I'll rub my thighs against your dick. Is the Altar finished yet?, we can do it there! Ariel won't mind a bit! No problem!

Vaquero: No!

Animal: Shut up and kiss me, you big brute!

Vaquero: Why are you doing this?

Animal: I love you, you fucking idiot.

*Scuffling.*

Vaquero: You say this, and you say this, and yet how can you say this?

*He is out from under her. They sit, exhausted.*

Animal: Because you're never going to kiss me.

Vaquero: Then / Wait. Shit. What is happening? Because a moment ago nothing was happening and now something is definitely happening and I don't understand, I mean I love you, but I'm not *in /*

Animal: O God, Vaquero, get a grip. I am not revealing at long last my unrequited love for you, turning the tables in a sudden but inevitable twist; I'm making a point.

Vaquero: Oh.

Animal: And I'm making it this way precisely because you're not going to kiss me. Listen, you're trying really hard to be more kinds of idiot here than you actually are – which, arguably, is itself a your very own special brand of idiocy – but you do in fact know the difference between the kinds of relationships. You're crazy with jealousy. But you have this lunatic idea that to be a properly post-feminist man endowed with an enlightened appreciation for love and beauty and Ani Difranco and what-fucking-EVER, you have to pretend not to need to fuck her, and that it doesn't hurt you when she sleeps with someone else. I mean do you ever wonder why she isn't sleeping with you? Why not? And for once, even Jesus is on my side! Just because Mary is a girl, and just because they may not be having hot monkey-sex, it doesn't mean there isn't something wrong happening here.

*Beat.*

Animal: Point?

Vaquero: Point.

Animal: Thank you.

Vaquero: Look. I don't know / I just – . I don't know.

Animal: You don't know *who* you are, do you?

Vaquero: I can't tell her to choose, Animal. She'll leave me.

Animal: Well... Not... necessarily.

Vaquero: Stop.

*Beat.*

Animal: Well. Okay. I hadn't actually thought of that.

Vaquero: Point?

Animal: Point.

*Beat.*

Animal: It's only going to get worse, you know. Sooner or later the shit's gonna hit the fan if you don't do something constructive. If you just keep praying.

Vaquero: Man does not live by bread alone.

Animal: But it fucking helps. I lost track of who won.

Vaquero: I don't think anyone did.

Animal: Well. You should all be put in the hospital with padded walls. In any case. I should go.

Vaquero: Later.

Animal: Later.

Vaquero: And thanks, Animal.

Animal: Yeah.

Vaquero: Hey Animal? I think it's going to work. I think we're all on the same page. Why bother to – . You know? Why bother?

Animal: I hope you're right. And maybe you are.

*She goes. Vaquero is alone.*

Vaquero: Shit.

### **The Fourth Letter of Saul to the New Mexicans / Gethsemene**

*Passover.*

*The Train / The Studio*

*Dumb show:*

The west is dying.

Again:

*Ariel and Mary arrive at the studio, laughing, drinking wine from the bottle, with many flowers.*

remember the minor fact  
of the genocide of the indian  
and the subsequent and ongoing social, political, and psychological eradication.

Matter of fact the railroad killed it, too.

*Ariel kisses Mary.*

Imagine the middle Rio Grande Valley with no city in the middle of it.  
Just the sweep of the encircling mountains,

*Mary fights gravity.*

the austerity of the desert,  
and the Eden of the lowlands surrounding an unpredictable river.  
A handful of adobe villages.

The white pioneers loved it. And they brought the railroad.

Which killed it.

Man, who always kills what he loves.

The only killer, the only mourner.

*Gravity wins.*

We're murdering our own west, now, too.

You can smell it going to shit.  
You can point to it. Right there:

*Ariel draws her into the house.*

Another casino drags in another grandmother.  
Another McDonalds stops another heart.  
Another town gets another Walmart.

*Jude arrives, with bread and wine.*

The awful tragedy wells up in your hollow throat and chest.  
What can make the heart ache more than a billboard?

I think we feel it.  
In whatever we Americans have left of souls.

*Should he open the door? Should he knock? Sound of something. He listens.*

And even the yuppie bourgeois scumbags I hold responsible for it all –  
I think they feel it too. Because a lot of yuppies  
are hopping freight these days.

People who work in middle management and go to Starbucks.  
People who have high-speed internet access and dogs.

*He starts to leave.*

People who wake up one morning with a cold lump in their chests and realize that something important  
is missing.

*He sees the bottle of wine on the porch where they left it.*

People who see a train rolling by and suddenly  
have to swallow their throats.

*He looks at the bottle in his own hand.*

It's like a razor blade  
brushing your heart:

*He sits. He listens.*

And then you hear the train rolling down the track.  
you hear it calling your name.

### **Crucifixion**

*Good Friday.*

*The studio, early morning.*

*Jude sits close to the chimineya, in a suit. His great grandmother's dress hangs from something. Ariel bursts on,  
occupied with the last loose ends of her clothing.*

Ariel: Mary wake up! We're going to be late! I can't be late to talk to Chicago. I need the money they're offering, I can't be late!

Mary: *(off)* Start the car!

Ariel: Hurry!

Mary: I'm hurrying!

Ariel: I'm driving this time! We are going to be so late. O man, why do I always do this? Mary why do I always do this?

Mary: We have plenty of time, and you are not driving, we'll be killed! ...We have enough time! ...We have time! ...We -. ...Who the hell conducts important business at nine 'o clock in the morning?

*Ariel notices Jude.*

Ariel: Oh.

*Beat.*

Ariel: Hey love.

Jude: Morning.

Ariel: Baby what are you doing? It's cold.

Jude: That's why there's a fire.

Ariel: What are you doing here? Mary just hurry it up! Why are you in a suit?

Jude: Take this, all of you, this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for you /

Ariel: Mary: hurry it up! What?

Jude: shed for you, *and for many.*

Ariel: Baby what's /

Jude: It's Good Friday. Mondy Thursday was yesterday. Jesus gives his body to his friends. Passover. Feast of the Communion.

*Beat.*

Ariel: O, no. Did I stand you up baby?

Jude: Well not technically. I mean I was here. You were here. You were just a little... busy. You, would, not, believe. How beautiful the stars were.

Ariel: You're shaking. Your lips are blue.

Jude: How many times do you really get to watch the sun rise?

Ariel: I'm so sorry I can't believe I – . ...Forgot we had a date.

Jude: I brought you a dress. Old one. This century, poof.

*She goes to it, puts her sarong (being used as a shawl) somewhere.*

Ariel: O my god, it's gorgeous.

Jude: I want you to have it. It belonged to my great grandmother. Generations gone. Not like now.

Mary: *(off)* Ariel where the hell is my underwear?

Ariel: Shit. I don't know! My god, Jude, your great grandmother must have been a queen.

Jude: Such is the family myth.

Mary: Well I can't exactly leave without something!

Ariel: You're going to get pneumonia or something, baby. Jesus, you should have come in.

Jude: I didn't want to interrupt.

Ariel: I can't, Jude.

Mary: Ariel!

Ariel: What!

Mary: My underwear!

Ariel: Shit.

Jude: Relax:

Mary: Ariel!

Jude: this, by comparison, is pretty trite.

Ariel: What? Mary, Jesus, just put on something of mine!

Jude: I heard you.

Ariel: What?

Mary: Can I wear the gold ones?

Jude: I heard you.

Ariel: Yes, that's fine! What? I'm sorry.

Jude: I was going to come in, but I heard you. The two of you. I considered coming in anyway. But I didn't. I listened. But it's not so much what I heard, it's. It's only that I'm... totally unnecessary. I mean where do I come in?

*Mary bolts on stage. She is radiant, has a crown of flowers. She crowns Ariel with them.*

Jude: See?

*Mary sees Jude. Something.*

Ariel: He was on the porch. All night.

Mary: O. Jude this is not what -. This is not how I wanted this to go for us.

Jude: No, I imagine it isn't. You ever spend a night out here?

Mary: I never meant /

Jude: You can hear the most wonderful things. Bark Beetles.

Mary: Please don't do this, Jude. We can get burritos at the Frontier /

Jude: Hahaha. Cause that'll fix everything.

Mary: I'm not saying it will / I'm not saying anything but please. Please come with us. We can talk in Albuquerque – but we have to go. Now.

Jude: You two should go. I'll just stay here.

Ariel: Let me make you coffee.

Mary: We don't have time for coffee.

Ariel: I'm making him coffee.

Jude: I fucking hate coffee.

Mary: We have time to do one thing and one thing exactly. We have about twenty-five minutes to make that meeting. If you miss it you will regret it for the rest of your life.

Ariel: Tea then. Mexican hot chocolate. Come inside. You're shaking, we need to get you warm. I'm getting you blankets.

Mary: Ariel /

Ariel: I'm getting him blankets.

*She goes in.*

Mary: Jude I was drunk. We can talk.

Jude: I love this porch.

Mary: Jude don't you dare fuck this up. If we don't go now, we'll be late for her meeting with Chicago and they'll axe her piece from the exhibit.

Jude: Just love it.

Mary: It seems absurd, grotesque, but it's absolutely true.

Jude: Eat shit and die bitch I like it on the porch.

*Ariel returns, throws blankets on Jude, stokes the fire with a bunch of wood.*

Mary: Ariel.

Jude: You're late. Go.

Ariel: Shit.

Mary: Ariel.

Jude: You'll break the chimineya you put that much wood in it / Too hot.

Ariel: Don't be stupid you're freezing.

Mary: I'm gonna start the car.

*She goes*

Ariel: I have to go, love. But I'm coming back for you, I promise. Sleep in my bed. It's big. It's warm. The door's not locked. It's never locked.

Jude: Don't go.

Ariel: I have to.

Jude: Don't.

Ariel: I love you.

*Beat. She kisses him and is gone.*

*He is alone, cold, and shaking. He opens the door, stares at Almitra. Animal enters.*

Animal: Jesus you look rough.

Vaquero: Thanks I been workin on it all night.

Animal: It's a good look for you. Shit hit the fan, didn't it.

Vaquero: If by shit hitting the fan you mean sitting up all night listening to your / (Ha! Would you believe I almost said girlfriend?) soulmate? Listening to your left arm make ambiguous noises late into the night with one of your friends –

Animal: I'd say that qualifies. You look like you could use a drink. Have some of that wine.

Vaquero: I'm not about to start cultivating a drinking problem, thanks.

Animal: Buddy you got much bigger problems than drinking.

Vaquero: What are you doing here?

Animal: You weren't at the church. Did she leave you here?

Vaquero: Just now.

Animal: What a bitch. Why do you let her do this to you?

Vaquero: What am I supposed to do? Can't just get off the planet when the spinning makes you dizzy.

Animal: You should start by finding your spine. You seem to have lost it.

Vaquero: On the bright side of life, somebody's buying Almitra.

Animal: Lucky they're still interested.

Vaquero: *It is beautiful.*

Animal: Yeah whatever.

Vaquero: Beauty is life when life unveils her holy face.  
Beauty is eternity gazing t itself in a mirror.

Animal: Listen I got no time for this, I gotta go. I'm gonna miss this place when it goes.

Vaquero: You don't think she'll get the money? I think if there's any sense in the world, she'll get the money.

Animal: Pff. No. The piece is... not great. It will sell for a lot of money. But not what it could. It's this close to being genius. Close.

Vaquero: You're blind. She's going to get the money to keep this /

Animal: The money, the beauty, the piece, the studio, the desert, would you shut the fuck up? Do you ever listen to yourself? It's because she's a vegetarian, I'm telling you. You, Mary, this place, everything, it's all in that piece. Which is fine, but: you three are psychotic. Ariel's sculpture is no longer a part of your lives – you've become a part of it. If her piece doesn't get the money, then it isn't genius, and then nothing justifies the ridiculous meat-grinder that is your lives. I however have no such insanity: I am not love's deranged trauma victim. And I see that sculpture for what it is: inauthentic. A pack of fucking lies, in fact.

*Beat.*

Animal: Everything I love is ugly anyway. Listen. Shit. You look like – . I'm sorry. You should have that drink.

Vaquero: Fuck you. You're not my friend.

*He turns his back on her. Beat. Grace tackles him.*

*After some business, he winds up on top. The classic pose, he is about to hit her, savage, unnecessary. Beat. Something. She goes. Distant sound of a train?*

*Dumb Show:*

*He sips some wine. It is sour. He struggles to swallow it, succeeds.*

*Throughout the dumb show, he never drinks enough to get drunk.*

*He sees the sarong.*

*He smells it, holds it.*

*Swig, struggle, swallow.*

*A sarong dance, holding the bottle. Faster and faster.*

*He is spinning, he hurls the bottle of wine at the house. The bottle explodes.*

*He sees the axe.*

*Looks at the door.*

*He picks up the axe, goes in.*

*Sound of shattering glass, gigantic.*

*He staggers out, clutching his face, bleeding. He goes.*

### **The Fifth Letter of Saul to the New Mexicans / Golgotha**

*Same day*

*Split scene: the train / the studio.*

*The blankets lay crumpled up on the porch. It might look like someone is under them.*

Saul: A lot of people get killed jumping trains.

The last red-blooded American adventure.

Not a bloodless, corporate adventure  
involving bungee cords, vello walls, and hang gliders:  
there are no accessories /

No safety net /

*Ariel comes on. she is wearing Jude's great grandmother's dress. The dance moves.*

Saul: No titanium cage between you and the shark /  
No one to sell you a picture of the expression on your face /  
You're not on reality tv.

Ariel: Jude! Jude are you still here! Sleeping?

Saul: No.

Ariel: Jude! The dress fits! It's gorgeous!

Saul: It's real easy to get good and dead hopping freight.

Ariel: I think you finally talked me into religion, you know.  
Listen:

Saul: Listen:

Ariel: "Said Almitra,

Saul: we people, we are made of soft, breakable stuff.

Ariel: 'Speak to us of love.'

Saul: Trains are made of very hard, very heavy stuff.

Ariel: And the Prophet answered, saying:

Saul: Any one of a thousand ugly things will happen to you.

Ariel: when you love,

Saul: you'll break your ankles when you jump off.

Ariel: you should not say, 'god is in my heart',

Saul: Which is a relatively minor injury, as far as they go.

Ariel: but rather 'I am in the heart of god.'

Saul: Because:

Ariel: Think not you can direct the course of love,

Saul: You could have a sudden shift in momentum

Ariel: for love, if it finds you worthy, directs your course.

Saul: at fifty-nine miles an hour

Ariel: Love has no other desire but to fulfill itself."

Saul: Which can be a real fucker.

Ariel: Love has fulfilled itself. I am in the heart of god.

Saul: That's how the ugliest things happen.

Ariel: Baby?

Saul: I'll tell you some of the ugly things that can happen.

Ariel: You finally talked me into religion.

Saul: You're rolling along at a thundering speed.

*She laughs, she dances. She is magnificent. The same as in Blood Moon Rising. Mary comes on, with wine, and spotlights her with the world's most powerful flashlight. Magic.*

Saul: *The best way to see America,*

Ariel: Jude? Come dance.

*She lifts the blankets. No Jude.*

Ariel: Oh.

Saul: back of a dragon,

Mary: Can you believe the amount of money she's talking about?

Saul: the whole bit.

Mary: I'm so happy for you.

Saul: And without warning,

Mary: It's hard to believe:

Saul: Something shifts:

Mary: It's like last August all over again but on a much, much bigger scale.

*Something. A little jolt.*

Saul: In a loaded boxcar, a little jolt

Mary: What?

Saul: and the load will crush you suddenly.

Ariel: Suddenly: I'm icy. I could lose Almitra. If she buys it.

Saul: You'll be trapped under hundreds of pounds of sheetrock.

Mary: I hadn't thought of that.

Saul: Squirming.

Ariel: O, god.

Saul: Bleeding.

Mary: True.

Ariel: I love her.

Saul: Snap.

Mary: Me too.

Saul: Pelvis shattered under the freight.

Mary: But you, me, Jude, Grace / We got to spend all this time with it, alone. Like Jesus' disciples -

Saul: Coughing up blood.

Mary: *(a toast)* To the beauty we have known. May we remember it well, for all of our days.

Saul: As a general rule of thumb when trainhopping, beauty is danger.

Ariel: Amen.

*They drink, from the bottle.*

Saul: "Flatcars" are completely open.

Mary: Go, lover, love Almitra. I'll be outside.

Saul: Beautiful view.  
Riding a flatcar, a sharp jerk in momentum  
and the dragon will shrug you right off her shoulders  
and under the wheels.

*Ariel goes into the house. Mary enjoying the view, picks up Ariel's sarong.*

Saul: It'll be weeks before anybody so much as smells what the coyotes and vultures left of the various pieces of your broken rotting carcass.

*Mary smells the sarong. Bark beetles.*

*Ariel runs out of the house, and vomits.*

*Mary offers to help her.*

*Ariel shakes her head, points inside.*

*Fearfully, Mary opens the door, looks inside. She goes in. Ariel retches.*

Saul: So.  
Kids.  
No matter what  
the distant whistle of a train  
sounds like to you from the comfort of your home, know this:

A train is incapable of remorse.  
A train is a machine weighing unimaginable tons,  
and it doesn't have a heart.

*Mary comes back out, holding a piece of broken mirror. She looks at it. It has blood on it.*

Saul: It has a furnace incinerating hundreds of gallons of diesel fuel.  
The wheels go right on rolling,  
greased a little better for your blood.

## **Orpheus**

*Mary, alone, with broken mirror; continuous.*

The greeks had a story:

Orpheus was a lute player. More beautiful music has never been heard.

Orpheus married a Nymph named Eurydice.  
On her wedding day, dancing with the other Nymphs in the garden,  
she was bitten by a nest of serpents,  
and died instantly.

Heartbroken,  
Orpheus took his lute and traveled to the underworld  
to regain his wife.  
Moved  
by the beauty of his music, the god of death granted him his prayer. But  
there is always a condition.  
And the god's condition was that Orpheus not question:  
that he not look back to see her beautiful face.

He fucked up.  
Of course.  
Couldn't fight beauty.  
Later,  
Nymphs tore him to pieces,  
and buried his head, which was still singing.

You see. The greeks understood:  
Joy has its own justice.  
And everything bows to beauty.

## **Linens**

*Holy Saturday.  
The Church.*

*Jude, head in hands. Mary enters, with dress. He sees her. He sees the dress. She tosses it on the wall.*

Mary:            There's vomit on it now.

## **Eloi, Eloi, Lema Sabachthani?**

*Holy Saturday.  
The Studio.*

*Grace. She climbs onto the roof, Saul's opening position.  
Saul appears. Not excessively strange, but not naturalistic.  
She holds out her hand.  
He gives her his keys.  
He deals cigarettes, lights them.  
Drags.  
He goes.*

Grace:            You know.

Talking to the audience –  
I don't like it.  
I mean apart from its obviously Schizophrenic implications.  
I think it's vulgar.  
So I'll keep it vulgar:  
Kahlil Gibran was full of shit.

Beauty is eternity gazing at itself in a mirror?  
Give me a fucking break.

Worshiping beauty is adolescent, narcissistic, and  
fucking stupid, too.

*Grace sits on the roof. She sees everything. She smokes.*

*Dumb Show:*

*Enter Jude. He looks through the window. He begins to haul on an enormously large bag – a painting tarp, full of something, impossibly large. He has plainly been hauling it at great physical expense. He alternately pushes it from behind, and pulls it from the front. Mounting desperation. At last, an explosion:*

Jude: CHINGATE PUTA! YOU STUPID SON OF A BITCH MOVE! GOD DAMN YOU TO HELL!!!

Ariel: What are you doing here.

Jude: Oh. I came. Oh. To ask your forgiveness. I brought /

Ariel: No. I don't forgive you. Please go now.

Jude: It's a stupid world. I don't deserve forgiveness, I know, I don't, and you didn't / Almitra didn't deserve what I did either. Jesus teaches us not only to /

Ariel: You are out of your mind.

Jude: Of course. I'm in love with you.

Ariel: You don't love me.

Jude: Liar.

*Ariel produces a shard of broken mirror.*

Ariel: When people love each other, they talk. They don't commit childish acts of brutal violence.

Jude: Yes they do.

Ariel: You reduced the one thing in the world I loved better than you or Mary to thousands of these.

Jude: You know how I love.

Ariel: Too well.

Jude: Now picture that.  
Picture me doing that with – .  
I don't know. Someone you can really imagine, really visualize.  
Grace.  
Grace.  
Imagine me kissing Grace's neck,  
making soft brushing noises against her skin with my palms.  
Imagine you are on the other side of a wall from this

That it is cold outside,  
And that you can never go inside.

Because I did all of this,  
and I loved you while I did it.  
Wildly and unreasonably.

But wait.  
I don't mean to say that everything was fine until you had sex  
with the wrong person  
at the wrong moment.  
The sex is unimportant.

Ariel: No, it isn't.

Jude: They ate Jesus' body for the forgiveness of sins.  
Show me which part of my heart I should eat.

*Something.*

Ariel: I wish – . But – .  
Forgiveness is beside the point, Jude.  
What we want now is beside the point: I can't ever touch you again.  
I *can't*.  
Splinters of glass would drive through my fingers.  
I'm not going to repair. I'm not going to fight anymore. It will be a bed and breakfast. It is finished.

*She goes in, shuts the door.*

*Jude goes wild, trying to move the tarp.*

*He launches himself at it, pulls it with gargantuan strength halfway on.*

*Mary comes on. Mary sees Grace.*

*Grace looks at Mary.*

*Jude sees Mary.*

*He chokes, he runs off. Grace starts climbing down.*

Grace: You really are a bitch, aren't you.

Mary: No.

Grace: You know, I wasn't ever supportive of the two of them. But I knew enough not to fuck up a good thing. I didn't interfere.

Mary: O really.

Grace: What's that supposed to mean?

Mary: You tell me.

*Beat.*

Grace: You're wrong.

Mary: Am I.

Grace: It's about respect. I had the respect to keep my distance. Because listen.  
Most couples have about one or two good things going for them.  
These two, they had a whole trunkfull.  
They could have gone anywhere together.  
And you didn't have the brains to leave them alone.

Mary: I tried.

Grace: No, you didn't.

*Grace approaches the tarp.*

*Ariel comes out.*

*Grace peels back a flap, and impossible numbers of pineapples tumble out. Hundreds, thousands.*

Ariel: (Grace) What are you doing here?

Grace: The motherfucker loves you, Ariel.

Ariel: I know.

*Grace spits. She goes.*

Mary: You want hot chocolate? Got raspberry in it.

*Beat.*

Ariel: Could you go? Please.

Mary: Why?

Ariel: Just – please.

*Beat. She goes. Ariel is alone with the pineapples. She regards them. Her dance, but transfigured; mournful.*

Ariel: Then said Almitra : speak to us of love.  
And the Prophet said:  
Even as love crowns you so shall he crucify you. Even as he is  
for your growth so is he for your pruning.  
He assigns you to his sacred fire, that you may become  
sacred bread for God's sacred feast.

All these things shall love do unto you that you may know the secrets of your heart, and in that  
knowledge become a fragment of Life's heart.

*She makes a decision. She goes in.*

## **Resurrection**

*Easter.*

*The Studio. Early.*

*Enter Jude and Mary, hurried. A For Sale sign is up.*

Jude: Ariel?

Mary: Ariel!

*She rushes to the house. She opens the door. She is stunned. Jude sees the For Sale sign.*

Jude: Hey, Mary, you see this sign?

Mary: Oh wow.

Jude: What? Is she there?

Mary: No. Nothing is there. It's gone.

Jude: What's gone?

Mary: Everything. It's all gone. It's completely empty. Nothing. Not a teacup, not a can of paint, no underwear.

*He goes to the door. It is all gone. He goes in the house. He comes out.*

Jude: What did Grace tell you? Exactly.

Mary: She said they were leaving at six and to bring you.

Jude: Did she say where to?

Mary: No.

Jude: Did she say for how long?

Mary: No.

Jude: And what time did Grace tell you all this?

Mary: Very early.

Jude: And what time did you wake me up?

Mary: Early.

Jude: And what time is it now?

Mary: Quarter after early.

Jude: What a stupid world.

*She looks. While they are looking, Ariel enters, unfamiliar dress, and does not see them. She has a small, heavy bag. She is also carrying a sign. It says "Sold". She replaces the sign that says "For Sale" with the one that says "Sold". They hear her. They look at each other.*

Mary: Excuse me. Can you please tell me - oh.

Jude: Oh.

*Beat.*

Mary: I didn't recognize you.

Ariel: What are you doing here.

Jude: We heard you were going.

Mary: We thought you were gone.

Jude: Where are you going?

Ariel: Dammit, Grace.

Mary: You could have said goodbye.

Jude: Where are you going?

Ariel: Chicago.

Jude: When are you coming back?

Ariel: We sold the place. To the Texans.

Mary: That was fast.

Ariel: They were squatting on the phone salivating. All I had to do was call. It's going to be a bed and breakfast. For tourists. They'll expand, or they'll knock down the building wholesale. My dad helped me move out. Everything fit in his truck. I didn't have much besides the piece.

Jude: It's probably pointless, but I want to say again, I'm sorry, and if there's anything, I mean anything I can /

Ariel: It is. Pointless. I'm not coming back. To New Mexico. You should look into a future in art, Jude, they loved the axe. "A bold step in an exciting new direction."

Mary: What?

Ariel: "Most authentic part of the piece." Which it is.

She saw it on Friday night. She loved it. I'm sorry I'm so... I'm not making any sense, I haven't slept. Plotting positions of broken bits of mirror: thirty hours. They came at dawn today to pick it up. The little ones are in the bag. It's heavier than I expected. I got the money. I'm going to rebuild it in Chicago: they want it as is, exactly. It's enough to buy an apartment and studio in New York. Small, but enough.

Mary: You wanted them to bury your heart up here.

*Beat.*

Ariel: I know: I didn't want to leave so silently.  
But the words – they all blow away  
into some tunnel, or some wind.  
The light of the changing seasons.

*Grace enters. Beat. She holds up Saul's keys.*

Grace: Train to catch, Ariel.

Ariel: How sick of me you two must be by now. Do yourselves a favor and don't remember me kindly. You both deserve better.

Jude: There isn't anyone better, Ariel: you're an angel.

Ariel: Jude, you live with such unparalleled passion.

*He reaches out.*

*She touches him. Splinters of ice drive through her fingers.*

*She kisses him anyway.*

Mary: Just like that?

Ariel: Just like that.

Mary:            Okay.

*They hug. Jude watches the hug. Grace watches Jude.*

Jude:            Vaya con dios.

*She takes the keys from Grace. She goes. Grace offers to follow.*

Mary:            Grace: she didn't know we were coming.

Grace:           No: She didn't want you coming.

Mary:            Why did you tell me?

*Beat.*

Grace:           Respect.

*She goes.*

### **The Last Letter of Saul to the New Mexicans.**

*The train*

Hopping freight isn't for everybody.

Hell. Most of us prefer to fly.

Aisle seat preference, generally:

You can't see the view that your great great grandmother would have lost an arm for,  
but it's easier to get up and piss.

Hopping freight isn't safe.

I mean there are ways to do this that are much less likely to get you killed than others (guy wrote a book about it:  
"Hopping Freight Trains in America" / Guy named Duffy Littlejohn / Great book / Buy it), but it isn't  
safe.

Not completely. Never has been, never will be.

But

we have to do it. We must.

No matter how dangerous  
or downright idiotic it is.

Consider:

Watching the west roll by  
from the safety of our climate controlled minivans,  
we stick strictly to the tourist traps;  
the casinos;  
and the fucking McDonald's;  
while the magnificent steel dragon does nothing but haul shit  
from one city's asshole  
to another city's mouth.

Now consider:

the taste of freedom

whipping across your skin.

Alone, unheeded, happy, and near to the wild heart of life.

Life is an adventure.

I cannot believe what we settle for on a daily basis.

**Acts**

*Easter.*

*The Studio.*

*They're alone.*

Mary: You know – . Life can seem pretty complex sometimes. But when someone you love gets on a train and rolls away, it's pretty fuckin simple.

Jude: That girl should come with a warning label.

Mary: She should.

*Beat.*

Mary: Listen. Bark beetles. Going to sweep the desert clean.

*They listen to the thousands of tiny clicking noises.*

Jude: It's going to break my heart when those piñons go.

Mary: The desert is becoming a skeleton.

Jude: It's awful.

Mary: O, I don't know. Think of dia de los muertos. The skeletal Mexican smile. The Mexican dead dance.

*Beat.*

Mary: You want to hit the Frontier?

Jude: Yeah. I could use some chile.

Mary: It's actually addictive, you know. Chemically. The chile. Did a study at NMSU.

Jude: Well shit I coulda told you that.

Mary: Hey. You do me a favor before we go?

Jude: What's that?

Mary: I want you to shave my head.

Jude: Why?

Mary: I don't know. Bark beetles.

Jude: You shave mine?

Mary: With pleasure. Come on. We'll go buy clippers at Walmart.

Jude: Walmart?

Mary: You're right. We'll steal 'em.

*They go. Sound of a train.*