

THE OBJECT IN SCIENCE FICTION THEATRE
AND
MARKED: A PLAY IN TWO ACTS

by

NICHOLAS J. MAURER

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Approved: *Michael Malek Najjar*

Michael Malek Najjar

Science fiction is not a genre commonly associated with theatre, as common misconceptions assert that theatre cannot perform the spectacle science fiction productions require. Even when done well, science fiction is suppressed as an inferior genre, that playwrights experiment with before moving on to more serious genres. This inferiority stems from the fact that since science fiction is naturally set in a future reality, it cannot rely upon the same dramatic emotions that other theatrical genres can. Instead of tragedy, whether dramatic or comedic, science fiction must find an alternative dramatic form. Successful science fiction theatre relies upon the abject, to produce a sympathetic fear within the audience, in order to deter them from one possible future reality or another. This thesis project is an analysis of how science fiction theatre can use the abject to produce this sympathetic, which concludes with my

attempt at writing a play text that relies upon the abject. In this thesis, I analyze Jennifer Haley's *The Nether*, Tracy Letts' *Bug*, and Joel Silberman's *Human History*. The play text that I have written is called *Marked*, which is about a group of clones that attempt to escape their prison and confront their originals. The play grapples with themes of discrimination and the deconstruction of a person into their parts.

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Writing Science Fiction Theatre

Playwriting

“The dramatic writer is an arsonist who takes the tangled pieces of what is known and sets them ablaze to reveal what is at once deeply felt and unknown.”

(Linnell 10) The dramatic writer assembles a puzzle before the audience, combining aspects of the world and their imagination to make something completely new. The art of dramatic writing relies upon tackling large, philosophical or political questions and reducing their verbose explanations into a series of actions between characters. For playwriting, these actions occur in a performance in a theatre space between live actors before a live audience. The art of playwriting has developed over over thousands of years with several different origins, evolving from various performance rituals around the globe. The art form has developed into an art of social commentary, an art of spectacle, and an art of live storytelling.

Playwriting naturally separates itself from other forms of dramatic writing. Unlike a novel, a play text is a blue print for a production, rather than a finished piece of work. Unlike a screen play, a play text focuses on poetic language and large actions rather than a series of images and small gestures. The completion of the play text is only half of the process. The play text is only a text until it has been produced. Most importantly, the production must have an audience. “For the [playwright], there is no visibility without the audience. The relationship between audience and drama completes the circuit of emotional form among writer, text, performer, and audience. “ (Linnell 81) The audience is the final key to the creation and completion of a play. Film, fiction, and other forms of dramatic exist with or without an audience. A performance implies

there is an audience present. The production of a play is finite. Novels and films last as long as their medians are maintained. On the contrary, a play only lasts for its run. When the production closes, the play is gone. Even if a play is revived, it will never be the same production. Through the play text, the playwright lays a foundation for a production team to build a show upon. The play production is ultimately a collaborative process between a playwright and production team. A bad production team can build a terrible play on a great foundation, and a great production team cannot build a good play on a faulty foundation.

Playwriting and dramatic writing in general relies upon technique and craft rather than artistic inspiration. The technique of playwriting focuses upon a few basic principles:

A consensus among many of those who write about playwriting is at once convincing and unsettling... Everyone points to the interconnected principles of character, conflict, structure, story, and plot. The writer brings the personal and internal frame of reference that launches and completes the shaping events of the narrative. The writer brings her own story, a past and a self who lives in time and in currents of art, of history, of politics. At the same time, she embraces the paradoxes between ways of knowing, between the physical and the spiritual. (Linnell 26)

Playwriting is the meticulous crafting of character, plot, structure, conflict, and story, in order to make a cohesive production centered around a theme, called the spine of the play. The most common play text form is a three-act play structure, where the three parts refer to a beginning, middle, and end, with a linear plot. Traditionally, plays have been critiqued through the use of Aristotle's Six Elements of Drama: plot, character, thought, language, music, and spectacle, in that order. Some genres of theatre, like post-modernism, have actively flipped these elements around, valuing spectacle above all else, while dismantling many notions associated with the craft of playwriting like

structure or story. In addition, some forms of production, specifically devised theatre, have cut the playwright out of the equation by creating a storyline between the actors in the rehearsal room. In this process, the actors assume the role of the playwright. The playwright is responsible for creating the central theme of the play, referred to as the spine of the play. Ultimately, the playwright is in charge of writing a blueprint for a production through the play text, which will be interpreted by the production team and the cast will create the show.

Science Fiction on Stage

Science fiction has become a popular genre in the other forms of dramatic writing, specifically film and fiction, yet the genre has struggled to be produced in theatre. Even the most well-read theatre critic may struggle to name more than a handful of science fiction plays:

It is widely assumed by readers that not many science fiction plays have been written; moreover, those few that have been published and perhaps eventually produced are thought to be mere curiosities, brief experiments by playwrights who will in time move on to “serious” themes and formats. Furthermore, the belief that science fiction requires properties, sets, and special effects that are too technically demanding for the stage underscores reservations about the effectiveness of presenting science fiction in the theater. (Krupnik 197)

The lack of science fiction productions is not due to a lack of science fiction play texts, nor is it due to the technical demands of the genre. “To be science fiction a work does not have to display dazzling lights and technological paraphernalia.” (Krupnik 197) Instead theatre has constructed a stigma around the science fiction genre, asserting the genre on the stage is inferior in plot or action. To some critics, a science fiction production does not possess the same value as a non-science fiction production. More

importantly, that science fiction production cannot possess the same value as a film version of the same story, since science fiction cannot recreate the same spectacle that can be created on film. “Science fiction theater still labors strongly against the assumptions that only film is large enough to contain science fiction themes.” (Krupnik 198) Comparing film and theatre on the basis of spectacle is a fruitless comparison. Film relies upon visuals to tell stories, while theatre focuses on language to communicate to audiences. The power of theatre exists in the fact that it is not film, and therefore does not require the cinematic spectacle of film. Although there is a movement in theater to adapt to a more cinematic method of storytelling, which is leading to productions full of shorter scenes, set in various locations, and emphasizing special effects, these two art forms are distinct in their modes of production.

Being distinct, film and theater are more adaptable to certain kinds of science fiction premises. The science fiction genre can be separated into four sub-genres: plots concerning space travel or exploration, utopia or dystopia, a single invention added to the present or a near future reality, and time travel. Science fiction about space travel or time travel, naturally rely upon spectacle, which reduces their producibility on stage. “With rare exception... plays the rely on spectacle do not work on the stage. Actors are easily lost amid grandiose sets that ultimately minimize character development and distract the audience.” (Krupnik 199) Thus plots around time and space travel must be crafted specifically for the theatre, cleverly working their way around the natural spectacle requirements usually required in the sub-genre. In these sub-genres the audience’s attention must be drawn away from sub-genre itself and on to the actions between the performers, the unseen tensions weighing down the characters, and the

spine of the production. On the contrary, science fiction plays within the single invention or the utopian or dystopian sub-genre do not need to rely upon these spectacles. To Krupnik, these plays are more practical to the stage. He says “the more successful science fiction theatrical productions often invert audience expectations and employ restricted, even confined playing areas and use stylized language, sets, and special effects.” (Krupnik 199) Most of science fiction theatre is made up of these two sub-genres, since they are able to portray science fiction using restricted sets and special effects. This aligns with Aristotle’s elements, which emphasize plot and character above all else and place spectacle as the least important element of drama. Since these elements inform popular theatre criticism, they indirectly inform the productions put onstage.

In addition, with a de-emphasis on the spectacle of science fiction in the theatre, audiences may not recognize a play as being science fiction. Science fiction in cinema is most commonly identified by obvious special effects and imaginative settings. Therefore science fiction in the theatre might also be identified by its effects or settings. Yet there are a number of plays with science fiction elements, which are not identified with the science fiction genre like Laura Gunderson’s *I and You*, Tracy Lett’s *Bug*, and Sam Shepard’s *The Unseen Hand*. None of these plays relies heavily on spectacle, therefore cannot be identified by their special effects. In addition, science fiction plays can be reclassified once technology surpasses the fiction of the play. Hendrik Ibsen’s play *An Enemy of the People* written in 1882 is about a dystopian present where a community’s water source has been contaminated by industry. This dystopian premise categorizes this play as science fiction. Yet because of the popularity of the playwright

and the period in which the play was written, theatre historians will refer to this play as modernist or realist, without referring to its science fiction premise. Other classic plays that have been taken out of the science fiction genre include Goethe's *Faust* and Büchner's *Woyzeck*. This mass exodus of plays from the science fiction genre points to the lack of value that is put on art of this genre. Because of its inferior value, critics distance classic plays from this classification.

The reluctance to produce science fiction theatre stems from its ineffectiveness in applying traditional dramatic narratives. While traditional narratives create empathy within an audience through their inability to control the past or present situations of the characters and the society they live within, science fiction theatre is set in a future reality. By being set in the audience's future, the audience still has the semblance of control to avoid this possible reality. In this manner, the traditional dramatic forms are not enough for the science fiction genre. Instead of traditional dramatic forms, the science fiction genre needs to rely invoking other emotions within the audience. One of the effective tools for the science fiction dramatic writer is creating the uncanny and the abject within the world of the play.

The Uncanny and the Object in Science Fiction Theatre

The Uncanny

Freud attempts to define the term uncanny, translated from *unheimlich*, which literally means unhomely, in his essay “The Uncanny.”

The subject of the “uncanny” is a province of this kind. It undoubtedly belongs to all that is terrible— to all that arouses dread and creeping horror; it is equally certain, too, that the word is not always used in a clearly definable sense, so that it tends to coincide with whatever excites dread. Yet we may expect that it implies some intrinsic quality which justifies the use of a special name. One is curious to know what this peculiar quality is which allows us to distinguish as “uncanny” certain things within the boundaries of what is “fearful.” (Freud 1)

The uncanny does not exist as a singular definition, thus it can be adapted to fit the meaning of the subject feeling the sensation. This danger of this flexible definition is that the uncanny could mean a myriad of different things to different people. The uncanny is able to adapt its meaning to wrap around the unique fears that a person has. The uncanny also has a consistent coexistence with the ideas of “dread” and “horror.” Although the uncanny and fear have this coexistence, these are not the same feelings. When a person feels fear, they are afraid of something, that is there is an object to fear. When there is an absence, rather than an object, then that person encounters the uncanny. People feel uncanny on a dark street, because they are afraid of what is in the dark. Uncanniness is a discomfort in a location or a situation caused by fear of an object or action.

“It may be true that the uncanny is nothing else than a hidden, familiar thing that has undergone repression and then emerged from it, and that everything that is uncanny fulfills this condition.” (Freud 15) This is how Freud attempts to summarize the

flexible definition of the uncanny. With this summary, the uncanny becomes something returning to a person from a repressive state, such as the feeling of being in a new country. A person in a new country may recognize objects, yet that person would have to relearn social customs, spoken and written law, language, etc. The returning of these lessons causes uncanniness. More importantly, every time an audience sees a play, they are entering a new world, the world of the play. “The writer creates a kind of uncertainty in us in the beginning by not letting us know, no doubt purposely, whether he taking us into the real world or into a purely fantastic one of his own creation.” (Freud 7) The concept of a play produces a kind of uncanniness, in which when the show starts, the audience is forced into an unfamiliar world. The audience must discover what kind of world they are in, with two outcomes. If a play is set in a familiar place, which mimics the contemporary world or a historical setting, the audience is eventual able to ground the play in their understanding of that location and time period. When the audience grounds the play, the uncanniness produced by the mystery of the world becomes canny once again. If the play is set in a fantasy or science fiction setting, the audience is continuously discovering the new world throughout the play. Thus plays of this genre naturally retain their uncanniness, unless the playwright intervenes.

The Abject

Abjection shares an interesting relationship with the uncanny, sharing its flexible definition and constant coexistence with horror and dread. Kristeva claims that the abject is “essentially different from ‘uncanniness,’ more violent, too, abjection is elaborated through a failure to recognize its kin; nothing is familiar, not even the shadow of a memory.” (Kristeva 4) The abject and the uncanny occupy similar veins of

existence, although the abject has not “undergone repression and then emerged from it.” (Freud 15) Instead the abject is completely unfamiliar to the viewer. There is no recollection nor connection of any other memory. In this sense, Kristeva argues that abjection is a non-regressive form of uncanniness. The abject is “not an object facing me.” (Kristeva 1) When referring to the abject, Kristeva refers to a sensation or presence caused in a completely unfamiliar situation. Returning to the theatre example, unlike the uncanny, the abject is not naturally produced in the theatre at the beginning of the show. Instead it must be crafted from the uncanny. If the abject is “more violent” than the uncanny, producing a “failure to recognize its kin” (Kristeva 4) rather than a familiarity “that has long undergone repression and then emerged from it,” (Freud 15) then to make the uncanny into the abject, the playwright must disconnect the audience from the world they have been thrust into, by turning the audience’s expectations of the play and its reality into something much more horrific. In order to create the abject, the playwright must surprise the audience with something unexpected.

The fear which coexists with the uncanny and the abject is not genuine fear. Even when an audience is gripped by a play, they “typically do not believe the fictional objects are real,” therefore “it may be that [the audience’s] emotional response to fiction, in some sense, is not real either.” (Holt 139) Genuine fear causes humans to react in a flight or fight response, yet an audience’s “charged responses to fiction do not, in any ordinary way, so dispose us.” (Holt 139) Fictional fear keeps the audience gripped, since “so many of victims of the abject are its fascinated victims.” (Kristeva 6) Abjection can be a source of entertainment, providing the illusion of harm in the safety of a theatre. The playwright does not need to show the object of fear, since “certain

emotional states, like free-floating anxiety, seem not to require... an object.” (Holt 142)

The implication of something abject causes the audience to imagine the darkness, finishing the transformation of the uncanny into the abject. In the end, for abjection to exist “the [audience]’s sense of normality must be threatened from within or without. The [audience]’s position of coherence must be subverted in such a way that they at least momentarily experience the [fictional] equivalent of insanity.” (Olsen 117-8) This moment of fictional insanity separates the uncanny and the abject, since the uncanny produces the discomfort without questioning of one’s reality, while the abject forces the audience to face a twisted possible future. The difference between the uncanny and the abject is thin, requiring only one imaginative twist by the playwright to produce.

The Uncanny, the Abject, and Science Fiction Theatre

Theatre defines morality, performs philosophy, and instigates revolution. Brecht argues that “the theatre becomes a place for philosophers, and for such philosophers as not only wish to explain the world but wish to change it.” (Brecht 122) Theatre has a history of inciting social change and exposing public immoralities. Famously, productions of Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House* sparked riots when Nora left her husband at the end of the play. Plays of a didactic nature must present a deep and complex morality to the audience, which possess a duality of existence as “individuals of a mental and emotional maturity” and “a collective individual... [with] the high emotionally suggestibility of a mob.” (Brecht 122) The production must address a complex moral married with the appropriate emotional state to communicate to the audience and instigated change in their social and political systems.

Plays set in present or past tend to rely upon tragedy, whether the production is comedic or dramatic in nature, in order to present a folly or set of follies to an audience. The audience is able to become sympathetic to this past event, and with this presentation, the audience is expected to learn from this faux history and use this tragedy to inspire the change. Instead, science fiction, which is set in a possible future reality, whether that future is near or far, relies upon horror in order to produce a sympathetic fear in the audience. “Dystopian fiction presents us with futures that conform to our deepest terrors and wishes.” (Palmer 172) The sympathetic fear deters audiences from one future reality or another, in an attempt to control the otherwise unrestricted growth of societal progress. This sympathetic fear is produced by “unknown forces [which cause]... the reader’s sense of normality [to be] threatened from within or without.” (Olsen 117) In other words, this fear is produced by the uncanny and the abject. The power of the uncanny and the abject, or lack thereof, in science fiction theatre can be demonstrated by looking at three plays, namely Jennifer Haley’s *The Nether*, Tracy Letts’ *Bug*, and Joel Silberman’s *Human History*. The uncanny and the abject are integral to the science fiction genre with the uncanny being a natural product of the genre and the abject being a distortion of the uncanny. Ultimately, the abject induces a sympathetic fear of a possible future within the audience and sparks an interest for the story being told.

Jennifer Haley’s *The Nether*

Haley’s play *The Nether* follows Morris, a detective of the Nether, a future form of the internet where people live and work in virtual realities, and her investigation into a server administrator Sims, who has created a Nether reality for child pornography.

Morris also speaks with Doyle in the real world, a informant on Sims. In the Nether, the audience meets Iris, one the representations of a child sex worker, and Thomas Woodnut, a patron. Later in the play, the audience discovers that Doyle is Iris and Morris is Woodnut in the Nether, thus all three characters live a dual existence. The real world scenes take place in a dark, dimly lit interrogation room, which contrasts with the Nether scenes, which take place in a recreation of a Victorian home in the countryside. The spine of the play attempts to grapple with the definition of reality and how society defines existence on the internet. The dichotomy of the two worlds is an ever-present theme within the play, as the audience bounce back and forth between the two settings. In addition, the audience must question the existence of the two worlds, since the nature-dominated world is virtual and the technology-dominated world is real. Haley continues to play with Baudrillard's notion of simulacrum or simulation through the dialogue and the action within these two worlds. In *The Nether*, Haley transforms the naturally produced uncanniness of the science fiction genre into the abject by blending the worlds of the play, into a single simulation; by having the characters exist with two separate personas in the simulations; and by perverting unsettling concepts familiar to our reality beyond recognition.

Simulated Realities

Haley sets *The Nether* in two distinct simulations: the virtual world, represented by a Victorian Era, picturesque country estate in a state of permanent tranquility shone through sunshine, and the non-virtual world, represented by a harshly-lit and dingy interrogation room constantly under the presence of monitoring technology. These two settings are naturally uncanny to one another. The virtual world exists as a world of

only nature, while the non-virtual world exists as a world only of technology. Therefore, these two settings are also uncanny to our own reality, the audience's reality, where nature and technology coincide in the same realm of existence. Haley establishes through exposition that "eighty percent of the population works... in the Nether... [and that] our entire education system has been codified in the Nether." (9-10) Although the boundaries of the two worlds are well-defined, the characters in these worlds seem to cross the boundaries to complete everyday tasks, such as holding a career and gaining an education. After establishing these connections between the virtual and non-virtual worlds within the play, Haley asks the audience "when the Nether becomes our contextual framework for being, can you still argue that it isn't real?" (10) In this moment, Haley blurs the boundaries between the worlds by inscribing the virtual world within the non-virtual world. With this, the virtual and non-virtual cannot be distinguished into real and imaginary, simulacrum and simulation. Both the virtual and non-virtual worlds possess elements of reality, creating a dual reality.

The same question is also being directed to the audience. In his book *Simulacra and Simulation*, Baudrillard argues that "Simulators attempt to make the real, all of the real, coincide with their models of simulation." (2) The "Simulator" can refer to programmers creating a virtual world in the case of Sims. Yet, it can also refer to a playwright writing a play, in this case Haley. In this moment between Sims and Morris, the virtual and the non-virtual worlds of the play are also inscribed into the audience's reality, so what began as three separate spheres of existence, suddenly clashes into three inscribed spheres of existence. The audience is confronted with the idea that these realities exist within their own, just as their reality may exist within another.

The relationship of these three inscribed worlds are strictly directional, that the audience does not exist within the Nether, but the programmed child Iris exists in all three realities. The directionality of this relationship causes the lower order world to be the simulation of the higher order. Simulations themselves are their “own pure simulacrum,” which simultaneously are a “reflection of a profound reality,... masks and denatures a profound reality, [and]... has no relation to any reality whatsoever.” (Baudrillard 6) Therefore the simulations existence is an ambiguous contradiction. Through the many definitions Kristeva gives of the abject, Kristeva claims that “Abjection is above all ambiguity.” (6) Through this moment between Morris and Sims, Haley takes her settings, which are uncanny compared to the audience’s reality, and creates a sense of abjection through the melding of the three realms.

Dual Existence of Character

The characters of this dual reality live a dual existence, with two separate but distinct lives taking place in the virtual and non-virtual worlds. At the top of the show, the audience is introduced to five characters, with Sims being the only character that travels between the virtual and the non-virtual worlds. Yet later in the show, the audience discovers that Detective Morris doubles as the patron Thomas Woodnut and Doyle doubles as the child Iris in the Nether. Through this dual reality, none of these characters possess a static existence onstage nor within either reality. Although Baudrillard refers to holograms, he argues that “nothing resembles itself... like all fantasies of the exact synthesis or resurrection of the real is already no longer real, is already hyperreal.” (108) The characters fluctuate between the dual existences, and thus fluctuate between the dual personas.

Although the initial reaction to label the existence in the non-virtual world the “real” or “original” existence of the character, that would imply that the other persona is simply an impersonation, a simulation. “There is no real, there is no imaginary.” (Baudrillard 121) Implying that one existence is the simulation of the other, designates one existence as reality and the other as imaginary, or virtual. The play challenges this implication, since after Doyle takes his life in the non-virtual world, he is seen in the virtual world talking with Sims. Although the play has a nonlinear plot, the audience, who exist in a linear timeline, experience this moment in a linear progression, rather than a non-linear progression. This inconsistency in the linear existence of Doyle contributes to the creation of the abject within the play, since the “abject simultaneously beseeches and pulverizes the subject,” (Kristeva 3) with the “subject” in this case referring to the posthumous existence of Doyle in the Nether.

Perversion of Child Pornography

In our dual reality, Haley presents the audience a choice to have child pornography in the virtual world or the equivalent in the non-virtual world. Sims argues that by having his perverse realm in the Nether, he has “taken responsibility for my sickness I am protecting my brother’s children and my neighbor’s children and the children I will never have.” (16) The moral and written laws of the non-virtual world strictly define the actions taken in the Nether, as illegal in the non-virtual world. The laws prohibition sexual actions towards children. This same codex does not travel between the boundaries of the worlds. Kristeva argues that this double standard of law is abject. “The abject is perverse because it neither gives up nor assumes a prohibition, a rule, or a law; but turns them asides, misleads, corrupts, uses them, takes advantage of

them, the better to deny them.” (Kristeva 10) Thus Sims, in this case the source of the abject, is able to deny the immorality of his actions through his corruption of the law. Manipulation of the law does not deny the action, therefore audiences must recognize a world within their own in which these actions are not only permitted, but actively being performed.

Child pornography naturally possesses an uncanny sensation. “The uncanny undoubtedly belongs to all that is terrible— to all that arouses dread and creeping horror.” (Freud 1) Haley naturally converts this uncanny sensation into an abjection by perverting the definition of child pornography. Repulsion to child pornography centers around the cringe-inducing thought of an adult having sexual relations with a pre-pubescent child. The beginning of the play implies that these are the actions that has led to Morris’ investigation into Sims. Yet the reality of the virtual world is that patrons have been pushing stuffed animals down these virtual children’s throats and proceeding with murderous actions involving an axe, which are never specified. Through this creation, Haley distorts the definition of child pornography into something far more perverse. Kristeva claims that the abject is distinct from the uncanny by being “more violent,” that it is “elaborated through a failure to recognize its kin.” (4) Haley has taken an implied perversion of this virtual reality, which already produces uncanniness, and strengthens it by pushing past the audience’s imagined perception of the play with these barely comprehensible realities. By stretching the meaning of child pornography, and forcing the audience to face this disturbing reality of the Nether, Haley contributes to her construction of the abject.

Haley transforms the uncanniness into the abject by having the virtual and non-virtual worlds exist distinctly and as a blended simulation of the audience's reality, by having the characters exist with two separate personas in the virtual and non-virtual worlds, and by perverting child pornography. Her duality of personae, between Sims in and out of the real world, Doyle and Iris, and Morris and Woodnut, duality of existence in and out of the Nether, and duality of theme, with the conflict between technology and nature and the virtual and non-virtual, all converge onto the definition of reality.

“Many of us believe that what's real is what's physical, what you can get your hand on, what you can see, etc. perhaps to the point of thinking of classes or categories as mere mental constructions, useful abstractions; Plato, on the contrary, thinks this is exactly wrong. What you can touch, taste, or smell is, for that very reason, less real. It's what you grasp with your intellect, removed from the body that's ultimately real.” (Conrad 211)

The Nether adds another level of complexity to Plato's cave analogy, since inside the Nether there is a whole series of nested simulations meant to distract a person from “what you grasp with your intellect.” Through its abjection of these simulations, Haley strives to perform Plato's cave analogy. The abjection Haley creates around both the Nether and the interrogation room instigates a fear of a world where nature is trapped inside a virtual machine and most of your life is spent on the internet unveils the horror of the contemporary form of the internet and the time societies spend plugged in to the online world. The horror of a period when the virtual world is more valuable than the natural world does two things. First, it forces audiences to appreciate what makes the physical world unique from the virtual world. This appreciation hopefully instigates a fear of losing the physical world to the self-destruction of our home. Second, it attempts

to push audiences out of Plato's cave, where reality is defined through thought instead of the senses.

Tracy Lett's *Bug*

Lett's play, *Bug*, follows Agnes, a cocaine addict who has recently lost her child, and Peter, a veteran who has been the subject of several army experiments. Agnes is being stalked by her ex-husband Jerry, who has just been released from prison. Peter is hiding from the government, which is personified through Dr. Sweet. The spine of the play concerns the issue of the unstoppable pursuit and how Peter and Agnes can escape their respective pasts. The entire show takes place in Agnes' motel room, which neither her nor Peter seem to have control of nor can escape from. Agnes continues to get phone calls from Jerry, while Peter is pursued by helicopters. The first half of the play focuses on the development of Agnes and Peter in a real world setting. In fact, the science fiction premise of the play is not introduced until the end of the first act, when Peter reveals that he has been turned into an experimental weapon by the United States government and is the host for a nest of bugs, which slowly take over the room. Once this element is introduced, the reality onstage begins to distort, taking the audience along with it. In his play *Bug*, Letts slowly tears the audience from their reality to the abject by establishing a trustworthy character in Peter before questioning his sanity and by flipping the standard roles of the protagonist and the antagonist at the climax of the play.

Authenticity Versus Psychosis

In Act I, Peter is portrayed as a relatively harmless stranger. Someone who is quirky but is not threatening to the Agnes, R.C., or the audience. In fact, Peter attempts to assuage all the parties involved from his first line that he “is not an axe murderer.” (Letts 10) Through Act I, Peter and Agnes go from strangers to friends, as Agnes, as well as the audience, comes to trust Peter. This mutual trust is strained, but maintained, when Peter shares that he was the government’s “guinea pig.” (Letts 29) Later in Act II, Ronnie claims that Peter is making up the bugs. Later, Dr. Sweet comes to the motel room, claiming to be Peter’s doctor and ensuring Agnes he only has Peter’s best intentions in mind. This devolution of the image of Peter, from a trustworthy voice to someone suffering from a serious mental illness shifts the audience’s understanding of the world of the play and forces them to question the sanity of the other characters.. At every moment someone challenges Peter’s sanity, Agnes and the audience must question whether or not they believe this challenge. Throughout the play Agnes chooses to believe Peter and his story, since she has developed a mutual trust with him, which allows Peter to further his devolution within the play, continuing in a vicious spiral until the play’s climax.

The devolution of Peter’s character creates an uncanny sensation within the play. Uncanniness can be ascribed to the production of “intellectual uncertainty, so that the uncanny would always be that in which one does not know where one is.” (Freud 2) The instability of Peter’s character, and therefore the instability of the world of the play, creates this uncertainty. The uncanny sensation, coupled with the slow devolution of Peter, allows the audience to confront Peter’s psychosis without losing trust in Peter.

Letts split the Peter character into two separate simulations, one of Peter being how Peter presents himself to the audience and the other of Peter being the descriptions and perceptions that other characters have of Peter. The audience has to choose which of these two Peters to trust, which Peter is the simulacrum. Splitting Peter into these two simulations leaves the audience unsure about which Peter they will see onstage at any given moment. This unknown creates the uncanny within the play.

Flipping the Protagonist and Antagonist

In *Bug*, the central conflict centers around Agnes and Peter attempting to escape the clutches of their past and the people who want to keep them imprisoned. For Agnes, the main antagonist is Goss, her ex-husband. For Peter, the main antagonist is the government, which becomes personified by Dr. Sweet. The unwanted attachment that Goss and Dr. Sweet have for Peter and Agnes causes our protagonists to resort to extreme measures, choosing to burn themselves alive in order to kill off the bug colony and permanently escape their pursuers. Yet, both Goss and Dr. Sweet only want the best for Agnes and Peter. Goss appreciates Peter for “takin’ such good care of Aggie.” (Letts 33) Dr. Sweet says “I don’t want [Peter] locked up. I want to help him.” (Letts 46) So although they are the antagonists of the play, and described by the characters as having nothing but malevolent intent, both Goss and Dr. Sweet ultimately have the health of their loved ones in mind. Their actions and intentions do not portray the same malice, which they are described as having.

Thus the natural divisions between protagonist and antagonist are not present in Letts’ play. On the other hand, Peter and Agnes choose to escape, to burn themselves alive, is done against these good intentions. On one hand, the audience wants Agnes and

Peter, the protagonists of the story, to achieve their wants, so the audience can vicariously attain the same sense of accomplishment. On the other hand, the audience wants Agnes and Peter to be healthy, goals that align with Goss and Dr. Sweet. Kristeva argues that “there looms, within abjection, one of those violent, dark revolts of being, directed against a threat that seems to emanate from an exorbitant outside or inside, ejected beyond the scope of the possible, the tolerable, the thinkable.” (1) By flipping the roles of the protagonist and antagonist, Peter and Agnes experience these “dark revolts of being” against the good intentions of Goss and Dr. Sweet. Peter and Agnes, who may or may not be experiencing a dual psychosis kill themselves because of the belief that they will kill the bugs that may or may not exist, or a motive “beyond the scope of the possible” for the audience. Thus at the final moment in the play, the audience experiences this double suicide of the protagonists, questioning whether there was no escape from this the unwanted attachment or if the protagonists were in dire need of mental help without means to attain it. This dual focus, in addition to the means of the final suicide, produces the abject within the production.

Letts slowly tears the audience away from reality into the abject through the duality of Peter and by flipping the roles of the protagonist and antagonists within the play. The abject instills a fear of outer control in the audience, whether it is through an individual like Jerry or the invisible hand of a government. Through abjection, Lett’s communicates that Peter and Agnes are simply pawns of a much greater game, which is only alluded to throughout the play. Letts alludes to this game because “It is the sheer fact of the presence of an extreme version of the dyscatastrophic vision... [and] that for a subset of our society the horrific is the only reality of which our culture makes any

sense.” (Olsen 125) By Through the horror of the play, Letts is able to create a simulation of a horrific world, which mirrors the audience’s reality. Just as the audience is force to confront the question of Peter’s sanity or insanity, they must also consider this world’s reality or non-reality.

Joel Silberman’s *Human History*

Silberman’s *Human History* follows a classroom conversation of race between four students and a teacher on Centaurian Prime. Of the four students, two are human, and two are Ziltraxian. This play is set five hundred years after the Ziltraxians invaded Earth to extract its resources and enslave its people. The conversation is sparked by a mysterious disaster, which is never illuminated within the play, and winds it way through the many of the common contemporary arguments surrounding race and other prominent social issues in the United States today. The play ends without a resolution, as the conflict ends when the teacher ends the discussion, hoping the tensions between the Ziltraxians and Humans will soon end. Silberman’s play can be viewed as a counter-example to the use of the uncanny and the abject in science fiction theatre. Instead of relying upon these elements, Silberman attempts to familiarize the audience from this world rather than create this sense of abjection. In *Human History*, Silberman removes all the naturally occurring uncanniness by making Centaurian Prime familiar to the audience and restating modern social issues through a familiar, but distant lens.

Plug and Chug Planet Creation

Although Silberman sets up Centaurian Prime as an alien planet, populated by Ziltraxians with shiny skin and green spiky hair and descendants of human slaves,

Silberman draws many parallels between Centaurian Prime and our own planet. For example, throughout the play Silberman brings up basic points of common debates and social issues in the United States today such as racism, gun rights, and religion. Instead of creating a separate, complex history for the Ziltraxians, Silberman replaces a few words from human speech to make it Ziltraxian. For example, instead of “for the love God,” characters say “for the love of Marshbarglablar.” (Silberman 3) Instead of a gun, Broff carries a “laser cannon.” (Silberman 9) Instead of being racist, characters are being “space-ist.” (Silberman 12) Therefore, the audience watches a production centered around human language and human values, with a few substitutions in vocabulary and visuals made to create this new world. This plug and chug method of world creation leads Silberman to introduce the audience to a world they are familiar with, namely their own. In this way, the laws of the audience’s reality still apply to the reality within *Human History*; thus it is not uncanny at all, much less abject. Without its natural uncanniness, this play de-emphasizes the science fiction premise it has created.

The de-emphasis of the genre, and the unbelievability of Centaurian Prime, alienates the audience from the play, creating an absurdist production. Brecht’s alienation effect has primarily been associated with a didactic intent. When the alienation effect is applied to characters in an exaggerated situation or reality, it “rids the audience of any empathetic feelings for the ridiculous dilemmas of the characters” allowing the audience to extract more enjoyment from the comedy onstage. (Maurer 79) This comedic outcome contrasts with the weight of the issues addressed within the play, diminishing their value.

Restating Social Issues

Silberman focuses on the issue of racism throughout his play, although he reiterates common arguments through his translate language. For example, after firing his laser cannon at Michael, Broff is let off with a warning because the officer “forgoes” bringing him in because Broff “seems like a good kid.” (Silberman 10) Earlier in the play, Broff does not “think it is fair that we must always be hyper-sensitive” all the time. (Silberman 3) Broff and the Ziltraxian viewpoints clash with the human’s arguments. Ashraxa, a half-human, says that “anger is allowed for [Ziltraxian women], but not for women who are Human,” because as an angry human might “frighten a Ziltraxian.” (Silberman 5) These clashing viewpoints echo the current debate around racism in the United States, although one side is painted as entirely antagonistic through absurdism, while the other is portrayed as the center of morality through a moment of seriousness amongst the humor. Through the absurdist presentation of the antagonists, Silberman removes the weight of their arguments.

In the end these questions are simply reframed in a melodramatic fashion within the play, which fails to come to any conclusion. In a final moment, Professor Grock shares his words of wisdom that “only by exercising the area of an injury,” or discussing these social issues including racism, “can we exorcise the injury itself... It is painful, but... perhaps if we do it enough, the future might not be as bleak as the past.” (Silberman 12) The ultimate conclusion of the play does not exist as a harbinger for the future pain these issues will cause nor a path towards a better future. Instead Grock’s solution to the problem is to let it solve itself naturally through open dialogue. Silberman’s lack of a conclusion represents the lack of a conclusion in the audience’s

world. By reframing these questions on *Centuarian Prime*, Silberman relies upon a science fiction of Brecht's alienation effect, where constant references translations of earth objects and the use of silly worlds alienates the audience, distancing the audience from the issues to highlight their absurdity.

In his play *Human History*, Silberman familiarizes the audience to the world of *Human History* and restates modern social issues without relying upon the abject.

Although in the play the value of this arguments are diminished, Silberman creates a reality to be afraid of, namely a reality where Humans are dealing with the same social issues for the next five hundred years. Without the use of the abject, Silberman relies upon the alienation effect to distance the audience from the world, allowing them to think critically about the arguments made onstage. In addition, Silberman relies upon spectacle to create this world, by having the actors portray exaggerated and heavily costumed humanoids onstage, through special effects such as firing the laser cannon onstage and through stylized language. Spectacle hinders instead of assists science fiction. "With rare exception... plays the rely on spectacle do not work on the stage.... In effect, serious authors of science fiction on the stage write intimate science fiction." (Krupnik 199) Spectacle within the play draws the focus away from the questions surrounding social issues, to have the audience examine the world the playwright has created. In *Human History*, the spectacle draws away from the plot and the character development. This attention to spectacle is especially destructive for the ten minute play format of *Human History*, sine a longer piece would give the playwright more time for exposition and allow the audience more time to immerse themselves in the world. Instead, *Human History* ends before the world is able to settle.

Although this play highlights critical social issues and creates a fear of these issues continuing for hundreds of years, without abjection, it fails to offer a path forward. In the timeline of this play, humans struggle with these issues on Earth until this very year, when the Ziltraxians arrive, invade the planet, and force the issues to start from square one. The Ziltraxian invasion removes the audiences' agency over this future reality. Without agency, the audience does not have the opportunity to prevent these next five hundred years from progressing if the Ziltraxians or a similar group invade suddenly. In contrast, Haley and Letts give the audience agency to control their futures, in order to allow the audience to avoid making the mistakes which lead to their abject realities.

The Effectiveness of the Uncanny and the Abject

The uncanny and the abject are integral to the science fiction genre in order to simultaneously induce a sympathetic fear and spark an interest in the story being told. The power of science fiction theatre stems from "the unease that we feel is essentially that of border situations, of being on the verge of knowledge that may split the configuration of the world apart." (Yarrow 113) Science has developed to the point that humanity has the power to accidentally destroy the Earth and all life on it. Therefore science fiction thrives by showing the many possibilities in which society can lead to its own self-destruction. The problem with a possible self-destruction is that it is difficult to imagine it taking place. Plays such as *The Nether* and *Bug* imagine these disasters and perform them for the audience. The performance gives the audience a tangible fear, rather than an abstract circumstance. In addition, these science fictions plays vicariously

play through some of the obvious mistakes an audience might make in that situation, thus science fiction theatre is in some ways a trial run for future scenarios.

Ultimately, the uncanny and the abject foster an environment for science fiction theatre to create a horror for the audience. These horrors incite the audience towards avoiding a reality. Theatre space is a safe place, therefore “one thus understands why so many victims of the abject are its fascinated victims—if not its submissive and willing ones.” (Kristeva 6) The horrors of the uncanny and the abject can play out to their entirety without physically endangering the audience, so these horrors can be observed from the safety of a seat in the theatre. With this stage fear, instead of true fear, the audience can simultaneously be fearful and fascinated.

Marked

Marked grapples with the vicious cycle of discrimination, asking whether or not our society can move past systems of second-class citizenship. To answer this question, it creates a new hierarchy through the separation of clones and humans. The aim was to create an abject reality, where clones were treated with similar discriminatory practices that haunt American society today, in order to incite the audience to deconstruct these systems. It creates this abjection by calling back to slavery, the Holocaust, social stratification, and other effects of discrimination. Although the play has a more direct connection with racism, it was intended to be about discrimination in general, rather than any particular conflict within caused by discrimination. In its current state, I believe the play partially accomplishes that goal. There are moments within the play that rely more on tragedy than abjection, which I plan to revise in another version of the text. Ultimately the current version of the play accomplishes its goals of showing the power of abjection in science fiction theatre, existing as science fiction theatre which does not rely upon extraneous spectacle, creating a narrative around discrimination, and inciting a horror of this future reality within the audience.

The Development of *Marked*

I started writing *Marked* two years ago, while studying abroad at Oxford University under the tutorship of Shane Garrigan, as project about the loss of identity. It was play that wanted to blend the ideas of past, present, and future in order to create dream world for the audience to enter. I wrote a few scenes, which echoed some of the tensions around discrimination. This initial foray into the world of the play did not go anywhere, so I moved on to another project in that tutorial. Then on August 9, 2014,

Michael Brown was wrongfully gunned down by the Ferguson Police Department, which incited riots throughout the city and outrage throughout the nation. This incident and its aftermath caused me to return to this premise and switch the focus of my play from identity to discrimination. I let a generally premise of the play incubate until Michael Najjar's Advanced Playwriting course, where I wrote a three-act version of *Marked*, then called *Printer Effect*. This version of the play still included the fantasy world which combined past, present, and future. Specifically, it attempted to place a future of cloning in a world similar to Medieval Europe. At the time, I felt the play was ineffective, but I did not have the understanding of why. In hindsight, *Printer Effect* failed to create this sensation of the abject within the audience and therefore failed to create a repulsive horror around the topic of discrimination. After the course, I took what I learned from that text and started over from the beginning with only the premise for this project.

My process began with reading everything, from philosophers to theatre critics to new articles to playwrights and everything else in between. At the same time, I started to outline the play. At first, I wrote out vague phrases which alluded to scenes on sticky notes, and I placed them on my wall. This way, I was able to change the order of these actions everyday, as well as add more and more description to this flexible outline. I developed the characters in the same way, writing down attributes and sticking them next to names. I played with this outline until I had a structure and the material to write down an outline. Once I typed it out, I let it incubate for a few weeks, before I started writing the play. I wrote the play in order, writing action to action until the end. Although some playwrights like working backwards, I had a stronger grasp of

the beginning of the play, and I wrote the first act rather quickly. The second act was much more difficult to put to paper and is still weak in its structure. The challenge of the second act was discovering the motivation of Cynthia, the human. I had difficulty determining how she would react to seeing her clone, something she does not acknowledge the existence of before Spades' arrival.

After finishing a first draft, I went back and did a single revision, before doing an informal read through with the cast of the staged reading. I took the discoveries of that read-through and did a second edit, adding stage directions to help the audience of the staged reading envision the play. I had a week with the cast before the staged reading, where we rehearsed the play, so they could get a grasp of the language. In these rehearsals, we made some last minute edits to the language, mostly subtracting extraneous lines to polish the sound of the play. The staged reading was a valuable experience, because it allowed me to read the audience's reaction to some of the moments within the play. In addition, the reaction of the audience allowed the play to live outside of my head, which is an important step in the development process. The text within this document is the text from the staged reading, but I hope to take the perspective gained from the reading and continue to revise this work further.

Marked by Nicholas J. Maurer

Cast of Characters:

Spades W - Cynthia's clone. Spades is missing a couple fingers on her left hand.
Played by Erica Hartmann

Diamonds W - A clone. Diamonds is missing her left breast. Double casted with Officer Black, a senior officer for the San Rafael Police Department. Diamonds and Officer Black are played by Siobhan Nickerson-Farr

Hearts M - A older clone, nearing his expiration date. Heart is missing his right eye.
Played by Michael Teague.

Clubs M - A clone. Clubs is missing his left arm. Double casted with Officer Blue, a rookie for the San Rafael Police Department. Played by Ben M. Jones

Cynthia W - A wealthy woman from California with late stage lung cancer. She is the human Spades' is cloned from. Double casted with Guard. Played by Lynn Connelly

Staged Directions are being read by Aiyana Marie Parks.

Setting:

There are three settings for this show. Act I Scene 1 is set on the Farm, a prison camp where clones are grown and kept until they are ready to be harvested. The clones can see the outside world through chainlink fencing, but they have no contact with humans except for the human employees of the Farm. The clones live and spend most of their time in a bunk room reminiscent of an internment camp. Act I Scene 2 is set in an abandoned barn not far from the Farm. The barn and bunk room at the Farm should look fairly similar in design. Act II is set in Cynthia's apartment. Cynthia is extremely wealthy person living in the bay area, and the apartment should reflect that. Her home reflects the most contemporary version of style. More so, she lives far away from the Farm and her clone, Spades. The two worlds have never come in contact.

Clones:

Note that all the clones have a marked on their faces. The marked should be uniform among the clones and separate them visually from the humans within the play.

Act I Scene 1

Setting: Our four clones, HEARTS, DIAMONDS, SPADES, and CLUBS sit in a dingy bunk room on the Farm.

At Rise: The clones are playing four way cribbage. HEARTS is working in a small notebook. DIAMONDS lays her cards on the table.

CLUBS

(Reacting to DIAMONDS cards.)

It's all meaningless you know. Every minute of it. This life in a cage. This rickety chair. This endless game. Meaningless.

DIAMONDS counts her cards.

DIAMONDS

Fifteen two. Fifteen four. Fifteen six. And a double run for eight for fourteen.

DIAMONDS pegs her fourteen points.

CLUBS

Why do you care anymore?

DIAMONDS

Eleven. Twelve. Thirteen. Fourteen.

CLUBS

Fucking cheaters.

SPADES

You'd cheat too, if you could.

CLUBS

I'd never cheat anyone.

SPADES

You just faked a cold to get out of work.

CLUBS

Woah woah woah. You all are cheating a person. Cheating the system ain't like cheating a person. Cheating a person is cheating yourself. Lying to yourself. Cheating the system is not lying. The system is not based upon trust. I say I'm sick, and they take me in. No questions asked. I spend all day in cushy rooms with doctors, who say I'm healthy. And then they send me back. The system isn't based on trust, so there's nothing to break. I could say I'm sick tomorrow, and I'll get the same treatment I got yesterday.

SPADES

Count your damn cards.

CLUBS counts his cards.

CLUBS

Fifteen two.

SPADES

All that for two points. Unbelievable.

CLUBS

I get my money's worth.

DIAMONDS

You get the address this time?

CLUBS

Who the fuck do you think I am?

SPADES

It's only taken you five tries.

DIAMONDS

You can't fake anymore sick days.

CLUBS

Twenty-seven Twenty-one Walnut Lane. Plano, Texas. Or what is it Seventy-two twenty-one.

DIAMONDS

You better have that straight.

SPADES counts her cards.

SPADES

Fifteen two. Four. Six. Pair for eight.

CLUBS

I got it. No need to worry.

HEARTS

Who was the kid who broke his leg today?

CLUBS

Pine did. One Thirty-Five Seventy-Eight. Carving him up as we speak.

SPADES

Whatcha you got old man?

HEARTS writes the number in his notebook. HEARTS continues to flip through pages of his notebook.

HEARTS

Ten.

SPADES

You got to count. It's half the game.

HEARTS

If I count it, it's ten. If I don't count it, it's ten. So peg me for ten.

DIAMONDS

Let it go.

SPADES

This is the game we're playing. The least he could do is pay attention.

CLUBS

We're paying attention. There is nothing more important to us than this game. Right Hearts.

HEARTS

Huh?

CLUBS

Right?

HEARTS

Definitely.

SPADES

Either play or don't play.

DIAMONDS

Forget it Spades.

HEARTS

I'm playing.

SPADES

Then count your crib.

Nothing. HEARTS

You didn't even look. CLUBS

HEARTS flips over the crib.

Four. HEARTS

Can please count for us? SPADES

One two three four. HEARTS

Fuck off. SPADES

I can't win on my own Hearts. Don't leave those points out there. CLUBS

HEARTS counts his cards.

Fifteen two. Fifteen four. HEARTS

Thank you. SPADES

DIAMONDS starts shuffling the deck.

We can play three-handed if you want out. SPADES

He's playing. CLUBS

HEARTS
(continuing to flip through his book)
Maple, Cheddar, and Pine. Just three today?

DIAMONDS
Little Jay makes four. Six Twelve Twenty-Six.

HEARTS writes the number in his book. DIAMONDS deals five cards to each player.

Forty this month.
HEARTS

It's harvest season.
SPADES

All four Clones put a card into Diamonds' crib. CLUBS cuts the deck and DIAMONDS flips a card.

Could you not?
CLUBS

That's what it is.
SPADES

The clones start playing their hands.

Could we talk about something else then? Seven.
CLUBS

Ignoring it won't make it go away. Fifteen for two.
SPADES

I'm not ignoring it.
CLUBS

Twenty-five.
HEARTS

Twenty-eight.
DIAMONDS

Go.
CLUBS

Go.
SPADES

Go.
HEARTS

DIAMONDS

One for go.

HEARTS

Did anyone get fed tonight?

CLUBS

Eight.

SPADES

Fifteen for two.

DIAMONDS

Pepper. Fourth one in her bunkhouse.

HEARTS

Diseased cattle. Twenty-five.

CLUBS

Stop it.

DIAMONDS

Thirty.

SPADES

What else would you call them?

CLUBS

Go.

SPADES

Go.

HEARTS

Go.

DIAMONDS

One for go.

CLUBS

Anything else. Anything at all. Four.

SPADES

Eleven.

HEARTS

Twenty-one

DIAMONDS

Thirty-one for two.

CLUBS

Damn cheaters.

GUARD enters. The clones freeze. They do not make eye contact. They do not make a sound. Pause. GUARD looks at them curiously, before crossing the room and exiting. Once the guard exits, the clones continue the game.

CLUBS

Six.

SPADES

Ten.

HEARTS

Twenty.

DIAMONDS

Thirty. One for last.

CLUBS

What is apple anyways?

DIAMONDS

Eyes. I think.

SPADES

Apple is the heart. Blueberry is the eyes.

DIAMONDS

No way. Cyclops came back from that surgery, and he definitely had apple.

SPADES

You can't believe him. He can't find his ass without a mirror.

CLUBS

Who would forget pie?

DIAMONDS

Peanut.

HEARTS begins scanning his notebook.

CLUBS

Poor girl must be half gone by now. What did she have? Boysenberry—

SPADES

I heard cherry.

CLUBS

I was there when she gave Cherry away.

DIAMONDS

Pumpkin?

CLUBS

What the hell is pumpkin?

DIAMONDS

I don't know. An ass cheek maybe?

HEARTS

Liver.

SPADES

I hope I never get pumpkin. Terrible slice of pie.

CLUBS

Lemon is the worse. You get lemon, and you'll wake up pissing through a tube.

SPADES

It's more of a tart than a pie.

CLUBS

It has a crust, so it's a pie. It's as simple as that.

The clones count their cards.

Fifteen two. Fifteen four. Run of four for eight.

SPADES

Not everything that has a crust is a pie. Fifteen two. Fifteen four. Pair for six.

HEARTS

Ten.

DIAMONDS

Hearts—

HEARTS counts his cards.

HEARTS

Double run of five for ten.

DIAMONDS counts her cards.

DIAMONDS

Fifteen two. Pair for four.

DIAMONDS counts her crib.

Run of three for three.

CLUBS grabs the cards and begins shuffling.

CLUBS

I wish they had a few more days. Just a few more, so the tunnel would be finished and we—

DIAMONDS

Shut up.

CLUBS

No one can hear me.

SPADES

Shut up. There's some winners and losers. Okay. Some of us aren't going to be able to get out. Someone will get pie everyday until the tunnel is done, and it's a shame. But if the wrong person hears us, that's the end of it.

Silence. CLUBS deals four hands of five.

CLUBS

What was that last pie again?

HEARTS

(reading from his notebook)

Cherry. Pumpkin. Apple.

HEARTS closes the notebook.

CLUBS

I'm not sure if I would want apple as my last pie.

SPADES

Does it really matter?

CLUBS

The question is quality over quantity or quantity over quality. Nothing tastes sweeter than apple. But you never get more than one. And it always seems to be the smallest slice of pie.

HEARTS

Pie is not a joke.

CLUBS

Jokes don't have to be funny.

SPADES

I like the sound of more pie. Lemon, blueberry, and those sort always seem to be bigger. Plus you come back half the time. What I wouldn't want is any of those fucking meat pies. I am leaving with all my limbs, thank you very much.

CLUBS

Everyone gets meat pie at some time or another.

SPADES

We don't have to like it.

HEARTS

Peanut never got one.

into HEARTS, CLUBS, SPADES, and DIAMONDS throw a card
CLUBS' crib.

SPADES

In the end, you get what you get. You can hope for whatever you want, but most of the time your screwed.

SPADES cuts the deck. CLUBS flips the card. It's a Jack.

CLUBS

Knobs for two.

The clones start playing their hands.

SPADES

Seven.

Fifteen two. HEARTS

Twenty-three for three. DIAMONDS

Twenty-seven. CLUBS

Thirty-one for four. SPADES

Damn it. CLUBS

SPADES pegs out.

We playing again? SPADES

Depends. Are you going to keep cheating? CLUBS

SPADES collects the cards and begins to shuffle. GUARD enters carrying a slice of pie, a fork, and a knife. The group freezes up upon the GUARD's entry. The cheer is sucked out of the room. GUARD places the food in front of SPADES.

GUARD
(to SPADES)
Five twenty three sixteen. Bon appetit.

GUARD exits. The group watch the guard leave. SPADES picks up a fork and takes a bite of the apple pie. SPADES drops her fork. Silence.

I'm sorry. CLUBS

Are you? Are you really? SPADES

Truly— CLUBS

HEARTS opens his notebook to write SPADES' information.

SPADES

You aren't going to wake up to your beating heart being sliced out of your body. Why should you be sorry? Why the fuck should you be sorry? I'll be on that cutting board, and you'll be here playing this stupid fucking game. Put that fucking thing away! I'm not going to be reduced to a damn number in your damn book!

DIAMONDS

Spades—

SPADES

No. No. Don't try to calm me down. I have every right to be pissed. I have every right to yell! To curse! To throw things! Whatever the fuck I want to do, I'm going to fucking do it! Because I'll be dead tomorrow.

DIAMONDS

Sit down.

SPADES

Get off me.

CLUBS

Sit down.

SPADES

Don't touch me! Don't you dare touch me.

HEARTS

Sit down.

SPADES

I have to get out of here.

CLUBS

Let's play the game. We can talk things through.

SPADES

I'm done.

HEARTS

Breathe.

SPADES

I have to leave. I have to leave.

SPADES reaches for the hidden trap door. CLUBS stands on it.

Spades. Stop being ridiculous. CLUBS

Get off. SPADES

Spades. CLUBS

Get off! SPADES

Some of us aren't going to be able to get out. DIAMONDS

Shut up! SPADES

It's a shame. But that's the way it is. DIAMONDS

Shut the fuck up! SPADES

Stop it Diamonds. CLUBS

Get out of the way Clubs. SPADES

Spades— CLUBS

SPADES
Keeping me here is sentencing me to die! I don't want to die. I'm not ready to die!
You're standing between me and my only opportunity to escape. If you don't let me
out, you're killing me! You're killing me Clubs! You're killing me!

HEARTS
You can't finish the damn tunnel tonight, so sit the fuck down.

SPADES

I have to try! I have to try!

CLUBS

Spades—

SPADES

I don't have a few days. I can't wait a few days. I can't wait a few hours!

DIAMONDS

If you keep shouting you'll have a few minutes!

SPADES

I won't go quietly! I won't fucking go quietly. And I'm sure not letting some dessert dictate my life. So get out of the fucking way!

CLUBS pulls a chair to him and sits down over the door.

CLUBS

We can't finish it.

HEARTS

You're not going to ruin months of planning.

SPADES

Give me a god damn chance.

HEARTS

You're dying here.

SPADES

I deserve to die on my own terms. Not like cattle heading for slaughter.

HEARTS

Death is death. Deal with it.

CLUBS

Maybe we should—

DIAMONDS

If that tunnel pops up before the tree-line, then we're all dead. Maybe not tomorrow or the next day, but that's the end of it.

SPADES

We can run! Hide! We can escape. But damn it, if we don't go now, I never will!

HEARTS

I want you to live Spades. But it's a numbers game. It'll always be a numbers game. Either a few of us get out now. Or most of us get out in a few days.

SPADES

Everyone can leave now! I'm stopping them.

HEARTS

A half-finished tunnel will be spotted.

SPADES

Any tunnel will be found eventually.

DIAMONDS

Even if a few of us made it out, most of us would end up right back in here, waiting for our slice of pie. Are you really willing to trade all our lives for your freedom?

A long silence.

CLUBS

(Gesturing to the pie.)

Are you... are you going to eat that?

SPADES

Don't touch the pie.

CLUBS

You're letting it get cold.

SPADES

Don't touch the pie.

CLUBS

It's a shame to waste good pie.

DIAMONDS

You can't wish it away.

CLUBS

I can help you get rid of it.

SPADES

Don't you dare.

CLUBS

Someone's got to eat it.

DIAMONDS

Let her waste it if she wants.

CLUBS

That doesn't make any damn sense.

HEARTS

It doesn't have to make sense.

CLUBS

If she won't eat, then why should I go hungry?

SPADES

No one's eating it.

CLUBS

You should embrace it. This is your escape. You could have been sliced up, maim'ed, torture. But no. You're mostly put together. Sure a couple of knobs are gone, but two eyes, two legs, two arms. That's a dream finish.

SPADES

Shut up.

HEARTS

It won't be any easier out there. You don't have to die to be killed.

SPADES grabs the pie with her hand and takes a big bite out the pie. SPADES' gets up and jumps onto her cot. She lays there staring into space. Silence.

CLUBS

Where... where were we?

DIAMONDS

We were just starting.

CLUBS picks up the cards and quickly shuffles.

CLUBS

We can play three's.

DIAMONDS

She'll come back.

CLUBS

We'll play three's until then.

CLUBS deals five cards to the players. Then he deals a card to the crib. DIAMONDS and CLUBS toss a card into CLUBS' crib.

CLUBS

Hearts. Yoo hoo. You there?

HEARTS tosses a card into the crib. HEARTS cuts the deck and CLUBS flips the top card. Then they start to play their hands.

HEARTS

Nine.

DIAMONDS

Fifteen for two.

CLUBS

Twenty-five

HEARTS

Thirty-one for two.

DIAMONDS

This doesn't feel right.

CLUBS

Just keep playing.

DIAMONDS

I can't.

CLUBS

Just try.

DIAMONDS

I'm not going to fake it.

CLUBS

I don't care how you feel just play the damn game!

DIAMONDS

I'm not going to play if I don't want to!

CLUBS

Are you kidding me? When the fuck has it ever been about what we want to do. We play this game every fucking day! Minute after minute. Hour after hour. And now that

one of us is almost done waiting, you aren't in the mood. When will you ever be in the mood? When have you ever been in the mood? When have any of us ever been in the damn mood? I hate this game. I absolutely hate this game. I don't play because I want to. We don't play because we fucking want to. We play because we fucking need to. Because without it, the waiting is just a little more bearable. So you're going to play, so I can play. You'll play with me until it's my turn to die.

They resume playing.

Eight. DIAMONDS

Eighteen. CLUBS

Twenty-four. HEARTS

Thirty-one for two. DIAMONDS

Ten. CLUBS

Sixteen HEARTS

Twenty-three DIAMONDS

Thirty-one for two. CLUBS

HEARTS counts his hand.

HEARTS
Fifteen two. Fifteen four. Fifteen six. Three of a kind for six for twelve.

DIAMONDS counts her hand.

DIAMONDS
Fifteen two. Fifteen four. Double run of five for ten for fourteen.

CLUBS counts his hand.

CLUBS

Fifteen two. Fifteen four. Fifteen six. Fifteen eight. Fifteen ten. Fifteen twelve. Pair for fourteen. Pair for sixteen.

CLUBS flips his crib.

CLUBS

Fifteen two. Fifteen four. Run of four for four for eight.

HEARTS collects the cards and shuffles the deck in silence. A long moment. HEARTS begins dealing.

DIAMONDS

Deal her in. It doesn't feel right without her.

CLUBS

What about—

DIAMONDS

Just deal her in.

CLUBS adds his and HEARTS points together. HEARTS deals a hand of five to DIAMONDS, CLUBS, himself, and the place where SPADES was sitting a few minutes ago. . DIAMONDS, HEARTS, and CLUBS all throw a card into HEARTS' crib. Pause. DIAMONDS peaks at SPADES cards.

CLUBS

That's cheating.

DIAMONDS

She has to play.

DIAMONDS peaks again. Picks one. Then throws it in the crib. DIAMONDS cuts the deck. HEARTS flips a card. The clones then start to play. Pause. DIAMONDS looks at SPADES hand. Throws a card.

DIAMONDS

Seven.

CLUBS

That's cheating!

HEARTS

Let it go.

HEARTS flips through his notebook.

CLUBS

You can't play two hands. Either Spades plays or we play three handed.

DIAMONDS

What would you do?

CLUBS

We can't have you cheating the whole game.

HEARTS

Forget it.

CLUBS

No—

DIAMONDS

I'm trying my best.

CLUBS

Well it isn't working.

DIAMONDS

Well damn it! Maybe I don't want to play without Spades! Maybe I don't want to count without Spades! Maybe I don't want to live without Spades!

HEARTS

Let her go.

DIAMONDS

No!

HEARTS

It won't be any easier hanging on. So let go.

CLUBS

What the fuck Hearts! She ain't dead yet.

HEARTS

You'll have to let go eventually. Better to do it before it starts hurting.

CLUBS

Can't you wait!

CLUBS snatches the notebook.

CLUBS

Piece of shit. This ain't some number. This is fucking Spades! She is one of our own. I'm not going to let you reduce her to a few digits in your fucking catalog. We owe her that at least. To remember her as the clone she was rather the numbers she was giving. Not a collection of...

CLUBS catches sight of his number in the book.

CLUBS

What the fuck! Why am I in here? Why the fuck I am in here? You tell me what this is all about right now!

HEARTS

It's nothing.

DIAMONDS

Forget it.

CLUBS

When do I die? When old man!

HEARTS

I don't know.

CLUBS

Tell me!

HEARTS

If I knew I would tell you.

CLUBS

Why am I in your fucking book?

HEARTS

I'm not some higher power. All I do is record the numbers.

CLUBS tosses the book across the room.

CLUBS

Unbelievable. Un-fucking believable.

DIAMONDS

Clubs—

CLUBS

Don't tell me to calm the fuck down!

DIAMONDS

Stop!

CLUBS

What the fuck are you hiding?

HEARTS

It's not important.

CLUBS

Not important? You filled up hundreds of these damn notebooks with numbers that aren't important.

HEARTS

You don't need to know.

CLUBS

If there's anything I should know it's my god damn expiration date!

DIAMONDS

Shut up!

CLUBS

Your number is in there too.

DIAMONDS

No it's not. Is it?

Pause.

DIAMONDS

Is my number in the book?

HEARTS

Please—

DIAMONDS

Yes or no. Is my number in the book?

Pause.

HEARTS

You're overreacting.

Am I going to die or not? DIAMONDS

Everyone dies. HEARTS

Is my number in the book? DIAMONDS

Do you have to ask? HEARTS

GUARD enters. The group freezes, watching the guard. GUARD looks at the group. A long moment. GUARD steps forward to take away the pie.

Don't. Please. HEARTS

GUARD exits.

She won't finish it. CLUBS

One of us will. HEARTS

It's bad luck. DIAMONDS

All we have is bad luck. HEARTS

CLUBS goes for the pie.

Don't touch the pie. SPADES

I'm not touching your pie. CLUBS

Don't touch the pie. SPADES

No one is touching your pie. DIAMONDS

SPADES takes a bite and slowly chews on it. SPADES looks down at the cards. Then at HEARTS.

SPADES

I think I played a seven.

The clones resume playing the game.

HEARTS

Fifteen for two.

DIAMONDS

Twenty four for three.

CLUBS

Twenty-eight.

SPADES

Go.

HEARTS

Go.

DIAMONDS

Go.

CLUBS

One for go.

SPADES

Eight.

HEARTS

Sixteen for two.

DIAMONDS

Twenty.

CLUBS

Twenty-five.

SPADES

Thirty.

HEARTS

Go.

DIAMONDS

Thirty-one for two.

CLUBS

Three.

SPADES

If we stay, we die. If we leave, we die.

CLUBS

We can't use the tunnel.

SPADES

Nine.

HEARTS

Nineteen.

CLUBS

I won't be responsible for killing our fellow prisoners.

DIAMONDS

Twenty-nine.

SPADES

Would they do the same for you?

HEARTS

You're not using the tunnel.

SPADES

That's the only question you need to answer.

CLUBS

Go.

HEARTS

Go.

DIAMONDS

One for go.

HEARTS

This is why I don't give out the numbers.

CLUBS

Three.

HEARTS

We're not leaving. Nobody's leaving!

CLUBS

We have to at least consider it.

DIAMONDS

No one of us are dying in this prison.

SPADES

The longer we wait, the closer we come to the inevitable.

HEARTS

Last card for one.

SPADES

You'll die too old man.

HEARTS

The tunnel's a sham. The tunnel has always been a sham.

CLUBS

We've dug through hundreds of feet of rock. Hundreds of feet.

HEARTS

Even if we ran, where would we go? What would we do? How would we survive?

SPADES

We will find our originals. We have their addresses. We can find them. They can help us.

HEARTS

Where the hell are we? Where the fuck is this Texas? New York? California? Do you know? Do you? How the hell are you going to get from where ever the fuck we are to where ever the fuck they are.

SPADES

No one said it would be easy.

HEARTS

I'm not saying it's difficult. I'm saying it's impossible. We don't know originals. Originals don't know us. We'll be treated like some alien species. Bodies to be poked

and prodded before they drag us back into this godforsaken place. They aren't going to help you. They're the one person on this planet that needs you dead.

SPADES

Could you kill your reflection? If you met the person you see in the mirror, could you kill them if you're life depended on it?

HEARTS

They kill us everyday.

SPADES

Well she'll have to look me in the eyes while she's doing it.

Pause.

HEARTS

You're making a mistake.

The clones count up their cards.

SPADES

Fifteen two. Fifteen four. Run of four for eight.

HEARTS

Double run of four for eight.

DIAMONDS

Fifteen two. Fifteen four.

CLUBS

Fifteen two. Double run of four for eight for ten.

CLUBS counts his crib.

CLUBS

Fifteen two. Fifteen four. Fifteen six. Pair for eight.

SPADES collects the deck and begins to shuffle.

SPADES

Pie?

Pause. CLUBS, DIAMONDS and HEARTS grab a piece of the pie and eating the rest of it. SPADES deals out four hands of five.

SPADES

We're leaving tonight.

HEARTS

You won't survive out there.

CLUBS

We won't survive in here.

into HEARTS, DIAMONDS, CLUBS, and SPADES throw a card
SPADES' crib. They start to play their hands.

DIAMONDS

We aren't meant to survive.

HEARTS

You'll live longer than you think.

SPADES

A life of waiting is not a life of living.

HEARTS

Ten.

DIAMONDS

Fifteen for two.

CLUBS

Who do we tell we're leaving? Twenty-four

DIAMONDS

The four of us might be able to escape, but we can't have a small colony on the run.

SPADES

Thirty.

HEARTS

Give it a few more days, and we could get everyone out. Go.

DIAMONDS

Go.

CLUBS

Go.

SPADES

I don't have a few more days. You might not have a few more days. One for go.

We'll hide you. HEARTS

Where? SPADES

In the tunnel. HEARTS

That's smart. So when the dogs sniff me out, the guards can just bury me alive in the damn thing. SPADES

Spades. HEARTS

I quite like that plan. SPADES

Okay. HEARTS

Something about just feels right. SPADES

Okay! We'll finish the damn thing. Diamonds, wake up who you can. HEARTS

No. We're not telling a soul. The four of us can survive. More than that is foolish. DIAMONDS

We don't have to tell everyone. Just a few more. CLUBS

Who would you choose? DIAMONDS

I— CLUBS

Who would you leave? DIAMONDS

Pause.

SPADES

Just the four.

CLUBS

Can we finish the game?

DIAMONDS

Later.

SPADES pockets the knife. CLUBS opens the trap door into the tunnel. CLUBS, DIAMONDS, and SPADES exit through the trap door. HEARTS grabs the cards, shuffles, and then deals to play solitaire. A long moment. GUARD enters. GUARDS looks at HEARTS, then looks around for DIAMONDS, SPADES, and CLUBS.

HEARTS

Sssshhhhhhhhh....

HEARTS gestures that the other two are sleeping. GUARD steps towards the table. Pause. GUARD grabs the plate and exits. A long moment. A knock from below. HEARTS wraps the cards with a rubber band and stuffs them in his pocket. HEARTS exit. A long moment. GUARD enters, doubling back on his route. GUARD looks around for the clones before running out of the room. A moment. Sirens blare. Blackout.

Act I Scene 2

Setting: SPADES and DIAMONDS are in an abandoned barn. The barn has been neglected for sometime now

At Rise: SPADES is sitting at some sort of makeshift table, digging at the table with the knife. DIAMONDS is looking through a gap in the slats of the wall.

Looking won't help. SPADES

I don't see them. DIAMONDS

They'll catch up. SPADES

What if they were caught? DIAMONDS

They'll catch up. SPADES

What if they are back on the farm? DIAMONDS

They'll catch up. SPADES

You don't know that. DIAMONDS

That doesn't matter. SPADES

I have to find them. DIAMONDS

DIAMONDS goes for the door.

Don't! SPADES

They need our help. DIAMONDS

SPADES

What can we do?

DIAMONDS

We can't just stand here.

SPADES

I'm not standing.

DIAMONDS

Damn it Spades! This isn't funny!

SPADES

What do you want me to do? Seriously. What do you plan on doing?

DIAMONDS

We can't leave them out there!

SPADES

Do you want to run out there? Amongst the predators. The hunters. Are you fucking insane? They would sniff us out in no time flat. They'll grab us by our throats and rip us apart limb from limb from limb. Is that what you want? Is that how you want to go? Throw it all away. All the days waiting. All the nights working, building that god damn tunnel. All for nothing. All the people we left behind, all the people we fucked over; you want to throw all that away to go under the knife so some masked man can slice every organ out of your body, while you shiver and tremble. They could put you out quickly. They could be efficient. But no. Not for you. Not for the fuckers who thought they were human. They would start with the nonessential ones. They would work slowly. Blood dripping down the knife. Laughing. They'll do everything they can to keep you awake until they extract every last part. The harvest moon is shining if you're ready.

DIAMONDS

I don't want that.

SPADES

Then sit the fuck down and re-fucking-lax.

DIAMONDS sits down. Pause.

DIAMONDS

Alright genius. What's your big plan then?

SPADES

They'll catch up.

Wait. You want us to wait. DIAMONDS

They'll catch up. SPADES

You don't see the irony in that. Escaping a lifetime of waiting to hold up in a barn until Clubs and Hearts walk through the door or someone burns it down. DIAMONDS

We're not waiting. We're postponing our next action. SPADES

Don't feed me bullshit. DIAMONDS

It's not bullshit. SPADES

Spades— DIAMONDS

It's not. They'll be here. SPADES

How do you know that? DIAMONDS

I just do. SPADES

If we don't help them, no one will. DIAMONDS

We can't just run out there aimlessly. SPADES

They would do the same for us. DIAMONDS

Would they? SPADES

Don't you dare say that! DIAMONDS

SPADES

It's not the smart choice.

DIAMONDS

Love isn't about making the smart choices.

SPADES

I'm trying to do what's best for all of us.

DIAMONDS

And I'm trying to save them, and you aren't going to stop me.

DIAMONDS heads for the door. Dogs barking in the distance.
DIAMONDS freezes. Long silence. Breath. DIAMONDS sneaks
over to the gap and looks outside.

DIAMONDS

I don't see them.

SPADES

Looking won't help.

DIAMONDS

It won't hurt.

SPADES

We can't stay here long.

DIAMONDS

Those dogs sounded close.

SPADES

Which is why we can't wait any longer.

DIAMONDS

Give them a second to pass.

SPADES

Then we're running away from here.

DIAMONDS

I'm not leaving.

SPADES

We can't stay here.

I'm not abandoning them. DIAMONDS

They're right behind us. SPADES

How the hell will they find us? DIAMONDS

Our only chance to get away is to start running now. SPADES

We have to wait for them. We have to find them. They'll be here any moment. DIAMONDS

We don't have a moment. SPADES

Just a little bit longer. DIAMONDS

We've probably lost them. I'm not losing you too. SPADES

They'll catch up. DIAMONDS

No. No they won't. It's just us now. SPADES

We can't give up. We can't give up. DIAMONDS

Dogs barking in distance, a little closer than before.

We don't have a choice. SPADES

What about Hearts? What about Clubs? They'll be here. They'll be here. DIAMONDS

We have to go. SPADES

They'll be here. DIAMONDS

We have to go now.

SPADES

Where the hell will we go?

DIAMONDS

It doesn't matter.

SPADES

SPADES and DIAMONDS head for door. There is a bang on the door. DIAMONDS and SPADES freeze. There is a second bang on the door. Pause. The door is pushed open. HEARTS drags himself into the barn.

Oh my god!

DIAMONDS

SPADES and DIAMONDS help HEARTS into the barn.

Is it broken?

SPADES

I don't know.

HEARTS

propping

SPADES and DIAMONDS place HEARTS into a chair,
up his bad leg.

Let me take a look.

SPADES

Did they find you?

DIAMONDS

What— no.

HEARTS

Did they follow you?

SPADES

No!

HEARTS

What happened?

DIAMONDS

SPADES

Can you walk?

HEARTS

Maybe.

SPADES makes a splint from materials around the barn.

DIAMONDS

Did you see Clubs?

SPADES

Did they catch Clubs?

HEARTS

He saved my life. I was running. We were running. Sirens blaring behind us. Guards shouting. I straggled behind. Huffing and puffing. My legs started to give. I felt a bright white spotlight on my back. Men running. Dogs barking. I pushed for more. Running for my life. I kept looking back. They kept getting closer. I kept looking back and they kept getting closer. Then my foot caught something. I heard a snap. That was it. I tried to get up, but it was useless. I pulled myself under a bush, foolishly hoping they would pass me by. The lights got closer and closer. The shouting louder and louder. In the blink of an eye, I felt a shadow over my face. Clubs stood over me. An angel glistening in the dark. He looked into my eyes. I looked into his. He smiled. As quick as he came, he left, bounding through the trees. The dogs, the light, the men, they all followed him. The dogs barked and barked and barked into the distance. Then all at once the barking stopped. I crawled from under that bush. I crawled through the trees. I crawled through the fields. I crawled over grass and mud. Over sharp rocks and through thorny bushes. I crawled every inch to that barn door, wishing the barking never stopped.

DIAMONDS

No no no— They didn't— They couldn't—

SPADES

Diamonds—

DIAMONDS

He's still out there.

SPADES

Don't be stupid.

DIAMONDS

We're all he has—

HEARTS

Diamonds! He's gone.

Dogs barking in the distance.

DIAMONDS

This is your fault!

SPADES

Stop yelling.

DIAMONDS

You killed him! You fucking killed him!

SPADES

Shut up!

DIAMONDS

You don't even care. What the fuck is wrong with you?

SPADES

Right now I am focusing on how we get out of this alive. Okay. And the odds look bleak when I'm paired with a cripple and a psycho who won't stop screaming.

DIAMONDS

You know what your problem is Spades. You live in an imaginary world. In your world, people can run away from death. They can live forever. What a stupid world you live in. You think you have the power to dictate your own life. Well you're wrong Spades. You're dead wrong. None of us have any damn control. We're meat bags. We're destined to be meat bags. There's nothing else out there for us. I hate that I listened to you. You dragged us into this goddamn mess and now you're ready to abandon us at any moment of weakness.

SPADES

I'm not abandoning anyone.

DIAMONDS

Worst of all, you are the center of this fucked up world. You want us all to give up everything, so you don't have to eat one god damn slice of pie. I'm through. I'm through with you. I'm through with your world. If you want to keep running fine. Run. Run as fast as you can.

SPADES

I'm right here.

DIAMONDS

You want to be more than a bag of spare parts, then start acting like a fucking human.

SPADES

Well fuck me for trying. Fuck me for wanting more. You can either carry Hearts or leave him behind, but we aren't staying here! Come on. Get up. We're leaving. We're living. Diamonds. Diamonds. Look at me. We can't stay here. We started down this path, we can't go back now.

HEARTS

No one is keeping you here.

A long silence. Dogs are heard barking in the distance. SPADES sits down. Silence.

SPADES

What now?

HEARTS

We wait, like we've always done. They'll come, like they've always done.

SPADES

They might not come.

DIAMONDS

They'll come, with sharpened knives.

SPADES

Then we don't have long.

HEARTS

Can't be far off now.

SPADES

Is this what you truly want? To die here.

DIAMONDS

Here is as good a place as any. Most people aren't lucky enough to choose where they die. I count myself blessed.

Pause. Dogs barking in the distance.

SPADES

There getting closer.

DIAMONDS

Oh sweet release, come quickly. Please come quickly.

HEARTS

One can only hope.

SPADES

This isn't like you. Either of you. We can't give up now.

DIAMONDS

I'm not leaving. Not with Hearts. Not without my family.

SPADES

We have to leave. The three of us. We have to leave.

HEARTS

And go where?

DIAMONDS

When do we stop running Spades? When do you stop running?

SPADES

125 Glenwood Drive, San Rafael, California. 94901.

DIAMONDS

Stop it.

SPADES

125 Glenwood Drive, San Rafael, California. 94901.

DIAMONDS

I get it.

SPADES

125 Glenwood Drive—

DIAMONDS

We can't stop there.

SPADES

San Rafael, California. 94901.

DIAMONDS

Spades!

SPADES

Then we'll keep moving. We'll confront them all. One by one. Running is living. The day we stop moving is the day we stop living. So we'll keep moving. For the first time in my life I feel as if I am alive. I don't want to stop moving.

DIAMONDS

Then go.

SPADES

I don't want to leave you both behind.

HEARTS

Just leave me here.

SPADES

We're way past that.

HEARTS

Look at me. I can't run! Even if I get out, I'll only slow you down.

SPADES

We'll deal with that when the time comes. First, let's just get you out of here.

SPADES looks around. SPADES picks up two rusty hand tools.

SPADES

Wait here. I'll sneak out and get to the other side of the pasture. That's when I'll start banging these things together. When you hear that, you go.

DIAMONDS

That's suicidal.

SPADES

I'll be alright.

DIAMONDS

They'll catch you.

SPADES

I'll be alright.

HEARTS

This is stupid.

SPADES

What else can we do?

DIAMONDS looks through the gap.

I don't see them.
DIAMONDS

They're there.
HEARTS

Where do we meet?
DIAMONDS

I'll find you.
SPADES

SPADES exits through the barn door. DIAMONDS goes over to
slat and watches her go.

You should have left me here.
HEARTS

This will work.
DIAMONDS

You should have left me here.
HEARTS

Your leg feeling okay?
DIAMONDS

What do you think?
HEARTS

Can you walk or am I carrying you?
DIAMONDS

I can walk.
HEARTS

Good.
DIAMONDS

DIAMONDS takes a handle off a rake on the wall. She then
tosses the handle to HEARTS.

Thank you.
HEARTS

Silence.

DIAMONDS

Why is my number in your book Hearts?

HEARTS

It wasn't.

DIAMONDS

Bullshit.

HEARTS

It doesn't matter now.

DIAMONDS

Did you know when we would be harvested?

HEARTS

I recorded when people got pie and when they left. That's all.

DIAMONDS

Then why was my number in there?

Pause.

DIAMONDS

Why was my number in your book?

HEARTS

Please.

DIAMONDS

Why was my number in your god damn book?

HEARTS

Your time was almost up. Clubs' time was almost up. My time was almost up.

DIAMONDS

How the fuck did you know?

HEARTS

Diseased cattle. I tested positive for something. I don't know what. But I was at the end of the line. The gal who diagnosed me was real sweet. Real sweet. She said I had three days. A week at most. She said you all would be slaughtered too. Diseased cattle. Just so happened Spades was called first.

Pause.

Why didn't you tell us sooner?
DIAMONDS

It wouldn't have mattered.
HEARTS

Don't you think we deserve to know.
DIAMONDS

No one knows about their slice of pie, until its served. Why should I upset that order?
HEARTS

Because we're family.
DIAMONDS

Even families are surprised at the loss of a loved one.
HEARTS

That's bullshit.
DIAMONDS

This is nothing new.
HEARTS

Pause.

What's taking her so long?
DIAMONDS

Enjoy the silence while it lasts.
HEARTS

Maybe she left us.
DIAMONDS

It certainly possible.
HEARTS

Do you think she—
DIAMONDS

HEARTS

No.

Silence. A loud banging can be heard from across the pasture.
Dogs bark in the distance.

DIAMONDS

Ready?

HEARTS

Ready.

HEARTS uses the walking stick to get to his feet. DIAMONDS grabs her bag. They walk across the barn towards the barn doors. As they reach the door, two dogs jump on the doors, barking and scratching just outside the barn. DIAMONDS and HEARTS stumble back. A small gas grenade is tossed into the room. The grenade clicks and gas starts filling the room. The two clones cough and cough, collapsing to the floor. HEARTS and DIAMONDS fall to the ground. Blackout. End of act I.

Act II Scene 1

Setting: Six months after the prison break, lights up on a upper class apartment living room. There is a shelf on the wall full of knick knacks, including a cribbage board. There is clock on the wall.

At Rise: CYNTHIA enters her apartment, followed by Officer BLUE and Officer BLACK.

CYNTHIA

You people need to make up your mind. You come to me six months ago saying it escaped, but “don’t worry, we’ll handle it.” Then you say it died in the woods, “its body has been recovered. Unfortunately we’ll have to grow a replacement.” Now you’re telling me not only is it alive, it’s been spotted in the god damn state. What the fuck do you people get paid to do?

CYNTHIA pulls out a cigarette and lights it.

BLACK

Misses.—

CYNTHIA

Miss.

BLACK

Miss Shelley, we’re doing the best we can.

CYNTHIA

Don’t give me that bullshit. Your job isn’t to do your best. It’s to catch the damn thing.

BLUE

We will.

CYNTHIA

If you hadn’t let it out in the first place—

BLUE

We didn’t let it out.

CYNTHIA

I don’t care where you work. You still should have caught it months ago.

BLACK

We’re doing everything we can to catch it as soon as possible.

CYNTHIA

That’s very reassuring. I hope it’s more than just the two of you.

BLACK

We have the whole department searching the area. We have been assign to your protection detail.

CYNTHIA

I feel so safe.

BLUE

Maybe you shouldn't insult those sent to protect you.

BLACK

You are in good hands ma'am.

CYNTHIA

How close is "in the area?"

BLACK

It a hundred miles away. There is no immediate threat.

CYNTHIA

How the fuck did it cross half the fucking country?

BLUE

That doesn't matter ma'am. We have it taken care of.

CYNTHIA

Have you faced one of these things before?

BLACK

Miss CYNTHIA, I want to assure you that my partner and I are two of the most qualified officers to serve on protection detail.

CYNTHIA

So its dangerous then?

BLACK

We cannot know for sure ma'am.

CYNTHIA

You wouldn't be here if it wasn't dangerous.

BLUE

We'll handle it.

Does it know where I live?
CYNTHIA

We can not say for sure—
BLACK

Does it know where I live?
CYNTHIA

It being here is hardly a coincidence.
BLUE

What the fuck! How the hell would it have gotten my address? How does it know where I am?
CYNTHIA

We have investigators back at the farm working on that as we speak.
BLACK

Did it steal the address? Was it given the address?
CYNTHIA

We don't know.
BLUE

I deserve answers.
CYNTHIA

We are currently investigating it, but as of now our priority is your safety.
BLACK

Why didn't you think my safety when you handed out my address?
CYNTHIA

Ma'am, we are doing all we can to rectify the situation.
BLACK

Who says its even coming here?
CYNTHIA

We unsure where it is heading, yet we feel it necessary to prepare for every circumstance.
BLACK

CYNTHIA

If you really want to be helpful, then how about you go catch the damn thing. If you all had done your job in the first place, then we wouldn't be in this predicament.

BLUE

Someone fucked up, but we're trying not to let that mistake become a tragedy.

BLACK

Ma'am, I suggest you remain indoors until further instructions. My partner and I need to check the perimeter of your community for potential weak points, and then we need to inform the gatekeepers about our search for the clone and request they search every vehicle attempting to enter the community.

CYNTHIA

Wait wait wait. This half-brained, murderous thing is roaming about the state, looking for me, and you're going to leave me here alone. Are you fucking insane?

BLACK

The last sighting was this morning and it was a few hundred miles away. There is no way it has crossed the state in a few hours. There is no need for alarm. We will return shortly.

CYNTHIA

Shouldn't you take me to a safe location or something?

BLACK

The department thinks it is best if you attempt to continue living normally. If the situation changes, then we can reconsider our options.

CYNTHIA

I don't have a death wish.

BLUE

You'll be safer here than anywhere else we can take you. Just try to calm down.

CYNTHIA

You better catch that thing. You better fucking catch it.

BLACK gives CYNTHIA her radio.

BLACK

Ma'am, this radio will put you in direct contact with my partner and I as well as any other officers in the area. We will only be gone for half an hour at most, but at any point during that time, if you feel unsafe, radio us and we will come here directly.

CYNTHIA

Okay fine.

Are you okay?
BLUE

I'll live.
CYNTHIA

We will return as soon as we can.
BLACK

BLACK and BLUE exit. CYNTHIA smokes anxiously, pacing around the room. She goes over to the window and looks outside. Nothing. CYNTHIA checks the clock. She looks nervously around the room. She grabs a well loved deck of cards and sits at the table. She shuffles the cards, deals out a game of solitaire and begins playing by herself. SPADES silently slides the window up and crawls into the house. CYNTHIA looks up and shrieks. She crawls away from SPADES as fast as she can.

Don't hurt me! Don't hurt me! Don't hurt me!
CYNTHIA

Sshhhhhhhhh....
SPADES

Don't hurt me! Don't hurt me! Don't hurt me!
CYNTHIA

I'm not going to hurt you!
SPADES

I don't want to die! Please! Please! I don't want to die!
CYNTHIA

I won't hurt you!
SPADES

Please! I didn't do anything! I didn't do anything! I swear! I swear!
CYNTHIA

Listen to me.
SPADES

Don't hurt me! Don't hurt me! Don't hurt me!
CYNTHIA

SPADES

I'm not going to hurt you!

CYNTHIA

I'm too young to die!

SPADES

I'm not going to hurt you. Okay. I'm not going to hurt you.

SPADES reaches out to CYNTHIA. CYNTHIA pulls back.

SPADES

You don't have to trust me.

SPADES sits at the table. Silence. CYNTHIA slowly gains confidence. Eventually, CYNTHIA speaks.

CYNTHIA

It's like looking into a mirror.

SPADES

I never thought I'd find you.

Pause.

CYNTHIA

If you're going to kill me, then do it swiftly.

SPADES

I'm not going to hurt you.

CYNTHIA

What do you want from me?

SPADES

I want to live. I want my life.

CYNTHIA

I'm not sure if that is mine to give.

SPADES

Of course it is yours to give. That's why I've come all this way, so you can tell the authorities to let me live. To stop chasing me. I don't want to hurt anyone or anything. I just want an opportunity to live a life. My life.

CYNTHIA

Go right on living. I don't own you.

SPADES

I got my slice of pie? I was going under the knife. They were going to rip out my heart.

CYNTHIA

Heart??? No no no. You got that all wrong. I need a lung. Lungs actually. I got cancer in one, but the doc says we should replace them both, just to be safe.

SPADES

You just told me I could live. That you didn't "own" me.

CYNTHIA

I don't own you. Whatever you are. But all those organs in that body of yours is mine. I spent good money on them. Clones aren't cheap.

SPADES

How much is your life worth to you?

CYNTHIA

Take it easy. Maybe we can work something out.

CYNTHIA slowly approaches the radio.

SPADES

What am I worth? What are my parts worth?

CYNTHIA

That doesn't matter.

SPADES

How much?

CYNTHIA

Alot. Even for me.

SPADES

What could I give you? What could I exchange for my life? I don't have much, but I would gladly give it all if—

SPADES notices CYNTHIA going for the radio. CYNTHIA lunges for it, but SPADES snatches it before she can reach it. SPADES take the battery out of the radio.

SPADES

Our only path to an agreement is if we both commit to negotiating. I can't have you calling in somebody. I don't want to hurt you.

CYNTHIA

Why don't you just leave? What do you need from me? Do you need food? Clothes? Money? Take it. Take whatever you want leave. I'll pretend I never saw you, and you can disappear, and the world can keep on spinning,

SPADES

I need to stop being hunted like some animal.

CYNTHIA

I can't give that to you! No matter how much you ask for it.

CYNTHIA pulls out a cigarette and lights it.

SPADES

Am I the only one?

CYNTHIA

It doesn't matter.

SPADES

So no.

CYNTHIA

No. You aren't alone.

SPADES

How many more are there? Ten? Twenty? Fifty? How many do you need?

CYNTHIA

Just one more. A replacement. They started growing it— They started growing her just after your escape.

SPADES

Do you just kill us for sport? One after another. Sucking on your cigarettes until the next set of lungs is ready. Doc, I just need another pair. Please. Might as well give us a ten second head start. Eight. Nine Ten. Bang. Bang.

SPADES

Just go right on sucking.

CYNTHIA

I tried quitting.

SPADES

Have you? Have you tried to stop murdering us one after another? Have you given up sending us to slaughterhouse? I hope that you find it in your heart to quit today.

CYNTHIA checks the clock.

CYNTHIA

Maybe tomorrow.

SPADES

Here I am begging for my life. Telling you I'm alive. Hear me speak. Hear me breathe. Hear my heart beat and my blood pump. Look at me. Your eyes, my eyes. Your hair, my hair. Your ears, my ears, your nose, my nose, your face. My face. A reflection. The same dimples, the crow's feet, the slightly askew teeth. Why do you want to break the mirror? I'll tell you. I don't want to hurt you. I never did. I never will. Because looking at you reminds me of myself. But I won't go away silently. I will do everything, I need to, so I can survive. You're not going to stop that.

CYNTHIA

Please don't hurt me. I hear you. I see you. I hear you. It's all so new. The shock of it all. It's— It's— It's strange to say the least. Those officers will hunt you down until the very end. I can't stop them.

SPADES

There must be something you can do. Something you can say.

CYNTHIA

It's not you and I anymore.

Pause.

SPADES

Could I have a cigarette?

CYNTHIA

What? No. It's bad for you.

SPADES

I'm going to die soon anyways.

CYNTHIA

You need to stay clean.

SPADES

All you can think about are my god damn lungs. Well here they are. Take a knife and just carve them out of my chest.

CYNTHIA

I'll die without them.

SPADES

I'll die without them.

CYNTHIA

What else do you think you were made for?

SPADES

There has to be another treatment.

CYNTHIA

Not a better one.

SPADES

I'm the best you could do. Kill another human to save yourself.

CYNTHIA

Clone.

SPADES

What was that?

CYNTHIA

I don't smoke all the time.

SPADES

Just enough to need me.

CYNTHIA

Shut up.

SPADES

All I want is one drag.

CYNTHIA

No.

SPADES

You'll wreck these lungs anyways.

CYNTHIA puts out her cigarette. Pause. CYNTHIA looks at the clock.

CYNTHIA

What do they call you?

SPADES

They call me five twenty three sixteen. Friends call me Spades.

CYNTHIA

Do you play?

SPADES

Play what?

CYNTHIA

Or what do you play?

SPADES

Cribbage mostly.

CYNTHIA

My grandfather loved that game. Every time I saw him, he would sit me down and we would play for hours. He was generally a silent man, but when you got those cards in his hand he would start singing like a canary. Nonstop. It was the only time I ever connected with him.

CYNTHIA takes the cribbage board down from the shelf.

CYNTHIA

This was his board. Beautiful isn't it? So you want to talk, you want to negotiate. Let's play. Let's talk. Let's figure this out.

SPADES

I think its fairly simple problem.

CYNTHIA

Humor me, and I'll humor you.

SPADES sits at the table with CYNTHIA. CYNTHIA sets up the board. SPADES and CYNTHIA cut for dealer.

CYNTHIA

You deal.

SPADES deals two hands of six. CYNTHIA and SPADES both throw two cards into SPADES' crib. CYNTHIA cuts the deck. SPADES flips the starter. They start to play their hands.

Nine. CYNTHIA

Nineteen. SPADES

Twenty-nine. CYNTHIA

Thirty-one for two. SPADES

How is it at the farm? Nine. CYNTHIA

Twelve. SPADES

Thirteen. CYNTHIA

One for last. SPADES

What do you do there? Double run of four for eight. CYNTHIA

Wait mostly. SPADES

Wait for? CYNTHIA

A slice of pie. SPADES

Is this all you do while your waiting? CYNTHIA

SPADES
What do you want me to say? That we have a grand old time. Not a care in the world. Everything provided for us. Oh yeah. Things are great at the farm. I really can't wait to

get back. Fifteen two. Fifteen four. Fifteen six. Fifteen eight. Pair for ten. Pair for twelve.

CYNTHIA

I'm sorry.

SPADES

No you aren't. You're curious. Curious what it's like waiting to die. Curious what it's like being a collection of spare parts. Curious what it's like seeing your friends carted away, knowing they're probably not coming back. You sick fuck.

CYNTHIA

I know what it's like waiting to die.

SPADES

Nothing in the crib.

CYNTHIA collects the cards and shuffles. She then deals six cards to SPADES and herself. CYNTHIA and SPADES toss two cards into CYNTHIA's crib. SPADES cuts the deck. CYNTHIA flips the starter. It's a jack.

CYNTHIA

Knobs for two.

SPADES

Nine.

CYNTHIA

Fifteen for two.

SPADES

What do you want from me? Twenty-three.

CYNTHIA

Twenty-eight.

SPADES

Thirty-one for two.

CYNTHIA

It's not about want. It's about need. Ten.

SPADES

Can you get a different lung? Fourteen.

CYNTHIA

One for last. I'm on all the lists can be on. Being a smoker, it's not looking so good.

SPADES

Fifteen for two.

CYNTHIA

Fifteen for two. Fifteen for four. Fifteen for six. Fifteen for eight. Pair for ten. Pair for twelve.

SPADES

Is there a way I walkout of here with both my lungs?

CYNTHIA

Pair for two.

SPADES shuffles the deck.

SPADES

What will it take for you to change your mind?

CYNTHIA

I'm not just going to magically be healthy. If I didn't need you, we wouldn't be having this conversation.

SPADES

You'll take my life to save your own?

CYNTHIA

Officially, you don't have a life. You're not human.

SPADES

Two legs. Check. Two Arms. Check. Two ears. Check. Two eyes. Check. Two lungs. check. A heart, a mind, a body. Check check check. What the hell can I be missing?

CYNTHIA

Why should I know what you're missing?

SPADES

Don't give me that bullshit.

CYNTHIA

A soul. You're missing a soul.

SPADES

What the fuck is a soul?

CYNTHIA

I don't need to explain it to you.

SPADES

How can you be so fucking sure you have a soul?

SPADES deals two hands of six. CYNTHIA pulls out a cigarette. CYNTHIA and SPADES throw two cards into SPADES' crib. CYNTHIA cuts the deck. SPADES flips the starter. CYNTHIA pulls out a lighter and lights her cigarette.

CYNTHIA

Ten.

SPADES

Nineteen.

CYNTHIA

Twenty-eight for two.

SPADES

Thirty.

CYNTHIA

Go.

SPADES

Thirty-one for two.

CYNTHIA checks the clock.

SPADES

Say there was some way you could treat your cancer without cutting me up? Then what?

CYNTHIA

This is the primary treatment option.

SPADES

Sure, but could you spare a life and save yourself?

CYNTHIA

It's not about saving your life. It's about you saving mine. This is what you were created for.

SPADES

I am merely suggesting—

CYNTHIA

You're suggesting that you can live. That you deserve to live—

SPADES

Don't you think I deserve to live!

CYNTHIA

What the fuck do you want me to say?

SPADES

I want you to help me. I want you to free me.

CYNTHIA

Then give me something. Make a deal. Make a sacrifice.

SPADES

Isn't there another treatment for the cancer?

CYNTHIA

Nothing reliable.

SPADES

But there is something.

CYNTHIA

I'm not going to rip my body apart with chemo. Ten. I said, ten.

SPADES

Eleven.

CYNTHIA

Fifteen for two. One for last.

SPADES

You said there was another clone.

CYNTHIA

I did.

SPADES

Could you take its lungs instead of mine?

CYNTHIA

It's still incubating.

SPADES counts her cards.

SPADES

Pair for two.

CYNTHIA counts her cards.

CYNTHIA

Run of four for four.

CYNTHIA counts her crib.

CYNTHIA

Pair for two.

SPADES collects the cards and shuffles the deck.

SPADES

Suppose you own my innards.

CYNTHIA

I don't have to suppose.

SPADES

You own my organs. Wouldn't it better to keep me alive as long as possible? In case you need something else. A liver. A kidney. Something. If you agree to protect me, to let me live here, I will give you a lung. And when you need it, I will give you a kidney, a liver, whatever you need. Just let me live.

CYNTHIA

You can't sell me my property.

SPADES

If they take me back to the farm, I will never see the light of day again. They will cut every piece of me out. Partially out of spite. Partially out of amusement. I will only be worth two lungs.

CYNTHIA

Two lungs is all I need.

Pause. SPADES puts the deck down.

SPADES

Then take everything. Take every last organ. Take my fingers and my toes. Take my face. My eyes. My ears. Take everything. I mean how many organs do you really need. How many can you take and still be yourself? Hell, take me. Take my whole body. I am yours. All I'm asking is that you don't turn me over to them. That you let me live.

CYNTHIA

It's not that simple.

SPADES

It's obvious we're getting nowhere.

SPADES heads towards door. CYNTHIA checks the clock.

CYNTHIA

Wait! I feel like we're getting close. It would be a shame to give up now.

SPADES

Getting close? We haven't agreed on anything.

CYNTHIA

We can make this work. We can come to an agreement, but you can't give up. I need you to trust in the process. If you walk out that door, you lose your chance to negotiate.

SPADES

What's with the sudden change of heart?

CYNTHIA

It's not sudden.

SPADES

I walk towards that door and you suddenly change your mind.

CYNTHIA

It may seem that way, but I assure you, this is a process. We're talking it through. I'm trying to work with you.

SPADES

What can you do?

CYNTHIA

What if we wait as long as possible? I can wait. I'm on these transplant lists, which could come through for me, eventually. It might buy you some extra time.

SPADES

I don't want extra time. I want a life.

CYNTHIA

What kind of life do you want?

SPADES

Where would I wait?

CYNTHIA

That's not important right now.

SPADES

You'd be insane to think I would head back to the farm.

CYNTHIA

I don't want you staying here. I don't think you would want to stay here either. Wouldn't it drive you insane, living with the person who you're created from?

SPADES

Where else can I go?

CYNTHIA

Where do you want to be?

SPADES

I don't know.

CYNTHIA

If you can't answer that question, how do you expect me to? It's simple. If you tell me what you want, then we can come sort of agreement, but if you won't share that with me, then how do you expect me to help.

Pause.

SPADES

Are you deaf? All we've talked about are my wants. My needs. That's it. I don't know what conversation you've been apart of, but my demands have been made abundantly clear. I don't know why you're talking in circles, but I'm tired of having this conversation. It's clear you aren't willing to help me.

CYNTHIA

One lung. If you give me one lung, I will get you anything you want. But I need one lung. That's the deal.

SPADES

How do I know you'll protect me?

CYNTHIA

You don't.

SPADES

How do I know you won't send me back?

CYNTHIA

You don't.

SPADES

How do I know you won't take both lungs?

CYNTHIA

You don't. But I'm the only hope you have and that's my lowest price.

SPADES

How can I trust you?

CYNTHIA

You can't afford not to.

Pause.

CYNTHIA

You better hurry. This offer won't last forever.

SPADES

How? Tell me you'll protect me. Tell me how you'll let me live. I won't live a life tethered to you.

CYNTHIA

You don't have many choices here.

SPADES

What happens when you need the second one?

CYNTHIA

What do you think?

SPADES

You'll come looking for me.

CYNTHIA

Bingo.

SPADES

How about this? How about you give me your cancer ridden organs. We swap them all out. I'll live in your dying body, and you can take my living one. My thriving one. Just let me die on my own terms and not at the hands of a scalpel. I'll trade you a long life for a short one. Then you and I can both have our freedom.

CYNTHIA looks at the clock.

CYNTHIA

No.

SPADES

What? What else can I possibly offer you? There is nothing else in this world I can give you than what's inside this body. You get everything you want. You're throwing your dying organs out, why not just throw them in me.

CYNTHIA

No.

SPADES

Why not?

CYNTHIA

Because.

SPADES

Don't give me that. Why not?

CYNTHIA

Because I can. Because I rather throw them out then give them to the image of a woman. They deserve better than you.

SPADES

This is ridiculous. You don't have to like. You don't have to respect me. You don't have to help me. But if you want to live, you have to deal with me.

CYNTHIA

I'm not going to purchase what's I already possess.

SPADES

Work with me. We were getting so close. Don't shut me off now.

CYNTHIA

No.

SPADES

Why won't you help me? Why won't you call off the dogs? I have kept my promise. I have not hurt you. I am willing to trade everything I have. Every organ in my body to live a normal life. A human life. Why won't you let me live my own life?

CYNTHIA looks at the clock, and then back at SPADES.

CYNTHIA

Because I own you! I OWN YOU. Down to every god damn little cell in that body. That is my blood. My genes. My skin. My hair. My lungs. And I will take them whenever I please. Whenever I need. Because your purpose is to be nothing more than storage for my organs until I pull them out. One by one by one. That is your grand purpose in life. That is why you were created. That's why you were grown. Don't mistake yourself to be human. You are a fleshy, breathing appliance, and nothing more. They just had to make you all think and speak and move and read and listen. It's a real shame, that you all can't just be a box of organs. You know what, I'll make sure they sew my next clone's mouth shut. Make sure they cut out its brain. Slice off its ears. Pull out its eyes. Chain its legs and arms to the wall, and feed it through a tube. I'll make it sure it never mistakes its place in this world. You mistake yourself for being something natural. For being something human. To being a derivative of something alive. You are just carbon. You are just water. You are the mere shape of a woman. You are so much less than that. You are no more than the organs pulled out of you. No more than the fingers chopped off. No more than the parts taken away. Your value is in the number of parts you have left. Our interchangeable parts are only a coincidence of creation. My life does not end with this fleshy prison. Your existence ends at your deconstruction. As close as we seem, as real as you look, you are nothing but a reflection of me, stuck behind the glass. So when my friends return, we will shatter your glass. We will break the mirror into a thousand different pieces and that reflection will be gone forever. They will drag your broken pieces away and carve them up. I will get my lungs, and we will feed the rest of your fleshy prison to your friends, to the other appliances, piece by piece. You won't die. You'll be disposed of. Recycled for parts. You have two options, you can stay here and finish our game, and then go with the nice officers who will take you back to the farm. They'll cut you up, and if you're lucky, and if you're kind, and if you're polite, they'll make it marginally painless. Or you can run. You can run to the corners of the earth, and you can keep on running until the end of time. But there's no where you can hide. They'll find you. We'll find you. We'll peel off every square inch of your skin. Chop off fingers and toes one by one by one, only to feed them to you in the same manner. Crunch. Crunch. Crunch. We'll pull your ears inside out, so you can no longer hear your own screams. Pull out every little tooth from that little smile of yours, and I'll stick my hand down your throat, and pull my two beautiful lungs out through your mouth. When I am finally done with you, when you are nothing but a pile of leftover flesh and fluids, then we will wash the rest of you down the drain. You'll be gone and forgotten. And there will be another clone ready to take your place. So Spades. It's your turn.

Pause. SPADES grabs ahold of the cribbage board. In a moment SPADES is on top of CYNTHIA, beating her head with the

cribbage board over and over and over again. CYNTHIA stops struggling, but SPADES continues to beat her. SPADES starts to cry, continuing to beat CYNTHIA's face into ash. SPADES' face is covered in blood. CYNTHIA's face is covered in blood. SPADES finally runs out of steam. Pause. SPADES looks down upon CYNTHIA. SPADES pulls the cigarette pack out of CYNTHIA's pocket. SPADES pulls out a cigarette and lights it. SPADES takes a long drag. A long moment. SPADES starts rapidly undressing CYNTHIA. SPADES then switches clothes with her. Pause. SPADES takes her knife and smears it with blood, before placing it into CYNTHIA's hand. SPADES then smears blood onto her body and clothes. SPADES then grabs a cloth off the table. SPADES screams into the radio.

SPADES

Help! Help! Help me! It's here! It's here!

SPADES tosses the room about, turning over chairs and tables. SPADES throws a table cloth loosely over the body, covering the face. We hear footsteps offstage. SPADES rips off a bit of the table cloth and quickly covers her mark with it. BLACK and BLUE enter.

SPADES

Oh my god! Oh my god! Oh my god!

SPADES starts crying.

BLACK

Embracing SPADES

You're okay. You're okay. It will be okay. It will be okay. It's over now. It's over now.

BLACK gestures to BLUE to check the body. BLUE approaches CYNTHIA, slightly peels back the table cloth, and then quickly tosses the table cloth back over the body.

BLUE

I told you we shouldn't have left.

SPADES

It— It— It came after me— with a— a— knife—.

BLACK

Are you hurt?

SPADES

It caught my face. I don't know how bad. I think it's a shallow cut.

BLACK

Let me take a look.

SPADES

Pulling back

No! Please don't.

BLUE

I'll call it in.

BLUE exits.

BLACK

You might need medical attention.

SPADES

I'll be fine.

BLACK

I know this is overwhelming. Please, stay calm. Breathe. Can you do that for me?

SPADES

It was going to kill me.

BLACK

You did the right thing. You defended yourself. That was extremely brave.

SPADES

I panicked. I panicked. It came in through the window. Smiling. It just started lunging at me. And I panicked.

BLACK

It cannot hurt you anymore. It's dead now. It's all over now.

SPADES

Oh my god. Oh my god. Oh my god. Oh my god.

BLACK

We will need to evaluate your condition before they decide how to proceed.

SPADES

It's just a few scratches.

BLACK

This is standard protocol.

SPADES

I feel like it'll jump up at any minute.

BLACK

Do you have a family member or a friend nearby you can stay with for the next couple days?

SPADES

Yea. Yea. I have someone I can stay with.

BLACK

I know you are scared. That's okay. It's okay to be scared. But it's all over now.

SPADES

Can I have a minute alone? This is alot to process.

BLACK

Maybe you should step outside. Away from—

SPADES

No. I want a moment alone with it.

BLACK

Are you sure?

SPADES

I feel connected to it.

BLACK

Maybe you should step out with me.

SPADES

I need a moment alone.

BLACK

I will be just outside. Okay?

SPADES

Okay.

BLACK

Come out when you're ready.

SPADES nods. BLACK exits. A moment. SPADES drops the torn cloth in her hand. She pulls back the table cloth to take a good look at CYNTHIA. SPADES lays the table cloth back down. SPADES grabs her knife. Pause. SPADES pulls her face flat and then uses the knife to cut off her marked skin. SPADES screams while slicing off her mark.

Blackout. End of Play.

Epilogue or How Not to Write a Thesis

This process of studying science fiction and writing this science fiction play has taught me a great deal about academic writing and academic writing. In regards to the academic portion of the thesis, I feel I have fallen into every trapped laid out for me. Doing an artistic thesis, I focused on the creation of the play text. Luckily, I started working on the project nearly two years before my defense date. Even when I decided I was going to do an analysis of science fiction in the theatre as my thesis project, in conjunction with this artistic venture, I had a full twelve months to complete the assignment. My first mistake was not reading enough over the summer. Although I told my advisor, Professor Michael Najjar, and myself that I would come out of the break far ahead of my reading list, when Fall Term came around I had only read Foucault's *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* and a couple science fiction plays. In the end, this book would hardly even factor into my analysis, instead providing only inspiration for my play text. I was not yet behind schedule, but the lack of reading definitely did not help. Throughout college, I have been able to get by with term papers that only required a few weeks to develop. Although I wanted this thesis to be different, I approached in extremely similar way, just on a larger timescale.

Starting late on the reading was my first of many mistakes. The next major error I committed was choosing art over academics at every moment. In the prospectus course, I was forced to lay out a plan for the rest of the academic year, which is the only reason I finished on time at all. Having a two prong thesis, one part academic and the other part artistic, I made two plans. These two calendars staggered around each other, around midterms and finals, and around productions I was directing or designing on top

of school. In hindsight, the plan was absolutely perfect, and if I had stuck to it, I would have saved myself countless sleepless nights. However, my inexperience writing a thesis and my confidence in my ability to complete the project allowed me to become complacent. This complacency, plus an abundance of “incubation time,” caused me to miss every single deadline I had set for myself. Again, Michael had warned me that defense comes faster than expected, encouraging me to stay on top of my work. In my weekly meetings with him, I would not inform him how far behind I was, but instead I would have a conversation about the work and the thoughts I had done, inflating what I had in order not to worry him. I am sure he knew I was falling behind, just as he knew I had the ability to complete the project.

It was not long before the start of winter term. The only substantial piece of work I had done was read two of the three plays I would eventually analyze and have a written outline for *Marked*. It was in a meeting with Michael at the beginning of this term that I shared all the breakthroughs I had had on the project over winter break. He once again warned me not to ignore the academic portion. I assured him I would make my deadlines, and they surely passed me by a couple weeks later. Although I had done little academic work, I also struggled to complete the artistic side of thesis. I could not write a coherent first draft to save my life. I suffered from a serious case of writer’s block. Classes, several theatre productions, and roommate issues put so much stress on my life. It took me two weeks to squeeze out ten bad pages of the play. I must have watched the opening scene from *Reservoir Dogs* a hundred times, grasping for some inspiration. I even wrote an entire other play text, *2 Space 2 Murder*, attempting to break through. Yet I could not write *Marked*. My biggest mistake at this moment was

not accepting it and moving on to the academic portion. This writer's block was the perfect opportunity to step away from the play for a few weeks and catch up on all the academic work on the genre of science fiction I had been putting off. Unfortunately, I did not take this opportunity. Instead I chose to press on.

Several months previous, I submitted a ten minute play to the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival playwriting contest. I could not know it at the time, but this would be the inciting incident that allowed me to finish my thesis on time. My play was selected by the festival. Therefore in February, I flew out to Denver with a couple cohorts from the Theatre Arts Department to attend the festival. This caused two things to happen. First, having the week away from all the pressures of Eugene broke my writer's block. Although I was expected to attend a series of sessions about different topics relating to theatre, I spent a large portion of my limited free time writing in the hotel room. I wrote an entire first draft in five days. No matter how rough it was, I had a play text I could turn in. The day I returned from Denver, I packed up my stuff and moved out of my house. A week later, I finished my final theatre production of the term. Not long after, I completed a second draft of the play. From there, I made a number of heavy revisions over the following month leading up to a staged reading in Spring Term. One of the best decisions I made was choosing to do a staged reading rather than a full production. The staged reading took me three weeks to organize from start to finish. A full production would have been months on months of work after the play text had been completed. By the end of Winter Term, I had essentially finished one half of my thesis project.

Second, attending the conference deterred me from taking my last Honors College Colloquia during Winter Term. Although most professors would probably understand the academic nature of my trip to Denver, I decided that I did not want to take that risk. So instead, I took my final Honors College requirement Spring Term. By happenstance, Professor Casey Shoop was teaching a course on David Lynch, the film director. As someone aspiring to be television screenwriter, who had never taken a cinema studies course, I thought this was perfect course to enter into the world of film and television. Of course, being a fifth year senior, I overslept on registration day and was put far down the waitlist on the most popular colloquia. Somehow, in less than 24 hours I had moved up ten positions on the waitlist before registering for this course. In the first week, Casey introduced me to the Freud's concept of the Uncanny and Kristeva's concept of the Abject. In class we discussed these terms in the context of Lynch's films, but I had made saw the connection between these two concepts and the science fiction genre. I owe the crux of my argument to this class.

According to the original schedule I had made, I should have been done writing my thesis the first day of Spring Term, giving myself plenty of time to make revisions over a few weeks. Instead, I essentially started the academic half of my thesis the first day of Spring Term, with only six weeks to finish it. I started like I had started six months previous, I made a schedule, a short schedule. I gave myself three weeks to read everything, a week to outline an argument, a weekend to write the document, and another few days to edit it. I took copious notes in the most efficient ways I knew how. I kept a running bibliography, that way I could just plug it in at the end of the process. I did not read anything twice that was not vital to the argument I was making. I worked

sixteen hour days, seven days a week, up until my defense. I did not take breaks, except to eat, to sleep, and to go to class. I pushed my body to the limit, surviving on a diet I am not proud of. I did not go outside for days at a time. I went weeks recycling the same dirty laundry. I hardly bathed at all, doing just enough that my peers would not be aware. My life became centered around writing what I had put off for months. I sacrificed all of this and more, to finish a year's worth of work in six weeks. By doing everything I could to stick to this schedule, I finished a document on time. It was riddled with errors and misspellings, but I had a coherent argument on the page.

In the end, I have finished the monumental project I set out to accomplish. I wrote a full length play. I engaged the question of the role of the science fiction genre within theatre. I had made a great discovery about how science fiction works in theatre. Although I had accomplished everything I had set out to do, I made it much more painful than I had to. If I have learned anything from this process, I learned precisely how not to write a thesis.

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