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# **MONKEY IN THE SHADE**

a southern gothic noir

By  
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# MONKEY IN THE SHADE

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## MONKEY IN THE SHADE

### CHARACTERS

#### 1978

**MONKEY** - Derrick man on oil rigs. 50's.

**SEAN** - Drifter, college dropout, and roughneck on oilrig. From Minnesota. 18.

**CLAY** - Co-owner of Clay and Minnie's Restaurant and Boarding House. Southern Louisiana native. Husband to Minnie. The temperature changes when he enters the room. 50's.

**MINNIE** - Co-owner of Clay and Minnie's Restaurant and Boarding House. Wife to Clay. From Mississippi. The temperature changes when she enters the room. 50's.

**JANNY** - Niece to Clay and Minnie. 16.

**WILLIE** - Retired roughneck. 70's.

**JOE** - Roughneck on oilrig. From East Texas. 40's.

**DELBERT** - Driller on oilrig. Southern Louisiana native. 50's.

#### 2018

**BROOKS** - Sean at 58, back in Harvey, Louisiana, investigating the past.

**VERN** - 70's. From the neighborhood. Played by actor playing Willie.

**DARL** - 50's, bar manager, played by actor playing Delbert.

**CHASSY** - 21, daughter to Janice, played by actor playing Janny.

**JANICE** - Janny, now 56 in 2018, played by actor playing Minnie.

**OLD CLAY** - Clay, now in his 90's, in a wheelchair, played by actor playing Clay.

## MONKEY IN THE SHADE

### SET

The set is a bar/restaurant with a metal gangplank called a monkeyboard above. The monkeyboard is what a derrick man on oilrigs stands on while controlling the top end of hundred-foot sections of pipe. It may work to have steel girders rising at the corners of the set to suggest derrick legs, one world fitting within another. The pipe rack, hanger bells, and elevator clamp mentioned in the text are left to the imagination.

**ACT I, Clay and Minnie's in 1978** is a dive bar/restaurant but not without some attempt by the owners to give it local bayou flavor. A bar/counter with a bar back runs along the stage right side of the set. A mirror above bar back. A swinging metal door with a small circular window leading to the kitchen is behind the bar. On the bar near the kitchen door is an old stainless steel cash register from the 40's. Next to the cash register is a black rotary phone. A door leading outside is stage left. There is a jukebox below a large window in stage left wall. Upstage center is a hallway leading to a bathroom and another outside door beyond our vision. Tables and chairs are from the fifties but feel like the newest components of the place. That said, there is something a bit abstracted about it all, as if there are pieces missing, as if remembered by a less than perfect brain.

**ACT II, The Grand Canal in 2018** (except for Scene 4, which returns to Clay and Minnie's in 1978), a refurbishment of Clay and Minnie's that is trying to remember the dive of 1978. The new place is not only cleaner but has none of the original's authentic patina. A sad attempt at a strange nostalgia.

### MUSIC

**ACT I:** Country music, mainly from 1970's: *Ready for the Times to Get Better* by Crystal Gayle, any Merle Haggard (except *Okie From Muskogee*), *Blue Bayou* by Linda Ronstadt, *Lucille* by Kenny Rogers, etc. on the jukebox.

**ACT II:** New Orleans blues, R&B, and jazz, old and new, like Professor Longhair, Ellis Marsalis, Sr., Baby Dodds, Louis Armstrong, James Booker, Allen Toussaint, Stanton Moore on the jukebox.

## MONKEY IN THE SHADE

### TIME AND PLACE

**ACT I: 1978**, Clay and Minnie's Restaurant/Bar in Harvey, Louisiana, Workover Oilrig, and Monkeyboard in the Louisiana delta oil patch.

**ACT II: 2018 and 1978**, The Grand Canal Restaurant /Bar; Clay and Minnie's; a phone booth on the street in Hartford, CT; and a Monkeyboard of the mind.

### NOTES

.... at end of line denotes a trailing off.

-- denotes an interruption by the next speaker.

/ denotes the point of overlapping dialogue.

*They regard one another* means two characters hold eye contact dumbly for 4 seconds.

## MONKEY IN THE SHADE

*Monkey In The Shade* was developed at Seven Devils Playwrights Conference, 2018; Great Plains Theatre Conference, 2019; a public reading at Mile Square Theatre, Hoboken, NJ, 2019; the 36<sup>th</sup> Street Writers Block; and Soho Think Tank. The Mile Square reading was directed by John Pietrowski, Artistic Director was Chris O'Connor, Playwright in Residence was Joseph Gallo, and featuring the following cast:

Clay / Old Clay.....	Ross DeGraw
Monkey / Brooks.....	Joseph Gallo
Sean.....	Julian Gordon
Miz Minnie / Janice.....	Annie McAdams
Janny / Chassy.....	Annette Hammond
Delbert / Darl.....	Eli Ganas
Joe.....	Duncan Rogers
Willie / Vern.....	David Sitler

Thanks to Seven Devils New Play Foundry, Jeni Mahoney, Sheila McDevitt, Great Plains Theatre Conference, Mile Square Theatre, 36<sup>th</sup> Street Writers Block, John Pietrowski, Jamie Richards, Elizabeth Karlin, the late Arthur Giron, and The Kaplan Brothers: John Kaplan, Robert Lyons, Joseph Gallo, and Ron Dobson.

## MONKEY IN THE SHADE

The wind goeth toward he south  
and turneth about unto the north; it  
whirlleth about continually, and the  
wind returneth again according to his  
circuits.

**Ecclesiastes 1:6**

**Night**

Like a fellow running from  
or toward a gun ain't got time  
to worry whether the word for  
what he is doing is courage  
or cowardice.

**William Faulkner**

**Light In August**

That is perhaps what we  
seek throughout life, that  
and nothing more, the  
greatest possible sorrow  
so as to become fully  
ourselves before dying.

**Louis-Ferdinand Celine**

**Journey to the End of the**

*As always,  
For Ruth*

MONKEY IN THE SHADE

# MONKEY IN THE SHADE

ACT I

1978

PROLOGUE

*SEAN on the **Monkeyboard**, a metal gangplank on which a derrick man stands on workover oil rigs\*. It juts straight out at audience well above the restaurant set (now in darkness). Sean stands at its furthest edge. He is wearing a safety belt which allows him to lean out at an almost 45-degree angle. He wears a hardhat that obscures his face and hair. We should not make the connection when we meet him in next scene. Maybe we make the connection later. We hear sound of large engines as background and seagulls. Area is isolated by golden sunset light shooting across Sean. He is looking down. He signals people below. Sound of engines revving. Engines crescendo.*

*\* Workover rigs are designed to service existing wells, they are the smaller cousins to the drilling rigs that create wells. In the Louisiana delta oilpatch workover rigs are barges towed by tugs through channels cut through the high delta reeds to the wells from which they then harvest oil. Their U-shaped keyways fit around the well, water fills the hull of the barge to help anchor it in place. The derrick, lowered in transit, is then raised at the well.*



## MONKEY IN THE SHADE

### SCENE 1

*A January night around midnight in Harvey, Louisiana. 1978. Clay and Minnie's Restaurant and Boarding House. Hard Rain. CLAY and MONKEY are in the restaurant. Clay is behind the bar counting receipts, washing glasses, etc. He is a big man, barrel-chested and balding, speaks with a Louisiana bayou drawl. Monkey sits at the bar. He is long, rangy, and speaks with a middle Pennsylvania accent. Both are in their 50's.*

**CLAY.** I'd haul off, by God.

**MONKEY.** Uh huh.

**CLAY.** You'd be hush quicker than a heartbeat.

**MONKEY.** That is a hell of a thing to say to me.

**CLAY.** It was anybody besides you, I'm sayin'. I'm speakin' as a friend.

**MONKEY.** If it was the other thing it'd be fine.

**CLAY.** Only difference between this thing and the other thing is this thing is lighter and it pays way more!

**MONKEY.** And you go away for way longer! *You* go away who gives a shit! I got two daughters!

**CLAY.** Two daughters.

**MONKEY.** As you well fuckin' know.

**CLAY.** Two daughters in Pennsylvania.

**MONKEY.** Yeah.

**CLAY.** Who don't talk to you.

**MONKEY.** What's your point?

**CLAY.** What's my point? You know what my point is.

**MONKEY.** No.

**CLAY.** My point is you ain't gonna go to no prison. But even if you do you gonna see your daughters 'bout as much as you do now. And my point also is: you wanna keep sendin' money to a wife and daughters who hate your fuckin' guts you can send a lot more doin' this thing. Than the other thing! *(They regard one another.)*

## MONKEY IN THE SHADE

**MONKEY.** Weed ... yes. Cocaine ... no. And I don't need no advice from you on the subject of my family.

**CLAY.** Okay.

**MONKEY.** I mean you would be the last motherfucker.

**CLAY.** Okay!

**MONKEY.** And she's my ex-wife. *(Clay goes back to his business. Monkey concentrates on his drink.)*

**CLAY.** Tell that to Joe.

**MONKEY.** What? Don't talk to me about Joe.

**CLAY.** He owes you a measure a respect.

**MONKEY.** I took that measure.

**CLAY.** Well, he forgot! See people don't talk about me. I enter a room the place goes *hush*.

**MONKEY.** Man, this ain't even my life here.

**CLAY.** Oh. Okay. How many years you been here, Monkey?

**MONKEY.** That don't mean I live here. *(The door stage left flies open and SEAN stumbles in from the storm. He's eighteen, longish hair, carries a backpack, drenched, pathetic.)*

**SEAN.** Hi. *(The men stare for a beat then turn back to their conversation.)*

**CLAY.** Yeah, I think it about four years now.

**MONKEY.** Gimme a pack a smokes.

**CLAY.** Maybe five. You want another beer?

**MONKEY.** Sure. *(Clay gets Monkey his pack of Pall Mall straights long and a beer. Monkey lights a cigarette. Sean watches.)*

**SEAN.** Hi! *(The men turn and look at him.)*

**CLAY.** What is that, bud?

**MONKEY.** Can't tell. *(The men go over to Sean and examine him more closely.)*

**CLAY.** I mean ... what is that?

**SEAN.** *(Minnesota accent.)* Is this Clay and Minnie's Restaurant and Boarding House? I was in the French Quarter, um Jackson Square? These guys said to come here if I was looking for work --

**CLAY.** Come all the way 'cross the river in this weather?

**SEAN.** Said everybody works on the oilrigs hangs out here.

## MONKEY IN THE SHADE

**MONKEY.** You a little late to be askin' around --

**SEAN.** I'm dripping. / Your floor --

**CLAY.** Work the oil patch? You a roughneck, roustabout, derrick man? You a driller, son?

**MONKEY.** He's a college kid, look at 'im.

**SEAN.** I was in college.

**MONKEY.** He's a swizzle stick.

**SEAN.** Guess I'm ... seeking my education in the world.

**CLAY.** Well. This is it.

**SEAN.** What?

**CLAY.** The world! You found it, bud!

**SEAN.** Are you Clay? I don't have experience, / but I --

**CLAY.** Every drifter in the country come down here in the wintertime lookin' for work.

**SEAN.** That's what I heard.

**CLAY.** President Carter say we havin' a energy crisis. Our energy is in crisis! Monkey'll get ya a job.

**MONKEY.** I ain't bringin' that down to Mightyville they'll laugh my head off.

**CLAY.** Joe talkin' that trash 'bout your wife you say you don' give a shit.

**MONKEY.** This is my livelihood we're talkin' about!

**CLAY.** No, this *my* livelihood we talkin' about! What your name, bud?

**SEAN.** Sean Brooks.

**CLAY.** Sean Brooks! Make you wanna go fishin' or somethin'. Where ya from, Sean?

**SEAN.** Minnesota.

**CLAY.** A yankee! Monkey is a yankee.

**SEAN.** Your name is Monkey?

**MONKEY.** What was your last job?

**SEAN.** I was a janitor at a resort near the Grand Canyon until a month ago. Then I was a taxi driver in Minneapolis until last week.

**MONKEY.** Before that?

**SEAN.** Last summer I was a caddie.

## MONKEY IN THE SHADE

**MONKEY.** What the hell's that?

**SEAN.** You carry golf clubs for golfers. *(Pause.)*

**MONKEY.** Uh what Clay said ain't true. We don't just hire anybody. Maybe at Poole Offshore but at Mightyville we try to be a bit particular.

**CLAY.** That is a mountain a bullshit and you know it –

**MONKEY.** You in trouble?

**SEAN.** Uhhh. I mean I don't have any money or a place to live but other than that --

**MONKEY.** Legal trouble!

**SEAN.** No!

**MONKEY.** How'd you get down here?

**SEAN.** Hitchhiked.

**MONKEY.** Why'd you leave Minnesota?

**SEAN.** Got fired.

**MONKEY.** Fired from what?

**SEAN.** Fired by my dad. Came home for the holidays. We had a fight he kicked me out.

**MONKEY.** Your dad fired you. What was your job?

**SEAN.** I was a son. *(Monkey studies Sean, sighs, walks back to the bar, drinks his beer. Clay smiles at this, turns back to Sean.)*

**SEAN.** What's so funny? *(They regard one another.)*

**CLAY.** No room in the big house, ya got to stay in the barracks out back. Rent is eighteen dollar a week. Eat an' sleep here on credit 'till ya get your first paycheck then ya pay up.

**SEAN.** Holy shit.

**CLAY.** Do this for everybody. Only thing - don' forget to pay me. Skip out I'll find ya.

**SEAN.** Oh! You don't need to worry about that!

**CLAY.** I know it! Number nine in the barrack out back. Meet ya there!

**SEAN.** Thank you so much!

**CLAY.** I do this for everybody! *(Clay laughs, exits upstage. Monkey takes money from his pocket, offers it to Sean. Sean stares.)*

**MONKEY.** Take it. I'm sure your daddy's sorry. *(Sean just stares.)*

## MONKEY IN THE SHADE

Why do you think he's helping you?

**SEAN.** I don't know. Why aren't you?

**MONKEY.** I am! Last chance. *(Sean just stares, then exits the way Clay did, upstage. Monkey stands there, pockets his money, sits at the bar.)*

### SCENE 2

*Early evening on outer deck on **Workover Oil Rig** in the lower delta. Two weeks later. Sound of engines and clanging pipe. Orange light of a gulf sunset on Monkey down center, lighting a cigarette. Sean enters, looking exhausted, all his movements are painful to him. They are dirty in their work gear, T-shirts, hardhats, oil gloves. Monkey looks at Sean, annoyed.*

**SEAN.** Bum a cigarette?

**MONKEY.** We ain't even halfway through the hitch you're out?  
*(Monkey shakes head, takes out cigarettes, Pall Mall straights, gives Sean a cigarette, lights it. They smoke. Sean studies Monkey.)*

**MONKEY.** You ain't gotta hang out with me. We got ten minutes you can wander around, look at the swamp. Maybe see a alligator!

**SEAN.** Look, man, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to embarrass / you –

**MONKEY.** You don't talk to Doughbelly like that!

**SEAN.** You were sick and / he didn't –

**MONKEY.** You make this big fuckin' deal wake everybody 'cause you can't mind your own shit! You speak to the driller you speak with respect! Don't matter what kind a asshole he is.

**SEAN.** He is an asshole. He really fuckin' hates me. I mean --

**MONKEY.** Yeah, he hates you! Everybody hates you! You don't talk to nobody, you're all freaked out! Worst roughneck ever, man!

**SEAN.** Is he gonna fire me? *(Monkey snorts and starts to walk away.)* You talk in your sleep.

**MONKEY.** What?

**SEAN.** I mean.... When you scream into that pillow you keep on your stomach? Right before that happens you talk in your sleep.

## MONKEY IN THE SHADE

**MONKEY.** You remember what I just said about mindin' your /own shit.

**SEAN.** Who's Lucy?

**MONKEY.** What?! *(Sean just stares. Monkey shakes his head, punches Sean in the stomach. Sean doubles over, groaning.)* Stand up. Straighten up! I didn't hurt you.

**SEAN.** *(Slowly straightening.)* You think that hurt? That didn't hurt.

**MONKEY.** Kid. You need to get the fuck outta here.

**SEAN.** He's gonna fire me / isn't he.

**MONKEY.** 'Course he's gonna fire you!

**SEAN.** After I pay Clay I'll have like fifty cents.

**MONKEY.** Well. You pay Clay, take your fifty cents, get the fuck out.

**SEAN.** I'm not leaving here with fifty cents.

**MONKEY.** There was a guy named Tick Tock. Hated work. Always askin' the time. We called him Tick Tock. Got fired. Then tried to skip out without payin' Clay. They found him sittin' on a levy with both legs broke. Clay *always* gets paid. You understand me? *Always.*

**SEAN.** I wasn't gonna skip out! That's not --

**MONKEY.** Clay was ten years Angola State Pen. For manslaughter. They got him on that one thing, but you ain't got the fingers and toes for all the lights he put out. He's gone a few days, nobody asks where he is, where he's been, 'cause everybody knows ... somebody is *findin' Jesus*. So. You're leavin'. *After you pay you're fuckin' tab!*

**SEAN.** Man. My biographers will find this period of my life especially fascinating. *(He chuckles at his joke, smokes, off Monkey's look.)* What.

**MONKEY.** Your daddy rich?

**SEAN.** And my mama's good lookin'.

**MONKEY.** What?!

**SEAN.** I can't go back.

**MONKEY.** Why not?

**SEAN.** Then he's right.

**MONKEY.** Who?

**SEAN.** My dad.

## MONKEY IN THE SHADE

**MONKEY.** About what?

**SEAN.** Everything. That ... I'm shit.

**MONKEY.** Why's he think that?

**SEAN.** It's ... not really one thing. Um school. He's disappointed I dropped out. Um. I don't really buy the whole Jesus thing. And yeah okay the drugs. Except I don't really do drugs anymore, not even pot, makes me feel guilty and anti-social and besides I don't have a connection down here so....

**MONKEY.** He know where you are? *(No response.)* He know you're alive, at least?

**SEAN.** There's only one guy my dad really respects and that's the one who rose from the dead. So that's what I'm gonna do. I'll let Dad know I'm alive when he least expects it. When he's *reconciled*. To my *death*. I will resurrect my ass. Then, believe me. I will never have to take shit from that man again. *(They regard one another, smoking.)*

**MONKEY.** You are one weird fuckin' kid.

**SEAN.** Thanks.

**MONKEY.** No. Sean. That is an asshole thing to do to a father. Go home. Or go somewheres else. But don't fuckin' stay here. *(Monkey extinguishes cigarette, exits.)*

### **SCENE 3**

*Clay and Minnie's. Bright early morning. Two weeks later. MINNIE and JANNY waiting on customers. Janny is sixteen and has a four-month baby bump pushing out under her T-shirt. Monkey is sitting at a table drinking coffee. JOE, a bald fireplug of a man, sits nearby. Jukebox is playing "Lucille" (Kenny Rogers). WILLIE is dancing around to the music. He has a long white scraggly beard. Willie, dancing, bumps into Joe's table and spills some coffee.*

**JOE.** Sit down ya goddamn fool! Dancin' 'round drunk 8 o'clock in the mornin'. *(Willie cackles.)* Gonna slap you upside the head quicker'n a heartbeat you sorry motherfucker!

**MONKEY.** Joe! What / the hell?!

## MONKEY IN THE SHADE

**MINNIE.** I am standin' right here, Joseph!

**JOE.** Oh shit. Miz Minnie, I --

**MINNIE.** Willie, I believe, has not gone to bed. You're drunk by noon half the time that hardly makes you a Methodist. Think before you speak, Joseph.

**JOE.** Yes, ma'am! I am sorry. *(Willie laughs. The record stops. Willie drops a quarter in. "Lucille" plays again, Minnie groans, and exits into kitchen. Sean enters. He has his gear: hardhat, duffel bag, gloves, and a slicker. Monkey crosses to him, pissed.)*

**MONKEY.** The hell you been?!

**SEAN.** Forgot my slicker. *(Sean fumbles with his gear. His hardhat falls to the floor.)* Probably think I'm nervous or something.

**MONKEY.** You ain't nervous you're a moron. Now Delbert ain't the same brand a asshole as Doughbelly. But he don't like yankees so let me do the talkin'.

**SEAN.** Why'd you change your mind?

**MONKEY.** About what?

**SEAN.** Helping me keep my job.

**MONKEY.** Don't be stupid. This ain't my idea any more'n last time.

*(Janny is at Joe's table with a plate but looking at Sean.)*

**JANNY.** How you doin' this mornin', Sean Brooks? *(Serves Joe.)* Big day, huh? Can I get ya some breakfast? Ya gotta eat, big big day!

**SEAN.** I'm not hungry.

**JANNY.** Oh now. Delbert is kinda terrifyin' but that don' mean everything. *(Sean knows he's being teased, watches Janny go back behind bar. Minnie enters from kitchen, puts glasses below the bar.)*

**JOE.** Monkey, where you find this wingnut?

**MONKEY.** Walked right in here.

**JOE.** *(Turns to Sean.)* You better be comin' to work. We already heard 'bout you from Doughbelly. Monkey gonna be one hunerd feet too high in the sky to help your sorry ass.

**MONKEY.** You don't pull your weight Joe might have to break a sweat. That's what he's so worried about.



## MONKEY IN THE SHADE

**JOE.** Shit, I'll wring his ass. *(Enter DELBERT. He's 50, wears greasy overalls, filthy baseball cap, has long sideburns and a long unkempt soup strainer moustache.)*

**DELBERT.** Here we go! Howdy, Monkey! Joseph.

**MONKEY.** Delbert.

**DELBERT.** Miz Minnie! Miz Minnie, where you at?! *(Minnie pops her head up from behind the bar plops down a to go cup.)*

Thank ya, Miz Minnie! *(Promptly spits tobacco juice in cup, regards Sean.)* All right NOW! Goodness gracious. This him? Doughbelly wadn' lyin'. Well let's see now, young man, ya got yer gear here, I see ya got yer oil gloves and -- Only one pair? Ya need three pairs at least there, bud. Got yer hard hat. Got your slicker, and some ... nice boots, you bet! Them's nice, son. *(Sean and Delbert regard one another. Sean attempts a smile. Delbert stomps down hard on Sean's foot.)*

**SEAN.** AAAGGGHH! GOD DAMN! What the hell are you doing?!

**DELBERT.** I knew it! It's a goddamn yankee!

**MONKEY.** *(Laughs.)* You knew he's a yankee, Delbert, stop playin' the fool, man.

**DELBERT.** Now, Monkey, listen to me, now.

**MONKEY.** Yeah.

**DELBERT.** How come you the only yankee I can stand to look at.

**MONKEY.** You wouldn't talk to me for months 'til I kicked hell outta Joe that time.

**DELBERT.** That's true. Deserved it too, hard-headed bastard.

**JOE.** Fuck both a y'all.

**MONKEY**

**DELBERT**

**MINNIE**

Whoa! God damn!

What the hell!

Joseph!

**JOE.** Shit! Sorry! Miz Minnie, I thought you was in the kitchen!

**MINNIE.** Well, that is where I am going now! Lord of grace. Janny! *(Minnie storms into kitchen followed by Janny. Delbert spits tobacco.)*

**DELBERT.** WHERE THE HELL YER STEEL TOED BOOTS, MAN?!

**SEAN.** I thought I could get by until I --

MONKEY IN THE SHADE

**DELBERT.** HOW 'BOUT I DROP A HUNERD FOOT A PIPE ON YOUR FOOT HOW YOU GET BY THEN WITH HALF A FOOT, YANKEE DUMB ASS! DOUGHBELLY LET YOU WORK WITH THESE?! HE OUGHTTA BE SHOT!!

**MONKEY.** Calm down, man.

**DELBERT.** How'm I gonna calm down?! You gonna vouch for him?!

**MONKEY.** Hell, this ain't my idea.

**DELBERT.** Got that right! Where is Clay anyway?!

**MONKEY.** Not here.

**DELBERT.** 'Course not!

**MONKEY.** Why? What was you gonna do if he was? (*Awkward pause.*) Kid needs some help findin' his way no doubt –

**DELBERT.** How you gonna help him on the ground while yer standin' on a monkeyboard?

**JOE.** That's what I said!

**DELBERT.** Shut up, Joe.

**SEAN.** What's a monkeyboard?

**JOE.** Jeeesus!

**DELBERT.** SHUT UP, JOE! Where ya from, yankee?

**SEAN.** Um, Minnesota.

**DELBERT.** Minnesota! You a Eskimo?

**SEAN.** That's Alaska.

**DELBERT.** That's Alaska. (*Spits tobacco.*) Colder'n a witches tit, I hear.

**SEAN.** In the wintertime it's very cold.

**DELBERT.** River start up there?

**SEAN.** The Mississippi? Um, yeah, the source is Lake Itasca. It's just a trickle where it comes out of the lake. You can actually step across it. (*Beat.*)

**DELBERT.** Well, that is just fascinating. This the *tail end* a the Mississippi. You done found the butthole of America, son. Come summertime you gonna melt like a snowcone!

**SEAN.** *What is a monkeyboard?*

**MONKEY.** It's what the derrick man stands on while headin' pipe.

## MONKEY IN THE SHADE

**SEAN.** That's why they call you Monkey.

**DELBERT.** No! Monkey always jumpin' 'round the derrick on the cross beams. Slidin' down the air wench cable to get down, don' bother with no ladder, by God. Man got no fear a heights! That why they call him Monkey. Best derrick man in the oil patch. And you gonna be the worst roughneck I ever seen. And that ain't good. I already got Joe on my crew.

**JOE.** Hey. C'mon man --

**DELBERT.** So now I got the worst and second worst roughnecks in the oil patch both on my crew!

**SEAN.** I'm a real fast learner. Okay, I admit I wasn't last time but.... The truth is I couldn't understand half what Doughbelly said with the engines and he always had like a pound of Red Chief tobacco in his mouth, it was like -- *(Delbert spits into his cup.)* But I can understand you just fine. Look man, if I don't get it this time you can fire me and I'll swim back to Pointe La Haeche.

**DELBERT.** Oh, I got your permission to fire ya do I?!

**SEAN.** I've got nothing! I need a job. Please! I'm asking you for a job. Not Clay. Me. *(They regard one another.)*

**DELBERT.** You do what I say when I say it or you *will* be back in Pointe La Haeche quicker'n a heartbeat you got me, snowcone?

**SEAN.** Yes! Thank you! Name's Sean, Sean / Brooks.

**DELBERT.** Sure, Snowcone, whatever you say. Get us some coffees while you're at it. Miz Minnie! *(Sean limps over to the bar. Janny and Minnie enter from kitchen.)*

**SEAN.** Hey. Four coffees to go? Clay said I'm okay with the tab -- *(Janny stops him with a gesture, starts getting the coffees.)*

Where is Clay anyway? Haven't seen him for a few days. *(Everything stops. Silence. Minnie glares. Janny turns and stares at him, turns back and resumes pouring the coffees. Sean takes in the silence. Minnie finally breaks the moment.)*

**MINNIE.** *(Almost a whisper.)* Clay's gone on business, Sean. *(Janny hands Sean a bag with the coffees.)*

**DELBERT.** Let's do it! *(Sean collects his things and passing Monkey gives him a "what the fuck!" look, then exits. Delbert and*

## MONKEY IN THE SHADE

*Monkey exchange a look. Exit Delbert, Joe. Monkey sees Janny, Minnie, and Willie staring at him, shakes his head, exits. Willie goes to put more money in the jukebox.)*

**MINNIE.** Willie, you feel free to play that song, I know you love it so. But I will be cutting off your ears and nailing them above the bar. Just so you know. *(Willie puts money away. Minnie exits to kitchen. Willie dances to the music in his head.)*

### SCENE 4

*Clay and Minnie's. Late night after closing. One week later. Clay and Sean sit at a table. Each has a drink, pondering.*

**CLAY.** Fuckin' Delbert. Sumbitch fires everybody ... at least once.

**SEAN.** I don't think that's true.

**CLAY.** Learnin' the job, any shithead can learn the job. Thing is ya can't have them boys thinkin' ya gonna get yourself killed, is the thing.

**SEAN.** Or them.

**CLAY.** Or them! That's right! Ya can't scare 'em like that! Hidin' your fear with a attitude don' work neither. Ya gotta get along!

**SEAN.** I need to wake up.

**CLAY.** That's right! Wake up!

**SEAN.** I've been fired twice now. Twice!

**CLAY.** Shut up and drink your drink. Good?

**SEAN.** Why are you being so nice to me?

**CLAY.** What ya mean?

**SEAN.** I was led to believe that you were a man to be feared.

**CLAY.** Me?

**SEAN.** I was warned against owing you anything.

**CLAY.** People are funny. Now, them that lack respect, they tend to kinda find my dark side, but you ain't like that. You're smart!

**SEAN.** Okay.

**CLAY.** And sensitive. I see you're very sensitive --

**SEAN.** Well --

## MONKEY IN THE SHADE

**CLAY.** Ain't nothin' wrong with bein' sensitive! Unless you are *too* sensitive.

**SEAN.** Monkey says I don't belong here.

**CLAY.** This the world, son! Ya don' belong in the world where do ya belong?!

**SEAN.** So.... You killed somebody? You killed somebody and went to prison?

**CLAY.** .....

**SEAN.** Sorry. Is that not...?

**CLAY.** .....

**SEAN.** It's common knowledge. Actually.

**CLAY.** That right? *Actually?*

**SEAN.** What are you ... ? *(Clay, from where he sits, flips the table over on Sean and sends him sprawling. Sean crawls out from under the table.)*

**SEAN.** You think that hurt? That didn't hurt. *(Clay violently drags Sean to his feet.)*

**SEAN.** Okay! I'm sorry! I'm sorry! I'm sorry! *(Clay releases Sean.)*

**CLAY.** Fix the table.

**SEAN.** I didn't tip it over.

**CLAY.** FIX THE GOD DAMN TABLE! *(Sean quickly rights the table, the chair.)* Glass over there. *(Sean quickly picks it up.)* Have a seat. *(Sean sits. They regard one another.)* You lucky we alone in here.

**SEAN.** It's not luck.

**CLAY.** Huh. I get you.

**SEAN.** Yeah?

**CLAY.** Tryin' to convince yourself you are whatever the hell you think you wanna be. Instead a the pussy you afraid you are. You gonna learn who you are. The truth will be revealed! Can't be helped. Will ya be a pussy 'bout *that*, that the question. *(Clay goes behind the bar, throws a book on the bar.)*

**CLAY.** I seen you like to read.

**SEAN.** *(Goes over, picks up book, is totally astonished.)* What?! Henry Miller?!

## MONKEY IN THE SHADE

**CLAY.** You know him?

**SEAN.** Yeah! ... I mean .... Holy shit ...

**CLAY.** *The Rosy Crucifixion*. A trilogy in three parts! *Sexus*, *Plexus*, and *Nexus*. That the first part. *Sexus*. Read it, tell me what ya think. We'll have us a literary discussion.

**SEAN.** Okay. Thanks! (*Flipping through finds something in the book.*) Hello. (*Reading a slip of paper.*) "David Grossman, 1625 Laurel Drive, Belle Chasse."

**CLAY.** Whoa! That's where that was. (*Takes the paper from Sean.*) Ya put somethin' where ya sure ya won' lose it.... Hold on. I'm thinkin'. I'm thinkin'. Oh, the wheels are turnin'. Look out! I got me an idea.

**SEAN.** What?

**CLAY.** How'd you like to work for me?

**SEAN.** Excuse me?

**CLAY.** Well, you see that name there, David Grossman. That a man I got to pay a visit. But it don' have to be me. It could jus' as well be you. That would free me up to do other things. See I have to take these little trips every now and again but they are gettin' to be a nuisance. But you could go, collect the money, bring it back --

**SEAN.** Wait wait wait. Collect the *money*?

**CLAY.** This Mr. Grossman owes some money.

**SEAN.** To you?

**CLAY.** No, not to me. He owe money to somebody who has asked me to collect the money *for him*. For which he pay me a percentage. But I got shit to do so --

**SEAN.** Clay, I don't think so --

**CLAY.** I ain't done! I'd split that percentage with you. Tell the truth, Monkey might be right. Maybe a oil rig jus' ain't the place for you. But this job all you got to do is drive!

**SEAN.** Clay ... I see a lot of movies, okay. I mean I'm pretty sure I know what this is and I am way more cut out for an oil rig, shitty a roughneck as I am, than something like this.

**CLAY.** Somethin' like what.

**SEAN.** You know.... Breaking people's legs.

## MONKEY IN THE SHADE

**CLAY.** (*Laughs hard.*) You are *hilarious*, you know that 'bout yourself? Break legs. Like I gonna have you break somebody's legs. No no if Mr. Grossman don' wanna give you the money you jus' say *Okay, then Clay will have to pay you a visit tomorrow.* He still don' pay you thank him for his time and go away.

**SEAN.** I don't have a car.

**CLAY.** I'll lend ya mine!

**SEAN.** Which one?

**CLAY.** Which one. The Lincoln! Tell you what, whether he give you the money or not, we tear up your tab.

**SEAN.** Really?

**CLAY.** He pay you, we split our percentage *and* I tear up your tab! He don' pay I *still* tear up your tab! And Sean, this regular easy work, at least one visit a week.

**SEAN.** How much a visit?

**CLAY.** Hunerd fifty or so with no tax. Couple visits a week. That beat rig pay, son! (*They regard one another.*)

**SEAN.** No.

**CLAY.** No. Why?

**SEAN.** I don't wanna work for the people you work for.

**CLAY.** You'd be workin' for me.

**SEAN.** See. That's the kind of thing you say to someone who is stupid. (*Clay smiles.*)

**CLAY.** I apologize. Lemme make it up to ya. I'll have a word with Delbert, get ya back on / his crew.

**SEAN.** No! You *really* don't have to -- !

**CLAY.** I don't have to do nothin'! I do what I wanna do! Now you go read that Henry Miller. (*Sean looks at the book and ponders, Clay laughs.*) I mean now! Get gone! I got shit to do! (*Sean takes the book and exits upstage. Clay looks at the slip of paper.*)

### SCENE 5

*Three weeks later. Monkey up on **the Monkeyboard** in a safety belt. Sunset shoots across him. We hear engines, seagulls.*

## MONKEY IN THE SHADE

**MONKEY.** Sun takin' a dive. Right into the gulf. Miles of delta grass bright green lit up like neon. Can you see this? Even if you are out there can ya see and hear? I imagine the dead are blind and deaf like that Helen Keller. And if ya wanna get some news from Earth ya gotta put your hands on to get the sound. What the dead got for hands. Must be a dark road to paradise. I wanna feel your dead hands on my face. Let me know you're there. And tell me why. You took it all away. *(Sean appears at the top of ladder behind Monkey.)*

**SEAN.** Hey.

**MONKEY.** JESUS FUCK!!

**SEAN.** Delbert said I should come up here, have you teach me. Who were you talking to?

**MONKEY.** Son of a bitch! Don't you EVER do that again!

**SEAN.** Bet I can guess.

**MONKEY.** Don't make me hit you! We're a hundred feet up!

**SEAN.** Hundred? Feels like a thousand. Man, what a view, holy shit!

**MONKEY.** *(Taking off his safety belt.)* Come here! You buckle this at the back here too in case this one lets go. The ropes run back to the rails see? You adjust 'em back there soes you can lean out at the right angle. *(Sean is now in Monkey's safety belt, inching toward the front of the Monkeyboard.)*

**SEAN.** You know, if a person had a religious nature this could be the perfect job. Talking to the sky.

**MONKEY.** Don't fuck with me, Sean.

**SEAN.** You were talking to Lucy again last night. I never had anyone get inside me like that. You talk to her in your sleep. You talk to her when you're alone. She makes you scream into a pillow at night –

**MONKEY.** I get pains! Idiot! I get this pain like a knife in my gut! So I sleep with a pillow on my stomach to muffle the scream! I don't wanna wake -- !

**SEAN.** She your ex-wife? *(Monkey kicks Sean hard in the ass and Sean goes over the edge of the Monkeyboard. He dangles upside down, hanging from the safety belt. He flails about in a panic.)*



## MONKEY IN THE SHADE

*Monkey watches calmly. Eventually Monkey grabs a rope with one hand, reaches down and quickly pulls up Sean by the collar and sits him on the Monkeyboard. Sean gasps for air.)*

**SEAN.** YOU FUCKING LUNATIC!! MOTHERFUCKER! OH MY GOD!! YOU ASSHOLE!!

**MONKEY.** What're you yellin' at me for? You slipped. *(It takes Sean awhile to calm down. He eventually stands. They regard one another.)*

**SEAN.** So. Who's Lucy? *(Monkey can't believe it.)*

**MONKEY.** Whoa. Whoa.... Maybe.... I was just askin'.... Maybe you're.... My sister. Lucy is my sister. Was.

**SEAN.** Oh.

**MONKEY.** Four years ago I'm drivin' a tractor trailer 'bout four in the mornin'. On this little two lane state highway in the flatlands, Nebraska. I'm poppin' bennies to stay awake. Thinkin' about my family back in Pennsylvania. How my wife is ready to kick me out 'cause I'm never home and drivin' a truck is all I know. I see somethin' down the road. Somebody way down the highway dressed in white, standin' in the road. I think a hitchhiker but then I get closer and it's my sister, Lucy. Standin' in the road. It's the middle a nowhere, four in the mornin', Nebraska cornfields forever. She's wearin' her nighty. Barefoot. Her feet all muddy. She's yellin' somethin'. Standin' in the middle a the road. I hit the brakes but I'm goin' fast. I'm almost on top a her. I see her eyes black as outer space. Yellin' words I can't hear. I turn the wheel.

**SEAN.** Wait –

**MONKEY.** Jackknife. Wake up in the hospital with two cops lookin' down at me and a doctor and machines beepin' an' shit. They tell me three things. First, I fucked up that truck big time, they found the speed in my blood, I ain't never drivin' no truck again.

**SEAN.** Damn.

**MONKEY.** Two. My wife was notified a what happened. She washes her hands. Files for divorce.

**SEAN.** While you're still in the hospital?

## MONKEY IN THE SHADE

**MONKEY.** And three, they say my sister Lucy died about four o'clock that mornin'.... Don't happen every day somebody dead drops by on their way out. I saw the other side. My sister who I loved like nothin' on this earth. The mornin' she died I saw ... a miracle.... And it completely fucked me up! Took everything. My family. My job. Fucked me up entirely! So tell me why my sister would do that to me?

**SEAN.** I ... don't think she did.

**MONKEY.** Whatta you mean --

**SEAN.** You were stoned, man.

**MONKEY.** Speed don't make you see fuckin' ghosts -- !

**SEAN.** They tell you about your sister. You're all doped up --

**MONKEY.** They asked what made me jackknife! I told 'em! I said I saw my sister! In the road. My sister Lucy! Then, *then* they say we called your wife, she says tell him sister Lucy died at four o'clock. Room got *real* quiet. Cops lookin' at their shoes. (*Pause, Engines, seagulls.*)

Why'd she do that?

**SEAN.** I..... Sorry, Monkey. It's not / real to me.

**MONKEY.** Take that belt off! You're goin' back down! Fuckin' --

**SEAN.** Monkey, I'm sorry! I just can't pretend I believe something I -- !

**MONKEY.** No, you know what, that ain't it! You're just fuckin' ... cold, Sean! And I'm a fuckin' idiot. Next thing! When you go back down .... Look. You're doin' better but you still ain't gettin' it. You got to jump in. Okay? When we ain't goin' in or comin' out of the hole, like now, you got to be first to go at whatever is goin' on. Do not *ever* stand there and watch a man work. Jump in! You see a man fightin' to get two pipes apart get in there with him and get rough with it. We need bags of salt from the keyway be the first to carry 'em up. Have a pipe wrench in your hand at *all times*. You see Delbert, ask him what next. Every time you see him, "What next?" Maybe someday he'll call you What Next instead of Snowcone! That'll be a sweet victory. You hear me?

**SEAN.** I hear you.

## MONKEY IN THE SHADE

**MONKEY.** Go on. Tell Delbert I'll be down. And Sean.

**SEAN.** Yeah.

**MONKEY.** What else you gonna say?

**SEAN.** ..... I slipped.

**MONKEY.** Good man. *(Sean exits. Monkey turns to look at sunset.)*

### SCENE 6

*Clay and Minnie's. Late afternoon. Two months later. May. Monkey stands at bar, drinking a beer, talking with Janny, now six months pregnant. Sean sits at a table in the middle of the room. He is reading, rifling with energy through a week's worth of newspapers. He is also drunk and drinking whiskey. Clay is at the upstage end of the bar working on bills and receipts with an adding machine and ledger, drinking whiskey, his mood increasingly turbulent. Willie is passed out at another table.*

**MONKEY.** He imagines a boy on top of you. That's hard on a dad.

**JANNY.** Didn' have to kick me out.

**CLAY.** You way better off here than with that tight ass.

**JANNY.** I ain't sayin' I ain't.

**SEAN.** Your dad sounds like a do right asshole.

**JANNY.** All men are assholes. Men are *scum*. Men are *filth*.

**CLAY.** Jesus -- !

**MONKEY.** How old are you?

**JANNY.** Sixteen.

**SEAN.** Am I scum?

**JANNY.** You ain't a man. *(Laughing off his look.)* I meant it as a compliment! How'd he do this last time?

**MONKEY.** Better. Even Delbert says so. Couple months since we got him on a monkeyboard. *(Janny starts, feels her belly.)*

**JANNY.** Oh! There he goes.

**MONKEY.** Thought about names?

**JANNY.** A boy I think I name him Cyrus.

**SEAN.** After Cyrus the Great, Persian general and empire builder?

## MONKEY IN THE SHADE

**JANNY.** Uh Cyrus the granddaddy. Auto mechanic and shit stormer.

**SEAN.** I say we call him Cyrus the Great. He allowed the ancient Hebrews to return home from the Babylonian exile. You and me both being exiles it makes perfect sense.

**JANNY.** Okay, first off, I don't know what the hell you talkin' about. Second, my kid's name ain't got nothin' to do with you. And third, what the fuck. I heard you was actually *in college*, and you dropped out! That right?

**CLAY.** Sean too smart for college.

**MONKEY.** Bullshit. 'Course Sean belongs in school.

**CLAY.** Damn right and this is it!

**MONKEY.** Anyways! A boy, Cyrus the Great.

**JANNY.** And if a girl I was thinkin' Chastity. Chastity Boudreaux! That sounds good, right?

**CLAY.** *(Laughing.)* Holy shit!

**JANNY.** What?! Oh you don' think I know what it means?! I know what it fuckin' means and I like the way it fuckin' sounds!!

**CLAY.** HEY, take it easy, girl!

**SEAN.** Chastity Boudreaux! What a beautiful fucking name!

**JANNY.** Thank you very fuckin' much!

**CLAY.** OKAY! Jesus. Sean gonna be a writer or businessman or mob boss, is what I predict. Sean need to do somethin' special someday to justify what a pain in the ass he is today.

**MONKEY.** Or the pain he's causin' his *parents* that's for sure.

**CLAY.** He *need* to learn about life! Did Henry Miller go to college? He did not.

**SEAN.** Might be a journalist. See the world. I dunno.

**MONKEY.** For sure need to go to school for that. *(Phone rings. Clay answers.)*

**CLAY.** Clay and Minnie's. *(Monkey crosses over to Clay. Clay shakes his head no. Monkey slowly crosses back to where he was.)* This is Clay. *(Clay turns away from the others. A muffled conversation follows. No one else speaks for a while, curious about what's going on. We hear a tugboat horn from the canal. Monkey turns to Janny.)*

## MONKEY IN THE SHADE

**MONKEY.** Janny. What do you wanna do?

**JANNY.** What?

**MONKEY.** When you're all growed up.

**JANNY.** Oh! Um. *(She's never been asked this.)* I mean ... I ain't made up my mind yet. I got time, right? *(She gets another kick.)*

Damn.

**SEAN.** What's that like?

**JANNY.** 'Bout as weird as you'd expect. Why, you wanna feel -- ? *(Clay slams down the phone, seethes. Pours himself a shot, downs it. Tugboat horn. He sees the others staring at him.)*

**CLAY.** Monkey. Got a minute?

**MONKEY.** No.

**CLAY.** What ya mean no? You don' know what I want.

**MONKEY.** I know exactly what you want. Answer is no.

**CLAY.** Huh. Sean! Got a minute?

**MONKEY.** *(To Sean.)* Man, don't you fuckin' move. *(Clay and Monkey eyeball each other.)*

**CLAY.** Sean. When you gonna finish that book I give ya? *Sexus.*

**SEAN.** Finished it a while ago.

**CLAY.** Well, why didn' ya say? I get the next one for ya. *Plexus!* Now I see ya catchin' up on the week's news. Check out Friday's paper. Front page. You'll know it when ya see it. Now where the hell my wife at? Janny, when I'm back we gonna start them specials. They ain't gonna be ready 'less we start now. Back in a flash. *(As Clay heads for the hall he kicks a leg of Willie's table. Willie rouses, looks around. Clay exits upstage.)*

**JANNY.** Willie. Clay don' like you sleepin' here. You should go to bed, baby.

**WILLIE.** But I don' wanna miss nothin'! *(Willie puts his head down on the tabletop again. Sean has rummaged through the papers and found the article. Pause.)*

**SEAN.** Monkey. Remember I told you I found a name in a book Clay gave me?

**MONKEY.** After he tried to talk you into doin' collections?

## MONKEY IN THE SHADE

**SEAN.** Yeah. This is the guy! (*Reads.*) "David Grossman. Recently named as a witness...." I thought he just owed money -- "apparently forced off the road." *Monkey.* He's dead. (*Monkey sits at Sean's table. They both study the article. Willie turns his head still on the table to listen. Janny, agitated, busies herself behind the bar.*)

**SEAN.** Is this my fault? Monkey.

**MONKEY.** No. No! Do not let 'im freak you out! Ain't done tryin' to enlist you, is my guess. Look. He's in hock for this place. Couldn't get a real mortgage. Ex-con with mob connections. Now he owes the same people he's gotta do collections for to make the money to cover the loan for this place. 'Cause the money he makes here is shit! Fuckin' awkward situation, man.

**SEAN.** What's that got to do with me?!

**WILLIE.** Prob'ly the cocaine.

**MONKEY.** What – Willie, what are you -- Shut up, man -- !

**WILLIE.** Sorry! Nothin'! I don' know nothin'! But it prob'ly the cocaine – (*Delbert and Joe crash in, both drunk.*)

**DELBERT.** Here we be, we made it! Howdy Monkey! Hey Janny. Well hey dere's ol' What Next!

**SEAN.** Delbert.

**JOE.** I'm hungry! (*Clay is entering up center with book.*)

**JANNY.** Well, what you want to eat, Joe?

**JOE.** You! (*He cracks up then sees Clay.*) Oh, hi Clay ...

**DELBERT.** Jus' a beer for me.

**CLAY.** Janny. Go on get some gumbo for Joe. All I ever seen Joe eat is gumbo. (*Janny exits to kitchen. Clay gets a beer for Delbert.*)

**CLAY.** What we gonna do with you, Joe?

**JOE.** I dunno.

**CLAY.** You dunno. Quicker'n a heartbeat I will fuck you up 'til you stay fucked. Nod let me know ya hear me. (*Joe looks down, nods, silence.*) Sean! Come see. Come see, I said! (*Sean crosses tentatively. Clay hands him a book. Janny enters with gumbo for Joe.*) Since you done with *Sexus!* Here ya go with *Plexus!* When you done with that I'll give ya *Nexus!* Okay! Where the hell my wife?!

## MONKEY IN THE SHADE

I'm gonna have to cook them specials it gonna be a surefire disaster!  
Help me out, Janny.

**JANNY.** Uncle Clay, I gotta watch the / bar'n all.

**CLAY.** Won' take long ... come on, now.

**WILLIE.** *(Suddenly stands.)* I could use a beer --

**CLAY.** Look who's up! Sorry, Willie, not 'till you pay the tab ya got – Janny! Ain't got all day. *(Janny conspicuously takes off her apron, throws it on the bar, and walks slowly into the kitchen. Clay is about to follow.)*

**WILLIE.** My social security don' come for days! I wanna drink now! NOW! I'll throw this chair right through that mirror, by God! *(Willie tries to lift a chair, struggles, gives up pathetically. Clay sighs, exits into kitchen. Silence. Sean is studying the other men. Monkey, Willie, and Delbert are all looking down at the bar.)*

**SEAN.** What.... is going on? *(Shame in the air is palpable. Sean moves behind the bar and is approaching the kitchen door.)*

**MONKEY.** Sean. Sean! Don't. *(Sean gingerly pushes the kitchen door open and is about to enter when Miz Minnie enters through the side door with bulging bags of groceries. She is seen by Willie.)*

**WILLIE.** HEY MIZ MINNIE! HOW ARE YA THIS FINE AFTERNOON?!

**MINNIE.** Willie. Please. I'm exhausted, got a splittin' headache ... Sean. What are you doing behind the bar...? Sean! You answer me, please?

**SEAN.** Nothing. I'm sorry, Miz Minnie. *(Sean crosses from behind the bar as Clay enters from kitchen.)*

**MINNIE.** Clay, can you take these, please?? Where's Janny?

**CLAY.** Helpin' me in the kitchen. I was gonna start the specials.

**MINNIE.** With what? I went to make the shopping. *(Minnie encounters Janny in kitchen doorway. Janny slides past her, eyes averted. Minnie shoots a look at Clay.)* Clay. Help me put up the groceries. *(Exit Minnie briskly into kitchen.)*

**CLAY.** Willie. What can I get ya.

**WILLIE.** Bourbon.

## MONKEY IN THE SHADE

**CLAY.** You got it. Good man. *(Clay pours a big drink, serves Willie as they exchange a look. Willie looks down as he drinks. Clay exits into kitchen. Janny stands behind the bar not knowing where to look. Silence. Willie lifts his glass.)*

**WILLIE.** To Janny.

**DELBERT.** To Janny.

**MONKEY.** To Janny. *(The Men all hold up their glasses. It is a pitiful attempt at support to a young girl they are all failing to protect. Janny, still and silent as a statue stares them down. The men slowly lower their glasses and look away. Only then does Janny turn her back and find a chore. A silence of men together in shame. Sean shudders, crosses quickly to his table, sits heavily, finishes his whiskey, and stares off. The silent torture continues. Finally, Willie knocks back his drink and stumbles to the jukebox, punches in a tune. "Lucille" plays and breaks the spell. Sean flips through the book Clay gave him. He finds a slip of paper. He is taken aback but understands quickly. He gets Monkey's attention and motions him over. Sean hands Monkey the slip of paper.)*

**SEAN.** Another name in a book. *(Monkey reads the slip of paper and stiffens immediately.)*

**SEAN.** Michael Oakes. *(Monkey stares gravely.)* You know him?

**MONKEY.** Janny! Can I get a bourbon, please?

**DELBERT**

**JOE**

**SEAN**

Me too, Janny.

Me too.

Me too, Janny.

*(Janny angrily and sloppily pours four shots. Monkey gets his, crosses to the window and looks out. Sean watches him, goes to the bar for his drink. Janny reacts to her baby kicking.)*

**SEAN.** 'Bout as weird as you'd expect? *(Sean holds out his hand toward her belly. Everyone stares. Janny shrugs, comes around the bar, stands in front of Sean. Everyone looks. Sean puts his hand on her belly. He feels a kick.)* Whoa! Wonder if it makes a noise in there.

**JANNY.** How should I know? *(Sean looks at her)* Go ahead. *(Sean puts his ear to her belly. Janny is tempted to touch Sean's head but does not. Sean feels a kick as Joe approaches.)*



## MONKEY IN THE SHADE

**SEAN.** Ha! Kid just kicked me in the head!

**JOE.** My turn.

**JANNY** *(To Joe, instantly furious.)* Stay THE FUCK away from me you! *(Sean jumps back. Janny storms back behind the bar. Joe looks at the floor, face reddening, fists clenching. Clay followed by Minnie enters from kitchen.)*

**CLAY.** What is goin' on in here?! Willie, how many times we gotta hear that damn song?!

**WILLIE.** It speaks to me, Clay. It speaks to me.

**CLAY.** Someone tell me / what is goin' on?

**JANNY.** Nothin. Everything's fine, Uncle Clay.

**MONKEY.** *(Still looking out the window.)* I remember when my daughters were kickin' like that. Funny how you can love somebody so much and you ain't even met 'em yet. Then they're born and they seem like they'll love you forever. For a time it's true.

**JANNY.** They ... love you, Monkey.

**MINNIE.** If they don't call it's ... they miss you so much they're scared to hear your voice. *(Sean knocks back his bourbon, Janny pours another.)*

**WILLIE.** What a kind thought, Miz Minnie!

**MIZ MINNIE.** I mean every word.

**JOE.** Or they callin' that 'ol boy shacked up with your wife daddy by now.

**DELBERT**

**CLAY**

**WILLIE**

Shut up, Joe!

There ya go now see?

Jesus God!

**MINNIE.** I will be in the *kitchen*, Clay, *if you need me*. Lord of grace. *(Exit Minnie into kitchen. All stare at Joe.)*

**CLAY.** Only Joe.

**DELBERT.** You got that right.

**JOE.** Well, I can't see it! Man sleeps with your wife ya pay him for it!

**MONKEY.** Uh. That ain't what the money's for, Joe.

**JOE.** What it for then?!

**MONKEY.** Man can't find work.

## MONKEY IN THE SHADE

**JOE.** He don' have to work! You work for weeks on end without no days off! Send all your money so that sumbitch can lie around all day nailin' your wife into a coma, by God!

**MONKEY.** EX-wife. Got two daughters. I'm supposed let 'em starve?

**JOE.** I mean if I do your wife will ya pay me, too?

**CLAY.** Monkey, I'm tellin' ya –

**JOE.** If I do his daughters will he buy me a house?! *(The SLAP comes instantly from Monkey across Joe's face.)*

**CLAY.** Whoa! There he is – ! *(And Monkey and Joe lunge into a careening scrap around the room, tables and chairs skidding and overturned. Clay doesn't rush to clamp it down but then he does, forcefully separating the two men during the following.)* All right, enough! That's it, I said! / NOW, god dammit!

**MONKEY.** I beat you bloody once I'll do it again, / piece a shit!

**JOE.** What the fuck, Monkey! I was jus' funnin' – !

**MONKEY.** I don't care what you say about me! But my wife, my daughters ain't open to discussion! YOU UNDERSTAND ME, SHITHEAD?!

**JOE.** I WAS JUS' FUNNIN' I SAID!

**WILLIE.** Yeah, that what you always say after you act like some backwoods East Texas coon ass! 'Cept about five minutes later you're bein' some backwoods coon ass again an' ya say you was only funnin' again. Let's face it Joe, you jus' one ragin' shit ass dumb ass back woods Texas coon ass, plain and simple! *(Laughter, hoots.)*

**DELBERT.** WHOOO! Willie on a tear today! Look out!

**JOE.** Fuck all y'all! What am I, your burrhead?!

**CLAY.** No, but that about all anyone can say about ya. *Joe ain't a burrhead.* That about it.

**SEAN.** Is that a racist reference? It is, isn't it. You're all fuckin' assholes / you know that, right?

**CLAY.** Hey! This boy's drunker'n shit.

**SEAN.** Hey, Joe! You always talking about Monkey's wife. Where the fuck is yours?

**CLAY**

**DELBERT**

**MONKEY**

## MONKEY IN THE SHADE

OHHH!                      God damn!                      Sean, stay out of it!

**JOE.** Yankee sumbitch. *(Joe is in Sean's face.)*

**CLAY.** Everybody knock it off! / Joe!

**WILLIE.** Don' worry, boy, only fight he ever won was with his wife. *(Joe spins toward Willie.)*

**CLAY.** Willie, I swear!

**WILLIE.** He don' like to be reminded!

**JOE.** DON' NOBODY TALK ABOUT MY WIFE!

**WILLIE.** But that the only fight you ever won, Joe!

**JOE.** BITCH I WILL KILL YOU WHERE YOU FUCKIN'  
STAND!!!

**MINNIE.** Now, Joseph! I hope you're not talkin' to me.  
*(Minnie has entered unseen from the kitchen. Joe spins round, stares stupidly at Minnie, drunk staggers. Willie cackles with besotted triumph, sits at a table. Minnie looks hard at Clay then exits into kitchen.)*

**WILLIE.** Dumb ass coon ass! *(Joe charges at Willie but is grabbed and thrown against the bar by Clay. Willie cackles. Clay takes two fists full of Willie's beard.)* Wha --?

**CLAY.** Tired a you stirrin' up this shit. *(Clay has to strain as Willie grabs Clay's wrists and starts to scream in disbelief. Clay rips two fists full of beard from Willie's face. Willie howls. Clay holds his hands high and sprinkles the white beard hairs over the table. Willie gingerly touches his face in shock, whimpering, hands trembling. Everyone else freezes until Joe laughs, still leaning against the bar.)*

**JOE.** God damn, Clay! First time I seen it snow in ol' Louisiana!  
*(Clay walks back behind the bar looks at Joe. Clay slaps Joe hard across the face. Joe gapes, not yet comprehending. Clay slaps Joe hard, three more times, with slow sadistic deliberation. Joe takes it, not daring to even raise his hands. He then covers his face and weeps from shame. Janny exits quickly out the side door. Clay brings out a revolver from under the bar and slams it down on the bar. Everyone flinches.)*

**CLAY.** I am the meanest motherfucker in the state a Louisiana!  
Anybody here say diff'rent?! *(Clay waits. Long silence except for*

## MONKEY IN THE SHADE

*Joe's weeping. Clay takes Joe by the ear, pulls him down to Willie's table, then pushes him in a chair. Willie and Joe sit together both covering their faces.) Sean. (Clay indicates Willie and Joe) Not alive. Not dead. Not men.*

**SEAN.** Schooling me, Clay? Makin' a man outta me?

**CLAY.** Who else ya got? *(Clay exits. Minnie enters, walks up to blackboard marked "Specials". She writes: "Chicken, Red Beans and Rice \$1.95". Minnie exits. Monkey walks behind the bar, pours a big bourbon, comes back and sits at the table with Willie and Joe. Monkey gently pulls Willie's hands away from his face, which is bloody, and helps him to drink. Sean watches Monkey's ministrations at the table of ruined men.)*

### SCENE 7

*Three months later, August and very hot. Clay and Minnie's. Midafternoon. Janny is behind the downstage end of the bar, CYRUS, her newborn baby, is on the bar in a basket. Merle Haggard on the jukebox.*

**JANNY.** Whooo goo goo woo goo goo. Whoooo atch cha cha. Atch cha cha. Yeah. Yeah. C'mon. Yeah yeah. Cyrus, giggle goddammit, what's the matter with you? *(Enter Clay through side door.)*

**CLAY.** Seen Minnie?

**JANNY.** In the kitchen. I'll get her.

**CLAY.** Don' move. *(Clay moves to the opposite end of the bar near the old metal cash register. He looks at her. Long pause.)*

**JANNY.** Oh we gonna do this out here / now?

**CLAY.** Shshsh. Put your hands like ya do. *(Janny assumes a kind of pose, her hands shielding her crotch. Clay quickly looks through the circular window in the door to the kitchen. He returns to the cash register. He looks at Janny and puts a finger to his lips. Long silence as they look at each other. Cyrus makes a gurgling sound. Janny turns to look.)*

## MONKEY IN THE SHADE

**CLAY.** Don' move, I said. *(Janny returns to her position. A long pause between them that is filled with sounds from outside: trucks passing on Peters Road, sound of a tugboat moving down the canal, cars passing playing country music, seagulls. Clay very slowly approaches Janny down the length of the bar. When Clay is a little more than halfway to Janny she looks away, reaches over, and pinches some part of Cyrus. Cyrus screams then cries. Clay stops dead, scurries back to the cash register. Minnie enters from kitchen, hot and exhausted.)*

**MINNIE.** When did you get here?

**CLAY.** Jus' now. I need me some cash. *(He rings open the cash register takes out some cash.)* Gotta see a man 'bout a dog! *(Clay laughs, exits out the side door. Sean enters up center. Sean stops as he sees Minnie staring darkly at Janny and Janny look away. Minnie walks up briskly and pinches the back of Janny's arm. Janny yells. Cyrus continues to cry.)*

**MINNIE.** Such a fussy baby. *(Minnie exits into the kitchen. Janny returns to Cyrus, rubbing her arm. Neither has noticed Sean.)*

**JANNY.** Shshshshsh. I'm sorry, baby. Atch cha chaaa. Yeeaaayah. C'mon, Cyrus, smile for me. *(Sean tentatively enters further into room. Janny looks up and sees him. Sean has the Henry Miller book.)*

**SEAN.** Um. Looking for a place to read. My room is too hot.

**JANNY.** That what you do when you're off? Read?

**SEAN.** I keep going to New Orleans and blowing out all my pay. Gotta wise up.

**JANNY.** What ya do in New Orleans?

**SEAN.** Hear blues and jazz mainly. Walk around. Go to the movies. Saw *Saturday Night Fever* which was good. And a prison movie called *Short Eyes*, which was great. I was the only white guy in the theater.

**JANNY.** Well. Ain't you somethin'. I'm sure they all thought you must be one a the good ones.

**SEAN.** Um. How about a beer? *(She gets him a beer. She gets one for herself. They drink in silence.)*

## MONKEY IN THE SHADE

**JANNY.** You gonna apologize, you?

**SEAN.** For what?

**JANNY.** You know what.

**SEAN.** No.

**JANNY.** Starin' at me all the damn time.

**SEAN.** Oh. I don't think I can apologize for that.

**JANNY.** Sure you can!

**SEAN.** I don't mean to get caught looking at you but ... once I'm looking at you it's so hard to look away.

**JANNY.** .... Shut up.

**SEAN.** It's true! It's not just you're so pretty it's your fashion sense. The way you wear a different color bandana every day of the week to tie up your hair. That is very cute and adorable and charming and delightful in case you didn't know.

**JANNY.** I got me some bandanas.

**SEAN.** I think about your freckles too when you aren't around.

**JANNY.** Oh, my freckles huh?

**SEAN.** Yeah, those freckles on your nose? And your collar bone.

**JANNY.** Boy, I got freckles you don' even know about.

**SEAN.** Oh my God. You wanna go to the movies with me? (*She laughs, shakes her head.*) Or just like take a walk? I've got something I wanna talk / with you about.

**JANNY.** Sean. There ain't no point to it.

**SEAN.** What? Why.... I think / there is.

**JANNY.** I already got me a kid, the daddy gone to the damn *army*.

**SEAN.** I know.

**JANNY.** Instead a goin' to damn *jail*. For statutory *rape*. So how stupid can I actually *be*? (*He looks at the floor, she waits.*) Well?

**SEAN.** I ... when I read? I can't go more than about two pages. No matter how good the book is. I have to think about you.

**JANNY.** I ain't got that problem. (*Sean stares at her, starts to exit, stops.*)

**SEAN.** What's going on with Clay?

**JANNY.** Excuse me? (*Janny flushes, comes from behind the bar, pushes Sean away from kitchen door.*)

## MONKEY IN THE SHADE

**SEAN.** Everybody knows –

**JANNY.** Yeah? How long *you* know you only askin' now?! (*Sean looks away, she gets very close, hushed.*) How fuckin' long, Sean?! You wanna know? He make me show my tits! I unbutton my shirt, pull it down from my shoulders, hold my hands jus' so. He say I look like a virgin milk maid in a old painting. Fuckin' weird thing to say when I was pregnant but... He jus' look at me. Never touches me. But he want to. And he will. One day. Then he cries.

**SEAN.** He *cries*??

**JANNY.** You don' want me.

**SEAN.** I do.

**JANNY.** Maybe you want me to want you but you don' fuckin' want me!

**SEAN.** That's not / true –

**JANNY.** (*Furious.*) Or you would *do somethin'*! But you ain't! All y'all fuckin'... Fuckin' *worthless*! Cowards! Failures! Do nothin' motherfuckers! I will haunt you all! Lost boy! (*Janny stands there shaking. Sean is shocked, shamed, angry. He gets control of himself, places the bottle on a table, and exits upstage. Janny goes to Cyrus.*) Kochee kooo. Oocky wooky koochee.... (*Crying.*) Cyrus. Please!

### SCENE 8

***Monkeyboard.*** *Still August. Unbelievably hot. Sean stands at the end of the monkeyboard. We hear engines, seagulls. Sean wears the safety belt. Monkey stands behind him barking orders. Sean is nervous, hot, mad.*

**MONKEY.** I'm sayin ya gotta watch! Ya gotta be careful on this end to see what section he puts the pipe down in soes you put the top end in the same section, see?! Otherwise we got a terrible mess! Now.... The elevator clamp holds the top a the pipe. You release the pipe by pullin' on the horn. When you release the pipe you grab the pipe and hook it with your elbow. Why you hook it with your elbow?

## MONKEY IN THE SHADE

**SEAN.** Because if you lose the pipe it –

**MONKEY.** Ya lose the pipe you got a hundred foot a pipe bendin', bouncin' around this god damn tower! Ain't a good thing!

**SEAN.** I know! I was there! When *you* did it!

**MONKEY.** That's right! Even I fuck up! So how careful *you* got to be?! Really fuckin' / careful!

**SEAN.** So Clay makes Janny show him her tits. He looks at her tits and then he cries. *(Beat.)*

**MONKEY.** Well.... that ain't good. That's it?

**SEAN.** That's it?!!

**MONKEY.** Whatta you want me to say?!

**SEAN.** We gotta do something!

**MONKEY.** Like what?!

**SEAN.** Like I dunno! Help her!

**MONKEY.** Get out there! Now! / Go on!

**SEAN.** Why're you being such a fuckin' asshole?! Monkey, / listen -  
-

**MONKEY.** Delbert's waitin'! GO ON! *(Monkey indicates the end of the Monkeyboard. Sean approaches the edge slowly.)*

**MONKEY.** He *cries*? She said that?

**SEAN.** We gotta get her out, man.

**MONKEY.** Yeah? You gotta go too. He'll know it was you helped her. Got enough to pay Clay and still go off with a girl and a baby? A *fuckin' baby*?

**SEAN.** I'm gonna do it whether you help me or not.

**MONKEY.** Delbert's waitin'! C'mon!

**SEAN.** I release the pipe by pulling the horn –

**MONKEY.** Whoa! Whoa, what are you doin'?! Ya gotta lean out! You can't control the pipe with your hips back like some jailhouse punk! Ya gotta lean out! *Fall* into the belt! You need the leverage with your legs otherwise you're gonna drop that pipe, kill half the crew, what the fuck's the matter / with you?!

**SEAN.** I'M FUCKING SCARED SHITLESS WHATTA YA THINK?!!



## MONKEY IN THE SHADE

**MONKEY.** We're takin' eighteen thousand feet of pipe outta that hole! Today! Now / do it!

**SEAN.** Motherfucker! Get away from me! I know what you're doing / goddammit -- !

**MONKEY.** Hey hey heeey! Don't be paranoid. *(Monkey smiles. Sean looks down, tries to steel himself but can't make himself fall forward. Monkey sighs, kicks Sean in the ass. Sean goes over the edge, hangs there, and flails helplessly.)*

**SEAN.** AAAAAGGGGHHH!!! Monkey! Monkey! Monkey! Monkey! Monkey! (etc.)

**MONKEY.** *(He yells down.)* HEY DELBERT!! GIVE US A MINUTE!

Sean. Michael Oakes goes the way of David Grossman we don't do what Clay wants. *(Sean flails, screams, but eventually settles down, finally hangs sideways and helpless. Monkey squats at the edge.)*

Tonight, after midnight, there's a tool boat. There is shit on that boat got nothin' to do with tools. How ya doin'?

**SEAN.** Fuck you.

**MONKEY.** Gonna be a bag. Duffel bag. Cocaine. Kilos a cocaine. I ain't got room in my gear for it all. You gotta take some. What I say?

**SEAN.** Tool boat. Cocaine.

**MONKEY.** You gonna help me?

**SEAN.** *(Indicating his situation.)* If I say no?!

**MONKEY.** I been trying to keep you outta this!

**SEAN.** Michael Oakes. *(Pause. Monkey hauls Sean back up on the Monkeyboard where Sean sits, weirdly calm.)*

**MONKEY.** Stand up.

**SEAN.** Michael Oakes. That name in the second book Clay gave me. It was pretty obvious you knew him. Can I ask you something?

What's your name, Monkey? You never told me your real name. *(They regard one another.)*

**MONKEY.** Michael Oakes.

**SEAN.** Shoulda told me.

**MONKEY.** Been tryin' to keep you outta this! Hell, been tryin' to keep *me* out of it.

## MONKEY IN THE SHADE

**SEAN.** Yeah but ... you caved. *(Pause.)*

**MONKEY.** I did. *(Pause.)*

**SEAN.** I'll help you if you help me with the Janny thing.

**MONKEY.** Plus you go too.

**SEAN.** Of course I go too. With her if she lets me. By myself if she won't.

**MONKEY.** You gotta pay Clay first. But then you gotta go. No matter what Clay says.

**SEAN.** Yeah.

**MONKEY.** You hear me?! No matter what he promises after this deal!

**SEAN.** Yeah, I said! *(Sean stands slowly. They shake hands. Pause. Sean turns and looks down off the edge of the Monkeyboard.)*

**SEAN.** How'd he finally get you?

**MONKEY.** Asked me to see him in his room. Showed me somethin' .... Called it a doily. I don't wanna talk about it...! Motherfucker.... I got two daughters. *(Sean studies Monkey then turns and looks off the edge of the Monkeyboard. Sean suddenly screams and falls forward. He is caught by the belt. He is leaning out at a forty-five degree angle. He looks down, screams some more, then laughs.)*

**SEAN.** AAAAAGGGHHH!!! C'MON YOU COON ASS MUTHAFUCKAS! HA HA HA HA HAA!

**MONKEY.** DELBERT!! YOU SEE THIS BOY?!! C'MON LET'S DO IT! *(Monkey makes a signal. We hear the engines rev until they roar.)*

### SCENE 9

*Clay and Minnie's, a week later, 2 o'clock in the afternoon. It is hot and darkly overcast through the window. Joe is very drunk at the bar talking to Minnie who is deeply annoyed and distracted.*

**JOE.** I mean ... Say it was you. What would it take for you to forgive me? I ain't even sayin' take me back! Though that would be

## MONKEY IN THE SHADE

great.... I'm sayin' please forgive me! Or even jus' talk to me.... Bear in mind she's maybe twenty years younger'n you and I ain't allowed within two hunderd yards.

**MINNIE.** Joseph. I know exactly what to do. Write her a letter. Not a love letter, mind. No ex-wife wants a love letter. But a letter in which you make a promise of the kind people make in suicide letters. But then you must keep your promise.

**JOE.** What are you sayin'?

**MINNIE.** I'm saying, Joseph, that women love it when men keep their promises. So here's what you do. Write a nice letter, tell her how much you miss her and if she won't take you back or forgive you ... you'll kill yourself. Then when she won't take you back, which she won't because, as you may remember, Joseph - *you broke her jaw* - then you keep your promise. She'll love it! Guaranteed.  
*(Joe stares stupefied.)*

**JOE.** What kind a bartender are you, anyway?! *(Minnie crosses from behind the bar to window.)*

**MINNIE.** Joseph, the world is very old but mostly weary of you. Now he knows I need to get on the road. Where is he? Look at those clouds! If I am to drive in a monsoon to Natchez I want the Lincoln! Oh look at this now. *(Minnie spins and heads behind the bar. Enter Delbert, Sean and Monkey with Willie, now clean shaven and slung over Monkey's shoulder. All drunk except Monkey.)*

**DELBERT.** Look what we found comin' back from Pointe La Haeche!

**MINNIE.** Willie! Where have you / been?

**DELBERT.** We stop in this here roadhouse for a beer. And there's ol' Willie! Drunk and dancin' to that same damn song! *(Janny enters from kitchen pushing a pram.)*

**MONKEY.** *(Putting down Willie.)* Kickin' an' screamin' the whole way back here. Says he's gotta grow his beard back.

**JANNY.** Willie, I never knew you had such a nice face. Ya look like a gentleman.

## MONKEY IN THE SHADE

**WILLIE.** Only reason I ain't got a beard is it got ripped out by the roots! *(Awkward pause. Monkey and Sean exchange a look. Monkey crosses up right, moving away from the crowd.)*

**MONKEY.** Hey, Janny. Bring Cyrus over here. Lemme see that baby. *(Janny crosses with pram. Over which -)*

**SEAN.** I think we ought to have a rousing chorus of "Lucille" in honor of Willie's return. *(Sings drunkenly, he is covering for Monkey's exchange with Janny which includes Monkey putting an envelope fat with bills in the pram.)* You picked a fine time to leave me, Lucille . . . *(Others laugh, scream.)*

**SEAN.**

C'mon, sing!

**DELBERT**

Four hungry children and  
crops in the field.

Where's a bar towel to gag 'im!

I've seen some bad times,  
lived through --

**JOE.** Hey! Shut the hell up!

**JANNY.** What the hell, Monkey.

**SEAN.** Sorry, what's that, Joe?!

**MONKEY.** Shshsh! This is from Sean.

**JOE.** I said, shut the hell up! I hate that song!

**SEAN.** Who doesn't, Joe? But I'm giving Willie a homecoming rendition to --

**JOE.** I'm tellin' you to shut it!

**SEAN.** You picked a fine time to leave me Lucille!

*(Joe advances on Sean as he sings. Minnie starts singing with Sean and Joe stops. All join in except Joe who goes back to the bar in defeat. Under which Monkey hands Janny another even fatter envelope and ushers her upstage out of view with the pram, then stands guard and sings with the others.)*

**ALL.** With four hungry children and a crop in the field.

I've seen some bad times, lived through some sad times  
but this time your hurtin' won't heal.

You picked a fine time to leave me Luciiiiille! *(Awkward pause.)*

**WILLIE.** Uhhh. Thank ye.

## MONKEY IN THE SHADE

**DELBERT.** Well, that was purty fun, boy howdy.

**SEAN.** MIZ MINNIE!

**MINNIE.** Good Lord!

**SEAN.** A round for everyone! On me!

**MINNIE.** What has got into you?

**DELBERT.** Monkey done created a monster. A yankee-style monster!

**SEAN.** You know, I am getting really sick of this yankee crap.

**DELBERT.** I was a yankee I'd feel sick myself.

**SEAN.** The Civil War ended over 110 years ago! YOU LOST! Get over it! (*UPROAR!!!*)

**DELBERT.**

**JOE**

**WILLIE**

WHOA! WHOA!  
CRAZY?!

WHAT THE FUCK!!

ARE YOU

What Next, stop!

YANKEE SUMBITCH!! You can't say shit  
like that!!

**MINNIE.** I beg your pardon, Sean, but that is simply NOT TRUE!!

**SEAN.** Jesus Christ --!

**MINNIE.** That war is fought every day in this land, every damn day! As long as it is being fought it is certainly not lost! And as long as there are poor white people suffering in this country and their suffering is *denied* that war is all this country is!

**DELBERT.**

**JOE**

**WILLIE**

WOOOOO! Miz Minnie!

YOU TELL 'IM!!

MIZ MINNIE!

**MINNIE.** I believe that is all that needs to be said on the matter!

**SEAN.** You people are insane. So Willie! What is it with that song, anyway?

**WILLIE.** It speaks to me.

**DELBERT.** C'mon, bud.

**MONKEY.** Yeah Willie c'mon, man. (*Janny enters from hallway with pram and holding a letter she has clearly just read. She seems moved. Minnie notices her entrance.*)

**WILLIE.** It's this dream. This woman in a dream.

**MINNIE.** What woman?

## MONKEY IN THE SHADE

**WILLIE.** She come to me in this dream. I don' know 'er from nowheres but the dream. Sometimes in the dream I recognize 'er from the other dreams an' I remember I am dreamin'.

**MONKEY.** Wait. When you're dreamin', you know you're dreamin'?

**WILLIE.** She always want to tell me somethin' real important. But the thing is ... she look like she loves me. So, naturally, I go an' reach for 'er. I can' help it. And then the whole thing jus' blows to smithereens! I wake up she ain' told me nothin'. So she leave me at the worst time, see? Like Lucille. In the song. That's why.

**DELBERT.** Willie, you a real nutwagon, son.

**MONKEY.** But she keeps coming back?

**WILLIE.** Yeah, 'cause I keep playin' the song! *(Gentle laughter. Janny walks over to Sean and kisses him tenderly on the cheek. Everyone stares, stunned. Silence.)*

**JANNY.** Bye. *(Sean understands she is leaving without him. Janny promptly crosses upstage with pram.)*

**MINNIE.** Janny! Where do you think you're going? *(Janny exits without looking back.)* Janny! JANNY! Sean, can you tell me what is going on, please?!

**SEAN.** No.

**MINNIE.** Excuse me?!

**SEAN.** I said no. I can't fucking tell you what the fuck is going on. *(Minnie stares. Sean drinks. Silence.)*

**WILLIE.** Uh, somebody wanna tell me why bullethead didn' come back with y'all? I reckon he still workin' yer crew.

**DELBERT.** Joe got sick. Come back early.

**WILLIE.** Gettin' his medicine at the bar, I see.

**MINNIE.** Just ignore him, Willie, PLEASE! Something is going on and one of you is going to tell me what it is.

**WILLIE.** I never know what's goin' on. Someone can buy me a bourbon.

**SEAN.** THAT'S A ROUND FOR EVERYONE, MIZ MINNIE!

**MINNIE.** WHAT IS WRONG WITH THIS BOY?!

**MONKEY.** Accordin' to Sean, he won a victory over terror.

## MONKEY IN THE SHADE

**DELBERT.** Ever since he worked the derrick there ain't no livin' with 'im. *(Joe passes out on the bar. Minnie throws up her hands.)*

**MONKEY.** Worked up there ten hours on Friday! Did real good too.

**WILLIE.** That when Joe got sick?

**DELBERT.** What?

**WILLIE.** When the boy worked the derrick that when Joe got sick?

**DELBERT.** Willie, you ain't as dumb as you look. *(Clay enters with a grocery bag. Minnie storms into kitchen.)*

**CLAY.** Y'all jus' get back? Well now, look at this, a new face! Welcome, bud, I'm Clay. *(Clay is extending his hand to Willie. Awkward pause.)*

**WILLIE.** Uh.... It's me....? Willie?

**CLAY.** Ohhh Willie! I'm sorry, man, thought finally a new customer! You look diff'rent! *(Very awkward pause.)*

**WILLIE.** I shaved?

**CLAY.** ..... Right. Like ya better this way.

**SEAN.** It's unanimous!

**CLAY.** This boy's drunker'n shit.

**DELBERT.** We're all drunker'n shit. *(Minnie enters fast with small yellow suitcase and wearing a raincoat.)*

**MINNIE.** Clay! Keys! You were supposed to be here an hour ago! I need to take the Lincoln. DID YOU SEE THE SKY?! Keys! *(Minnie takes keys from Clay and storms toward the side door.)*

**CLAY.** Where Janny at? *(Minnie shoots him a look and exits. Clay looks at the others.)* Goin' to Natchez see her sick mama and them. Fuckin' hates her mama. And them! *(Chuckles, pause, to Monkey and Sean)* So. How'd it go our little thing? Everything okay?

**MONKEY.** Everything went fine.

**CLAY.** Glad to hear it. Monkey, me and you, we'll talk later. Sean, you never told me what ya thought a that book I gave ya, *Plexus*. Got the last installment for ya. *Nexus*! Give it to ya tonight. We'll have us our literary discussion. Finally! After closin'.

**SEAN.** Can't wait.

**CLAY.** Good man! *(Looking at Joe passed out on the bar.)* Talk about a sorry sight. *(Clay collects whipped cream, grenadine syrup*

## MONKEY IN THE SHADE

*and a cherry. He pours syrup, then the whipped cream on Joe's bald head and tops it with the cherry. He finds a half-burned cigarette from an ashtray and lights it, then carefully places the burning cigarette between two fingers of Joe's left hand.)* In the kitchen.

*C'mon y'all. This'll be a hoot! (Clay, Willie exit to kitchen. Delbert looks at Monkey, exits upstage. Joe stirs, moans a bit. Sean stares at the smoldering cigarette between Joe's fingers. Monkey drags Sean upstage and pushes him off. Monkey crosses back, considers taking the cigarette from between Joe's fingers, decides against it, turns and exits upstage. Moments pass. Joe suddenly cries in pain, jumps up and falls on the floor. Joe sucks on his burnt fingers, picks up the cigarette and looks around the vacant room. Seeing his reflection in the mirror, he howls, slaps the whipped cream off his head. He tries to wipe off the red grenadine but only succeeds in spreading it around. He slaps his head, cries, howls some more, and finally goes off, an explosion of impotent rage – flipping tables, throwing chairs, screaming. Joe looks at himself again in the mirror, staggering,)*

**JOE.** GOD DAMN YOU TO HELL, CLAY BOUDREAUX!! *(Joe finally stumbles out the side door. Clay and Willie enter from kitchen.)*

**CLAY.** God damn you to Hell, Clay Boudreaux! How'd he know it was me?! *(Laughs.)* I swear. *(Clay notices the others have left. Lightning. Thunder. Clay is behind the bar. Willie crosses, looks out the window. Clay surveys the shambles.)* Place is hush... Hey, Willie. Where Janny at? *(Willie continues looking out the window.)* Willie! Where Janny at?!

**WILLIE.** Don' know, Clay. *(Clay stares, pours a whiskey, puts the glass on the bar. Willie turns and looks at the drink.)* But I ... I reckon she gone.

**CLAY.** Gone. Where? How? *(Willie turns back to window. Clay darkens, picks up the drink and comes out from behind the bar, joins Willie at the window, hands him the drink. Clay puts an arm around Willie's shoulder. Willie cringes, sips the drink. They look out the window.)*



## MONKEY IN THE SHADE

**WILLIE.** Don' know where. Monkey and the boy give her the money. *(Clay stares hard at Willie. Willie can't look at Clay, he can only sip his drink. Clay looks out the window.)*

**CLAY.** Look at that sky. Them clouds ain't lyin'. It gonna come down! *(Clay exits angrily out the side door. Willie remains at the window. Some moments pass. Rain begins to hit the glass. Lightning. Thunder. A shudder moves through Willie. He drinks. The rain intensifies. Willie turns to look at the room. He covers his eyes for a moment. He puts down the drink on the bar and begins slowly righting the overturned tables and chairs, silently weeping as the rain intensifies. Lightning. Thunder. Blackout.)*

### **END OF ACT I**

***THE PLAY IS NOT OVER!! TO FOIND OUT HOW IT ENDS—  
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