

Til Death Blooms True

---

A full-length play

By Klæ Bainter

Klæ Bainter  
KlæBainter@gmail.com  
Athens, Ohio

206.372.3469

Wren Hooker- 19, White Female

Floyd Moxley- 40s, Black Male

Jubal Hooker- 50s, White Male

:: :: INDICATE A CHARACTER IS TALKING TO THEMSELVES

-- INDICATES A CHARACTER IS CUTTING ANOTHER CHARACTER OFF

## SCENE 1

1884.

KANSAS.

*THE HOOKER FARM*

*Outside of the farmhouse. There is the side of a barn. MINNIE lives in this barn.*

*There is a GRAIN SILO. The Silo can be implied. Put as far down stage as possible. It doesn't have to be outrageous in height, however, if it is, the humble playwright thanks you for your commitment.*

*It should have a roof, and if possible, some of a stair case that wraps around the back out of sight.*

*The top of the silo should be able to bare weight.*

*WREN HOOKER enters with FLOYD MOXLEY.*

*Moxley is wearing a SATCHEL, there's an AXE sticking out of it.*

WREN

What made you want to come out here, Mr. Moxley?

MOXLEY

Oh, I s'ppose I just thought it was time.

WREN

I must say, it sure is nice to see you.

MOXLEY

The feeling is mutual, Wren. It's been far too long.

WREN

Years, I'm sure.

MOXLEY

I'm sure it has. Since you was a little thing..

WREN

Since before we went to Ohio.

MOXLEY

Yeah, that must be it. Cause I ain't seen you since you came back here to Kansas. And that was what? Ten years now?

WREN

Yes, sir.

MOXLEY

Well, you're doing just fine, Wren. Farm is looking mighty nice.

WREN

That's all of it, in all of it's glory, I suppose.

MOXLEY

You're gonna need to drain that silo before harvest. Must've been filling up all winter long.

WREN

Oh, I will.

MOXLEY

Gotta be a busted stave somewhere.

WREN

On the roof, but don't worry Mr. Moxley, It's on the list.

MOXLEY

You've done a hell of a job, Wren. *Hell of a job.*

WREN

Well, thank you Mr. Moxley.

MOXLEY

I think you've known me long enough to call me Floyd, doncha think?

WREN

Probably not, Mr. Moxley.

MOXLEY

Fair enough.

WREN

So you like what you seen?

MOXLEY

You've been maintaining this for what? A month?

WREN

Just about.

MOXLEY

I hope he knows what kind of job you've done here.

WREN

I think he does...

MOXLEY

How's he doing?

WREN

He doesn't say much-- in that room for a month-- complete isolation.

MOXLEY

Was he eating?

WREN

Here and there. [beat] I leave food, but he seldom consumed it all. Which, to be honest, and God forgive me for saying it, has kinda made the affording a little easier.

MOXLEY

Are *you* getting by alright?

WREN

Money's been tight since the funeral.

MOXLEY

I'm sorry I couldn't make it-- I wanted to... but, you know-- lots of folks still don't think a black man can show up to mourn a white woman.

WREN

It's okay Mr. Moxley. Just a lot of tears and too much wine.

MOXLEY

I'm sorry to hear it. She was a good woman.

WREN

Yes, sir.

MOXLEY

So are you... I just mean... how are... how are *you* holding up?

WREN

Good days and bad days, I s'ppose. I haven't had a lot of time to work out my feelings on the matter. Pa went straight from the funeral to his room.

MOXLEY

That ain't no easy thing, Wren.

*Short pause.*

WREN

No, it ain't. But I done a good job of distracting myself with my work.

MOXLEY

Have you talked to him about it?

WREN

Pa? Oh, no, you know pa, Mr. Moxley. He don't say much-- Figure I just wanna ask "why," don't know what good that would do.

MOXLEY

Ain't always an answer.

WREN

No I s'ppose not. But I wish she would've said something.

MOXLEY

She ain't leave you a note?

WREN

No, sir. Not that I'm aware.

MOXLEY

Well, if you feel like getting anything off your chest you just let me know. I'm happy to help in anyway I can.

WREN

Thank you, Mr. Moxley. I appreciate that. Just gotta get through it right now... to-- just focus on my work--

MOXLEY

Bury your roots.

WREN

Sure, Mr. Moxley.

MOXLEY

Remember that?

WREN

Mama used to say it all the time. Shoulda had a banner. Gotta bury our roots, she'd say.

MOXLEY

Back when I first crossed over from Missouri -- you was no bigger than a corn cob back then-- it was middle of the night and didn't know where in tarnation I was, so I just laid down the first chance I could. Next morning your mama found me sleeping in your daddy's wagon... She didn't scream, didn't make a fuss, of course-- and she let me splain myself for all of half a sentence before she told me "Bury your roots, mister." Brought out some bread and coffee and told me your pa had a job for me if I wanted it.

WREN

Could be words to live by, Mr. Moxley.

MOXLEY

I never quite got it until recently... Still don't know I fully understand, figured it had something to do with making oneself at home. For planting yourself down and making sure you grow. Could be we all understand it differently-- But it sure feels good to hear it, don't it?

WREN

It does. I'm not sure how to use it in this moment, but I'm sure someday I'll find a way to understand it. Thank you, Mr. Moxley.

MOXLEY

She was a good women, Wren. Raised a good child, too. A child that could do anything she wants to go do.

WREN

You know. [beat] As I'm counting them figures, we're moving closer and closer to the red every day, it's a free fall-- and with harvest just a ways away-- well, I guess... I guess I don't know how long pa is gonna be dealing with his... ya know...

MOXLEY

Spell of... listlessness?

WREN

*Ennui.*

MOXLEY

On what?

WREN

*Ennui.*

I read it in a short story when I was still in school-- it means... I guess it means listlessness, I suppose. But it's a symptom of doing nothing, brought on by *doing*. *nothing*.

MOXLEY

He's been through a lot, Wren. [beat] Losing the love of your life ain't no easy thing, right?

WREN

He didn't lose her. It ain't like Ma just disappeared. She died. Ain't no Christian death, neither. Wasn't no ascending.



MOXLEY

Well, ya can't just blame a man for--

WREN

A bathtub of bitter sweet water, and my ma was the source.

MOXLEY

Wren--

WREN

We all been through a lot. I been through a lot, hell, you been through a lot. Yet here we are, standing in the light of the day!

MOXLEY

He's grieving, Wren. Ya gotta let the man grieve.

WREN

He done had his time to grieve! You see me grieving? No, cause there's work needs to be finished.

MOXLEY

Wren, maybe you need to slow down a little.

WREN

How do you expect I do that, Mr. Moxley?

MOXLEY

Well... hopefully I can help.

WREN

That's the idea.

MOXLEY

Hey, how's Minnie? I'll have to say hi before I go.

WREN

Old, but still fat. I swear she's been my one saving grace. If it wasn't for her I swear I would've-- well, I don't know, actually. But I'll tell ya, sometimes I would be out here by myself-- tending the fields... or chopping wood for the stove and I'd just want to go upstairs and... ah, I don't know.

MOXLEY

And do what?

WREN

I wanted to clobber him cross the head! I swear, Mr. Moxley, there was more than a few times I wanted to push him out the bed, and push him down the stairs-- it's frustrating! Instead I'd just go and talk to Minnie.

MOXLEY

I understand. I reckon it ain't right, but I understand.

WREN

I'm sorry, Mr. Moxley. I know it ain't right, but neither is leaving me to all this work on my own. So I'd just go over and sit and tell Minnie everything I could. Beats talking to myself, at least.

MOXLEY

Does Jubal even know I'm here?

WREN

He does.

MOXLEY

I think it's good you're getting on things so early this year. Whole town is moving in the right direction.

WREN

I sure hope so. This whole state been living in fear for too many years, I say. Too long we been sitting on grains. I'm happy to take a normal pace this year-- and given how much I been doing by myself this seems like the best option.

MOXLEY

Won't be doing it alone. I got a team of migrant brothers-- hard workers... the lot of em.

WREN

You don't know how glad I am to hear that!  
I'm doing enough out here by myself, Mr. Moxley. I just ain't got time to go to the markets, and manage the sales, and--

MOXLEY

He up there now?

WREN

Yes, sir. ::With a watchful vindictive eye....::

MOXLEY

What's that?

WREN

Where else.

MOXLEY

Might as well try to get him down here. I can start this process with you, ultimately it's him that's gonna need to sign off on it?

WREN

Yes, sir. I'm aware. But I'll just take the matter to him later tonight.

MOXLEY

And he's gonna be okay with this?

WREN

He will be.

MOXLEY

Wren?

WREN

He's the man of the farm.

MOXLEY

Might not be to your liking, but the bitter truth.

WREN

I said he will be.

MOXLEY

Well, now. I just want to be clear. You're like family to me, but it can't be you signing on that line. And given the nature of the relationship--

WREN

He'll be fine with it.

MOXLEY

If you say so.

WREN

I'll make something happen, Mr. Moxley!

MOXLEY

Ah, don't get so excited.

WREN

We need that money, Mr. Moxley! We ain't got much left. And the truth of the matter is that I'm down here working this farm and he's up there... well... doing whatever he's doing. And while he's doing whatever that doing is, I'm doing the work, and as hard as I do it, lotsa things still ain't getting done, and there ain't no money coming in.

MOXLEY

Look, it ain't like I don't get it! I see what's going on-- trust when I tell you that if it were up to me, I'd buy and sell your grains for you faster than the Lord gave you breath. But it ain't binding unless your pa signs. That's just the law, Wren.

WREN

Ain't there something you can do? With him all laid up I should be able to sign, doncha think.

MOXLEY

My hands are tied, Wren. The only way you could sign is if, well...

*Pause.*

WREN

Got it. [beat] Well, I'll get you a signature, Mr. Moxley. Don't worry about that.

MOXLEY

Alright, then.

WREN

Sorry to get right to it, but is there an offer I can take to him at least?

MOXLEY

Sure. I figure I'll give you \$1000 for the whole harvest. And I got them boys working for me now, too, so let him know it's a package sort of situation.

WREN

Mr. Moxley?

MOXLEY

I'll give you forty percent when the contract is signed, and you'll get the rest at the end of harvest.

WREN

I... that's...

MOXLEY

Now I know that you'd make a little more than that if you was selling everything yourself, but I think it's a fair deal-- especially with the labor.

WREN

But you only gave Mr. Washburne--

MOXLEY

Washburne ain't family. Besides, my business is relatively small, and given the nature of the relationship I have with your pa, well, If I can get Jubal Hooker to sell to me I can probably do just about anything.

WREN

Thank you, Mr. Moxley. Thank you so much. You don't know how much this means to me. This farm is everything.

MOXLEY

That shouldn't be the case, Wren

WREN

Oh, this just might save us, Mr. Moxley.

MOXLEY

You're nineteen, Wren. I'm not meaning to disrespect your pa, but a girl your age shouldn't be pushing around the weight of her father--

WREN

Forty percent!

MOXLEY

Especially not this soon after--

WREN

Just thinking about it makes me happy, Mr. Moxley!

MOXLEY

You know your ma never wanted you to be a farmer...

*Wren pays it no mind.*

Ah, hell you ain't listening to a word I'm saying.

WREN

Mr. Moxley, I have hogs to feed, and food to buy. I got a silo roof to fix before harvest come, and a father that done locked himself in a room. No, sir, I didn't hear much after forty percent.

*Moxley reaches into his Satchel.*

MOXLEY

Ha ha! Alright, then-- well, here's your contract.

WREN

My heart.

*Moxley pulls the axe out of the satchel and hands it to Wren.*

MOXLEY

And, I guess, here is your...

*Wren takes it and reads from the inscription on the handle.*

WREN

..Moxley Agricultural Trade and Labor." Axe [beat] Very fancy, Mr. Moxley.

MOXLEY

It's because of your mama I can even put that on there. She's the one taught me to read, and to write letters and such.

WREN

You ever think that night you was sleeping in pa's wagon that you'd be established as such the man you are now, Mr. Moxley?

*Short pause.*

MOXLEY

You need anything else you don't hesitate to reach out, you hear?

WREN

Thank you, Mr. Moxley.

MOXLEY

I'll be in touch.

*She hugs him.*

*Moxley starts to exit.*

WREN

Thank you, Mr. Moxley!

*He waves.*

*Exits.*

*Wren folds the contract and puts it in her pocket.*

*She examines the axe. She's not sure what to do with it.. She looks towards the barn. She walks over and into the barn and comes out a few moments later without the axe.*

*She walks towards the house.*

*Lights.*

SCENE 2

*Moxley in ISOLATED LIGHT. Talking to Minnie.*

## MOXLEY

Hey, Old friend. Ya ol' porker.  
 How ya handling all of this?  
 You holding up okay? So much going on in the world... you lost your Mama, huh?  
 Must hurt... must really chew you up, huh?  
 You get angry, Old Friend?  
 You lose her and your pa goes and locks himself in a room-- can't imagine how isolated  
 you must feel... so far away from everyone.  
 Wish it hadn't been so long since I was here... too many years... we letting too much time  
 go past.  
 I'll bet behind those pink ears you're just wishing for a way to break free, huh?  
 Pent up your whole life.. Even well taken care of still want a little more-- but penned up  
 you can't do much about it.  
 But you can only see so much through the slats on a farm.  
 Must take it's toll.  
 Poor Elizabeth, Lord knows what might make a woman of such caliber to go and do  
 something like opening up her wrists.  
 Maybe she never wanted to come back.  
 Maybe she just done living.. hard to say, Old Friend.  
 What do I know?  
 Never knew I'd be here-- never knew I'd be so... established as such.  
 I've been making my own way these past few years., been doing my best--  
 Gonna keep doing what I can, Old Friend.  
 That plague done come in and changed the landscape--  
 I known you a long time now--  
 Used to watch you rolling around in the mud when you was just a piglet-- when you and  
 Wren was the same size.  
 You moving slower these days than you used to, but you're still a good ol' hog, huh?  
 The days is numbered, but you a good ol' hog.  
 Keep an eye on Wren, now.  
 Hard make sense of why her mama done it.  
 You gotta be there for her.  
 Gotta be there for all of em.  
 God knows they need you.

*Lights.*



## SCENE 3

*WREN HOOKER is sitting at the BREAKFAST TABLE eating.*

*She's dressed in dirty red flannel. She's examining a LEDGER.*

*JUBAL enters. He's also wearing a red flannel.*

Pa?? Good morning!

WREN

Good morning.

JUBAL

Oh, my! Here lemme get you some coffee-- some breakfast!

WREN

No need to get all excited.

JUBAL

Pa, it's so good to see you-- to see you here... and, look at us!

WREN

Huh?

JUBAL

We're dressed the same!

WREN

Seems we are.

JUBAL

*Wren has a huge smile on her face.*

WREN

I'm so happy to see you in the world of the living!

*Jubal doesn't respond.*

I was just getting ready to bring you up some breakfast.

JUBAL

Looks from here like you're reading.

WREN

Just looking over our budget is all. Have a seat, Pa.

*Wren pulls out a chair.*

JUBAL

How's the hogs?

WREN

These eggs was just made!

JUBAL

Said, how's the hogs, Wren.

WREN

Lets get some coffee in you.

JUBAL

Wren Maranda.

WREN

There will be plenty of time to talk about the hogs. Here, drink this.

JUBAL

Have we lost any?

WREN

Drink.

*Pause.*

*Jubal drinks.*

JUBAL

Happy?

WREN  
Only two.

JUBAL  
Which two?

WREN  
We'll get to that.

JUBAL  
Forget it, I'll go look for myself.

WREN  
Sit down. Locked up in that room with almost no daylight, and you're gonna have a seat for a moment. Gonna have a morning for a moment. You've been pecking at plates like a chicken for almost a month. You're gonna eat something before you do anything else.

JUBAL  
That ain't no way to talk to your father.

WREN  
Father or not, you're gonna do this for me.

*Long Pause.*  
Now here. Eggs is still warm.

JUBAL  
Can you just tell me which two?

WREN  
Eat.

*Jubal and Wren stare at each other.*

*Finally, Jubal takes a moment, he then starts to actually eat the food in front of him.*

JUBAL  
Thought maybe I'd come down for a spell and start tending to some matters of great importance.

WREN

What are these matters of great importance?

JUBAL

First thing is you telling me about them hogs.

WREN

Like I said--

JUBAL

Which two, Wren?

WREN

Just a couple of the younger ones.

JUBAL

It wasn't Minnie?

WREN

Well, no, It wasn't Minnie.

JUBAL

What do you mean "well." You'd tell me if it was?

WREN

I'd tell you if it was.

*Jubal examines Wren.*

*He takes a few bites.*

JUBAL

I don't know why you couldn't just tell me that to begin with.

WREN

Because right now you need to get some food in you, pa. And the thing about Minnie...

JUBAL

What thing about Minnie?

WREN

Well, I separated her out from the others.

JUBAL

I thought you just said she ain't sick!

WREN

She ain't... so far as I can tell, but she old... I thought it best to isolate her from the others. She been acting funny because of it.

JUBAL

Funny, how?

WREN

Hell, pa, I dunno. Just funny. She always been queen of her pen. And truthfully, I don't think she's even gone this long without seeing you or mama... been locked in that room up there for a month now--

JUBAL

No need to worry about her seeing me... I'ma head out there soon as I finish this.

WREN

So long as you finish.

JUBAL

They say animals act funny before something bad happens. Gonna have to check on her for sure.

WREN

I'm fine too, pa.

JUBAL

Well, I could see you from up there... I could just barely see her out that window.

WREN

You and that hog, I swear. Mama used to say if it came down to slaughtering her or that pig she'd hope you'd at least have the courtesy to bury her in her Sunday whites.

JUBAL

I don't wanna hear no talk like that.

WREN

Sorry, pa.

JUBAL

You know that pig was borne the very same moment--

WREN

I know.

JUBAL

The very same moment..

WREN

*--She was borne the very moment the plague stopped. [beat] She was a sign of goodness and can't nothing happen to her...*

Them little critters were pouring down for hours-- and your big old sow started birthing piglets... she done pushed out seven, and then here come number eight, a tiny little runt, and the very moment she fell out her mama onto the ground you heard the last locust fall.

JUBAL

That's right. She was my--

WREN

*--Your Mini Miracle-- cause she held back the plague--*

JUBAL

That's how--

WREN

I know, pa. That's how you named her.

JUBAL

Ahh, hell, forget it.

WREN

Naah! I still think it's sweet, pa!

JUBAL

I'm just saying-- Minnie's just..

WREN

Here, just a little more.

*She tops off his cup.*

JUBAL

I have to get out there and get to working.

WREN

Sounds good, pa. The roof on that silo needs fixing.

JUBAL

I'll check in and see how secure she is in the barn.

WREN

Whatever for?

JUBAL

Just incase.

WREN

Incasing what? This ain't the fever, pa. Not that I can tell.

JUBAL

Just want to get out there and see her. Just to be safe.

WREN

Sure, pa. But... just don't over do it. Don't... Well--

JUBAL

What?

WREN

The wallowing, pa.

JUBAL

She's a big girl, but she'll be alright.

WREN

I ain't talking about her.

*Beat.*

JUBAL

I'll be fine.

WREN

I just don't want you starting a bunch of work you aren't going to finish.

*Jubal just glares at Wren.*

JUBAL

I said I'm fine.

WREN

Of course-- but--

JUBAL

What were you doing with the ledger?

WREN

Just going over some numbers.

JUBAL

You accounting now, too?

WREN

A little-- things have been bad--

JUBAL

You don't need to do no accounting.

WREN

Well... with mama gone...

JUBAL

Stop saying things about your mama being gone. We just dealt with that for a month, and it's time to move on now, ya hear.

WREN

Pa?

*Silence.*

With... and you being... pa, everything is piling up...



JUBAL

If I remember proper you didn't even finish schooling. Don't need you playing with the numbers. I'll get to figuring all that needs to be figuring.

WREN

I didn't finish school cause you moved us 'cross the country and back again! I had all the intentions of finishing... but... I haven't been playing around pa, I been working.

JUBAL

It'll be fine.

WREN

We're not fine. Just take a look!

JUBAL

I don't need to take a look. I wrote all that in there. You don't think I know what I wrote?

WREN

I wrote all this!

JUBAL

Lot we have to do if we intend to start harvest...

WREN

Due respect, pa. That's what I've spent the better part of the last month doin. And besides...

JUBAL

Besides what?

WREN

County ain't harvesting early this year. They been meeting about it for a few weeks now... everyone seems to think we'll be fine to harvest like normal this year. Get back to how we used to do it.

JUBAL

Time ain't right yet.

WREN

But, pa, everyone agrees that the danger is gone--

JUBAL

We ain't everyone, ya hear? We're gonna harvest early like we done last year and the year 'fore that.

WREN

But pa, there ain't been no sign of anything ever since--

JUBAL

I said what I said. We're gonna harvest early this year.  
I fear the worst for this season. I fear the return of the very devils you dismiss.

WREN

But ain't no reason--

JUBAL

With the Godlessness of humans, it's bound to happen.

WREN

What are you referring to--

JUBAL

There's something in the air.  
Something's coming.

WREN

Pa, whole state is fixing to harvest like normal... it's too risky to keep harvesting early.  
We need to talk about making some changes.

JUBAL

*Changes?*

WREN

Well, with all the work to be done, and given your... given the ways things has been this summer, I wonder if we can't...

JUBAL

Can't what?

WREN

There's so much work to do, and I was thinking maybe we could get some help.

JUBAL

What help?

WREN

Word around town is that Mr. Moxley is offering a pretty good sum for grains and if we was to sell--

JUBAL

Floyd Moxley?

WREN

Yes, sir, and if we was to sell--

JUBAL

I ain't selling to no Floyd "Back Stabbin'" Moxley.

WREN

But pa, just listen--

JUBAL

Ain't nothing to listen to.

WREN

Mr. Washburne sold to him. Signed a contract with him just last week.

JUBAL

Of course he did. Those two is thick as thieves.

WREN

Word is he's paying Washburne eight hundred dollars for his harvest.

JUBAL

Hell, Wren, we'd make more than that selling ourselves.

WREN

But pa, I'm broken down.

JUBAL

You broken down, huh? Been doing this a month and you broken down. I been doing this my whole life do I seem broken down to you?

WREN

Pa, you just spent a month in your room.

JUBAL

That was different. That was on account of the passing of your mother..

WREN

A thousand dollars, pa!

JUBAL

A thousand dollars, what?

WREN

I'll bet if we went and talked to Mr. Moxley he'd give us a thousand dollars. I bet he would, with all the past we have and such.

JUBAL

There ain't no past with Moxley. Now leave it. The day I needed him the most he done jumped ship. There was no past after that.

WREN

He's given advances and everything.

JUBAL

Where you getting all this from?

*Pause.*

WREN

You know, people gabbing--

JUBAL

You been talking to Moxley?

WREN

No, sir. Just hearing things when I go into town is all.

JUBAL

Just people talking in town, huh?

WREN

Just talking.

JUBAL

They talking about me? You know how they be talkin in town-- nothing but affectation! Pretending they know everything.. kinda folks that talk poorly about a face in dark window not realizing it's a reflection.

*Pause.*

WREN

He gave Mr. Washburne forty percent up front. Forty percent.

JUBAL

And you think that's a good deal?

WREN

I think it's wonderful. And, the way things has been...

*Wren moves the ledger towards her father.*

JUBAL

How thing was... we get to harvesting and there won't be no problems. Not for us anyhow.

WREN

Pa, it means everyone else's crop is gonna be more mature than ours.

JUBAL

If they have a crop at all.

WREN

Mr. Moxley could really help us right now, pa.

JUBAL

And you think that would be better than us doing it all?

WREN

Pa, we're drowning.

JUBAL

We seem to be floating now.

WREN

Just take a look.

JUBAL

I don't need to see no ledger.

WREN

I just think that if you take a look you'll see. We don't have to do it next year, but given everything we been through... please take a look.

JUBAL

No thank you.

WREN

I just want you to see--

JUBAL

I don't need to see things to know what I know.

WREN

How much can you know you been up in a room for weeks.

JUBAL

If I remember right, I'm the man of the farm. Unless of course that's another of your changes?

WREN

It's a package deal-- He has workers and everything. It might give me a chance to really... to deal with [pause] for us... it might give us a break, pa.

JUBAL

Floyd Moxley has some cheap labor, huh?

WREN

Package deal, pa.

JUBAL

I got *you*, don't I?

WREN

Well, sure.

JUBAL

*And I got me.*

WREN

That's two hundred acres out there.

JUBAL

I guess we better start preparing then.

WREN

Please give it some thought.

JUBAL

I don't have to give it any thought. I'm not selling my grains to Floyd Moxley.

WREN

PA! There ain't no part of me that doesn't know this is your farm-- but I have spent a month doing everything around here because you've had yourself locked in a room! And Mama's funeral has darn near wiped us out. I ain't barely seen my room at all... you living in the dark and I...[beat] Now you listen to me, I don't have the strength to do all of this if you decide you're just going to withdraw from life again.

*Beat.*

*Silence.*

You hearin me? [pause] Can ya nod, at least?

*Jubal nods.*

Now you think on it, okay.

*Nothing from Jubal.*

You want anything else?

*Pause.*

JUBAL

Can you fix me some bread with sugar, please?

*Beat.*

WREN

Sure I can. [pause] Is it for you?

*Jubal smirks.*

*That's* what I thought. [beat] You know, you want to stay on her good side you better hope we don't run out of bread.

*Wren grabs some BREAD and cuts two large slices. She slathers some CREAM on it and sprinkles some SUGAR.*

JUBAL

I think if I'm goin out there and see her I should come with a lil som'thin.

WREN

Sounds great, pa.

JUBAL

I'm sure she been missing me.

WREN

I'm sure she has.

Probably standing out there in the mud just wondering when it was you was going to come back.

*Pause.*

JUBAL

I think she'll be good and happy to see me.

She's my favorite.

*She puts the bread on the table and kisses his cheek.*

WREN

*You're my favorite.*

*Jubal reaches up and pats Wren.*

Now, finish up them eggs so I can get to washing. You're gonna need your strength.



*Jubal scoops up the remaining eggs on his plate and shoves them in his mouth.*

Thank you.

*Wren grabs the plate and turns around to wash it. As she does, Jubal spits the eggs between the two pieces of bread. He squishes it all together and sets them back on the table.*

JUBAL

Floyd Moxley.

WREN

He was your best friend for years, pa.

JUBAL

He was my foreman. Nothing more.

WREN

That's just not true.

JUBAL

He wasn't even at the service. :: What the?::

*Jubal notices something on the floor across the room.*

WREN

Lots of folks weren't at the service. You know he couldn't come.

*Jubal is slowly moving his way towards whatever it was he saw.*

JUBAL

:: I gotchu.::

WREN

I really think this deal is a good idea. Given everything we've been through this year, this is a nice way to end the season.

::This it how it starts... ::  
 JUBAL  
*Wren turns and notices her father's movement.*  
 WREN  
 What *are* you looking at?  
 JUBAL  
 Hooooold on.  
*Beat.*  
*Jubal is on the ground.*  
 Ah, ha!  
*Jubal dives towards the wall.*  
*He's got something!*  
 WREN  
 What on earth are you crawling around for!?  
*Jubal jumps up.*  
 JUBAL  
 I think I broke him.  
 WREN  
 A mouse?  
*Jubal holds up a dead bug.*  
 It's just a little bug.  
 JUBAL  
 It's a locust.  
 WREN  
 Woopee for you.  
 JUBAL  
 Don't mock, now.

WREN

I don't see them falling from the sky yet, do you?

JUBAL

You just wait.

WREN

I think it means you've spent too much time laying in bed. You got the energy to go crawling around for bugs then I think it's time you took it outside and did something useful.

*Silence while Jubal examines the locust. He sees Wren's perplexed face.*

JUBAL

Oh, hell. Alright then.

*Jubal starts to exit.*

WREN

Take that egg sandwich with you.

*Jubal stops cold.*

You ain't clever.

*Wren grabs the bread and eggs off the table and hands it to Jubal.*

Now get.

*Jubal takes a moment.*

*He exits.*

*Lights.*

SCENE 4

*Jubal in ISOLATED LIGHT.*

Oh, how I've missed you, Old Girl.  
 You miss me?  
 I was up in that room, there.  
 I like to think you could hear me talking to you.  
 It's been some kind of life, huh?[pause]  
 Look at us now.  
 I brought you a little something.

*Jubal tosses the "egg sandwich" to Minnie.*

I tried to pull a fast one over on Wren.  
 How you feeling, Old Girl? Acting funny?  
 Feeling something inside you?  
 Might be there's something in your bones, something telling you something-- you telling  
 me something, Old Girl?  
 I hear some of your family members died.  
 Porkers you probably thought you'd never have to see go.  
 Sucked out of existence.  
 Something nasty.  
 No reason.  
 Never any reason for it, Old Girl.  
 No sense or reason.  
 But we keep looking for it, don't we?  
 Wondering where it comes next, how it's going to come, how to keep ourselves from it.  
 Ain't no keeping ourselves-- just time spent.  
 Killing it until it kills us.  
 I missed you so much.  
 When the light started to leave the windows I'd begin to shutter-- a shaking  
 uncontrollable fear.  
 You got to prepare yourself.  
 To be ready... but then there ain't no ready.  
 Just life ripplin though the roots til death blooms true. [beat]  
 How's your bread?  
 Gonna keep you in your own pen for a while-- how you feel about that?  
 I hear you acting funny, Old Girl-- Can't let anything happen to you.  
 Something happens to you, Old Girl.  
 How you feel about that.  
 I knew you'd understand.  
 You always understand me.

*Lights.*

## SCENE 5

*Wren is at the top of the silo. She's looking out over the fields. Jubal comes up the steps-- he's carrying some tools with him.*

*He steps up next to Wren and looks out with her.*

JUBAL

Been too long since I took in this view.

WREN

Seems a good view from your window.

JUBAL

Ain't the same. Ain't no where near the same. That bed room window is only sits about 20 feet off the ground.

WREN

No, you're right. It's a long way. One little breeze could put me right through that roof though. In fact, you outta be ashamed to have me up here in a situation like this; lacking all salubrious intent.

JUBAL

Did I ask you up here?

WREN

I thought you might want some help.

JUBAL

I'll take care of it.

WREN

I'm here now aren't I?

*Pause.*

JUBAL

Why do you talk that way?

Pa?

WREN

JUBAL

Salubrious intent? You can't just say "Pa, being up here scares the wits outta me."

WREN

When I learn a word I might at well use it.

JUBAL

How about right now you learn how to fix a roof.

WREN

That's what I'm doing, ain't it?

JUBAL

God help me Wren, I don't know what you're doing.

WREN

Flows both ways, pa.

JUBAL

Which one is it?

WREN

The middle.

JUBAL

This one?

WREN

Yes, sir.

JUBAL

Yeah, it's loose alright. Let's hope it ain't rotten. Hand me that bar.

WREN

Here. [beat] How was Minnie?

JUBAL

Oh, she was fine.

WREN

That's good. She seemed okay?

JUBAL

I dunno if I found her funny. But you right, I think maybe she's winding down.

WREN

Maybe I misread her a little bit.

JUBAL

For as loose as it is, it sure is stuck.

WREN

It's leaking, that much I know.

JUBAL

It's coming. [beat] Yeah, I hate to admit but I think Minnie's days are about numbered. She's an old hog, Wren. I hate to say it, but it's about that time.

WREN

Well, she don't look sick.

JUBAL

Ain't about sick. Just about her time, is all.

WREN

You can tell that?

JUBAL

Something in the air. I told ya, I can feel it.

WREN

Can you always feel it?

JUBAL

Ah, hell, look. It is rotted. I'm gonna have to replace this whole roof.

*Pause.*

Gonna have to go into town I reckon. Put this away for me?

WREN

Sure, pa. [beat] So, can you always feel it when that's happening?

JUBAL

What's that?

WREN

You said you can feel it.

JUBAL

I said I could feel Minnie starting to fade. And it's no time for that. Not right before harvest. This is about as bad a situation as I could imagine.

WREN

What are you feeling?

JUBAL

Right now I imagine I'm feeling pretty behind. Thought you was down here taking care of things. Silo is wide open. Gonna have a silo full of locusts--

WREN

You really think Minnie is dying?

JUBAL

You think you can manage if I head into town for a bit.

WREN

You think maybe while you're there you could stop by and talk to Mr. Moxley?

JUBAL

I ain't got time for this right now, Wren.

WREN

These issues with Mr. Moxley just don't make no sense. You said you'd think on it.

JUBAL

Do you remember what it was like that day the plague moved in on us. Caught us all off guard.

WREN

I remember bits of it--



## JUBAL

Heavens, you could hear them ripping against the blue of the sky-- they just set up there at first, their wings glistening in the light of the day .

It was as if a white golden fleece hovered above us until they were so exceedingly numerous that they actually blocked out the sun.

A storm, it looked like.

Come in quicker than anything I'd ever seen.

It's one thing to watch rain fall, but to witness a cloud drop down from the sky right before your eyes is something right out of The Book.

Down they fell like hail; they beat against the houses and swarmed in through the windows.

The tree branches broke under the weight of such a multitude.

They even derailed trains.

It was hell.

## WREN

I remember Mr. Moxley scooping me up and throwing me inside with Mama. Then you come running in and she cinched ya's pants and you ran off to cover the well.

## JUBAL

They won't do it again-- They took everything that day. Everything went from there on out. We had to pack up and go to Ohio with your mama's family.

## WREN

I remember, Pa.

## JUBAL

Moxley stayed here. At first we offered to take him with us, but I don't think he much wanted to go. It was decided that he'd tend to things while we was gone. Feed the hogs we couldn't take, and do some general up keep-- he sent letters to your ma to keep us informed of the happenings, and we paid him what we could. Then shortly after the second season, the letters just stopped. Wasn't a word about how things was going.

## WREN

That's why you two have issues.

## JUBAL

Them devils wiped out the entire state of Kansas. The economy crashed, and our population dropped by about half. Almost every farmer I know lost everything. All of em except for John Washburne--

WREN

How come?

JUBAL

Washburne had moved on to growing cabbage and broccoli and so his harvest was already done-- he was fixing to sow that next week for autumn.

WREN

And you're mad that Washburne was able to harvest?

JUBAL

No, I was mad because he decided to pilfer my man for his farm. Come to find out he had offered Moxley a job. Moxley had then written your mother asking if he should take the job, and she done went and gave her blessing. I went through the letters and all this was spoken of weeks before she told me. Forced my hand to bring us back here. In that moment I made your mother stop writing letters, and I wrote Floyd Moxley off for good.

WREN

Pa I didn't know any of this.

JUBAL

Of course you didn't know any of this... think I just go around telling my business to the world. You mama, God rest her soul, didn't want to come back-- she kept insisting you go to school out there and well... she didn't take to coming back here. I told her there wasn't any time for that-- not anymore-- I told her you was gonna farm. Right? That's your roots.

*Pause.*

WREN

Course, pa.

JUBAL

Course.

WREN

That how we bury our roots?

JUBAL

Absolutely.

WREN

That what that means to you , pa?

JUBAL

What's that?

WREN

Bury your roots. What's it mean?

JUBAL

You know exactly what that means. Means you have to make sure your base is solid... you're planted firm and steady in one place. [beat] Right?

WREN

Maybe it means different things to everyone.

JUBAL

Well, that's just fine too. It'll make sense when it needs to.

WREN

Can I ask you something, pa?

JUBAL

Ain't you about out of questions?

WREN

No, sir.

JUBAL

Well, go on.

WREN

You said you can tell when something is winding down... and I'm just curious... I mean...

JUBAL

I ain't got all day, Wren. What are you asking me?

WREN

Why did mama kill herself?

*Long pause.*

JUBAL

What kind of question is that.

WREN

I just don't understand it, pa. I just don't understand why she done it.

JUBAL

You think I have that answer, do you?

WREN

You said you can tell when something is winding down--

JUBAL

And you wanna know if I knew your mother was gonna do the most ungodly of acts.

WREN

Did she leave a note, pa-- I know lotsa people leave notes when they do something like this, and--

JUBAL

She didn't leave no note. Ain't no reason for what she done. And I don't know why you insist on bringing this up when we just dealt with it for a month now.

WREN

We ain't dealt with it. You dealt with it and I ain't been told anything-- I just want to know--

JUBAL

Ain't no answers, Wren. Ain't no reasoning and the sooner you realize that the better. I done all I could to take care of your mother and in the end it didn't matter. Now, you want more than that I don't know what to tell you. You hear me?

*Silence.*

I said you hearing me.

WREN

Yeah pa, I'm hearing you.

JUBAL

Now, get to putting this stuff away. We ain't going to be able to fix this hole we got today.

WREN  
Yes, sir.

JUBAL  
Look at me.

WREN  
I am. I said, "yes sir."

JUBAL  
We gonna be alright. I'm gonna make sure of that..

*Beat.*  
Sure is pretty up here, ain't it?

WREN  
Yes, sir.

JUBAL  
:: What the?:: There's one of them critters crawling behind you now.

*Wren turns and looks.*

WREN  
It's just one little bug.

JUBAL  
Crush it.

WREN  
What?

JUBAL  
I said crush it.

WREN  
Ain't but one tiny grasshopper, pa. I ain't gonna kill it.

JUBAL  
Girl listen to me when I tell you to do something.

WREN

Pa, I ain't killing no bug. It ain't harming nothing--

JUBAL

Get out the way!

WREN

Pa! Be careful! I ain't trying to fall in no--

*Jubal pounds his fist on to the grasshopper.*

JUBAL

See how easy that was? Just gotta crush it. They are all harmful-- you wait and see. Do you hear me? If you ain't fixing to help the problem than you're only part of it.

WREN

Cause I won't kill some dumb little bug?

JUBAL

Cause it's the same as collusion.

WREN

I just ain't see how one--

JUBAL

Get this mess cleaned up. I'm headed into town. We need to prepare.

WREN

Pa, wait!

*Jubal heads down the winding stair case. Just as he reaches the bottom MOXLEY comes around the backside of the silo.*

MOXLEY

Hello, Jubal.

JUBAL

What the hell are you doing here?

MOXLEY

Just stopped by to follow up?

JUBAL

Follow up?

MOXLEY

I came out here a couple days ago--

JUBAL

You was on my farm?

MOXLEY

Just stopped in to check on Wren.

JUBAL

I don't want you on my farm, Floyd. And I certainly don't need you checking in on my daughter.

MOXLEY

I was saddened to hear about Elizabeth's passing, Jubal. That's a horrible thing. I just thought I might stop in.

JUBAL

Well we don't need your stopping in.

MOXLEY

I left a contract with Wren... you get a chance to take a look at it?

JUBAL

A contract?

MOXLEY

Yes, sir. For my services-- for harvest this year.

JUBAL

I don't need your services. I got everything I need right here.

*Wren comes down the stairs-- hands full of  
TOOLS.*

WREN

Pa, you couldn't help with one thing-- Mr. Moxley! Pa!

JUBAL

When were you planning on telling me, Wren?

WREN

Pa, I was just--

JUBAL

Biding your time?

WREN

It wasn't like that, pa, I swear.

JUBAL

Going behind my back... just like your mother.

MOXLEY

Jubal.

WREN

No, pa, Mr. Moxley came by and I just think we can use the help. You was laid up in your room--

JUBAL

Well, I'm up now. So, I think everything is settled. Goodbye, Floyd. Your services won't be necessary.

WREN

Pa, wait.

JUBAL

I'm going into town. You're not to leave this place, do you understand me? You put them things away, and you feed the animals and then you wait for me to return.

WREN

Where am I gonna go, pa?

JUBAL

No where.



MOXLEY

Oh, don't be taking nothing out on her, Jubal. Was me that approached her.

JUBAL

And you won't do it again. You understand me? You say away from my daughter, you stay away from my farm.

MOXLEY

Whatever you say, Jubal.

JUBAL

You heard what I said. When I get back I don't want you here.

*Jubal exits.*

WREN

Mr. Moxley, I'm so sorry.

MOXLEY

No, no. I'm sorry. I shouldn't have just shown up.

WREN

I should've told pa-- I just didn't know how.

MOXLEY

It's okay, Wren. Really, I just worry about you.

WREN

I wish he'd sign it Mr. Moxley. I really do-- I want to just be done with this summer already. I'm so tired and he just doesn't understand.

MOXLEY

Your father can be a hard one to get through to, but I think he means well.

WREN

He don't mean well. All he sees is what he wants to see. He ain't gonna sign. He convinced this is the season them locusts are coming.

MOXLEY

Shame.

WREN

I'll try again Mr. Moxley, I'll try again.

MOXLEY

Yo ain't gotta try again, Wren. But I think maybe you can start looking for somewhere else to be.

WREN

Where would I go?

MOXLEY

Head back Ohio way, stay with your mother's family and get that schooling you always talked about.

WREN

I dunno, with Ma passing... I can't just leave pa. I just don't know how I would do it.

MOXLEY

I think you old enough to take matters into your own hands, Wren. Lord you knows you can.

WREN

I think right now I have to focus on this season. Give me two days, Mr. Moxley. I'll get him to sign.

MOXLEY

I don't know how you're gonna do that.

WREN

Come for dinner. Come over for dinner and we'll all talk about it.

MOXLEY

Wren, you just heard the man. He don't want me out here.

WREN

I'll talk to him. I will. Come back in two days.

*Silence.*

Mr. Moxley?

MOXLEY

Two days?

WREN

Yes, sir.

MOXLEY

You take care of yourself okay? Stay safe.

WREN

I will Mr. Moxley. I will.

*Lights.*

SCENE 5

*WREN in ISOLATED LIGHT.*

WREN

Hey, girl.

Fat girl.

Pa's back.

Sorta.

Guess you done seen that already.

Feel like maybe he lost a part of himself with Ma... departing and all.

Lost himself in that room.

Isolation can do that, I imagine. Come out a whole new person. Come out with no sense of duality.

He's like the Man of the Crowd-- Judging and taking toll of every one and everything else without so much as seeing who he is.

I'm tired, fat girl. I'm so tired.

I love this place, I do, God knows I do, but pa's out here--

What pa thinks.

Could be easier. Simpler. He's two different people, I swear.

Maybe Mr. Moxley is right, maybe I need to leave-- with so many new selves it might be time to find mine. I don't know how to leave him, Fat Girl.

He's the man who can hold a whole farm together, and man that can tear it apart.

I don't know what he is anymore, Fat girl.

Just one head short of the rapture. Dreaming of a plague that's s'pposidly coming.

But it ain't. Things is harder now that they different. I suppose it don't make no good of sense worrying about what could've been if... I imagine it just be the same old thing.

She just worrying the same-- having a little more, but always worrying about something--  
I can trace her worry-- like veins... her veins... pulled up and dried out like roots. [pause]

I'll do anything I can for you-- you just let me know, okay.

Just let me know.

Pa says you might be winding down...

...could you wait?

Just a bit.

Can you stay a while longer?

Please?

*Pause.*

Fat, girl.

I miss her.

*Lights.*

## SCENE 6

*Wren is in the farmhouse kitchen, she's drinking  
COFFEE.*

*Stressed and worn out, Wren pours over a  
LEDGER-- counting and thinking.*

*Beat.*

*JUBAL bursts into the kitchen with a soup can.  
His hand over the top.*

*He saunters about the kitchen for a moment--  
proud-- like he knows something.*

WREN

There ain't no money to buy eggs. No money to feed the damn pigs. No money for coffee. Ain't no money for nothing. We need some money, pa.

JUBAL

Just wait. You just wait. You'll see. Let them all wait to harvest-- We'll be the only one with a full silo..

WREN

You fix that roof yet?

*In his own world.*

Wanna actually look over these numbers?

JUBAL

I told ya... I told ya I was right. You can hear hem bouncing around in there. Little villain. I caught him up on the silo.

WREN

Is it fixed yet?

JUBAL

Oh, quit your worryin!

WREN

I wish you'd start worrying. These hogs is gonna start starving soon if we don't do something. It's that simple.

JUBAL

I swear I saw this little bugger here dancing out on the horizon. Following him with my eyes until he practically landed right on my nose.

WREN

Can we eat him? Cause if we can't then I don't care.

JUBAL

Don't you make jokes like that, you hear?

WREN

You think I want to snack on locusts, pa?

JUBAL

I know it ain't nothing to fool about. This malicious little devils only function is to destroy... ain't no daughter of mine going to find nourishment in something this awful.

WREN

*Okay, pa.*

JUBAL

You need to listen when I tell you that. You know the day Minnie was born?

WREN

Yes, pa! Yes, of course I know!

JUBAL

You know when she opened her mouth to take her first breath these little devils started flying out her mouth.

WREN

Pa?

JUBAL

Her mama had been eating them... Minnie by the grace of God new to reject such a sin.

WREN

That ain't true pa. That ain't no where near the truth.

JUBAL

Was you there? Cause I was there as witness.

WREN

Pa, I think you need to settle down a bit. Maybe take some time to rest--

JUBAL

Don't need no rest.

WREN

Maybe you started working too fast. C'mon, pa. Why don't you take tomorrow off... I'll work on the silo.

JUBAL

Didn't make it to town. Saw this demon and so I followed him... all the back here.

WREN

You didn't go to town?

JUBAL

The pull of mutual gravitation was so strong. Came right to me. He came as a warning. I'll tell ya, great motions rectify small ones. His is a warning-- such a large warning from such a small beast.

*Jubal struts around the kitchen.*

WREN

Somehow you hear a bug, but you can't hear me?

JUBAL

Nope. Nope. Nope. You're gonna see... I am right, I am right, I am right!

WREN

We don't have time for you to be right. Once them hogs starve then what? Us? We're gonna be next if we can't sell something. Don't you understand that? You like to eat doncha? Cause I know I do, and right now we got scraps.

JUBAL

It's like he was speaking right to me.

WREN

If you can hear a grasshopper than you can hear my belly.

JUBAL

It's not a grasshopper! It's a locust!

WREN

You saying this storm of *locusts* is coming, but I ain't seen so much as an oil beetle all summer!

JUBAL

That's because you ain't paying attention. You have to feel it. [pause] What do you say to this, huh?

*He holds up the can.*

WREN

Behold! The power of a rusty soup tin!

JUBAL

Go on, take a gander.

*He moves his hand to let Wren look inside.*

WREN

Well, there's one.

*Pause.*

Where's the rest of em?

JUBAL

It's the start of something bigger. It's a warning-- and no one but me seems to be paying attention to it.

WREN

Pa, it's one little grasshopper! You willing to sacrifice your life's work for one grasshopper? So you gonna just ignore what is right in front of you?

JUBAL

You're just like your mother. Too worried about what's right in front of you. You need to have faith in what I'm telling you. Maybe it's my failings as a father. You need to understand that I'm saving you.

WREN

First mama. Now this farm. Everything around you is dying.

JUBAL

Don't you say that! Don't you dare bring your mother into this! You take for granted the freedom and privilege you've been able to experience in your life! You didn't see what happened last time-- the way they fell from the sky-- it was like the whole world was being gobbled up. Flying smack dab into the mill, into the silo. They devoured the wool off of the sheep! The Harnesses off horses! They ate the paint off the wagon! Your mother, God rest her tortured soul, wore a green dress that morning, and by the time they was full she had been stripped bare right in front of her own home!

WREN

And so what? That was ten years ago! Ain't been trouble since! Where you're getting this idea that after all these years is craziness!



JUBAL

You probably don't remember. You were too young!

WREN

I may have been young, but I remember that day. I remember you runnin off to cover the well, and I remember laying *with mama* under the bed for hours, watching them pile up on the floor, crawling over each other. I saw ya'll shoveling, and moving their bodies for weeks. I remember selling the pigs off because we couldn't feed em. I remember the time we spent in Ohio afterwards. I know it was hard, pa, I do, but you have to let this go. You can't keep living under the fear of something you can't see!

JUBAL

I don't need to see it! I can feel it. Either you're with me or you're against me. I don't care that you don't like it. This is my farm and I'll run it how I want.

WREN

But you ain't running it! You runnin around catching bugs, but you ain't running nothin else-- I am.

JUBAL

Well, it's my name on this land, not yours! And until the day come that I keel over then I reserve the right to do with my crops *what I want* to do with my crops.

WREN

You need to listen to me now. Floyd Moxley is coming over for dinner, we're gonna have a conversation.

JUBAL

Ain't happening in my house.

WREN

Pa, you need to calm down and listen to reason. You hear me? I just want some sense of normalcy... something. Please. We are going to just have some dinner and have a talk-- ain't nothing set in stone. Can you please, please do this for me?

JUBAL

Always what I can do for you. Off making plans with a man that stabbed me in the back-- but you don't a think I ask of you.

WREN

What was the last thing you asked of me pa? To cook and bring you food? To watch the whole farm? What else?

JUBAL

Just this afternoon I asked you to kill that devil up on the silo, but did you do it?

WREN

Why would I kill it? Why?

JUBAL

To see that you're devoted to this farm! I need to see that you're willing to protect it!

WREN

But it ain't done nothing, pa! It's a little ol' grasshopper-- death isn't devotion! It's sad and it's... I don't want to! I don't want it!

JUBAL

You need to be willing to do what needs to be done in order to get what you want, Wren!

*Wren storms over to her father and snatches the can out of his hands.*

*She grabs her coffee cup.*

WREN

This what you want? Fine. Here's your devotion.

*She quickly pours her coffee into the can,, shakes it, and sets it down on the table.*

*Jubal peers into the can.*

There. Now will you please go into town and at least get something for us to eat?

*Wren exits.*

JUBAL

Don't you leave this land.

*Jubal looks inside the can.*

*He reaches in and pulls out the locus.*

*He examines it.*

*Swirls it around in the can.*

*Lights.*

## SCENE 6

*Lights up in the kitchen. There are CRATES upon CRATES of CANNED FOOD.*

*Jubal is sitting at the table eating SOMETHING. He has a CUP of COFFEE.*

*Wren enters.*

JUBAL

Well, looks who's back.

WREN

What is all of this?

JUBAL

Have a seat, my love

WREN

Pa, what is all of this.

JUBAL

Please, have a seat. Let me get you some coffee.

WREN

Where did you get coffee? I don't understand?

JUBAL

Coffee first.

But, where--  
WREN

Wren Maranda.  
JUBAL

*Wren takes a seat.*

Drink.  
*Jubal pours her a cup of coffee.*

JUBAL

What are you talking about?  
WREN

What is all of this? Why is our kitchen full of canned foods?  
WREN

This is the best thing for us right now, Wren. You'll see.  
JUBAL

We are going to be the laughing stock of the whole county.  
WREN

The world doubted Noah too. And as the waves washed over their screaming bodies they felt the full force of regret.  
JUBAL

*Wren gets up and goes to the cupboard.*

What are you doin?  
*She pulls out a bottle of wine.*

*She opens it.*

That's funeral wine.  
*Finds a GLASS and fills it.*

Funeral's over, pa.  
WREN

*She drinks.*

JUBAL

Well, what are we having for dinner?

WREN

I don't know.

JUBAL

I think if you invite a guest over for dinner you should know what's going to be on the table.

WREN

What should I be cooking? Tell me. No bread. No nothin! Tell me Pa! Tell me what I'm to fix!

JUBAL

Look around you, sweet pea.

WREN

At what?

*Wren drinks from one of the bottles.*

JUBAL

There's a thousand tins of food right in front of you!

WREN

The tins!

*Wren digs in the crates and pulls out can after can of food.*

*She slams them down on the table*

Blueberries?

*She grabs another...*

Codfish?

*Another...*

*FRESH* Salmon, it says!

*She recklessly throws it at the other cans.*

How about some baked beans?

JUBAL

Those would be fine.

WREN

Which of these prime delicacies should I make?

JUBAL

How am I to know? I didn't invite him to dinner.

WREN

I asked him to come over because I thought it might be nice to have someone in our home! That it might be a nice change from you yelling about locusts and going on about plagues! To have spend time with someone that isn't going to or from a funeral. Just something nice and normal. You like the past so much, how about a nice dinner like we used to have?

JUBAL

Maybe you should cancel.

WREN

What you're doing is completely wrong.

JUBAL

Wrong? You think preparing for what could very well be the end of times is wrong? You think preparedness is wrong? There's something coming. You may not believe it, but when it happens this whole state will be running around looking for anyone to help them.

WREN

You need to listen to reason. Nothing is coming. There aren't any locusts coming!

JUBAL

These is hard times but they nowhere near what we looking at. The future is grim.

WREN

Let's just sell everything!

JUBAL

Excuse me.

WREN

Sell the farm. Just pack it in and we'll move West. Start a whole new life. Or we can go towards Ohio and stay with mama's family until we find something else.

JUBAL

How dare you.

WREN

This isn't a life!

JUBAL

How dare you suggest we leave our land. Who do you think you are? This is our farm. Your mama and me lived here for years before you were borne. Your mama is buried out there. How dare you ask us to leave this place. I'm trying to save us. Don't you see that? This is our home, *my* home. I will not be forced out. I learned that the last time. We packed up and left-- scared and running away with our tails between our legs. I refuse to ever do that again.

WREN

This is better!?

JUBAL

What do you think all of this is for? It's to keep us going. We're prepared. You were too young to remember the stores sell'n out of food. We're ready this time.

*She takes a drink.*

WREN

I just want to have a nice dinner with an old friend.

JUBAL

He ain't *my* friend.

WREN

How can you say that?

*Moxley enters.*

*Jubal doesn't notice.*

JUBAL

Where was he when we all left, huh? I'll tell ya. He stayed here and used it to his advantage.

MOXLEY

I wasn't exactly invited.

WREN

Mr. Moxley.

MOXLEY

How do you do, Wren?

JUBAL

You took advantage of our kindness, and you went behind my back.

MOXLEY

It wasn't my family in Ohio. I got the opportunity to make my own way. Jubal, did you expect I just wanted to sit here and tend to your farm my whole life. I wanted to do something else. It had nothing to do with our friendship.

JUBAL

And what did we get?

MOXLEY

You survived with your family.

JUBAL

Survival with family.

WREN

C'mon, pa. Stop living in the poor parts of the past.

MOXLEY

You know my only option was to go to Washburne's Jubal.

JUBAL

I see what's happening here. [beat] She invited you here to gang up on me.

MOXLEY

Oh, Jubal, ain't no one ganging up.



JUBAL

Come to tell me I should be selling you my grains. Well, I ain't gonna do it.

MOXLEY

I'm just not one to turn down a dinner invite. I'm just here to eat and converse.

WREN

Will you tell him? Will you tell him, please?

MOXLEY

Your daddy never has been the type of man to be told anything.

WREN

He won't listen to me! Tell him, please, tell him this is madness.

JUBAL

Whatchu got to tell me? Hmm? Got something you want to say to me?

MOXLEY

Wren, now, let's just all take a breath. No sense in a big what-to-do. I didn't come here to tell you anything, Jubal. I just came for dinner.

JUBAL

You think I'm a lunatic?

MOXLEY

I think you're going through a rough patch.

JUBAL

A rough patch?

MOXLEY

And I think you have the best intentions in mind, but I think you're missing how this is affecting your daughter.

JUBAL

Floyd Moxley coming in to tell me how to take care of my family.

MOXLEY

Now listen here, Jubal. I came here to eat dinner, and see old friends. I thought some company might do you some good in what are confusing times.

JUBAL

No confusion here.

The only one here that seems to be confused is you. If you think you can come in here and just sweet talk me into selling my grains than you are too high for your nut, Floyd.

MOXLEY

Jubal, I came here to spend time with you and with Wren. Talk about what's next for you and the farm... and we can talk about business as well. Whatever you want.

JUBAL

I want it clear that I'm not selling anything to anyone until the time is right. I won't be wiped out again. I'll see to it that we're prepared. That we're protected.

MOXLEY

What about Wren?

JUBAL

*What about Wren?*

MOXLEY

This is your life, Jubal, not hers. You don't run your family all across this country for you... what about what they want?

JUBAL

You see the name out there? That's my name.

MOXLEY

But you can't control their lives, Jubal.

JUBAL

Don't you tell me how to keep my family.

MOXLEY

You keep in your family, Jubal? Cause from where I'm standing, you just lost your wife, and you on the verge of losing your daughter.

JUBAL

Don't you dare--

MOXLEY

Have you even asked Wren how she's doing? Have you? Have you broken away from your own senses long enough to know if your daughter is okay?

WREN

Don't Mr. Moxley.

MOXLEY

She just as broken as you are, Jubal.

JUBAL

She's fine! She been working-- we all doing just fine, thank you. I think I'd know if something was going on with my daughter.

MOXLEY

Just like you knew what was going on with Elizabeth?

JUBAL

You son of a bitch! You don't know a damn thing about my wife! Why don't you just head right back out the door you came through. I know how to handle my own. Who invited you out here anyway? We was fine without you showing up out here. We was fine.

*Moxley reaches into his jacket pocket.*

MOXLEY

June, 25. Hello, My Old Friend. Too many years have passed since you were on our farm. I understand through others that you have moved into business for yourself, and I think that's fine. That's quite fine, indeed. I'm sad that I haven't written you in all of this time, but I haven't yet found the will nor the state of mind to move my body into convalescence, and so I find myself more frail and distant than I ever thought possible. This letter, while the first in many years, will be my last-- I write in hopes that you may find your way back into the lives of our family, as shortly after I send this the unit will find itself a member short. I cannot for the life of me find happiness in this place any longer, and I feel it's my time to, well, bury my roots. This was never a place for me, and while I tried to stay away from it I always ended up back hidden among the stalks of wheat, over shadowed by their heads, and the pull they have over Jubal. He is not a bad man, however, if it is not in a pen or a field, he hasn't anyway to communicate with it and I feel myself growing down into the soil.

I know the relationship isn't more than a memory these days, but I ask that you reach out, if for no other reason to take care of my daughter-- I cannot find the passion I once had, Old Friend, and fear she will end up as bitter and alone as her father. Please take care of them, and remember me well. Eat, Drink, and be Merry. Thank you, old friend.

Elizabeth Hooker.

JUBAL

What is that?

WREN

Mr. Moxley, that's, she...

MOXLEY

She did.

WREN

Why didn't you say anything sooner.

MOXLEY

I thought it best to move slowly.

JUBAL

How'd you get that?

MOXLEY

How do you think I got it, Jubal. It was delivered by post.

JUBAL

You been writing my wife all these years?

MOXLEY

Now what did I just read to you? That's the one and only letter I received in years.

JUBAL

And she wrote you.

WREN

It's okay pa. It's okay. Let all have a drink. Let's have a drink and talk pa.

MOXLEY

What do you say Jubal? Eat, Drink and be Merry?

*Silence.*

I'm sure Wren has been working on a nice dinner all day.

*Jubal looks to Wren.*

*Wren takes a drink.*

JUBAL

I have no interest in selling my grains to you.

MOXLEY

As I said, you want to get into that, we can. If you don't, then we won't speak a word of it.

JUBAL

I don't want to talk about it.

MOXLEY

Not a word then.

*Silence.*

Just take a breath. Go outside and get some air. We can all cool down and have a nice dinner.

WREN

Pa, let's just have a nice time. Please. You deserve a nice time.

*Pause.*

JUBAL

Then we'll eat.

WREN

We'll find something. Something in these tins.

MOXLEY

Tins?

WREN

Tins.

MOXLEY

Tins it is.

*Wren takes a drink.*

WREN

Where are my manners? We should all have a drink!  
What do you say, pa?

*Nothing from Jubal.*

Can you nod, at least?

JUBAL

We will eat and we will drink and we will be merry.

MOXLEY

Stupendous.

WREN

Great! This is gonna work! Mr. Moxley, would you like a glass of wine?

MOXLEY

I sure would.

*Wren pours a glass of wine for Moxley.*

WREN

Here you are.

MOXLEY

Thank you, kindly.

WREN

Pa, do you want a glass?

JUBAL

I'm gonna take a *breather*. [Pause]

Wren? [beat]

Can you make me some bread with sugar?

I would... Pa... but...  
WREN

What is it?  
JUBAL

We ain't got no bread.  
WREN

*Beat.*

*Jubal nods.*

I'm sorry, pa.

*He exits.*

I'm so sorry, Mr. Moxley.  
WREN

You have absolutely nothing to apologize for.  
MOXLEY

I don't know what to do anymore.  
WREN

A man with that much conviction is dangerous.  
MOXLEY

Says it's going to be worse than the one a decade ago.  
WREN

Wren?  
MOXLEY

Yes, Mr. Moxley?  
WREN

Are you okay? Honestly, how are you holding up?  
MOXLEY

WREN

Well... to be honest...

*Long pause.*

I'm starving, Mr. Moxley.

MOXLEY

Starving.

WREN

I just don't know Mr. Moxley. Hearing that... I mean it don't tell me why she done it, but I can't help but wonder if I should be doing something else. If maybe this should be my last harvest.

MOXLEY

I think that's what she would've wanted.

WREN

Maybe I should find a way out... To see if there ain't something better out there to lay my eyes on...

MOXLEY

Maybe there is.

WREN

Hard to say, Mr. Moxley. I know right now there ain't no money for a new life... ain't no money for anything.

MOXLEY

I think once you decide what you want to do, you'll find a way to get it.

WREN

I'm sure you're right.

*Beat.*

Let 's worry about dinner first, huh?

MOXLEY

What are we eating?



WREN

Right. So... see anything you like?

*She gestures towards the cans.*

MOXLEY

Oh, alright. What do we got?

*Lights Shift to Jubal in isolated light.*

*He has Moxley's axe in his hands.*

*There is blood on his face.*

JUBAL

I have been completely unable to protect my family with the totality of my will.  
 I am unable to grasp a sense of what is right and what is evil.  
 I cannot begin to breathe the life that would deliver me from guilt.  
 I have risen up to sow the seeds but I've only proven sterile.  
 From the cypher I untangle to the ribbons of the windmills.  
 Like a part to throw away the words beget are always born still.  
 I have forced my ways into the grave with a sickness and a fever chill.  
 I have listened only for the flutter and the song of locusts' trill.

*Long pause.*

Whacha got there, Old Girl? Another one of those little devils?  
 Wait just a minute and I'll... Now why'd you go and eat that, Minnie.  
 You more than anyone else know that ain't no food.

*Jubal stands.*

That ain't no kinda food, Old. Girl.  
 Now you know that ain't food!

*Lights shift.*

*Moxley and Wren are going through the cans.*

WREN

I threw some codfish and *FRESH* Salmon somewhere.

MOXLEY

That Sounds wonderful.

*He grabs a can.*

*Wren grabs a couple of SPOONS off the counter  
and hands one to Moxley.*

*They start opening cans and tasting them.*

WREN

How about Sweet Creamed Corn?

MOXLEY

Perfect.

*Wren tastes it.*

WREN

Oh, my Lord! Maybe we'll save that for dessert.

*Moxley grabs two cans and opens them.*

MOXLEY

With blueberries, or the canned peanut butter?

*He tastes the peanut butter.*

Now that is something. [beat] Try?

*Wren takes the can and tastes it.*

*Moxley tastes the Corn.*

My God, this is sweeter than the peanut butter!

WREN

What's that one?

MOXLEY

Blueberries.

Try it!

WREN

*Moxley looks in the can.*

I don't know if I can...

MOXLEY

What?

WREN

*He hands the can to Wren.*

It looks like...

MOXLEY

*Wren looks in.*

Oh, my. Is that deer shit?

WREN

*They laugh together.*

My thoughts exactly.

MOXLEY

Should I say a prayer?

WREN

May the Lord protect you.

MOXLEY

*She tastes it.*

Mmmm. Tastes like deer shit too. Here, try it.

WREN

Must I?

MOXLEY

*He reluctantly takes the can and tastes it.*

*Hates it.*

WREN  
This will be one fancy dinner!

MOXLEY  
Where's that salmon?

WREN  
Umm... Somewhere. [pause] There!

*Moxley crawls over and grabs the can.*

*Wren grabs something else out of the crate.*

*He opens it.*

*Tastes it.*

MOXLEY  
You're not gonna believe this...

WREN  
What?

MOXLEY  
It's tastes...

WREN  
I shudder to wonder.

MOXLEY  
*FRESH!*

WREN  
Oh, stop! It does not!

MOXLEY  
I think we've found our dinner, Wren.

WREN  
Give it here.

*Moxley hands the can over.*

Here, try the beans.

*She hands him a can.*

*They taste.*

Well, if that ain't a coffin nail.

WREN

Beans ain't half bad neither.

MOXLEY

I guess that's it then. *FRESH* salmon and beans.

WREN

Better than the last supper.

MOXLEY

Mr. Moxley!

WREN

I beg your pardon.

MOXLEY

I better get to fix'n. Suppose I'll just boil it all?

WREN

More?

*She grabs the bottle of wine and fills her glass.*

Please.

MOXLEY

*She tops off his glass.*

Cheers, Mr. Moxley.

WREN

Cheers!

MOXLEY

*They clink glasses.*

*Jubal enters.*

*They Freeze.*

*Upon his crown he is wearing the HEAD OF MINNIE; the skin draped down around him like a fleshy cape.*

*He carries a BLOODY ROAST in his arms.*

MOXLEY

Jubal? Is that... Minnie?

WREN

Oh, my God, pa. What have you done?

*He drops the meat on the table.*

*He sticks the axe into the table top.*

*He picks up the bottle and pours himself a glass of wine.*

Pa? Pa, what have you done?

***Long pause.***

JUBAL

Eat and drink and be merry.

WREN

What did you do??

JUBAL

Here. You can take this back.

*Jubal throws the axe at Moxley. Cutting his leg.*

*Jubal exits.*

WREN

No, Pa! Mr. Moxley are you okay.

MOXLEY  
I'm fine... it ain't going to kill me.

WREN  
What did he do? What did he do?

MOXLEY  
Wren...

*Pause.*

WREN  
What did he do?

MOXLEY  
Look, I think it may be best for you to just grab whatever belongings will get you by, and-

WREN  
I should've been prepared for this... for his..

MOXLEY  
Wren, listen. Grab some things, we'll leave and get you on the first train to your mama's family.

WREN  
That was Minnie... He was wearing Minnie...

MOXLEY  
Don't think about it.

WREN  
He killed her. He slaughtered her--

MOXLEY  
Get it out of your mind, child.

WREN  
He...

MOXLEY  
Listen to me. Go get what you need.

Mr. Moxley...  
WREN

Go.  
MOXLEY

*Pause.*

Sure, Mr. Moxley.  
WREN

*Wren exits.*

MOXLEY  
What to do with you, old friend.  
Who would have thought you'd meet your end like this... to him of all people.  
Never saw that coming.  
Never was you just an animal.  
You deserved better than this, old friend.  
Figured you'd be here until the end.  
You was loved though.  
So loved.

*Moxley pours a glass of wine.*

*He drinks.*

*Wren enters.*

You get what you need?

This is all I need.  
WREN

*Wren holds up Moxley's contract.*

MOXLEY  
Wren this hardly seems like the time to try--

WREN  
I told you, Mr. Moxley, this is what I need to do.



MOXLEY

The man just took his hog's head off and put it on his own, Wren. What do you think you're going to do?

WREN

I have to, Mr. Moxley.

MOXLEY

I'll come with you.

*Moxley grabs the axe.*

*Lights shift*

*Jubal is at the top of the Silo.*

*He still wears Minnie on his head.*

*Wren exits the farmhouse.*

WREN

Pa!

JUBAL

I have failed you as a father!

WREN

Why don't you come down and talk with me...

JUBAL

They're coming! I can feel the vibrations of their tiny bodies all lifting together.

WREN

Sure, pa. Why don't you come down and tell me about it.

JUBAL

I need to be where they can see me!

WREN

Why do they need to see you?

JUBAL

I am their guiding light! They have warned me and soon they will return and take everything.

WREN

I'm going up there.

MOXLEY

That ain't a good idea, Wren. I can't make up there.

WREN

I'm fine, Mr. Moxley.

MOXLEY

Take this will ya?

WREN

I don't need it.

MOXLEY

Let's just go, if you got all you need--

WREN

I ain't leaving Mr. Moxley. I told you I get you a signature and that's precisely what I intend to do.

MOXLEY

*Alright, then.*

*Wren heads up the silo.*

WREN

You know I don't like coming up here, pa.

JUBAL

Can't you feel it? This is what it must've felt like before the flood.

WREN

Do you think there's going to be a flood, pa?

JUBAL

Could be a flood. Could be fire.

WREN  
You think this is the end, pa?

JUBAL  
It's too late for the harvest.

WREN  
Pa, what do you say...

JUBAL  
This is what we're prepared for...

WREN  
Pa, that letter, what mama said...

JUBAL  
I have been a failure, but no more. I let your ma pass, but I'll see to it that you're protected. You'll be protected.

WREN  
Let me Moxley help us.

JUBAL  
This is my farm, and my crops and I am a beacon of hope!

WREN  
Pa.

JUBAL  
What have I done to become such a failure as a father?

WREN  
No pa... you're not a failure.

JUBAL  
Failed husband...

WREN  
Pa, listen.. That ain't true.

JUBAL

Your mother and me was together for twenty five years...

WREN

I know, pa.

JUBAL

Twenty five years... And she goes and opens her veins up right in that very room. A mortal sin. It's a mortal sin, Wren!

WREN

I know. I know it is, pa. But let's not think about that right now.

JUBAL

How do you come back from that?

WREN

You move on... you move forward... you just have to push through...

JUBAL

I can't. I won't. I should've been better. Seen what was coming... but I missed it. I won't miss anything again.

WREN

I know, pa.

JUBAL

And you and Mr. Moxley talking behind my back...

WREN

No, pa. I just want us to get through this season...

JUBAL

And your ma talking to Moxley behind my back...

WREN

...to help you out a little bit. To gain some clarity.

JUBAL

Clarity?

WREN

Yeah, pa, while you mourn and such.

I'm done mourning.

JUBAL

I ain't.

WREN

You was.

JUBAL

I done no mourning and I'd like to.

WREN

*Pause.*

You hearing me?

*Nothing.*

Pa?

*Nothing.*

Can you nod, at least?

*Jubal nods.*

More of my failings.

JUBAL

Nah. Just all mixed up is all.

WREN

I ain't even seen it.

JUBAL

I know.

WREN

My course is set. We are set. This is how I put it behind me.

JUBAL

Pa... you gotta.. sign, pa. You gotta...

*Silence.*

Gotta bury your roots.

JUBAL

Bury our roots.

WREN

Yeah, pa. I've been trying to understand what that means to me.

MOXLEY

Wren!? Wren are you okay?

JUBAL

Bury our roots. That's what she'd say. To set up a home and to make sure your roots are deep, and they're getting the nourishment they need...

MOXLEY

Wren?

WREN

Course it is. It means so much to all of us, pa. I think what it means to me-- sometimes we have to push our roots down as far as we can... to cover them up... to hide them and do our best to grow. And hope, just hope that we bloom into something strong and beautiful...

JUBAL

I'm so sorry, Wren. I'm so sorry.  
It's beautiful up here isn't it.

WREN

It sure is, pa.

JUBAL

I'm so sorr--

*Wren pushes her father backwards through the roof of the silo.*

MOXLEY

Wren!?

*We can hear Jubal splash deep inside.*

*Wren looks inside.*

*He calls out and screams and splashes until the  
screams and splashes stop. .*

MOXLEY

Wren!?

WREN

It's okay, Mr. Moxley.

*Pause.*

We're selling.

*End of play.*