

THE ONLY CHILD

By
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CHARACTERS

ASHER: Approximately 65 & 45 years old. Myrna's husband.

MYRNA: Approximately 65 & 45 years old. Asher's wife.

HADLEY: Approximately 29 years old. Odd but charming.

SAMUEL: Approximately 9 years old. Intelligent. Odd.

MAN: Approximately 25 years old. Harsh, worn out.

TIME & PLACE

Part Two: MYRNA and ASHER's old, rundown home.

Part One: The same home, only new. Twenty years earlier

Part Three: The same home, moments after the end of Part Two.

PART TWO

A decaying house. Old. Falling apart. It has not been redecorated or updated for twenty or so years. Stage right is the living room, with a couch, coffee table and chair. An insect display case is hanging on the wall. Black bars cover every window of the house. A set of stairs leading to the second floor. Stage left is the kitchen, with a back door, closed off from the living room.

MYRNA, an older woman, is in the kitchen making lunch. She pulls out a chair at the table then returns to the stove. ASHER, an older man, enters and sits. MYRNA pours a cup of coffee and holds it out as ASHER reaches and takes the cup. MYRNA pours another cup and places it on the table. MYRNA piles food onto a plate and sets it in front of ASHER. She fills a plate for herself then sits. They drink their coffee and eat their food. MYRNA keeps her left hand in her lap and takes small bites, placing her fork on her plate after every bite. ASHER rests his arms on the table, never putting his fork down. This continues until a knock is heard. They look at each other for the first time. Silence. They go back to eating. Another knock. They both stop and look towards the front door, through the living room. Another knock.

MYRNA

I think someone's at the door.

ASHER

Who would be at the door.

MYRNA

Well, there certainly was a knock.

ASHER

I will assume the wind is to blame.

MYRNA

Yes, it has been very windy lately.

ASHER

It has.

MYRNA

I heard the most awful scraping against the window in my bedroom last night. That tree has grown into my window.

ASHER

Yes, the yard has truly taken over the house.

MYRNA

I don't mind, after awhile it becomes comforting, a very rhythmic scratching, no need to cut the branches.

ASHER

I was not about to make the suggestion.

MYRNA

Alright.

(They return to eating in silence. Another knock, much louder.)

MYRNA

I don't believe it's the wind.

ASHER

Nor do I.

MYRNA

You don't think someone is actually at our door?

ASHER

Let us find out.

(ASHER stands, he enters the living room, MYRNA follows. They reach the front door. Another Knock. They stand a moment, then ASHER unlocks the many locks on the door, and opens it to reveal MR. HADLEY.)

HADLEY

Good afternoon.

(Pause.)

ASHER

Hello.

HADLEY

I don't suppose I could have a moment of your time sir.

ASHER

I...

HADLEY

Do you have a moment?

MYRNA

Yes, we have a moment.

HADLEY

Hello ma'am, I didn't see you there.

MYRNA

That's alright.

HADLEY

Well, I was in the neighborhood and I was walking down that lovely path, not many homes down this way, thought I was done for the day actually. But I happen to stumble upon your place here, and an overwhelming need came over me to knock on your door.

ASHER

You don't say.

HADLEY

I do. Have you been saved?

ASHER

Excuse me?

HADLEY

Have you rejected evil and repented your sins? Are you in need for redemption? Have truly delved into the sins of your rottin- are you-

(HADLEY begins to cough, it escalates into a very violent hack.)

MYRNA

My word, come here. Come sit down.

(MYRNA leads HADLEY to the couch. She runs into the kitchen and gets a glass of water. ASHER watches HADLEY from a distance. MYRNA enters the living room and hands the glass to HADLEY who is still hacking.)

MYRNA

Calm now, drink this.

(HADLEY takes the water, he manages to take a sip, then another, eventually he is silent, sitting with his glass.)

MYRNA

There we are.

HADLEY

I apologize, that was quite unexpected.

MYRNA

I certainly hope so.

HADLEY

Embarrassing as well.

MYRNA

No, no. Happens all the time. Well I...yes well. More?

HADLEY

No. I'm alright. Thank you though.

MYRNA

Oh, you're welcome. Asher, sit down.

ASHER

I am fine.

MYRNA

You are making our guest uncomfortable.

HADLEY

I'm not uncomfortable.

ASHER

I was unaware he was our guest.

MYRNA

Asher.

HADLEY

No, he's right, I understand. I'm sorry. I should go, I've intruded.

MYRNA

No, no you have not.

ASHER

I must apologize. It has been some time since anyone has been here.

MYRNA

Yes, a long time since we have had a visitor. Please have a seat.

HADLEY

Thank you Mrs...

MYRNA

Last.

HADLEY

Mrs. Last, Mr. Last I presume?

ASHER

Yes, Mr...?

HADLEY

Hadley, sir.

ASHER

Mr. Hadley.

(Silence.)

MYRNA

What were you asking us, before the uh...

HADLEY

Your souls, I was going to ask if you had given any thought to the preparation of your souls.

ASHER

Religion, dear.

MYRNA

Yes, I understand, thank you.

ASHER

You're welcome.

MYRNA

We aren't really very religious.

HADLEY

Are you spiritual?

ASHER

Is there a difference?

HADLEY

I believe so. Some people find the organization of religion too mundane, too fallible. But they desire a certain level of peace in knowing their good deeds will go rewarded.

ASHER

If they have good deeds.

HADLEY

I find most people who seek spirituality are full of good behavior.

ASHER

We are not very spiritual either.

MYRNA

Not since I was a girl.

HADLEY

Aren't you concerned?

MYRNA

About what?

HADLEY

What will happen to your soul, if you don't repent your sins.

ASHER

No sense in worrying about something you have no control over.

HADLEY

So you are at peace with you life, your experiences?

ASHER

Are you?

HADLEY

Perhaps I am mistaken, you obviously don't-

(Pause. HADLEY stares at the case display on the wall.)

MYRNA

Mr. Hadley?

HADLEY

Are you fond of insects?

ASHER

Excuse me?

HADLEY

Hesperioidea.

ASHER

The butterflies?

HADLEY

Fine collection you have.

MYRNA

You must know a bit about insects.

HADLEY

I use to have an interest in entomology.

MYRNA

They are all skippers.

HADLEY

Yes, I see. (Pause.) Except that one.

MYRNA

What?

HADLEY

The one on the end. See how the antennae aren't hooked.

MYRNA

But the body is just as long, he looks just like the others.

HADLEY

No. That ones not a skipper, that ones a moth.

MYRNA

They all look like moths but they're butterflies.

HADLEY

Yes, that is true but that one is an actual moth.

MYRNA

I thought, it was with the others I thought it was one of the butterflies.

HADLEY

It's a common mistake. I'm sure no one else will notice.

MYRNA

I guess I could take it down I-

HADLEY

Please don't. It's very nice. I didn't mean to upset you. Would you mind if I used your wash room.

ASHER

Upstairs. First door on your right.

HADLEY

Thank you.

(HADLEY exits upstairs. MYRNA
is still engrossed in the
Butterfly case.)

MYRNA

I thought they were all the same, they all look the same.

ASHER

I see that dear.

MYRNA

He has a warm face.

ASHER

Him?

MYRNA

Like a friend.

ASHER

May I remind you of our current social affairs.

MYRNA

Yes, thank you.

ASHER

Everyone has similar faces. Only so many noses and chins.

MYRNA

If you like.

ASHER

Nice to have someone around.

MYRNA

You think so?

ASHER

Does that surprise you?

MYRNA

I don't know.

ASHER

Apparently it does.

MYRNA

It's just...It has been such a long time, I'm afraid I don't know how to act around people any more.

ASHER

Should we turn the man away?

MYRNA

No, no. He seems very nice.

ASHER

Alright.

(HADLEY enters.)

HADLEY

Lovely house.

MYRNA

Thank you. I like it.

HADLEY

Have you lived here long?

MYRNA

Oh yes. About twenty years.

ASHER

It has been twenty three years.

MYRNA

Thank you Asher.

ASHER

You're welcome.

MYRNA

Twenty three years.

HADLEY

It is a unique distribution of property as well.

MYRNA

Thirty acres...right dear.

ASHER

That is correct.

HADLEY

If feels smaller.

ASHER

We've let things over grow a bit.

HADLEY

Awfully large house for just the two of you.

ASHER

It's a roof over our heads.

HADLEY

Do you have any children?

(Beat.)

MYRNA

Oh no.

HADLEY

What?

MYRNA

I'm sorry, I forgot I left our lunch out on the table, in the kitchen. If you'll excuse me, I'll just be a moment.

(MYRNA moves to the kitchen.)

HADLEY

Did I interrupt your lunch?

ASHER

Do you have sex?

HADLEY

I'm sorry?

ASHER

Are you a priest?

HADLEY

No.

ASHER

You're not under any vows or anything?

HADLEY

No.

ASHER

Do you smoke?

HADLEY

Tobacco use is one of the most deadly-

ASHER

Do you drink?

HADLEY

On occasion. I am fond of some bourbons-

ASHER

Do you have any on you?

HADLEY

Bourbon?

ASHER

Anything.

HADLEY

No, I do not.

ASHER

I see.

HADLEY

You, enjoy alcohol do you?

ASHER

You have to have it to enjoy it.

HADLEY

This is true.

ASHER

And you don't smoke?

HADLEY

No.

ASHER

You wouldn't happen to have any cigarettes on you.

HADLEY

No. I don't.

ASHER

Nothing beats a good drink and pack of cigarettes.

HADLEY

Didn't take you for the smoking type. It doesn't smell like smoke here.

ASHER

Are you married?

HADLEY

I don't think I am the marrying type.

ASHER

Keep them running after you.

HADLEY

I guess.

ASHER

You go out a lot?

HADLEY

I leave, I travel a lot...

ASHER

You ever been with a hooker?

HADLEY

A hooker?

ASHER

A prostitute?

HADLEY

No.

ASHER
Never?

HADLEY
No.

ASHER
Me neither.

HADLEY
That's probably for the-

ASHER
You've been with a woman though, right?

HADLEY
I have.

ASHER
You have a female friend?

HADLEY
No.

ASHER
Tell me about one.

HADLEY
One what?

ASHER
One time, one woman, girl...

HADLEY
Girl?

ASHER
Yes, amuse me would you, with a nice tale about a girl.

HADLEY
Mr. Last I-

ASHER
Call me Asher.

(pause.)

HADLEY

Asher.

ASHER

You have no bourbon, nor do you have any cigarettes the least you can do is entertain a poor old man with a little story.

(Silence.)

Forget the story just...tell me about the last girl you were with.

HADLEY

The last girl I was with.

ASHER

Anyone.

HADLEY

I'm not sure I really feel comfortable discussing this with you.

ASHER

Well I don't feel comfortable discussing religion but I opened my door to you. Gave you a glass of water. You had your turn, I'll take mine. And afterwards you can babble on about whatever you like.

HADLEY

Asher, sir with all do respect...I am very appreciative of you welcoming me into your home-

ASHER

I just...I need this. Do you understand? I need this...compelled, you know what that feels like. Just a few words.

HADLEY

What do I start with?

ASHER

You have someone in mind?

HADLEY

Yes, I think I have a girl in mind.

ASHER

Good. Go ahead.

HADLEY
Her name was-

ASHER
What did she look like?

HADLEY
She was very pretty.

ASHER
How?

HADLEY
How?

ASHER
How was she pretty. Her skin her face, her body, come on.

HADLEY
She was Caucasian.

ASHER
No, she wasn't Caucasian.

HADLEY
She wasn't?

ASHER
Women aren't Caucasian, they are peach, creamy, milky...

HADLEY
Milky skin.

ASHER
Milky skin and...

HADLEY
Light eyes, red hair-

ASHER
Slow down, slow. Slower.

HADLEY
Alright, she had...

ASHER
How was her skin?

HADLEY
Milky.

ASHER
And?

HADLEY
Soft, smooth...

ASHER
And?

HADLEY
She had freckles.
Not a lot just a few, sort of dusted on her cheeks, a few
along her collar bone.

ASHER
That's sweet.

HADLEY
Her hair was long.

ASHER
No, her hair was endless...

HADLEY
Endless red hair, deep red, like fire.

ASHER
Fire. Good.

HADLEY
Not too curly but sort of wavy.

ASHER
How?

HADLEY
Like ripples, in a pond.

ASHER
Ripples.
Go on.

HADLEY

Well, she had big eyes.

ASHER

No...she had wide eyes like...

HADLEY

Like a doe. Like large white Easter eggs, with blue paint-black pupils.

ASHER

Her body?

HADLEY

Thin.

ASHER

She was not thin, not thin, you are in my home. How was she thin?

HADLEY

Frail.

ASHER

How?

HADLEY

Willowy I guess.

ASHER

Willowy.

HADLEY

She had a bit of a slouch, not in a bad way, but very casual. Like she was aware of everything, but not affected by anything. She could, move you, just with a look, like she was reaching into you with her eyes...you don't have to touch her because, what she is doing to you in her mind, what she...

(Silence.)

I'm sorry, do you-

ASHER

No- just-

(They sit in silence. After a few moments MYRNA enters.)

MYRNA

Now everything is all put away, nice and clean.

HADLEY

I didn't mean to interrupt your lunch.

MYRNA

Not at all. We were already finished. More like an afternoon snack than a lunch, wouldn't you say?

I'm sure you will be hungry again by six.

ASHER

I believe that depends entirely on what we are having.

MYRNA

Stew.

ASHER

Stew.

MYRNA

You know this dear.

ASHER

I just thought something else might be lying around.

MYRNA

Like what?

ASHER

I'm sure we have something. I don't think Mr. Hadley here would be too interested in stew.

MYRNA

Staying for dinner are you?

HADLEY

I don't want to intrude.

ASHER

I believe we have venison, the venison I brought home, they should be wonderful by now.

HADLEY

I do enjoy venison.

ASHER

There we are.

MYRNA

I see.

ASHER

Mr. Hadley will join us for dinner and we will have venison.

MYRNA

Should be a nice change.

ASHER

Yes it should.

(Silence.)

I don't think the meat will cook itself.

MYRNA

I have plenty of time dear.

HADLEY

It has been a very long time since I had a home cooked meal.

MYRNA

We are glad to have you.

ASHER

So, what type of business are you in? I'm going to assume your missionary work does not pay commission.

HADLEY

No, not really. I spend most of my time traveling about, odd jobs really.

ASHER

Jack of all trades.

HADLEY

Not really, I mostly do research.

MYRNA

Research?

HADLEY

Recently a body was recovered, in this area actually. When first found it was thought to have been a recent death.

The man who stumbled upon the body thought it was a murder victim.

MYRNA

That's horrible.

HADLEY

Well the body had very little decay, considering, and there was a rope, very much in tact, around the neck. Judging by her clothes and artifacts found around the body, we- I think she died some, thousand years ago. Pollen dating will confirm. It's fascinating the preservation process, the possibilities. In Denmark dozens of bodies are found every year dating back to before Christ was born. Bodies that have been so well preserved that, at first, the police are called, because those who found them think they have stumbled upon a recent death. It's the bog, it provides a sort of natural mummification. Like being frozen in ice, it prevents decay. About fifteen years ago a Neolithic man was discovered in a glacier, he was so well kept you could trace the lines in his forehead.

ASHER

So you're a scientist as well.

HADLEY

No actually, as interesting as I find it all, I am just a sort of encyclopedia for religious research. The bodies found in Europe were all hung and then positioned in very similar ways, common belief is that these people were all ritually murdered as a sacrifice, to the goddess of fertility. Although the bodies found here are not nearly as old, we still believe there to be religious or ceremonial connections, or so I hope to prove.

MYRNA

I didn't know there was a goddess of fertility.

HADLEY

Yes. Known for her fire-like hair.

(ASHER stares out the window.)

MYRNA

But really how can you tell?

HADLEY

What do you mean?

MYRNA

After thousands of years.

HADLEY

The bodies are by no means in perfect condition. But after so long, considering most would be no more than a skull, these people have skin. These people have hair still attached and clothes, and you can even see the looks on their faces. They are kept enough to show the horrific way in which they died. Trapped in their faces.

MYRNA

Alright, I think I should start on the venison now.

(MYRNA heads to the kitchen.)

HADLEY

Let me help you, I haven't had the pleasure of cooking in some time now.

MYRNA

How kind of you. Asher?

(ASHER is lost in thought.)

HADLEY

Is he alright?

MYRNA

He does this, fixates on something and poof, he's gone for an hour.

(They enter the kitchen.)

HADLEY

I don't mean to make you uncomfortable.

MYRNA

What?

HADLEY

What I was saying out there.

MYRNA

I'm not uncomfortable.

HADLEY

You seemed a little uneasy.

MYRNA

Not at all.

(MYRNA begins to scratch at her thigh.)

HADLEY

What's that?

MYRNA

Nothing, old habit.

HADLEY

Hard to break.

MYRNA

Yes.

HADLEY

I always found it very interesting, the difference between a habit and an addiction.

MYRNA

I don't think I really know the difference.

(MYRNA starts to prepare dinner.)

HADLEY

Well a habit is simply an unconscious pattern of behavior, but an addiction, an addiction is a compulsive physiological and psychological need for a habit-forming substance. Substance being a broad term really.

MYRNA

That's very interesting.

HADLEY

I think so.

(Beat.)

Succulent.

MYRNA

Excuse me?

HADLEY

The venison.

MYRNA

Oh yes.

HADLEY

I bet you're a wonderful cook.

MYRNA

Well I'm making no promises Mr. Hadley.

HADLEY

Please call me Samuel.

(Silence.)

MYRNA

Samuel.

HADLEY

Yes?

MYRNA

That is a very nice name.

HADLEY

I didn't choose it.

MYRNA

You sure do know a lot.

What university did you go to?

HADLEY

I didn't spend much time at school.

MYRNA

Really?

HADLEY

I was taught at home most of my life. My younger life.

MYRNA

Oh.

HADLEY

What do you think of parents educating their children at home?

MYRNA

I don't know, I don't-

HADLEY

Well if you did, let's say one night, after a few, you and Asher get a little playful, he gets excited, you get excited, and he takes you upstairs...and you give birth, how would you raise your child?

MYRNA

I don't know.

HADLEY

I'm sure a child might get a better education but what about socialization?

MYRNA

I really don't know.

HADLEY

Some people think it's cruel.

MYRNA

What's cruel?

HADLEY

Isolating a child.

MYRNA

Not all home educated children are isolated.

HADLEY

I don't see how parents could trust themselves so much.

MYRNA

That's how things have to be.

HADLEY

Why?

MYRNA

There are many possibilities why...all parents do their best.
That's what I believe.

HADLEY

Do you?

MYRNA

I don't think anyone sets out to be a bad parent.

(MYRNA Scratches at her thigh.)

HADLEY

You don't need to make excuses.

MYRNA

I'm not. Those aren't excuses. They are reasons.

HADLEY

I'm not accusing you of anything.

MYRNA

Some children are hard to love. You ever think of that? What
if he's the opposite of anything you want, and he- is just
unlovable.

HADLEY

Well that's no reason to abuse them.

MYRNA

Abuse?

HADLEY

You don't think that might be abusive treatment, it could be
very damaging, maybe.

MYRNA

I-

(Pause.)

HADLEY

You're very sensual when you're mad. You're skin is flushed.
You're chest is heaving.

MYRNA

Mr. Hadley-

HADLEY

Call me Samuel. Say Samuel.

MYRNA

Samuel.

(Long Silence. MYRNA reaches to
scratch at her thigh. HADLEY
gently grabs her wrist,
keeping her hand at her
thigh.)

HADLEY

Strange to think that's where we all came from. Once we all
crawled through some woman to get here. A little twisted if
you ask me. Another human living inside you, swelling and
swelling until one day...being yanked, bloody, torn out of a
woman...through her legs, a part we all have seen yet cannot
be displayed in public. Silly. You should feel lucky. I hear
the separation anxiety is horrific, right after the
birth...to no longer have that separate but connected life
inside you. You don't know what that feels like. Of course I
don't, but I never was given the option.
Funny the choices we make.

MYRNA

Please let go of me.

HADLEY

I don't think I came through anyone's legs. Sometimes I feel
so disconnected, as if I'm the only one who just appeared,
who didn't come from someone, I came from somewhere, not
someone. What do you think Myrna?

MYRNA

Everyone has a mother.

HADLEY

They say unnaturally acquired children can never have that irrational bond, that unconditional love between mother and child, the way biological children are with their mother. Unnaturally acquired children don't have this bond, some say, because the child, aside from not being carried for nine months, never feeds on the mothers breasts.

(Pause.)

Sometimes I wonder, if I hold a woman's breast, place my mouth round her nipple...perhaps she might look down and love me like a son.

(Pause. HADLEY releases MYRNA.
He crosses away from her.)

HADLEY

You're tired. You should go lay down.

(Pause.)

You should take a bath, a long quiet bath.

(MYRNA slowly moves into the living room. She looks at ASHER, still trance-like on the couch.)

MYRNA

I'm going to take a bath.

(MYRNA disappears up the stairs. Silence. After a few moments HADLEY enters the living room. Eventually ASHER notices.)

ASHER

Mr. Hadley, sit down.

HADLEY

Having a good think?

ASHER

A man has got to dream. Keep the good stuff alive, even if it's only in his mind.

HADLEY

I see.

ASHER

Our reality, the one in here...so much more powerful than what's really going on.

HADLEY

You think so?

ASHER

I know so. Nothing will ever be as good as you can dream it.

HADLEY

Perhaps.

ASHER

You just wind up disappointed. And afterward, you can't have the fantasy back. Once you make it happen, it's gone, it's made tangible and you see all the wrinkles and cracks and ugliness that your mind left out.

HADLEY

You think it's better to dream about things than to do them?

ASHER

Imagination is more important than knowledge. Albert Einstein said that. He was a genius.

HADLEY

If you were presented with an opportunity to fulfill a...you wouldn't do it?

ASHER

I would be disappointed.

HADLEY

Doesn't that make a person too stagnant, inactive?

ASHER

So?

HADLEY

That doesn't seem right.

ASHER

It's not about right and wrong. What is right and wrong? Who, who decided this was right and that was wrong.

HADLEY

I don't know.

(Pause.)

ASHER

I thought you'd jump on that.

HADLEY

What?

ASHER

Aren't you going to jabber about god now, sins, righteousness, resurrection.

HADLEY

No.

ASHER

You give up easily. Like I was saying, it's about happiness. May sound wrong to others but if it makes you happy, who's to say you shouldn't do it.

HADLEY

That is one way of looking at it.

ASHER

Exactly. There are so many ways, what makes one better than another. Like flavors, we all prefer one over the other but you can't say strawberry is better than cherry, you can't prove it, all you can do is say you like it best and continue to taste it.

HADLEY

Do you ever look back on your life and regret things?

ASHER

No.

(Beat.)

Where's Myrna?

HADLEY

She's getting clean.

ASHER

I am getting a bit hungry.

HADLEY

You don't think you've done any wrong?

ASHER

No.

(Beat)

I'm hungry.

HADLEY

I think she might be up there for a long time.

ASHER

Well, I wish I had some bourbon to tide me over.

HADLEY

I do have something.

ASHER

What?

HADLEY

It's not Bourbon, but it's got a kick.

ASHER

Why didn't you mention it earlier, I asked you.

HADLEY

Must have slipped my mind.

ASHER

Well give it here, give it here.

(HADLEY removes a bottle from
his jacket, he hands it to
ASHER.)

HADLEY

You sure you want some, this stuff could kill you.

ASHER

I'll die a happy man.

HADLEY

One can hope.

ASHER

Very kind of you Mr. Hadley. You have no idea what this means to me.

(He opens it.)

Smells, smells...hmmm. Familiar.

HADLEY

Too strong?

ASHER

The way I like it.

HADLEY

It's better all at once.

(ASHER drinks most of the bottle. Silence. ASHER looks at the bottle. He sets it down on the coffee table.)

HADLEY

How does that taste?

(ASHER releases a muffled cough.)

HADLEY

I always wondered what it would taste like.

ASHER

What is this?

HADLEY

Tell me how it feels.

(Again ASHER releases a muffled cough.)

HADLEY

Describe it.

ASHER

It hurts.

HADLEY

No. Not hurts. It doesn't hurt, this doesn't hurt.

ASHER

It-

HADLEY

It burns...this burns.

ASHER

It burns.

HADLEY

How does it burn?

ASHER

I could use some water.

HADLEY

Does it singe...scorch...

Sear would be a more appropriate term as it applies to surface burning of organic tissue.

Is the surface burning of your organic tissue?

ASHER

God-

(More coughing.)

HADLEY

I do like being a missionary, it's amazing how much people trust a godly man, even if they aren't religious. But I have to admit, it's not the love of my life. My true passion is entomology. That's what I really love. Always have. Ever since I was a boy.

(ASHER Holds his chest as his breathing becomes irregular.)

HADLEY

Insects are amazing creatures, and so under appreciated. Often lumped into mass generalities, and thought of as so...disposable.

But really they are all very different, unique living beings.

(ASHER tries to stand up, he
falls back onto the couch.)

HADLEY

I enjoy moths. Most people don't realize that some moths, the day-flying moths are very colorful. Often mistaken for butterflies. My favorite is the Scarlet Tiger Moth. Black, with spills of red, orange and white. Callimorpha Dominula.

(ASHER begins to wince.)

HADLEY

I've always been fascinated by the life cycle of moths. The isolation in their cocoon. When they spin their cocoon, do they realize that they might not see anything for up to ten years. Do they understand that they will be alone, in a dark sack of silk for up to a decade. Then metamorphosis. Going from a scrunching grounded caterpillar, to a beautiful flying moth. So much change in such a small womb. Closest thing to a womb he will ever feel.

(ASHER tries to take a deep
breath, he doubles over.)

HADLEY

It's unfortunate that only a few weeks of their life is spent as a beloved creature. Women don't ooo and ahh over them that crawl, the way they do over those that fly. Tragic. But they don't have to decay. That's why I enjoy mothing. It allows their normally short lived beauty to last forever.

(ASHER gasps with pain.)

HADLEY

It's really very simple. You see what I use is formalin, the liquid version of formaldehyde, very strong smell.

(ASHER's movements slow.)

HADLEY

Formalin fixates the tissues, preventing the cells from decay.

Slowly brings flesh and blood and cells to a stagnant state.

(ASHER's body has become still
while his eyes watch HADLEY.)

HADLEY

It's what keeps the moth. What allows me to then place it
behind glass, for admiration. It's amazing to watch as the
moth begins to slow, wings bat less, then finally stillness.
Amazing.

There is one thing I always wanted to know, what I think
about, when I lie in bed at night...
Does it hurt? What does it feel like to become still. Fixed.

PART ONE

Twenty years earlier. The house looks exactly the same except now it is new. Everything remains in the same place. The only items that are not there are the bars on the windows and the insect display case. Young MYRNA, is cleaning the coffee table. Her movements begin to slow, she shakes herself and continues to clean. She slows to a pause, stillness.

Young ASHER enters. MYRNA puts on her best smile.

ASHER

Hello dear.

MYRNA

Hello Asher.

ASHER

How are you feeling this morning?

MYRNA

Oh I am fine.

ASHER

You woke early.

MYRNA

I wanted to make sure the house was in order.

ASHER

Everything seems to be in place.

MYRNA

Still so much to do, I haven't swept behind the bookshelves or arranged the tea cups in days. But I've made my way inch by inch through most of the upstairs. I can't believe how much dust those windows collect up there. You'd think I neglected them for an entire year, every two days I go there and dust.

ASHER

I think it looks lovely.
You are adorable when you clean.

MYRNA

It's rough on my hands.

ASHER

Try using a shovel for eight hours a day.

(He shows her his hands. She
pulls away.)

MYRNA

I can smell death on them.

ASHER

Just dirt.

MYRNA

I wash my hands, seems like seventy times a day. One day I'll
scrub the skin right off.

ASHER

I don't recall you coming to bed last night?

MYRNA

I was inspired to re categorize the books.

ASHER

What this time?

MYRNA

By subject. Math, science, and fairy tale.

ASHER

That sounds promising.

MYRNA

Really, alphabetical by author, I don't know what I was
thinking last week. Who cares who wrote the things.

ASHER

You are so clever. Have I told you that?

MYRNA
No I'm just-

ASHER
A good wife.

MYRNA
Thank you.

ASHER
You are welcome.
(A pleasant beat.)
Any plans for dinner?

MYRNA
The usual.

ASHER
Hm.

MYRNA
Would you prefer something else?

ASHER
Perhaps something hearty.

MYRNA
Hearty.

ASHER
How about stew?

MYRNA
I can make stew.

ASHER
I enjoy stew.

MYRNA
Alright then. Whatever you like.
(ASHER heads towards the exit.)
Where are you going?

ASHER
I am going to the shed.

MYRNA

The shed?

ASHER

I have a gift.

MYRNA

I don't need a gift.

ASHER

But you should have one. It's for the whole family. All three of us.

(He exits.)

MYRNA

The whole family. That's nice.

(Young MYRNA scratches at her thigh. She continues to clean, she hums, the song and scratching become more disjointed and uncomfortable as she cleans and cleans.)

Enter Young SAMUEL from upstairs with a brown box, he attempts to sneak past MYRNA out the door, he trips, a shower of humming birds escape from the box.)

MYRNA (CONT'D)

Samuel!

SAMUEL

Don't touch them.

(She picks one up.)

MYRNA

What are these?

SAMUEL

They're mine!

MYRNA

Oh my lord or are these-

SAMUEL

Archilochus colubris.

MYRNA

Are they dead? All of them?

SAMUEL

Of course they're dead. They have to be dead.

MYRNA

Did you kill them?

SAMUEL

I'm going to keep them and mount them on my wall next to the Katydid's.

MYRNA

Why would you want to kill humming birds?

SAMUEL

Archilochus colubris. You can't preserve them while they are alive. I've never been able to see them still, they move so fast but look now, look at this one's beak.

MYRNA

Samuel no, Please.

SAMUEL

I bet this one is a female. Maybe she has babies-

MYRNA

Alright I think you should go play in your room.

SAMUEL

I have to go outside, I am almost finished with my tenth case, Dragonflies, Anisoptera. Don't worry, they have a short life span. Less than five months above water, as adults, when they have wings.

MYRNA

That's very interesting but Mama has a lot of work to do so run upstairs and play there.

SAMUEL

They are much better than my Damselflies, Zygoptera.

MYRNA

I reorganized your books for you.

SAMUEL

Most people don't know the difference between the two but really it's very easy to tell-

MYRNA

Yes well, your father should be back in a few minutes you should save up all those interesting facts for him-

SAMUEL

Zygoptera, their wings, when rested settle up, not down, and their eyes are significantly separated compared to Anisoptera-

MYRNA

(With sudden wrath)

Alright!

(Calm now)

How would you like to play hide and find?

SAMUEL

That's an infant game, I want to go outside and capture more Archilochus col-

MYRNA

You have already been outside twice this week. That's once more than you should have.

SAMUEL

I don't like it inside.

MYRNA

Don't you want to help mama clean the house?

SAMUEL

No. I want to go outside, why can't I go outside?

MYRNA

You know why you can't.

SAMUEL

But I want to go outside.

MYRNA

"Once upon a day..."

SAMUEL

No.

MYRNA

"Once upon a day-"

SAMUEL

Please don't-

MYRNA

"Once upon a day-

SAMUEL

"There was a little red riding boy."

MYRNA

Who...

SAMUEL

"Who decided to disobey his mama and father, by going outside all by himself"

MYRNA

And then he...?

SAMUEL

Wandered into the woods.

MYRNA

And...

SAMUEL

Talked to strangers.

MYRNA

When he was supposed to be...

SAMUEL

At home, reading quietly with his mama and father.

MYRNA

And what was his punishment....

SAMUEL

"He was mauled by the wolf and sunk into a watery grave by the hands of the seemingly friendly woodsman."

MYRNA

That's right. Now, what would you like to do?

SAMUEL

I want to go outside and finish my display case-

MYRNA

You never do what I say.

SAMUEL

I want to go outside!

MYRNA

Fine, fine just go, get out, just get away. And take your box of birds.

(SAMUEL takes his box and runs out the door.)

God damnit.

(MYRNA composes herself and attempts to go back to cleaning but reverts to scratching.)

There should be no birds in the house. There are not birds in the house, that's not what should be in the house.

(More scratching. ASHER enters she stops and turns back into perfection.)

You have returned from the shed.

ASHER

I have.

MYRNA

Is this my present?

ASHER

It's for the whole family.

MYRNA

Sweet.

(ASHER opens the box and
reveals black bars for the
windows. Silence.)

ASHER

They are bars.

MYRNA

Yes.

ASHER

For the windows. Every window of this house will be fortified
with metal bars.

MYRNA

Black bars.

ASHER

Yes.

MYRNA

Black metal bars on our windows.

ASHER

Every window in the entire house.

MYRNA

Black bars do not go with blue shutters.

ASHER

What?

MYRNA

You see the shutters are blue and a house with blue shutters,
a nice house does not have bars on the windows.

ASHER

Safety first.

MYRNA

But what will the neighbors say?

ASHER

We don't have neighbors, that's was the whole point of living out in the middle of nowhere. Safety first.

MYRNA

Yes, so isolated so we could have a home, a proper home with a library and shutters and - criminals have bars on the window, it's not right for us.

ASHER

I think we really have to protect ourselves.

MYRNA

Did something happen? In town?

ASHER

Nothing to worry about. I just want to make sure everything we have here, everything we have worked so hard for, remains safe. I don't know what I would do without you and Sammy.

(She cleans.)

Are you alright?

MYRNA

I'm fine.

ASHER

I thought you would be happy.

MYRNA

Good people don't have bars.

ASHER

You look tired.

MYRNA

I'm getting older. Looks fade.

(She busies herself cleaning,
he watches her.)

ASHER

What time did you come to bed last night?

MYRNA

I don't remember.

ASHER

The night before?

MYRNA

I don't keep track.

ASHER

Myrna.

(Pause.)

Myrna.

(He stops her from cleaning.)

When was the last time you slept?

(Pause.)

MYRNA

There is so much to be done here.

ASHER

What is wrong?

MYRNA

I am fine.

ASHER

You're not sleeping.

MYRNA

I have to make th-

ASHER

How long has it been?

MYRNA

Not long.

ASHER

Have any other old habits st-

MYRNA

No. No.

ASHER

I thought we were good, things are good.

MYRNA

They were.

ASHER

They aren't now?

MYRNA

Well...

ASHER

What?

MYRNA

Nothing.

ASHER

If there is something I can do for you please tell me.

MYRNA

I've been thinking...

ASHER

Yes.

MYRNA

I think we would be happier if we had another child.

(Long silence.)

Oh Asher it would be perfect. I've been thinking about it a lot lately.

(Silence.)

It's the perfect time.

ASHER

I thought you were content.

MYRNA

I was. But now I'm not.

ASHER

This was the last, you promised-

MYRNA

I know, I thought it was but.... imagine it, a little baby boy. Those tiny hands, and such big eyes.

ASHER

What about Samuel?

(Pause.)

Do you not love him-

MYRNA

Of course I love him. I just - he's so strange.

ASHER

I don't know what to say.

MYRNA

Say yes.

Just imagine - a beautiful baby boy.

(pause.)

ASHER

No.

MYRNA

What?

ASHER

No. I...I don't want another child.

MYRNA

But he's not right.

ASHER

Stop it.

MYRNA

I would be able to sleep. I know it. I always do.

ASHER

The answer is no.

MYRNA

Why?

ASHER

We're not moving.

MYRNA

I don't want to move, I love this home, it's perfect.

ASHER

You can't have it both ways.

MYRNA

But we can. You did such a good job this time around, and with the commute to your work and then how far away we go for supplies - we are alone. No one can touch us out here. No one can ever find us and there can be another child and we still stay here and then I will sleep. And I will be happy again.

ASHER

All I want is for you to be happy-

MYRNA

Then say yes-

(SAMUEL enters.)

ASHER

Sammy.

SAMUEL

Father.

(He runs up to ASHER and hugs him.)

ASHER

Were you outside?

(Silence.)

Son.

SAMUEL

Mama said I could.

ASHER

Did she?

MYRNA

It makes him so happy.

(ASHER leads MYRNA to the kitchen. SAMUEL goes to the coffee table and pulls a doll out of the brown box.)

ASHER

What are you doing?

MYRNA

He was suffocating me.
Do you know what's in that box? Birds. He's got birds, he is capturing and killing birds, and doing whatever it is he does then - have you seen his room, wall to wall with dead bugs and insects and now birds, what next-

ASHER

Where is all this coming from?

MYRNA

He's changed. He's not the Samuel I knew. You ever look someone in the eyes, I mean really look, someone you know really well and just think, "I don't recognize you. There is not a shade of color in you I have ever seen before."?

ASHER

You can't let him outside by himself.

MYRNA

I just wanted some peace, he kept talking about it. Dead things and I couldn't stand it anymore.

ASHER

Then send him to his room but do not let him go outside.

MYRNA

He doesn't go past the lake.

ASHER

How do you know?

(Silence.)

Are you trying to ruin this?

MYRNA

Of course not. I just think perhaps we are being too...

ASHER

Safety first. Last week a man was eyeing me. Like a hawk from the bar to train station, and now-

MYRNA

The bar.

(Silence.)

I don't recall liquor on our supplies list.

ASHER

I went to a bar.

MYRNA

Father does not drink.

ASHER

Well mama doesn't go three weeks without sleep.

MYRNA

Don't turn this on me.

ASHER

You let our son-

MYRNA

I have to polish the silver.

ASHER

Would you stop cleaning!

MYRNA

Do not yell in front of Samuel.

(She moves towards the stairs.)

ASHER

Where are you going?

MYRNA

To take a bath.

(She exits. ASHER enters the living room and sits.)

Meanwhile SAMUEL has set up
the humming birds like an
audience and is playing as if
the doll is giving a lecture.
(ASHER watches/listens.)

SAMUEL

"When we look to the individuals of the same variety or sub-variety of our older cultivated plants and animals, one of the first points which strikes us, is, that they generally differ much more from each other, than do the individuals of any one species or variety in a state of nature. When we reflect on the vast diversity of the plants and animals which have been cultivated, and which have varied during all ages under the most different climates and treatment, I think we are driven to conclude that this greater variability is simply due to our domestic productions having been raised under conditions of life not so uniform as, and somewhat different from, those to which the parent-species have been exposed under nature. There is, also, I think, some probability in the view propounded by Andrew Knight, that this variability may be partly connected with excess of food. It seems pretty clear that organic beings must be exposed during several generations to the new conditions of life to cause any appreciable amount of variation; and that when the organisation has once begun to vary, it generally continues to vary for many generations. No case is on record of a variable being ceasing to be variable under cultivation. Our oldest cultivated plants, such as wheat, still often yield new varieties: our oldest domesticated animals are still capable of rapid improvement or modification."

(MYRNA comes back down.)

MYRNA

You haven't fixed the door.

ASHER

I have not.

MYRNA

How am I supposed to take a bath when the door wont close.

ASHER

Leave the door open.

(She exits. SAMUEL continues to play with the doll. After a moment.)

ASHER (CONT'D)

Sammy.

SAMUEL

Yes?

ASHER

What is that?

SAMUEL

I...

ASHER

Bring it here.

(SAMUEL hands ASHER the doll.)

SAMUEL

His name is Joseph.

ASHER

Who gave this to you?

SAMUEL

No one.

ASHER

Samuel.

SAMUEL

I'm not supposed to tell you.

ASHER

Did your mother ask you not to tell me things?

SAMUEL

No the man-

ASHER

What man?

SAMUEL

I-

ASHER

Samuel.

SAMUEL

He stands at the edge of the lake.

He said I shouldn't tell you about him. He said he'd come by soon. And we'd all have a long talk.

ASHER

What else?

SAMUEL

He asked me my name. Then he said I could call him Joseph.

(Long Silence.)

I'm sorry.

ASHER

Did he say anything else?

SAMUEL

He just asked a lot of questions. What I like to eat. What I like to do. What books I read.

(Silence.)

Father?

ASHER

Go to your room.

SAMUEL

I'm sorr-

ASHER

Go now.

(SAMUEL goes upstairs. ASHER sits in silence. Eventually MYRNA comes back down stairs.)

MYRNA

I can't do it. You'll have to fix the door this evening. I can't go another day without a bath. That's the wonderful thing about little babies, little little babies they can't walk. They can't walk away from you, or into you or places they shouldn't be.

(Beat. She notices the doll.)

I told you I don't want Samuel playing with dolls. Bring him the books if you like but no dolls.

ASHER

Do you know where this came from?

MYRNA

I don't want to know just take it back.

ASHER

How long have you let Samuel outside by himself?

MYRNA

I don't know.

ASHER

Myrna.

MYRNA

I promise I won't do it again.

(Pause.)

What?

ASHER

I'm trying to decide whether you had anything to do with this?

MYRNA

With what?

ASHER

Someone gave this doll to Samuel. It wasn't me.

MYRNA

It wasn't me.

ASHER

It was Joseph.

MYRNA

Who's Joseph?

ASHER

You tell me.

MYRNA

I have no- do you mean someone was here?

ASHER

Out there. In the yard.

(Pause.)

Do you realize what you have done?

MYRNA

Me?

ASHER

A strange man has been speaking with Samuel, a man who never would have seen Samuel if he was not outside alone.

MYRNA

I have never seen a single soul on this land but us. Maybe he followed you home. From the bar.

ASHER

That's impossible.

MYRNA

How do you know-

ASHER

Because I am careful. Because I care.

MYRNA

I care.

ASHER

You want another child.

MYRNA

How do we even know this man exists. Maybe Samuel is making things up. An imaginary friend. He's strange, he probably believes he's real, he's imagining things.

(MYRNA goes to clean the window, she stops.)

Oh my god. What is that?

(ASHER goes to the window.)

ASHER

Where?

MYRNA

There, down there.

ASHER

I don't see.

MYRNA

Maybe its just - there! Movement. I saw something move.

ASHER

God damn.

MYRNA

Where'd he go? I can't see him anymore.

ASHER

We need a plan.

MYRNA

Maybe he's just lost.

ASHER

He's not lost.

MYRNA

Do you recognize him?

ASHER

He's a hundred yards away I can't make out his face.

MYRNA

I bet it's the man from the bar. Maybe he-

ASHER

Maybe he recognized me?

MYRNA

Maybe he's been looking for us.

ASHER

After seven years?

MYRNA

Samuel! Come down here please.

ASHER

What are you doing?

MYRNA

I want to know exactly what happened.

(SAMUEL enters.)

SAMUEL

Yes.

MYRNA

Samuel, why didn't you tell me you saw someone outside?

SAMUEL

I didn't want to upset you.

MYRNA

Now you must tell the truth. Do you understand this is very important.

SAMUEL

Alright.

MYRNA

How many times have you seen the man?

SAMUEL

Uh...

MYRNA

Think.

ASHER

He's thinking.

SAMUEL

I don't know.

MYRNA

More than once?

SAMUEL

I only spoke to him once I promise.

ASHER

When did you first see him?

SAMUEL

I don't remember.

MYRNA

Last week? Last month?

SAMUEL

You were yelling.

MYRNA

I don't yell

SAMUEL

You were screaming about your blood. Father was at work. You were screaming at no one. You were talking to yourself.

(Pause.)

ASHER

(To SAMUEL)

Samuel go to you room.

(SAMUEL exits.)

Lift your skirt.

MYRNA

Excuse me.

ASHER

List your skirt.

MYRNA

No.

(He lifts her skirt, revealing
a hideous abuse of her thigh.
Long long Silence.)

ASHER

This was supposed to be the last time.

(Silence.)

This is why you can't sleep.

MYRNA

I don't sleep because I don't want to.

It hurts.

In my dreams, our son likes baseball, and plays in the mud. And you teach him sports in the backyard, he's wearing a cute little blue jumper, while I cook and...and...I'm swollen, my belly is so round, I can feel the weight of creation inside me. And you look at me from out the window and you wave at me, our son climbing on your back. And I tell him to set the table and he does. And I tell him to pick up his toys and he does. Because I'm a good mother and he loves me. And I'm not scared or paranoid or angry. I feel good inside. I feel uncluttered and happy. I don't have to look behind me, I can just look at you.

ASHER

That's a beautiful dream.

MYRNA

But I feel it. In my body I can feel myself feel it. I know what it feels like to be happy and content and not, not like this. It tortures me to have to leave that. And now I'm so aware that I'm dreaming that in my dreams I become sad, cause I know its not real, none of it is real.

(Pause. SAMUEL enters.)

SAMUEL

He's coming towards the house.

(ASHER goes to the window.)

ASHER

Myrna take Samuel out back.

MYRNA

Why?

ASHER

You have to take care of Samuel.

MYRNA

No.

ASHER

Yes.

MYRNA

I don't want to, can't you take him.

ASHER

Take Samuel out the kitchen, and go get him some formalin.

MYRNA

This is too fast.

(Another Knock.)

SAMUEL

I can go into town? Really?

MYRNA

Not this time, you, you take him, I can't. It's your turn.

SAMUEL

Please mama.

ASHER

You are a mess and I need to handle company.

MYRNA

I can't do this by myself again.

SAMUEL

I have a whole new case to fill.

(Another knock. The door handle rattles, it is locked.)

ASHER

Go now.

MYRNA

promise me.

ASHER

Take care of Samuel.

MYRNA

Asher.

ASHER

Go.

(Young MYRNA takes Young SAMUEL and leaves through the kitchen. Young ASHER opens the door. The MAN in a suit stands in the doorway. Silence.)

ASHER (CONT'D)

May I help you?

MAN

I do hope so. May I come in?

ASHER

I know my rights.

(Young ASHER steps to the side, inviting MAN inside.)

MAN

How kind of you.
This is a nice house.

ASHER

I didn't catch your name.

MAN

A very nice house. I like the shutters.

ASHER

I've seen you around the house-

MAN

I thought I was a bit obvious.

ASHER

Did you want me to see you?

MAN

I did knock on your door.
Have you lived here long?

ASHER

Why do you ask?

MAN

Just curious.

ASHER

Do you mind if I ask you a question?

MAN

By all means.

ASHER

Are you...would you care for a glass of water?

MAN

No, I'm alright, but thank you for asking.

ASHER

Nine years.
We've lived here.

MAN

And before that?

ASHER

We...moved around a bit.

MAN

Does your wife enjoy travel?
I find comfort in it. The change. Product of my childhood.

ASHER

You travel a lot?

MAN

Recently travel down from Lone Tree, where I grew up. You know it?

ASHER

Are you looking for something?

MAN

Maybe.

ASHER

Where did you say you were from?

MAN

Lone Tree.

ASHER

You are some way from home.

MAN

That depends on the definition of home.

(Pause.)

Not many people ever heard of Lone Tree. Not unless they've lived there.

ASHER

I'm going to have to ask you to leave.

MAN

Please don't.

ASHER

I'm sorry, but I have to go meet my wife, if you could kindly-

MAN

Are you happy? Is Myrna? Is Samuel? Samuel, that's nice. You must really love that name.

ASHER

I'm sorry, I don't know what you're talking about.

MAN

Now I wish Anthony had come. That's how I found you, I ran into Anthony, that's what he calls himself now. He tried that whole...change everything and start over...Several times apparently. I met him at a bar, a few months ago. Kind of crazy we both wound up drinking the same beer at the same bar in the same town. Just four hours North of this little house. Crazy. At first I just thought we had a lot in common and then we realized we had, everything in common. So much that I couldn't make sense of it. I thought he was mocking me. But he wasn't - I could see it, in his eyes, you know that look, you ever kick a dog, then raise your fist... but then I began to feel better, because, hey... I'm not the only one, maybe it wasn't my fault right.

ASHER

I think you should go now.

MAN

I was first, right, or at least before him, I've got a good five years on him. Was I the first the very first?

ASHER

I don't know what you are talking about.

MAN

Where is she taking this Samuel? A lake? She took me to a lake. I thought we were going swimming. And she kept telling me, "dive deeper, dive deeper." And so I dived deeper, and I dived so deep my ears began to hurt, they began to swell from the inside, but I kept going because I thought that's what she wanted and finally when I couldn't hold my breath any longer, I gave up. When I broke the surface, I looked over and she was gone. That was it. Just splash, she's gone, and everything was gone and I had nothing, and I had no idea where I was, but more importantly I had no idea where you were. I thought maybe you were looking for me, and it was just her. But you went with Anthony, he said. Both of you took him.

ASHER

I think you have me confused with someone else.

MAN

Are you even human?

ASHER

It's getting late and-

MAN

Was I just in the wrong place, at the wrong time? How did you choose me?

ASHER

I don't know you.

MAN

Why would you do this? How can you do something so evil, over and over again?

(ASHER ushers him to the door.
MAN casually reveals a gun.)

Why?

ASHER
...self preservation. We did what we needed to keep
ourselves...happy.
(Pause.)

MAN
That's it? That's all you have to offer me?

ASHER
What do you want?
(Pause.)

MAN
"What one man can do, all men are capable of."....Do you
believe that?
(Pause.)

ASHER
Yes.

MAN
So...you believe you are capable of killing your wife?
(Pause.)
Many men have done it before.
(Pause.)
Doesn't mean you want to.

ASHER
Yes.

MAN
Do you believe you are capable of killing yourself?

ASHER
...yes...

MAN

So do I.

(He puts the gun to his own head. Pulls the trigger - black out.)

PART THREE

Directly following the Part Two (the first scene).

HADLEY sits in a chair, staring out into nothing. He is waiting and waiting.

ASHER remains dead on the couch.

Eventually MYRNA comes down from the stairs, after her bath. She is small in her robe.

MYRNA

The waters gone cold.

(Long Silence.)

The longer I waited the colder it got. The waters gone cold.

(Long silence.)

The knob with an "h" is for the cold water. The knob with a "c" is for hot water.

(Pause.)

Nothing was warm.

(Pause.)

My hands have gotten old.

(Long silence. HADLEY stands and enters the kitchen.)

MYRNA

I can see my veins. I've lost the colors in my memories too. I watch them like films. I watch and I say...her there... she's a bad woman. She is a disturbed woman.

She is not what little girls should watch. Because actions speak louder than words. Because we learn by example. Because one plus one is two and you should always say please and thank you and chew with your mouth closed. And wash your hands. Always wash your hands. I always wash my hands. Maybe that's why they are so transparent. Washed away my skin. Actions speak louder than words.

(pause.)

That words? That. Louder than words what?

(HADLEY returns with a blunt object. He stands across from MYRNA.)

HADLEY

You took me to movies.

MYRNA

That words what?

HADLEY

Do you remember taking me to the movies? It was...the only time I left the property.

(Silence.)

You said "would you like some sweets?" and then you left me staring up at the screen.

(Silence.)

I tried to walk home, but I didn't know the way. I walked for hours, calling your name.

(MYRNA is engrossed in her hands.)

I like to walk now. I like to walk in places people cannot find me. I like to walk where no one else will walk. My own. In here -

(Points to his head)

Everything is perfect. Even when it's terrible. It's not bad, in here, in here, it's "tragic". It's not lonely, it's "melancholy." It's not forever...it's "eternity". It's not pain...it's "suffering". And I'm so courageous for suffering. That's how it is in the movies. That's how it is in here.

(Silence.)

But it's very different out here, when my reality has to share yours. It's compromise, not collaboration.

Most people get lonely. I'm never lonely. Or if I am I don't feel it. To be conscious and compromising all the time...when you can have everything your way. I can dream I'm flying. I run so fast and I fly, I really fly, when I wake I can feel it. I know what it's like to soar with nothing but my own abilities. It feels better than a hug. I hug the clouds. It feels better than a kiss. It feels better than sex. You don't need sex to reach that place of infinity. Of total unity.

(Pause.)

I've never enjoyed sex. I never come. It hurts. I didn't understand why people did it. But I know now. People masturbate...physically because they need that moment, that ultimate unity.

You can get it alone.

But most people, are brought up around other people and so they associate the act of touching as pleasurable. The way children in Kowananee of the twynoxtee tribe eat newt larva like we eat french fries. They don't find it disgusting. But we do. Sex is just a short cut to that self unity when your body and your mind form into one. It's a vehicle, a path, not the actual destination. Like in your dreams when you think you can fly so your body flies. They are one. Our conscious and our subconscious and our bodies are one. Sometimes I can do it when I'm awake, and I'm alone and I dream when I'm awake and I can control it and I am there and I feel everything and see everything and know...and then it happens, the moment, that... togetherness. Body, mind, soul.

(Pause.)

Everyone is alone when they come. Like when we die. Like when we're born. And when we are completely unified in that moment, alone...that's everything, that's purpose. That's beyond the mirage of god, of love...we invent words to try to explain it but it can't be shared that's the whole point. That's why everyone is so cruel. Because they think that that "being" that "unity" comes through other people but it's exactly what gets in the way. People get hurt, they hurt others, they blame the other for not being able to make them whole. You can't be whole if you have to share. You can't share a bottle of bourbon and have the whole thing.

The act of being completely aware and unaware at the same time. To come, to masturbate. But you need not even touch yourself. The body feels what the mind experiences.

The body is just a vessel.
 I masturbate as often as possible. But I never touch myself.
 I don't like the feeling of flesh. You don't need it.
 We really went the wrong way as a species. Our brains are
 getting smaller, they have been for the past 20,000 years.
 Perhaps the purpose of our brains is not complex thought...so
 we are de-evolving. Someday we'll die like butterflies.
 Pinned to a greater species wall.

(He approaches her with the
 blunt object.)

MYRNA

Moths. They are moths.
 (He stops.)
 We shouldn't wake Asher.
 (Silence.)
 You look upset Sammy.

HADLEY

Sammy?

MYRNA

It's a nickname. Didn't care for it before but I think I like
 it now.

(He sets down the object.)

HADLEY

Things aren't what I expected.

MYRNA

They never are.

(He begins to cry. She doesn't
 seem to notice.)

HADLEY

I want you to die.
 (He grabs at her feet and tries
 to clutch onto her.)

MYRNA

What are you doing?

HADLEY

Please. Please.

MYRNA

Stop it. Who are you?

HADLEY

Samuel. My name is Samuel. Say it. Say Samuel. Please. Please say Samuel. Say Sammy.

(Silence.)

Please. Please. Touch me.

MYRNA

My hands are so old now.

HADLEY

Please.

(She turns away.)

MYRNA

You sleep so soundly Asher. I never wake you when I tear apart the bed at night.

(Beat.)

I can't remember the last time I dreamed. Are you dreaming? Do you fly? Are you flying Asher? Can you feel the wind in your hair? Can you feel the wind?

(She lightly kisses him on the lips. She stops. She pulls back and looks at him.)

I thought I would leave first.

I always thought I'd leave when I was young. And my hands were warm and someone loved me.

HADLEY

Please. Don't ignore me.

MYRNA

I'd like some tea now.

(Pause. She goes into the kitchen leaving HADLEY on the floor. He searches around.)

I used to like honey in my tea.

(Pause.)

My mother used to like honey in her tea.
 In her green, mint green knit sweater with pockets.
 She always had tea. And a piano. A piano with white crocheted
 doilies. Always out of tune. With so much sheet music.

(HADLEY crawls over to the side
 table, eventually finding
 something with a sharp edge.)

HADLEY

(To ASHER)

Where are you now?
 Are you somewhere better?
 Smarter?
 Are you laughing?
 Is this all a joke? A wink? A preview?
 Or are you still here?

(He quietly begins to cut away
 at his clothes.)

MYRNA

She loved squirrels. And owls.

HADLEY

Or is it nothing. How much I've hoped that it is nothing.
 It's comforting to think you always have the option to end
 things.

MYRNA

This mug never gets used.

HADLEY

That it doesn't have to last forever.

MYRNA

Owls and squirrels.

HADLEY

(At his own behavior)

Do people do this?

MYRNA

I don't believe in steeping tea.

(Pause.)

That's a myth those British came up with. Not like good people.

HADLEY

We aren't good.

People.

Is there a difference.

Maybe your a good dog.

Or worm.

What makes a good worm.

(He cuts away more at his clothes.)

A shredder. Maybe we are all machines. I was made to be a shredder. Not a child.

(To Myrna)

Am I child?

MYRNA

I never went anywhere. I moved around a lot at first...but I never went anywhere. I never saw the ocean.

HADLEY

I cut my shirt.

MYRNA

I never rode in a plane.

HADLEY

I cut my shirt.

MYRNA

I never even went on a boat.

HADLEY

I cut my pants.

MYRNA

A small boat once. When Asher and I, before everything turned so liquid. It was small. A small boat. We had to choose between the wine and cheese and the life vests.

(HADLEY cuts himself. He looks
to her.)

HADLEY

I cut myself.

MYRNA

The whole point was the picnic.

(He cuts himself.)

HADLEY

I cut myself.

MYRNA

But what if we drown?

(He cuts himself.)

HADLEY

I cut myself.

MYRNA

I refused to leave the wine. It was the purpose, the purpose
of everything, there was no need for a boat for a lake for
wood for water....

(He cuts himself.)

HADLEY

I cut myself.

MYRNA

So we wore the life vests. We wore them. You can have your
vest and drink wine too. I felt so safe. Always be safe.
Protect what you know you need to enjoy. That boat was only
for the purpose of the picnic. It was the only way.

(He cuts himself.)

HADLEY

I cut myself.

MYRNA

The only way.

HADLEY

(Throwing himself at her.)

I CUT MYSELF!!!!!!!!!!

(Pause.)

I'm bleeding.

(She just stares at him.)

Something inside you should be breaking.

MYRNA

(Stoically)

I don't understand.

HADLEY

Kiss it.

(He holds out his bloody arm.)

Kiss it please.

(She doesn't)

Please. Please! Pleaseeee!! PLEASE. PLEASE!!!

(The more insistent and
desperate he gets the more
restrained and stoic she
becomes.)

I came here to kill you. Please kiss my arm. Please wipe it clean without thinking your own cleanliness or safety. Please tell me everything will be okay. That the pain is only temporary. That you will make it all go away. Please sterilize the cut and soothe me when it stings and tell me a funny joke to take my mind of the pain. Please wrap up my arm. Slightly too tight. Please kiss it and tell me it was never as bad as I thought it was and that It will heal just fine.

Please kiss me.

(Nothing. He gives up.)

There are two of me.

There are two of me now. At once.

MYRNA

I'm sorry.

HADLEY

No you are not.

MYRNA

Would you like some tea?

HADLEY

Hot chocolate.

MYRNA

You're not a child.

HADLEY

Take me to the movies.

MYRNA

No.

HADLEY

I graduated with honors.

MYRNA

That's nice.

(He searches her face.)

HADLEY

Would you like to come to the ceremony. They called my name.

MYRNA

I don't like crowds.

HADLEY

I lost my virginity to a forty year old woman with red hair. She had cancer. I could see every bone. She died the next day. She died in her own bed.

(Silence.)

I thought it was supposed to make me feel different. When do I feel different.

MYRNA

That's nice.

HADLEY

Do you have a mother?

MYRNA

Yes.

HADLEY

Do you miss her?

MYRNA

Why think about it. I'd rather have more tea.

HADLEY

I broke you. The wrong way.

(She goes into the kitchen to
get more tea.)

MYRNA

When I was a child. I did everything my mother and said to do. I dared not disobey. The thought of it filled me up with such anxiety it wasn't even difficult. It was the right thing to do it was the natural thing to do it was the natural thing to do. And my dolls all did what I said. And when my cousin played house he was obedient to me like a perfect little boy. He always wore the blue jumper like I asked. I never had to tell I simply had to ask, and he'd say "yes mama" I loved that so much. "mama" It's so warm. It's appreciative. It's honest. Full of pride and love. It floats right out of a mouth and dances up to a woman standing on a purple velvet pedestal.

(She returns.)

My mother told me, all good families live together forever. Then my father killed himself. I never saw my mother again.

(Pause.)

Two boys found me home alone in the house. Been that way for a week or so. They tied me to the tree out back and shoved twigs up into me. Left them there. Itched so bad and I couldn't scratch.

(She sips her tea.)

Too Sweet.

(Beat.)

I don't remember much else. Till I was older. And I met Asher. He understood that you have to have a child. Everyone needs a son. The way everyone needs a mother. I became restless and I began to feel....I Needed a son. And one day. Asher brought me my son. And everything was perfect.

(Pause.)

But he didn't want to wear the blue jumper. Just unnatural, non-natural that boy was. So...
There was so much fear.

(Pause. She begins to scratch
at her thigh.)

HADLEY

Stop.

(She continues.)

MYRNA

What?

HADLEY

Stop.

MYRNA

I'm not doing anything.

HADLEY

Stop.

(She continues.)

MYRNA

I was such a fan of the color yellow when I was a child-

(HADLEY grabs her hand. They
stay frozen a moment.)

I don't remember everything. No one can.

(Pause.)

I don't know what I did on February 3rd. On March 10th of my 16th year. It's not fair if other people can remember, I can't, isn't it gone, doesn't it all just go it's not real. Not now. Only in our heads.

HADLEY

In our heads.

MYRNA

They change. Every time you visit them they change. So really, nothing has ever really happened. Things that happened-

HADLEY

That you did-

MYRNA

That happened are not here, they are not real they are only in our heads and things change in there so much, so very much.

HADLEY

Maybe.

(Silence.)

I'm not satisfied. It's still cold in here.

(Pause.)

MYRNA

I'm sorry you don't feel better.

HADLEY

What am I supposed to do.

MYRNA

You'll figure it out.

HADLEY

It all was so clear before. I found this place. I had my plan. I have my bags. My only items in two blue suit cases at the Inn an hour from the port. I have a ticket. A ticket. To fly away on a ship and start my real life. I was gunna burn everything. And my life was going to start now. Just about now as I watched everything before burn, and look forward to people and places and things and me I- I was going to be a different person. I was gunna die with all of this. The few inches of myself that remained were going to grow into a good happy smart likable man. A man.

MYRNA

That's how everything is.

HADLEY

I don't see the point anymore.

MYRNA

(Referring to Asher)

He's dead.

HADLEY

I could be one of those people, who, can't decide between the silver or the black toaster. I could do crosswords puzzles while drinking coffee. Meet up with friends...and hug hello. Own sheets that match.

(He tries to wipe away some of the blood on his arm. He does this until he is a bit more clean. MYRNA watches him. When he is finally done.)

HADLEY

I always like the word Mama. I named my the objects in my room. All began with M. Mama.

MYRNA

Would you like me to make you a sandwich?
Liverwurst and mustard.

(Pause.)

HADLEY

The thick slices?

MYRNA

Yes.

HADLEY

You know that?

MYRNA

I think so.

HADLEY

It's not too late?

MYRNA

What's to stop us?

HADLEY

I'm bleeding on your rug. I killed your husband.

MYRNA

I suppose there is nothing we can do about it now.

HADLEY

It's been a very long time since someone made me a liverwurst sandwich.

MYRNA

Would you like me to cut the crusts off?

(Silence.)

HADLEY

Yes.

MYRNA

Tell me about the boat.

(She goes into the kitchen to
make the sandwich.)

I'd like to hear about the boat.

HADLEY

It's just a boat.

MYRNA

Is it big?

HADLEY

Yes.

MYRNA

What color is it?

HADLEY

I don't know.

MYRNA

You don't remember?

HADLEY

I don't know.

MYRNA

You haven't seen it?

HADLEY

No.

MYRNA

You bought a ticket on a boat and you haven't seen it.

HADLEY

It's a boat. The color doesn't matter.

MYRNA

I always imagine they are blue.

HADLEY

Probably white.

MYRNA

They should be blue. So predators can't spot them so well.

HADLEY

Or rescuers.

MYRNA

Boats seem so classic. Air, sky, water.

HADLEY

What about trains?

MYRNA

Loud. I think ships I think quiet. Like flying on water.

HADLEY

You've never been in a plane.

MYRNA

I've never flown in a plane.
Would you like mustard?

HADLEY

Yes.
Please.

MYRNA

Must be exciting. A ship. Luggage. Ports. Maybe you'll land
in the new world.

HADLEY

This is the new world.

MYRNA

Maybe you'll find a newer one.

(She returns with a sandwich.)

Here we are. Nothing fancy.

(He takes it with his still
somewhat bloody hands. He
takes a bite.)

HADLEY

This tastes nice. Thank you.

MYRNA

I'm glad you like it.

(He slowly moves to her. They
have a hesitant but eventually
moving hug.)

I have missed having Samuel so much.

HADLEY

I have...

MYRNA

I thought that all was taken from my mind but it's coming
back...maybe we do remember everything.

HADLEY

Maybe...maybe we could go on the boat together. Get another
ticket.

MYRNA

Really?

HADLEY

Would you want to come?

MYRNA

I think so.

HADLEY

I'm sure we could get another ticket.

MYRNA

That sounds wonderful.

HADLEY

Good. Good.

(He quickly finish the
sandwich. Animal like.)

I have missed this so much.

(He sets the empty plate down.)

Thank you. Mama.

MYRNA

Mama.

Perhaps we could find the others. I wonder about them now.

HADLEY

Who?

MYRNA

What they are doing? What they look like?

HADLEY

What others?

MYRNA

The other children.

HADLEY

What children?

MYRNA

The other Samuels.

HADLEY

Other Samuels?

MYRNA

Yes.

HADLEY

What do you mean?

MYRNA
My other Samuels.

HADLEY
Before me?

MYRNA
Yes.

HADLEY
There were others...before me?

MYRNA
Of course.

HADLEY
How many?

MYRNA
Oh...well six. I believe.

HADLEY
Six.

MYRNA
Perhaps seven. It...it is so long ago. Eight. or...

(Silence.)

HADLEY
What are their names?

MYRNA
What do you mean?

HADLEY
What are their names?

MYRNA
You sound angry.

HADLEY
Their names?

MYRNA
Samuel.

HADLEY

Samuel.

MYRNA

Of course. Always Samuel.

(Silence.)

I bet they are all doing just fine. Handsome men. All will be so handsome. And they might just remember me. Yes. They could remember me and smile. Big white smiles and bright eyes, welcoming home. I suppose you are all brothers. How nice. Did you know you have brothers?

(Silence.)

Samuel.

(Silence.)

Samuel.

(Silence)

Samuel.

(Pause.)

Let us go see them.

(Beat.)

HADLEY

Alright.

MYRNA

Can we?

HADLEY

Sure.

MYRNA

Wonderful.

HADLEY

You should pack your things.

MYRNA

Now?

HADLEY

Yes now.

MYRNA

What should I pack?

HADLEY

It might take a very long time. Six or seven.

MYRNA

I have a suitcase.

HADLEY

Good.

MYRNA

Should I get it?

HADLEY

Yes now, we'll have a wonderful time...

MYRNA

I...I will pack my things right away.

HADLEY

Good.

(She leaves to go pack her things. HADLEY sits on the couch next to ASHER. Silence.)

I don't think We've developed the way we should have.
As a species.

(Pause.)

I've been doing a lot of thinking these past few hours.

(Short pause.)

I can't remember last Tuesday. And this morning feels like forever ago. I think internal time begins to unravel at a certain point...when there no longer is a point. Once there is no use for something it's discarded. Like fins. Or fangs. So why am I still here. You still here.

(Pause.)

I can feel my tongue swelling. It's evolving out of me. Who do I need to speak with now. Eventually we'll all be telepathic and we wont need tongues...they'll just fall off, like tails on the shore.

(Pause.)

Who pit man against nature. It's all the same thing really. Part of. Unless we were dropped here by aliens.

(Pause.)

I guess it makes sense in regards to all those religious types. I feel sad for them. But at least they have succeeded in the delusion. That makes their lives so much.... Sufferable.

(Pause.)

Maybe I made the wrong choice.
Maybe I should have put less importance in humanity.

(He looks up.)

I should have wished upon a a star.

If I were god. I'd hide cameras in us all.

(MYRNA returns with a suitcase
and her hat.)

MYRNA

I've got a hat. My travel hat. I got my hat many years ago and have not had a chance to wear it. And now look. I am wearing my travel hat. To travel.

(She wraps herself in her beige
coat.)

HADLEY

You look beautiful.

MYRNA

Oh my dear. I am so happy. Will we go now?

HADLEY

Yes. One moment.

(He exits and returns)

After you.

(She takes his face.)

MYRNA

I am so glad you came. Everything is going to be much much better now.

HADLEY

Yes it is.

(She turns and walks towards
the door.)

HADLEY steps after her,
 revealing a blunt object, and
 bashes her head in. She falls
 to the ground. He bashes her
 and in head a second time. And
 a third. And a fourth. And a
 fifth. A sixth , a seventh. He
 does this 8 times. He stops
 and looks down at the mess. He
 sees the blood cover his body.
 He picks up her body and
 carries her to the couch. He
 sets her next to ASHER. He
 exits upstairs. He is gone for
 a long time.

He returns naked, wet, clean.
 He crosses to the couch and
 sits between ASHER and MYRNA.)

HADLEY

One day I went for a walk in the woods near the university I
 tried to attend. I walked down a path I used to pretend was
 mine...

That morning I woke with such a hole - this emptiness I
 assumed was hunger. I had never felt such a hole so I
 categorized it by similarities, origin, location - as hunger.
 So I cooked myself my regular breakfast. Eggs and fried
 zucchini. But I was still hungry. The feeling had not gone
 away. It was getting worse. So I made another plate. And I
 ate. But the feeling did not go away. So I made myself a
 sandwich and dipped it in corn bisque and ate it all in a
 matter of minutes... but the feeling, or lack there of, was
 still there. So I baked the cake mix that someone had left in
 the apartment before I moved in and I ate it all. It was so
 consuming that feeling. I couldn't fathom anything else than
 banishing that want from me. So I went to the little
 restaurant on the corner, near the gas station and I ordered,
 and ordered and ordered and I ate everything until I was
 unable to put anything else in my mouth. I didn't even care
 how disgusted the waitresses were. I hate it when people look
 at me.

I always feel like I've done something wrong even when I haven't.

I paid in cash and left. But the feeling was there. I began to think I was dying. That this is not hunger but death. This is how it comes, if you wait for it naturally. So I went to the Path. I thought it would be the best place to die. I liked it there. Only nature. I walk and walked and walked and tried to think of all my favorite moments, my most beautiful discoveries. But all I could think of are all the moths that are still caterpillars that I will never see. I will never drop into a jar. All the ones that will die and disappear and never get preserved. All the ones that will be forgotten. And the emptiness began to grow. I couldn't walk any more. I went to the ground. And curled up. Waiting.

I closed my eyes for a long time hoping all the stories would be true and that white would be all around me. That I'd see the bright light, that I'd hear singing. But when I opened my eyes I saw a red fox. A beautiful little red fox. Chewing and chewing and looking back at me with those velvet, plush eyes. And as he took another bite I looked down and under his little paws, such little paws, was another little red fox. Half gone. And he chewed and chewed and chewed. I could hear the tearing.

And then I felt something inside me shudder....

I vomited. It all came rushing out never ending as if I would turn inside out and evacuate my own self.

And then it was gone. The emptiness was gone. The hunger.

(Pause.)

I think I understand that now.

Some things, as disgusting as they seem, are just true, are natural, are part of the larger design of our existence. How can nature be unnatural. How can natural be wrong. What does that mean. I thought...how long until birds are told where they can and can not fly? That wanting to fly one way is not natural. How long till they are punished for flying to fast or too high or next to the wrong kind. And when did that first moment happen for man. And why. And why he let another tell him...it was wrong.

I don't think we're dying. It's too sad. I'd like to think we are entering a cocoon. And soon we'll all wake up...transformed into something actually worth preserving.

(He drinks from the formalin
bottle. End of play.)