

# **CANE FIELDS BURNING**

**By  
Kemuel DeMoville**

# CANE FIELDS BURNING

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## CANE FIELDS BURNING

### **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:**

**“Cane Fields Burning”** premiered at Kumu Kahua Theatre on Oahu, Hawai’i under the direction of Harry Wong III, with Katherine Aumer as Assistant Director. Set Design was by Uluwehi Mills, and Noh Choreography was by Abel Coelho. The cast was as follows:

**Young Man:** Justin Fragio

**Father:** Stu Hirayama

**Spirit:** Evelyn Leung

**Demon:** Shiro Kawai/Justin Fragio

**Old Man:** Shiro Kawai

**Man:** Wil T.K. Kahele

**Chorus:** Jaime Bradner, Elexis Draine, Lisa Ann Katagiri Bright, and Danielle Zalopany

### **DEDICATION:**

This play is dedicated to the generations of women in my own life who have survived horrific acts of violence, abuse, and harm. Despite these traumas they have approached life with empathy, compassion, and love. They have taken action to break out of cycles of generational trauma. They have met cruelty with justice, and malice with strength. I would not be the person I am today without their love, support, and guidance. I am a better human with them in my life.

**“Cane Fields Burning”** is the winner of the 2007 Hawai‘i Prize, co-sponsored by Kumu Kahua Theatre and the University of Hawai’i at Mānoa.

If you or anyone you know is experiencing domestic violence or has experienced sexual assault, help is available. Please seek help. You are not alone.

## CANE FIELDS BURNING

### **CHARACTERS:**

- YOUNG MAN:** A man in his late 20's.
- FATHER:** His father, late 40's or 50's.
- SPIRIT:** A wandering spirit who is somehow connected to the family.
- DEMON:** A demon that pursues the Spirit.
- OLD MAN:** The ghost of the Young Man's grandfather.
- MAN:** The grandfather's neighbor, about the same age as the Old Man.
- CHORUS:** A chorus of at least four people.

### **SETTING:**

We are in the interior of a small Hawaiian plantation house. All we see is the living room and the view from the window. The hardwood floor is covered in boxes and trash bags. The floor of the living room should somehow reference the style of a Noh stage. The house is rundown but still has echoes of a time when it was kept in better repair. Outside the window we can see an old pine tree in the yard and the expanse of a fallow sugarcane field behind it. There is something "off" about the space, something that makes us suspect that there is only the illusion of comfort.

**NOTE:** The play is written using the elements, style, and structure of Japanese Noh Theatre.

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ACT 1  
SCENE 1

*In the darkness we hear a SPIRIT sing, echoed by the CHORUS.*

**SPIRIT.**

Hot and dry the summer air, motionless and still  
Hot and dry the summer air, motionless and still  
Near a house, near an old field long forgotten.

**CHORUS.**

Hot and dry the summer air, motionless and still  
Hot and dry the summer air, motionless and still  
Near a house, near an old field long forgotten.

*The lights come up on a Spirit standing in the center of a living room covered in boxes. The Spirit is masked and dressed in a way that references the Noh style.*

**SPIRIT.** I am. I am. I am. I am. I am an unexpected breeze. I am an out of place shadow. I am morning mist rising from a meadow of long summer grass. I am the translucent husk of an insect on a windowsill glowing amber in the sunlight. I am old fingernails in the corner of a room. I am moonlight on the water right before a storm. I am a rusted cane knife burned and forgotten. I am black bones broken in a fallow field. I am ashes. I am. I am. I am. I am. I am. I am forgotten. I am almost forgotten. I have almost forgotten it all.

**CHORUS.**

A picture and a promise  
And a letter in the pocket  
Of the coat that was my sister's.  
Winds blast in from off the ocean.

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It is winter. I am leaving.  
Leaving on a ship whose name I can't remember.  
I can't recall those who traveled with me;  
Faceless women,  
Nameless workers,  
Over dark and hollow waters.  
The sea stretched out forever  
Like some angry rolling creature.  
There can be no glad returning  
To one's ancestral home.  
I can't recall why I am leaving.  
I can't recall where I am going.  
I can't recall who I am meeting  
When we land upon the shore.  
Then a man has me in hand  
And I'm lost in sugarcane and sadness.  
In the breeze stalks clack like raindrops  
As the cane sways in the sunlight.  
In the breeze stalks clack like raindrops  
As the cane sways in the sunlight.  
Swaying lazy in the sunlight.

**SPIRIT.** I am here.

*Blackout. End Scene 1.*

## **SCENE 2**

*Lights up; the house is empty and still. The Chorus is still onstage. After a few moments the YOUNG MAN enters the house with his FATHER. There is a slowness to the following scene, the kind of slowness of conversation that takes place between two people who share something personal but really don't know one another.*

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**YOUNG MAN.** Wow. *(The Young Man walks around the room for a few moments in silence, poking through a few boxes disinterestedly. His Father just watches him.)* Is this everything?

**FATHER.** Yeah.

**YOUNG MAN.** Everything?

**FATHER.** Big stuff's already gone.

**YOUNG MAN.** I didn't know there would be...

**FATHER.** This is it.

**YOUNG MAN.** It's just a surprise.

**FATHER.** It won't take that long if that's what you're worried about.

**YOUNG MAN.** That's not it.

**FATHER.** Maybe just today if we work hard.

**YOUNG MAN.** It's just...

**FATHER.** It won't take that long. I know you're busy.

**YOUNG MAN.** That's not it.

**FATHER.** I probably won't need you for all of it. Just some of the heavier boxes. The Doctors said I'm not supposed to lift heavy objects.

**YOUNG MAN.** I don't... That's not the problem.

**FATHER.** I should have asked the guys who took the furniture to help me. But I couldn't.

**YOUNG MAN.** It's fine.

**FATHER.** He was your family.

**YOUNG MAN.** I know.

**FATHER.** You should, you know, be here.

**YOUNG MAN.** I know.

**FATHER.** At least for some of it. You need to see it. To see the boxes. Clean up after everything. Throw it away. Besides, they're strangers, they don't know...I didn't want to ask. It makes me feel like a baby.

**YOUNG MAN.** I don't mind being here. I don't mind helping. It's just strange.

**FATHER.** I know.

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**YOUNG MAN.** Everything in boxes. Packed away. Thrown away. Given away. It's...

**FATHER.** Yeah.

**YOUNG MAN.** It's trite.

**FATHER.** I don't know that word.

**YOUNG MAN.** Cliché. Everyone says it I guess. I guess... Maybe it's just the same all over.

**FATHER.** Yeah.

**YOUNG MAN.** I thought there would be more. More...

**FATHER.** He wasn't rich. You know how...

**YOUNG MAN.** That's not... I mean, it's everything, right?

**FATHER.** Yeah.

**YOUNG MAN.** Everything.

**FATHER.** Except what those guys took yesterday.

**YOUNG MAN.** Still. Mostly everything.

**FATHER.** Mostly.

**YOUNG MAN.** All boxed up.

**FATHER.** Almost. There's still a few things left.

**YOUNG MAN.** And this is everything.

**FATHER.** Almost everything.

**YOUNG MAN.** Still. I mean... His whole life and this is everything.

**FATHER.** Almost everything.

**YOUNG MAN.** Still. Still. You'd think there'd be more.

**FATHER.** There was. Thank God it's almost done.

**YOUNG MAN.** That's not...

**FATHER.** I know. It was hard for me too. At first.

**YOUNG MAN.** Sometimes...

**FATHER.** I know.

**YOUNG MAN.** Sometimes...

**FATHER.** Come on. If we hurry we'll be done today.

**YOUNG MAN.** Yeah.

**FATHER.** With both of us it shouldn't take long.

**YOUNG MAN.** Yeah.



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**FATHER.** I should have had those guys help, but... They had already... It seemed like too much at the time. It seemed like something... I mean... You're family.

**YOUNG MAN.** I know. I should have been here more.

**FATHER.** You've been busy. It's... I understand.

**YOUNG MAN.** I know.

**FATHER.** He understood.

**YOUNG MAN.** Let's... Come on, let's...

**FATHER.** Yeah. It won't take long.

**CHORUS.**

Stillness. Stillness. Nothing left but

Silence. Stillness.

Static crackles in the corners

Causing motes to jump and jitter.

Tarnished. Tainted.

Nothing's left of life or luster.

**FATHER.** It's good to see you. *(Silence)* It's been like what? A year?

**YOUNG MAN.** Longer.

**FATHER.** Really?

**YOUNG MAN.** Almost two.

**FATHER.** Really?

**YOUNG MAN.** Yeah.

**FATHER.** Two years?

**YOUNG MAN.** Almost.

**FATHER.** Well... It's good to see you. *(Silence)* Two years. Too bad it had to be, you know, for this. *(Silence)* How's your... I mean, your mom, she's...?

**YOUNG MAN.** She's fine.

**FATHER.** Oh yeah? That's... that's...

**YOUNG MAN.** She talked about coming. She liked Grandpa and all but... After what happened... After all that's happened...

**FATHER.** Yeah. Yeah it's understandable. *(Silence)* It's been a long time though since... I mean... I wouldn't...

**YOUNG MAN.** She didn't think it would be appropriate.

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**FATHER.** Yeah. Yeah. *(Silence)* Tell her I've been to counseling... Tell her... Tell her, you know, I'm getting better... It was just... It was just a... Maybe... Maybe she could call up or something...

**YOUNG MAN.** Dad.

**FATHER.** Yeah? *(Silence. There is a moment of realization.)*

**YOUNG MAN.** I'm not sure what you need me to do?

**FATHER.** Just carry it out.

**YOUNG MAN.** What are we doing though? I mean, where is it going?

**FATHER.** We're just throwing it all out.

**YOUNG MAN.** We're throwing out all this stuff?

**FATHER.** It's all trash.

**YOUNG MAN.** All of it? You don't want any of it?

**FATHER.** No. Nothing.

**YOUNG MAN.** There's good stuff in here. Memorabilia.

**FATHER.** It's garbage.

**YOUNG MAN.** When you said... I mean... I didn't think you meant throwing it away. We're really throwing it away.

**FATHER.** Yeah. We're really throwing it away. It's trash.

**YOUNG MAN.** *(Looking through some of the boxes.)* Look, these are Grandpa's war medals. You want to throw out his war medals?

**FATHER.** They're trash.

**YOUNG MAN.** But...

**FATHER.** They're trash.

**YOUNG MAN.** But... Still. It just seems like...

**FATHER.** If I take them what happens to them? What happens...? What happens when I die? You take them?

**YOUNG MAN.** Yeah. I mean... Yeah. If Eddy doesn't want them.

**FATHER.** Eddy don't want them now.

**YOUNG MAN.** Oh.

**FATHER.** So you take them. Then you get older have some kids then you die. What happens then? What happens? Maybe your kids take them. Maybe. Most likely they just throw them out. But if they don't then their kids will. They don't mean nothing. They're

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just hunks of garbage that mean less and less every year. Best just to throw it all out now and save everyone the trouble.

**YOUNG MAN.** You're cynical. You're really being cynical. That's... I mean that's why... This is tradition, you know? This is something that gets passed down. Passed along. From father to son. That kind of thing. You can't throw that out.

**FATHER.** I had this crap around me every day growing up. Every day. Every day surrounded by it. I've got enough crap at my house without adding to it.

**CHORUS.**

Winds. Winds from far away.  
Calling calling blowing gently.  
Softly dust stirs up around them;  
Shapeless forms spin in the sunlight.

**YOUNG MAN.** Did anyone go through this? I think... I think there's stuff here that's... At least some of it looks important, you know?

**FATHER.** It's not. I know it's hard. It's not though.

**YOUNG MAN.** It's wrong. It's just... Not right somehow.

**FATHER.** Trust me.

**YOUNG MAN.** Still.

**FATHER.** Let it go. Let it all go. It's stuff. It's just stuff. It's clutter. We don't have time to go through all of it. Everything has to be out by this weekend. All of it. Emptied out. Everything cleaned up and fixed up.

**YOUNG MAN.** But still.

**FATHER.** The buyers are moving in on Monday. This whole place needs to be empty.

**YOUNG MAN.** It sold already?

**FATHER.** It's been a month.

**YOUNG MAN.** Has it?

**FATHER.** Property goes quick out here. Especially property like this. It's perfect for vacation home people. Just a little paint and it's practically new.

**YOUNG MAN.** He took good care of it.

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**FATHER.** Yeah.

*Silence. The OLD MAN enters. He wanders around the room confused, looking through boxes slowly. His movements aren't hurried or frantic, he has all the time in the world. No one sees him. The Old Man is not costumed in the Noh style, although something seems drained from him in both his features and costume. At times he weeps openly.*

**YOUNG MAN.** A month.

**FATHER.** Yeah.

**YOUNG MAN.** Wow. It feels like it's been longer.

**FATHER.** Really?

**YOUNG MAN.** I guess a lot has happened.

**FATHER.** I guess.

**YOUNG MAN.** It doesn't seem longer to you?

**FATHER.** No.

**YOUNG MAN.** Really?

**FATHER.** It feels like he was here yesterday. It feels like he's still here.

**YOUNG MAN.** *(Gesturing to the boxes.)* Not for much longer.

**FATHER.** This isn't him.

**YOUNG MAN.** I know.

**FATHER.** This stuff isn't him.

**YOUNG MAN.** I guess. Still.

**FATHER.** If you want something here just take it. If it's important to you just take it.

**YOUNG MAN.** I may. If it's just going to the garbage.

**FATHER.** Take whatever you like.

*Silence. The Father watches the Young Man as he looks through some boxes. The Old Man stands by one particular box and watches the Young Man as well. The Young Man comes to the box near the Old Man and stands there in silence for a few moments. The Old Man reaches out and grabs the Young Man's shoulder.*

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*When the Old Man speaks his voice is soft, slow, and raspy as if it's being heard over a great distance. He speaks with great difficulty.*

**OLD MAN.** Can you see before you? Can you? Can you?...see before you... an old man. An old man whose way is lost. An old man whose voice breaks in the sunlight. An old man who holds time like a spider's web. I have come. I have come. I have come so far. I don't know. I don't know why. This place seems familiar. This place seems like some place I used to know. I can't tell. I can't remember. *(The Old Man slowly falls to his knees, weeping, clutching to the Young Man. The Young Man responds as if in a dream, not knowing if what is happening is real or imagined.)* Ahhh. Ahhh. Things must be... Ahhh. The moments eating... eating... chewing at my heart... Things must be... Things must be made again. Lived again. Again. Again. Again. I must be. I must be again. Remember. Remember. *(Silence.)*

**FATHER.** You still dating that girl?

**YOUNG MAN.** What?

**FATHER.** You still dating what's-her-name? The girl you brought over for Christmas.

**YOUNG MAN.** What? When?

**FATHER.** A few years back I guess. She was real pretty. Blue eyes. You know the one.

**OLD MAN.** Remember.

**YOUNG MAN.** No. No we're not together anymore.

**FATHER.** No?

**YOUNG MAN.** No.

**FATHER.** Too bad. She was pretty.

**YOUNG MAN.** It was three years ago.

**FATHER.** Was it?

**YOUNG MAN.** Three years. At least three years.

**OLD MAN.** Remember.

**FATHER.** She was a pretty girl. Your brother goes out to look for girls but all he finds are beers. Made him fat. Not too fat, but

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bigger than he was.

**YOUNG MAN.** I'm sure he'll find someone.

**FATHER.** Maybe. Maybe.

**OLD MAN.** Remember.

**YOUNG MAN.** It's not easy.

**FATHER.** Too bad about that girl though. I thought... I thought for sure... you know. For sure you'd still be with her. She was so pretty.

**YOUNG MAN.** Yeah.

**FATHER.** You looked happy then.

**YOUNG MAN.** Yeah.

**FATHER.** Too bad. Too bad.

**OLD MAN.** Remember.

**YOUNG MAN.** (*Looking in the box at his feet.*) Do you know what this is?

**FATHER.** Just old papers.

**YOUNG MAN.** What papers?

**FATHER.** I don't know.

**YOUNG MAN.** Did you go through it?

**FATHER.** No. Not too much. It's just letters. Nothing important.

**YOUNG MAN.** You sure?

**FATHER.** Pretty sure.

**YOUNG MAN.** Can I...?

**FATHER.** It's just old letters. Not even good letters. Just letters from friends none of us remembers.

**YOUNG MAN.** Still.

**OLD MAN.** Remember.

**FATHER.** Come on, if you dig through every box we won't finish until next week. There's nothing in there you want.

**YOUNG MAN.** Maybe there is.

**FATHER.** Trust me. You don't want anything in that box. That box is nothing but garbage.

**OLD MAN.** Please.

**YOUNG MAN.** You said I could have something.

**FATHER.** Take something else. Something that means something.

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**YOUNG MAN.** I like old letters. I like old things like this. Old photos and stuff.

**OLD MAN.** Please.

**FATHER.** It's a waste of time. You won't find anything in there. Take something else. Like a statue or something.

**YOUNG MAN.** Did he have any statues?

**FATHER.** No. But something like that. He probably has something like that somewhere.

**YOUNG MAN.** Let me just look through here.

**FATHER.** Okay. Okay. (*Silence*) You know that Christmas, when what's-her-name was here? The blue-eyed girl... I think that was the last time... I think... I think... I'm pretty sure that was the last time all of us were together.

**YOUNG MAN.** There were other times.

**FATHER.** Yeah but... I mean... happy times.

**YOUNG MAN.** I don't remember being that happy then.

**FATHER.** Oh you were real happy.

**YOUNG MAN.** I don't...

**FATHER.** Real happy. Home from college. Pretty girl. I remember you were really happy.

**YOUNG MAN.** I don't...

**FATHER.** Yeah. We were all happy. (*Silence*) Real happy.

**YOUNG MAN.** Maybe.

**FATHER.** What do you mean "maybe?" We were. All of us... All of us were smiling and laughing and... and...

**YOUNG MAN.** Okay.

**FATHER.** All of us were happy. Smiling and laughing. That's happy.

**YOUNG MAN.** Okay.

**FATHER.** Too bad about that girl.

**YOUNG MAN.** Can we not talk about her.

**FATHER.** What was her name? I wish I was better at names. I can't... It's almost there, you know...

**YOUNG MAN.** Debbie.

**FATHER.** Debbie. That's right.

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**YOUNG MAN.** Let's talk about something else.

**FATHER.** Blue eyed Debbie.

**YOUNG MAN.** *(Sarcastic)* If you want I could get you a date.

**FATHER.** Don't be stupid.

**YOUNG MAN.** The way you go on about her.

**FATHER.** I liked her. She made you happy.

**YOUNG MAN.** No she didn't.

**FATHER.** You were smiling and laughing all the time when she was here. That's happy.

**OLD MAN.** Please.

**FATHER.** Too bad about her.

**YOUNG MAN.** Yeah.

**FATHER.** Why'd you let her go? *(Silence)* She was a good girl. You don't let good girls go.

**CHORUS.** Remember. Remember. Remember. Remember.

**OLD MAN.** Please... Please...

**YOUNG MAN.** I'd rather not talk about it with you.

**FATHER.** Oh... Okay... It's... I understand...

**YOUNG MAN.** Let's... Come on let's... There's a lot of stuff here. We need to clear it all out, right?

**FATHER.** Yeah. Yeah. *(Silence)* You know... You know I'm still... No matter... I mean... I'm your dad...

**YOUNG MAN.** Let's... Come on...

**FATHER.** You can still talk to me, you know? Sometimes... Sometimes if you wanted...

**YOUNG MAN.** I can't talk to you.

**FATHER.** Yes you can if... you know...

**YOUNG MAN.** I can't... I can't... I can't be around you. I can't... You're not... After what you did to us...

**FATHER.** *(Silence)* I never touched you. I did a lot... I did a lot... I mean... I never hurt my boys.

**YOUNG MAN.** That's... That's not what I mean. *(Long Silence. The Young Man pulls out a picture from the box. As he does so the Old Man wails and cries. The Chorus begins to pound*



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*rhythmically until the Spirit's entrance.) Who's this? (Silence)*

Who's this woman?

**FATHER.** I don't know.

**YOUNG MAN.** Was she a friend of Grandpa's?

**FATHER.** I don't know.

**YOUNG MAN.** It isn't Grandma?

**FATHER.** No.

**YOUNG MAN.** She's pretty.

**FATHER.** Not bad.

**YOUNG MAN & OLD MAN.** She's beautiful.

**FATHER.** She's okay.

**YOUNG MAN & OLD MAN.** She's... She's...

**FATHER.** Let's get this done. Put it away.

**YOUNG MAN.** She's...

**OLD MAN.** She's...

**FATHER.** Put it away.

**YOUNG MAN.** Yeah. Yeah. Okay.

*The Young Man puts the picture away in his pocket. Both the Young Man and the Father grab a box and start to exit.*

**FATHER.** Let's get this done. Let's get this all finished. Clean up and we can all go home.

*The Young Man and the Father exit.*

**OLD MAN.** Too late. Too late. Too late. I must... I must...

**CHORUS.**

Winds. Winds from far away.

Blowing harder. Coming faster.

This sudden gust from off the mountains

Rushing racing to the ocean.

Hear the wind reach its wild climax

Hissing in its passing violence;

Sliding in from off the mountain

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It rocks the house with its hard hammer.  
It ripples through the sugarcane.  
It slides across the summer grass.  
See the blades like waves rush toward us.  
A great green tide surrounds us;  
Rocks us like some poor lost ship  
Floundering without a captain.  
Rushing racing from the cane field  
With the curse it carries with it.  
Rushing racing to the ocean  
To cleanse it of its awful burden.  
The things it's seen can't be forgotten.  
Can't be forgotten.  
Can't be forgotten.  
Almost forgotten.

*The Chorus stops the rhythm abruptly. The Spirit enters. The Spirit does a short dance, then blackout. End Scene 2.*

### SCENE 3

*In the darkness the Chorus begins singing.*

#### **CHORUS.**

I am.  
I am.  
I am.  
I am.  
I am.

*A small pool of light appears. The Spirit dances through the light; sometimes performing fully illuminated, sometimes only partially seen. Every time the Spirit speaks or sings she stops dancing. The lighting remains like this throughout the scene. The Old Man is*

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*sitting on his knees just outside the circle of light; he is still visible but shadowed.*

### **CHORUS.**

Through the cane they ride in silence.

### **SPIRIT.**

With a man I barely know.

**OLD MAN.** A boy. A boy. Only seventeen and still a boy. Not a man. Not a man at all.

### **CHORUS.**

All around the cane field rustles.

Growing green, two weeks from harvest.

### **SPIRIT.**

Sugar still too young to harvest.

**OLD MAN.** I'm sorry... I'm sorry... But... But... My father... My father... He... He was so ill in those days. Ill from sun and ill from work and ill from fever. I wasn't... I didn't... I wasn't ready for marriage in those days... I wasn't ready... I wasn't ready for marriage to a wife who was even younger than... But... But... But he knew the end was nearing and he wanted grandchildren badly. So badly. So badly. He was dying and he wanted... He was my father... He... He... So badly... I didn't know what I was doing. I didn't know what I was doing.

### **CHORUS.**

That night I lay beside a stranger.

### **OLD MAN.**

Two young strangers.

Two young strangers.

### **CHORUS.**

Both pretending to be sleeping.

Outside the cane fields softly rustle

As if someone is passing gently.

I can hear him softly breathing.

I can feel his hand start creeping.

Creeping closer to my body.

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Does he know that I'm not sleeping?  
Will he force himself upon me?  
I can feel his fingers nearing.  
I can feel his hand is trembling.  
Can he hear my breathing quicken?

**OLD MAN.**

I can hear my father barking:

**CHORUS.**

Take her in your bed son, quickly.  
Make her quickly be a mother.

**OLD MAN.**

But my hand...  
But my hand...

**CHORUS.**

But his hand it pulls away.

**SPIRIT.**

His trembling hand.  
His stranger's hand.

**CHORUS.**

Something stops his hand from acting.  
This is not a night for violence.  
The moon shines silver on the sugar  
As it waves gently in the starlight.  
In the distance sounds the ocean;  
The soft and rhythmic sounds of waves  
Sliding softly on the shore.

**OLD MAN.**

I didn't know what I was doing.  
I didn't know what I was doing.  
A boy. A boy.  
Only seventeen and still a boy.  
Not a man.  
Not a man at all.

**SPIRIT.**

I cannot live here.

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I cannot love him.

### **CHORUS.**

Something's stirring in the shadows.  
Something's coming.  
Something's waiting.  
Something's stirring.  
Something's stirring.  
Something's clutching at the stomach  
Slowly working its way forward.  
Remember.  
Remember.

*We hear the Father's voice speaking in the darkness.*

**FATHER.** Did you hit her?

**OLD MAN.**

No.

**CHORUS.**

Remember.  
Remember.

**FATHER.** Did you hit her?

**OLD MAN.**

No.

**CHORUS.**

Remember.  
Remember.

**SPIRIT.**

All around the cane field rustles.  
Sugar still too young to harvest.

**CHORUS.**

Remember.  
Remember.

**SPIRIT.**

Almost forgotten.  
Almost forgotten.

## CANE FIELDS BURNING

Please.

Please.

Do not...

Do not...

**OLD MAN.** No... No... No... I didn't... I didn't... Only seventeen... I didn't... So young... young...

*The light fades out slowly until nothing can be seen. Blackout. End Scene 3.*

### SCENE 4

*The Father and the Young Man are sitting on the floor eating dinner. Some of the boxes and bags have been removed. The Young Man is looking at the picture as he eats. He is transfixed. There is a long moment of silence as the Father tries to muster up the courage to speak. The Old Man sits in a corner crying softly.*

**FATHER.** Did you hit her? (*Silence. The Young Man doesn't even hear him, he is lost in another world.*) Did you hit her? (*Silence. Still no reaction.*) You can tell me. It's... I can... You don't need... You don't need to keep it in. You can... You can tell me, you know. You can always... I mean... I understand. You know I'll understand. It doesn't make it right but... but... but... You know... I... I'll... I'll understand. (*Silence. Still no reaction.*) Did you? (*Silence*) Did you hit her?

**YOUNG MAN.** (*The Young Man slowly comes around and realizes the Father is speaking to him.*) What?

**FATHER.** Did... Did you?

**YOUNG MAN.** What? (*Silence*) What are you talking about?

**FATHER.** Debbie.

**YOUNG MAN.** Who?

**FATHER.** Debbie. Blue eyed Debbie. Debbie from Christmas.

## CANE FIELDS BURNING

**YOUNG MAN.** What...? Why...? Why do you care about Debbie? What is it? What is it? I mean, why? Why do you give a shit about Debbie?

**FATHER.** She made you happy.

**YOUNG MAN.** How do you know? Maybe she made me miserable the whole time I was with her. Maybe... Maybe, except for that one time, that one day, I was miserable. How do you... You don't... Just... Just... God damn it, just... leave it alone.

**FATHER.** *(Silence)* Did you?

**YOUNG MAN.** What?

**FATHER.** Did you?

**YOUNG MAN.** What? *(Silence)* Did I what?

**FATHER.** *(Silence)* Hit her. *(Silence)* Did you hit her? *(Silence)* Is that why she left? *(Silence)* There's... you know... people you can talk to... they can... I know people, they can...

**YOUNG MAN.** No.

**FATHER.** You don't have to...

**YOUNG MAN.** I didn't. *(Silence)* I didn't hit her. *(Silence)* Goddamn... God damn you. I would never... I'm... I'm... I am...

**FATHER.** I'm sorry. *(Silence)* I'm sorry.

**YOUNG MAN.** Fuck you.

**FATHER.** *(Silence)* I know.... I know... I'm so sorry.

**YOUNG MAN.** I would never...

**FATHER.** I know.

**YOUNG MAN.** Not after...

**FATHER.** I know.

**YOUNG MAN.** After living with you... With you and Mom...

**FATHER.** *(Silence)* I'm sorry.

**YOUNG MAN.** *(Silence)* Never mind.

**FATHER.** It's just...

**YOUNG MAN.** Don't.

**FATHER.** It's just... You know how sometimes...

**YOUNG MAN.** I didn't hit her.

**FATHER.** Okay. I know.

**YOUNG MAN.** I'm not...

## CANE FIELDS BURNING

**FATHER.** I know. I'm sorry.

**CHORUS.**

Windows shudder rattle  
Shutters clatter clatter clatter  
Against the wailing of the wind

**FATHER.** *(Silence)* Winds... Winds really picking up.

*The Chorus begins to moan slowly and softly. The sound should reference the sounds of the wind outside. Each Chorus member should moan at a different pitch. The sound slowly increases in volume until the Spirit enters.*

**YOUNG MAN.** Yeah.

**FATHER.** It's really starting to blow out there.

**YOUNG MAN.** Yeah.

**FATHER.** *(Silence)* Yeah. *(Silence)* That's one thing I won't miss about this place. All the wind, you know. *(Silence)* It's crazy.

Crazy wind here.

**YOUNG MAN.** Yeah.

**FATHER.** It's not like this by my house. By my new place. You know I got a new place?

**YOUNG MAN.** I heard.

**FATHER.** Oh. Because you never... I never... Anyway if you want, like, the address or something I'll give it to you.

**YOUNG MAN.** That's okay.

**FATHER.** Oh. Okay. Maybe later.

**YOUNG MAN.** Yeah. Maybe.

**FATHER.** Yeah. Yeah. Listen to it blow. Crazy. I won't miss this. When I was looking for a house I asked; "Is there a lot of wind? I don't want any wind." They probably thought I was crazy you know. They can't control the weather. But... But... You know... I was just tired of this wind. Shutters banging... And it whistles waking you up at all hours. Blowing all kinds of garbage and filth into the house. Always having to sweep up. I was just tired of it.

**YOUNG MAN.** Yeah.



## CANE FIELDS BURNING

**FATHER.** Yeah. God listen to it. Sounds like... like...

**YOUNG MAN.** Screaming.

**FATHER.** Jesus. Jesus don't say stuff like that. I was gonna say a motorcycle. Jesus.

**YOUNG MAN.** It does. It sounds like screaming.

**FATHER.** Maybe a little. Sounds like a motorcycle to me.

**YOUNG MAN.** Maybe. Maybe a little.

**FATHER.** Yeah. *(Silence)* Yeah. I remember when I was little I got real scared of the wind. It was the middle of the night and it started blowing and howling like this. And I got real scared. Real scared. So scared I couldn't take it anymore and I called out. I kept yelling "Help! Help!" Thinking someone would come in. Come running in. But it was late at night you know. Like twenty minutes goes by and finally your grandpa comes stumbling in, knocking over toys because he can't see nothing in the dark, and probably still a little buzzed from drinking beers with his buddies that night. And your grandpa, your grandpa he's sweet as sugar and says "What's wrong buddy?"

*The Old Man speaks at the same time as the Father speaks.*

**OLD MAN.** What's wrong buddy?

**FATHER.** But I don't say nothing because I'm still scared but I feel kind of stupid telling my dad I'm afraid of the wind. So I just sit there and my dad comes over and wipes the tears off my face with his shirt and says, "You scared of this wind?"

*In the following passages the Old Man again speaks at the same time as the Father. He draws out the sound of the word giving it a haunting feeling.*

**OLD MAN.** Wind

**FATHER.** "This wind, it brings our family's curse to us."

**OLD MAN.** Curse

## CANE FIELDS BURNING

**FATHER.** Now that. That scared the piss out of me. I think I just about pissed myself you know. A family curse. I mean... That's scary stuff you know. Especially for a kid.

**OLD MAN.** Curse

**FATHER.** I think your grandpa could tell. I must have had one of those looks on my face or something because he says, "You want to know what our family curse is?"

**OLD MAN.** Curse

**FATHER.** "You want to know?" I nod my head again. "Our curse" he says, "Our curse is to only marry beautiful women." (*The Young Man laughs.*) Yeah, yeah. I'm like ten years old and that's what he says. We both laughed. I mean, it was silly. We were really laughing.

**OLD MAN.** Curse

**FATHER.** Then he goes, "No, no I'm serious. It's a curse. And that wind. When that wind blows it means some beautiful woman is thinking about you and those are her thoughts coming to find you. That wind is her thoughts."

**OLD MAN.** Curse

*The Chorus and Old Man suddenly end their moaning and speaking. It is silent for a moment as the Spirit enters.*

**FATHER.** So I guess all this wind means there's some pretty girl out there thinking about you.

**YOUNG MAN.** Or you.

**FATHER.** Yeah. Yeah. (*Silence*) So how's... how's your mom doing? I mean... I mean is she doing okay?

**YOUNG MAN.** I told you already.

**FATHER.** Did you?

**YOUNG MAN.** Yeah.

**FATHER.** Really?

**YOUNG MAN.** Yeah.

**FATHER.** Oh. (*Silence*) I don't remember. So... So she's okay then?

## CANE FIELDS BURNING

**YOUNG MAN.** Let's not talk about her.

**FATHER.** Okay. Okay. *(Silence)* What are you looking at?

**YOUNG MAN.** Nothing.

**FATHER.** You still looking at that picture?

**YOUNG MAN.** Don't worry about it.

**FATHER.** You've spent all day looking at it.

**YOUNG MAN.** So what.

**FATHER.** I don't know. *(Silence)* Just kind of weird.

**YOUNG MAN.** Why? There's nothing...

**FATHER.** Okay. Okay. Sorry.

**YOUNG MAN.** *(Silence)* She's beautiful.

**FATHER.** She's okay.

**YOUNG MAN.** God she's... I mean... It's just... She just pulls you in.

**FATHER.** She's not bad.

**YOUNG MAN.** She's gorgeous.

**FATHER.** She looks like a Japanese lady in old time clothes.

**YOUNG MAN.** She's...

**YOUNG MAN & OLD MAN.** She's... She's...

**FATHER.** I'm gonna go finish packing up some stuff in the kitchen. You want to try to get some more of this stuff thrown out?  
*(Silence)* You hear?

**YOUNG MAN.** Yeah. Yeah sounds good.

**FATHER.** Okay. Yell if you need some help.

**YOUNG MAN.** Yeah. You too.

*Father exits.*

**CHORUS.**

Static crackles in the corners

See the motes jump and jitter

Slowly shapes form in the sunlight

Winds. Winds from far away

Coming. Coming. Howling. Growling.

**SPIRIT.**

## CANE FIELDS BURNING

Have you ever watched a cane field growing?  
Have you ever seen it seen it seen it  
Stretch out from soil to sky?  
Have you ever stepped into its vastness?  
Wandering in without a purpose  
Lost in stalks that sway above you  
A great green mass that lacks a center  
And all around the world is silent  
Except the creak and clacking of the cane  
Have you?  
Have you?  
Have you?  
Have you seen the leaves start turning  
Turning turning browning in the blood red soil?

**OLD MAN.** Come with me tonight.

**SPIRIT.** No. No I don't want to.

**YOUNG MAN & OLD MAN.** Come with me. Come.

**OLD MAN.** Come with me tonight. You stay here so often. You never leave this house.

**SPIRIT.** I don't know... I won't know... anyone...

**YOUNG MAN & OLD MAN.** Come with me.

**OLD MAN.** How will you get to know anyone? How will you get to know anyone if you just stay in this house?

**YOUNG MAN & OLD MAN.** Come with me.

**SPIRIT.** I don't know.

**YOUNG MAN.** It's just a party.

**SPIRIT.** I don't like parties.

**YOUNG MAN.** Well, it's not really a party. Party is the wrong word.

**YOUNG MAN & OLD MAN.** It's just some friends.

**OLD MAN.** Just other people who work the field. We always do this. We always do this right before we harvest. It's just friends.

**YOUNG MAN & OLD MAN.** Just some friends. Some people. Nice people.

**OLD MAN.** They want to meet you.

## CANE FIELDS BURNING

**YOUNG MAN.** I've told them about you.

**SPIRIT.** You have?

**YOUNG MAN & OLD MAN.** Of course I have.

**OLD MAN.** Of course. You're my wife. *(Silence)* Right? *(Silence)*  
Right?

**SPIRIT.** Of course.

**OLD MAN.** Of course. So you'll come with me.

**SPIRIT.** It's...

**OLD MAN.** You're my wife.

**SPIRIT.** It's...

**OLD MAN.** My wife.

**SPIRIT.** *(Silence)* Not really.

**OLD MAN.** You... you...

**SPIRIT.** Not really.

**OLD MAN.** You...

**YOUNG MAN & OLD MAN.** You are.

**SPIRIT.** Not...

**YOUNG MAN & OLD MAN.** You are.

**OLD MAN.** Come with me.

**YOUNG MAN.** You need to get... to... to...

**SPIRIT.** Alright.

**YOUNG MAN & OLD MAN.** To... to... to... to know...

**SPIRIT.** Alright. *(Pause)* I'll come. *(Pause)* I'll come. *(Silence)*

**CHORUS.**

Black moon black sky

Black mountain in the distance

Tonight the night absorbs completely

Cane fields lost within the shadows

Lost lost lost lost

Figures moving through the shadows

Walking somewhere in the darkness.

*The Chorus begins pounding rhythmically.*

**YOUNG MAN.**

## CANE FIELDS BURNING

Something's stirring in the shadows  
Something's coming  
Something's waiting  
Something's stirring  
Something's stirring  
Something's clutching at the stomach  
Slowly working its way forward

**OLD MAN.**

Remember.

Remember.

**SPIRIT.**

Remember.

*The Spirit wails like someone in intense grief and pain. The Chorus stops pounding. The Old Man and the Spirit slowly shuffle backwards into the shadows. The Young Man stands as if he is in a trance. After a moment the Father enters.*

**FATHER.** Hey. Hey I was thinking you know... Hey... Hey...  
You okay? Hey.

**YOUNG MAN.** Come with me.

**FATHER.** What?

**YOUNG MAN & OLD MAN.** Come with me tonight.

**FATHER.** What? What are you talking about. Hey. Hey.

**YOUNG MAN.** Yeah? *(Silence)* Yeah?

**FATHER.** What's wrong?

**YOUNG MAN.** Nothing. I'm... nothing's... It's fine.

**FATHER.** You sure?

**YOUNG MAN.** Yeah.

**FATHER.** You sure?

**YOUNG MAN.** Yeah. Really. Don't... don't...

**FATHER.** Okay. Okay sure.

**YOUNG MAN.** I just... I think I just... zoned out or something.  
It's no... It's nothing.

**FATHER.** You sure?

## CANE FIELDS BURNING

**YOUNG MAN.** Yeah.

**FATHER.** Okay. Okay. Hey listen, why don't we take a break or something.

**YOUNG MAN.** We've still got a lot to do.

**FATHER.** I know, I know. I was just thinking we could drive down to that place we used to go to when your grandma was alive.

*(Pause)* Do you remember the name? I can't... I can't... God.

Guess I'm really getting old. Pretty soon I'll forget everything.

*(Silence)* So you want to go? You want to go get a drink or something?

**YOUNG MAN.** I thought... I thought you weren't supposed to...

**FATHER.** I know, but take a break. Just a couple of beers. Father and son, you know? You don't look too good. Kind of pale.

**YOUNG MAN.** I'm fine.

**FATHER.** Still. Let's go. Let's go get something. You and me. Hanging out. Like when you was little.

**YOUNG MAN.** I'd rather get this done. We haven't really done anything.

**FATHER.** Still. An hour won't hurt. Just an hour. Come on. I'm buying.

**YOUNG MAN.** Then you go. I'm staying here.

**FATHER.** Yeah. *(Silence)* Yeah. You don't forget nothing do you? You don't... You just can't...

**YOUNG MAN.** Let's just get this done. Let's finish this and go home.

**FATHER.** Yeah. *(Silence)* You know, I've been thinking about that Christmas a lot. That Christmas... God we were so happy.

**YOUNG MAN.** Jesus not this again.

**FATHER.** I mean, I've... I've talked to people. I'm better now. You know. You know? Maybe, maybe one Christmas we could all get together. You, me, Eddy and... and your mom. All of us. We could... We could... you know...

**YOUNG MAN.** Let's just get this done.

**FATHER.** I... I was just... I...

**YOUNG MAN.** Let's finish this and go home.

## CANE FIELDS BURNING

**FATHER.** *(Silence)* Yeah. *(Silence)* Yeah you don't forget nothing do you.

**YOUNG MAN.** *(Silence)* Some things you don't forget. Some things you can't forget.

**FATHER.** Or forgive?

**YOUNG MAN.** Some things...

**FATHER.** *(Silence)* Yeah. Yeah. I'm going out. I'm getting something to eat.

**YOUNG MAN.** I'll stay here.

*The Father begins to get his coat on in order to brave the wind. He is visibly upset but trying to hide it. As he starts to exit his temper flares up and he kicks one of the boxes, he kicks it again and again until he is exhausted. The Young Man is silent, watching the Father. There is a moment or two of uncomfortable silence between them.*

**FATHER.** You... You can be a real prick sometimes.

*There is another uncomfortable silence. The Father is struggling against something. Finally, he leaves the house. The Father exits.*

### **CHORUS.**

Something's stirring in the shadows.  
Something's coming.  
Something's waiting.  
Something's stirring.  
Something's stirring.  
Something's clutching at the stomach  
Slowly working its way forward.

*The Chorus begins to pound rhythmically. After a few moments the DEMON enters. The Demon dances and creeps towards the Young Man, finally when it is just about to pounce on him the Spirit*



## CANE FIELDS BURNING

*screams. The Old Man draws out his final line at the same time as the Spirit screams.*

**OLD MAN.** Remember.

*The Demon is still, then it slowly turns towards the Spirit. The Old Man begins to weep softly as the Young Man pulls the picture out of his pocket and stares at it again.*

**DEMON.** I am here. *(Blackout.)*

**END OF ACT 1**

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