

RED SUMMER

a play

by

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Development:

Staged Reading, Home Brew Festival 2016 - 7Stages

Staged Reading, Home Brew Festival 2017 - 7Stages

"In the final analysis, a riot is the language of the unheard." ~ Martin Luther King

PLAYERS

Black Boy* . . . looking for his place in the world, almost stoic.

Maelstrom . . . the first of two sisters, a vortex, a claimer of souls, bound to the ocean.

Eirene** . . . the second of two sisters, a guide, a manipulator of souls, bound to the land.

Young White Male . . . also, looking for his place in the world.

Theo* . . . somewhat unfulfilled potential, somewhat numb, prickly, sarcasm is his armor.

Yvette* . . . smart, strong, the anchor, too busy to think about what she might have become. Theo's older sister.

[* SPECIFICALLY AFRICAN AMERICAN, **SPECIFICALLY NON-CAUCASIAN]

SETTING(s)

A segregated beach at Lake Michigan, July 27, 1919.

A high-rise residence, Chicago, July 27, present day.

A sleek corporate office, Chicago, July 27, present day.

NOTE(s)

A / indicates simultaneous dialogue.

A . . . indicates a word or feeling that is physicalized instead of spoken.

A - indicates an interruption, self-inflicted or otherwise.

One

Sea birds complain in the darkness.

A little light shines on a memory: A black boy stands nervously on a mound of sand, self-conscious and sixteen years old in a hand-me-down swimsuit. Sea birds cast shadows. The slow swell and crash of the ocean fills the space. The sound is identifiable enough, but wrapped in static as if it were playing on a record player.

It is 1919. Summer.

The boy quickly looks around, kicks off his shoes and rushes to the water's edge. The birds erupt in an awful squawking as he is about to step in. He looks up, then back down. Suddenly, in the water, is a beautiful white woman wearing a white swimsuit and cap. The boy freezes; terrified . . .

Maelstrom

(looking up at the birds)

They make an awful racket don't they?

Boy

I wasn't doin' *nuthin*!

Maelstrom

Only *three* of them and they sound like a mob.

Boy

Don't scream or nuthin' a'ight?! I wasn't, I ain't gonna *hurt* you, /or –

Maelstrom

/That *screeching*. Tears at the air, doesn't it?

Boy

Um . . . I, I don't know.

Maelstrom

Occasionally. I drown them.

Boy

. . .

Maelstrom

Well, that's not – I'm not *heartless*.

Boy

Okay, I 'on't know what that's supposed to . . . Look, I got lost. I was just walkin' and wandered over here and, the *heat* was on me, you know, *thick*. The water looked so - . . . I ain't realize where I was.

(The birds squawk loudly. It sounds like twice as many all of a sudden. They sound almost human. The boy and the woman look up. The woman makes a gun with her thumb and forefinger . . .)

Maelstrom

Pshew. Pshew. Pshew.

(We hear squawking and mad flapping as the flock temporarily scatters. The woman blows the “smoke” away from the “barrel.”)

They don’t like it when you lie. *I* don’t like it when you lie.

(The ocean roars.)

This part of the beach is whites only.

Boy

. . .

Maelstrom

So. Shall I scream at the top of my lungs? Shall I tear at my inner thighs with my fingernails? Shall I /rip –

Boy

(weakly)

/Please don’t.

Maelstrom

I’m sorry, *what* was that?

Boy

(weaker)

Ma’am. Please, don’t –

(A bird squawks. The woman reaches her hands to the sky, then violently pulls them toward the ocean. The bird makes a pathetic sound before we hear a loud splash as its body flails in the water, then drowns. The rest of the birds temporarily scatter.)

Now . . . You were saying?

Boy

. . .

Maelstrom

. . .

Boy

You just –

What. Maelstrom

drowned – Boy

Yes. Maelstrom

That bird! Boy

Well, there's *lots* of them, so don't look so appalled. Maelstrom

(*The ocean roars. She stretches out her hands.*)

Hush now! Hush, hush, the swell, the pull, *hush* now. Shhhhhhhh.

(*The ocean obeys.*)

How did you *do* that? Boy

I didn't do anything. Maelstrom

Yes, you – Boy

Less than anything. Maelstrom

I *know* what I – Boy

It's the heat. Maelstrom

No Boy

Has a way of *warping* what you see. Maelstrom

TELL ME HOW YOU – Boy

Maelstrom

You need to *calm* yourself, before you steer us into a thicket of thorns for which you're not ready.

(The birds gather, more this time, many, many shadows over the angry ocean. They sound more like a mob of people than birds. The boy looks around as the shadows of birds turn into the shadows of people. The mob swells in volume. The ocean swells in volume.)

Maelstrom

Too late.

Boy

(Shrinking from the confusion; terrified.)

Make that stop, please.

Maelstrom

Hm. *Orders.*

Boy

I said make 'em *stop*!

Maelstrom

You make them stop! It's *your* mob! *Your* specific horde of ill-will.

(He puts his hands over his ears.)

Boy

Hush now! HUSH!

(The mob gets louder.)

Maelstrom

(laughing) Oh, it takes *eras and eras* before you can speak to the elements.

Boy

I shouldn't be here!

Maelstrom

But you *knew* that, didn't you?

Boy

I want to *go*, I, I want to –

(He scoops up his clothes.)

Maelstrom

Well, I suppose you do have to try.

(He runs off stage right, then after a moment, rushes in stage left.)

Oh, hello.

Boy

I don't UNDERSTAND!

Maelstrom

You should duck.

Boy

What?!

Maelstrom

Incoming.

(We hear the sharp splashes of rocks hitting the water, intermittent at first, but picking up intensity, like rain. The Boy wades further into the water to escape them. As he does, a young white man enters, wearing a swimsuit; carrying a bloody rock the size of a softball. The sound of rocks abruptly cuts out as he methodically moves to the edge of the water. He and the boy stare at each other.)

Young White Man

You get outta that water right now, you hear me?

(The young white man wades in a bit, raising the rock. The boy stands his ground.)

BOY!

(He raises the rock a bit more. The boy stands his ground.)

OUT! NOW!

(The young white man moves to attack.)

Maelstrom

(Raising her hands.)

HUSH now! Shhhhh, HUSH, hush . . .

(The Young White Man slowly lowers the rock.)

Be still, now.

Boy

. . .

Young White Man

. . .

Maelstrom

That's it. Shhhhhhhh.

(The mob quiets as the shadows change back to birds. The ocean quiets as Maelstrom walks between the Boy and the Young white man. She takes the bloody rock and surveys the scene.)

I let this get out of hand. We'll do this again. Very soon.

(She makes a gun with her thumb and forefinger. She points it at the birds . . .)

Pshew. Pshew.

(The birds squawk and scatter. Then, she points her gun at the young white man . . .)

Pshew.

(He exits. She then faces the Boy, and points her gun at him.)

This part of the beach is *whites* only.

Boy

. . .

Maelstrom

But, then you knew that. *Didn't* you? Hm?

Boy

. . . What'chu mean by "very soon?"

Maelstrom

History is calling. Pshew.

(The Boy collapses into the water. She blows the "smoke" from the "barrel." She exits as the lights shrink to a small pool around the Boy. Large glass panels descend. Theo sleepwalks into the changing scene and lies down next to the Boy. They lay in exactly the same way. Eirene enters, wearing a robe and stands over Theo. The pool of light cuts out.)

Two

Lights rise. Glass panels. A sterile, modern hi-rise apartment. Theo lays alone on the floor, asleep. Eirene, still in a robe, is drinking a cup of coffee. She stands behind one of the glass panels and looks out. The sounds of the city bleed in. There is a group of people far off, chanting something indiscernible. Birds circle.

It is morning. Present day. Theo wakes up. It takes him a minute to get his bearings.

Eirene

Sea birds. Spying on me? *Really?*

(A bird squawks seemingly in response.)

Theo
What are you still doing here?

Eirene
Good morning. Coffee?

Theo
Did *I* offer you coffee?

Eirene
How's your back?

Theo
Did I *sleepwalk*, and in my altered state, *offer* you my coffee?

(She takes a long sip.)

Eirene
It's very *earthy*. Is it Turkish?

Theo
It's *Theo's*.

Eirene
Never heard of it.

Theo
You've never –

Eirene
Is Theo Turkish?

Theo
Theo 's my *name*.

Eirene
Except, your name is *Tommy*.

Theo
...

Eirene
Ohhhhh. Silly me. Well, you *look* like a Tommy. Not a *Tom*. *Definitely*, a Tommy.

Theo
I thought you'd left.

Eirene
D'you miss me?

Theo
No.

Eirene
You're the one that got out of bed.

Theo
After I thought you'd left.

Eirene
I like your place. It's very . . . *medicinal*.

Theo
. . .

Eirene
But, you know, *comfy*.

Theo
. . .

Eirene
You never answered, how's your /back?

Theo
/It's fine.

Eirene
You slept on the floor.

Theo
It's –

Eirene
Do you do that a lot?

Theo
You almost done with that?

Eirene
Come 'ere.

Theo
Why?

Eirene

I'll rub your back for you.

Theo

No.

Eirene

It's okay, I'm trained.

Theo

You're a Masseuse, too?

Eirene

Okay, I'm *partially* trained.

Theo

No, thanks.

Eirene

Why do you do that?

Theo

...

Eirene

Sleep on the floor. Why /do you –

Theo

/I caught the inference. My silence didn't mean I didn't hear you. It meant that I chose not to answer you.

Eirene

You have *very* bad dreams.

Theo

...

Eirene

Are you sore after your dreams batter you like that?

Theo

...

Eirene

You cried out.

Theo

I thought I heard you leave. Earlier. Heard the door open and shut.

Eirene

Did you.

Look, um –

Theo

Eirene.

Eirene

Okay.

Theo

With an “ei,” not just and /“i.”

Eirene

/Right. Okay. I don’t care.

Theo

No?

Eirene

No.

Theo

Well, maybe you’re grumpy because you sleep on the floor.

Eirene

I have work. So . . .

Theo

. . .

Eirene

Do you have Asperger’s?

Theo

Don’t think so.

Eirene

You don’t pick up social cues very well, do you?

Theo

(She gets a second mug and starts pouring him some coffee.)

Eirene

Look, I was *worried* about you. So I stayed. Deal with that however you need to. Now try this. It’s delicious.

Theo

I told you, I don’t, *no*, come on, don’t *do* that.

(She holds out the mug. A slight standoff. Then, he relents.)

Eirene
What do you do? For work.

Theo
Family business.

Eirene
Mom and Pop store?

Theo
A little bit bigger than that.

Eirene
How much bigger?

Theo
Oh, Jesus *Christ*. Growing since 1920, so you know, big enough.

Eirene
You don't strike me as the workaholic type.

Theo
No. Not anymore. My sister is . . . She's *better* at . . .

Eirene
At . . . ?

Theo
. . .

(*The crowd noise swells.*)

What is that?

Eirene
Protesters. A *mob*.

Theo
Protesting what?

Eirene
A loss. I can feel it from here. The anger. *Smell* it. It's like waves of . . . hot *blood*.

Theo
(*He takes a sip of the coffee. It's awful. He coughs and sputters a bit.*)

The *fuck?!*

Eirene
Too strong?

No, when you *said* that, it tasted -

Theo

What?

Eirene

Nothing. Like I said, *work*, so . . .

Theo

. . .

Eirene

So, can you . . .

Theo

Can I what?

Eirene

Seriously, what are you *doing*?!

Theo

What do you mean?

Eirene

I *mean*, what the fuck are you *doing*?! Eirene. With a fucking “ei!” You can’t possibly be that *stupid*!

Theo

I told you, I’m worried /about –

Eirene

/I don’t need you to worry –

Theo

What was your nightmare about?

Eirene

Eirene?! It’s *exactly* none of your business. Now, I *paid* you last night! For the *night*! Now, get dressed and – . . .

Theo

What.

Eirene

Your eyes are *different*. There’s little flecks of gold in them. They catch the light, like . . .

Theo

(The noise from the protesters swells a bit and turns into something that sounds like birds. This distracts Theo. He goes to the glass panel.)

Damn it, I'm fifteen floors up, it's like they're right on top of us!

(The shadows of birds flying dangerously close to the glass startles him. He realizes something strange about them.)

Sea birds?

Eirene

Grackles.

Theo

What?

Eirene

Grackles. Black sea birds. Yellow eyes. Legs the color of ash.

Theo

In the city?

(Another flock flies by. We hear the sound of one hitting the window. A horrible squawking that continues through the following . . .)

Holy shit!

Eirene

Tell them to leave.

Theo

What?

Eirene

They're yours. That horde of scavengers is specifically for you. Tell them to leave.

Theo

The fuck are you talking about?

Eirene

Well, Theo, when you have nightmares about drowning the way that you do, it's inevitable that they'd find you.

(She goes to the glass panel.)

Theo

How do you /know that –

Eirene

/Shhhhhhhh. Hush now. Hush.

(The squawking dies down and all we hear are the protesters.)

Theo

How did you do that?

Eirene

I did nothing. *Less* than nothing. Come 'ere.

Theo

. . .

Eirene

Come 'ere. Look at them down there.

Theo

(Stands next to her, looks out.)

I can't make out the signs.

Eirene

A man was shot last night. Not far from here.

Theo

Uh huh.

Eirene

Young man. Fit a *general* description. In the *general* vicinity of, so on and /so forth.

Theo

(Without an ounce of emotion.) /That's tragic. I've got my own problems I'd like to get back to if you don't mind.

Eirene

He liked to jog at night. When it's warm and late. Something about running *out* of the darkness and *into* the darkness at the same time made him feel . . .

Theo

Did you know him, or something?

Eirene

Yes. No. Only in the instant before.

Theo

I don't know what that even - You're obviously in a strange place. Strange is *obviously* where you live, so -

Eirene

You don't care.

Theo

No, I *less* than care, whatever that works out to be.

Eirene

Apathy.

Theo

Practicality. Perspective.

Eirene

Million dollar apartment, fifteen floors up, give you that perspective?

(He pulls her to the window.)

Theo

Right. Come 'ere. Look out there. You see that?

(The noise of the mob swells.)

All that sympathy and anger? The signs? The chanting, all that hand-wringing?! They'll all be gone tomorrow, or the day after. Nice, safe, *temporary* outrage. It's the American way. You know what else is? My right to *stay* fifteen floors up and watch it all while drinking my Turkish coffee. *Alone.*

(His cell rings.)

And there she is, right on time. *Get* your clothes.

(He answers the phone.)

What. Yeah, I'm surprised I answered too. What do you want, Yvette? No. What are you - *get your clothes* - not *you*. Never mind who. Actually, I'ma call you back. I will! I will *call* you back!

(He hangs up. He goes to the bedroom and brings out her clothes. Before tossing them to her, he realizes something odd.)

Where did you get these?

Eirene

Get what?

Theo

You were wearing blue jeans and a white shirt last night.

Eirene

...

Theo

This is a blue *shirt* and white *jeans*!

Eirene
Maybe you were mistaken.

Theo
Except that I'm not.

(Eirene gestures to his phone.)

Eirene
That'll be Yvette again.

Theo
What?

(His cell rings. Eirene lets her robe fall to the floor and gets dressed. He watches her as he answers the phone.)

You gotta stop calling me every day. What papers?

(She points to the couch.)

Eirene
Those papers.

Theo
Hang on. Did you *sign* for this? *Clearly*, I'm not talking to you Yvette.

Eirene
I persuaded the courier to leave it for you.

Theo
Persuaded?

Eirene
He liked my eyes, too.

Theo
. . . I'm gonna call you back.

(He hangs up.)

Theo
Did you know what's in this?

Eirene
I didn't open it.

Theo
Yeah, well up seems to be down this morning. *Do* you know what's in this?

Eirene

. . . Of course, I do.

(She walks over to him. Takes his face in her hands and kisses him deeply.)

Theo

What was that for?

Eirene

Because. Theo. Theodore. Namesake. I know you now. I know the how and why of you. I know that you barely leave this place. I know what you're afraid of. Theo? Namesake? This is the instant before. Now get dressed. You really do have to go to work.

Theo

(The truth of this frightens him to the core.) . . .

(She exits. Heels in the hall. The door opens and shuts. Theo watches the space where she used to be. His television turns itself on. It's a little too loud as we hear a news report of the shooting from last night. The crowd noise from outside swells as he searches frantically for the remote. He finds it and turns off the tv. The crowd noise remains. He sits with the couriered letter and opens it. As he tears into it, the noise abruptly ceases. Only Theo in the silence. He cautiously unfolds the letter and reads.)

Theo

What is this? What . . . Oh, Jesus. Jesus Christ.

(His cell starts ringing. And ringing. He continues reading as the lights fade. And ringing. He does not pick up . . .)

(softly, and little helplessly) I'll . . . I'll call you back. I'll call you back Yvette.

(And ringing and ringing as he reads. Lights out.)

Three

1919. A little light shines on a memory. A Black Boy on a mound of sand. Sixteen and self-conscious in a hand me down swimsuit. He nervously peels off his shirt, and looks around while he removes his shoes. Opposite him, the Young White Man watches him as he sits on his own patch of sand. In his hand, he holds a bloody rock the size of a softball. He's hot with anger. Sea birds squawk. The ocean is restless. Maelstrom is in the water. She turns to the Young White Man as the Boy builds the courage to wade in.

Maelstrom

They make an awful racket.

Young White Man

What.

Maelstrom

The damn *Grackles*. That *awful* screeching tears at the sky, doesn't it?

Young White Man

Um . . . sure.

Maelstrom

Occasionally, I –

Young White Man

Go away.

Maelstrom

. . .

Young White Man

Please.

Maelstrom

What you got there?

(He looks down at the bloody rock in his hand.

Quite a bit of *gore* on it.

Young White Man

. . .

Maelstrom

Something you want to tell me.

(The sea birds gather as the squawking gets louder. The Young White Man looks up.)

Shhhhhhhhhhh . . .

(The noise subsides.)

Young White Man

How did you do that?

(She points at the rock in his hand.)

Maelstrom

How did you do *that*?

Young White Man

. . . I don't know.

(The ocean stirs.)

Maelstrom

Don't lie.

Young White Man

I really don't. I mean, I remember picking it up, but . . .

Maelstrom

Does it have something to do with the boy you keep staring at?

Young White Man

I . . . *know* 'im.

Maelstrom

Yes.

Young White Man

His dad works for mine. They're . . . *friendly*. We got into an argument at the stockyard. He *embarrassed* me in front of my father and the other guys.

Maelstrom

What does that have to do with the rock in your /hand?

Young White Man

/I, I don't know.

(The ocean roars. The sea birds squawk terribly.)

Maelstrom

Hush now! HUSH. *(looking up)* I will RIP YOU FROM THE SKY!

(The birds scatter temporarily. She extends her hands and the ocean calms.)

They don't like it when you lie. I don't either.

(The Young White Man recoils from her a bit. She extends her hand.)

May I?

(He gives her the rock.)

Young White Man

I, I came here to cool off. To *think*. But this heat is, *thick*. You know? It antagonizes you. *Badgers* you. I was gonna jump in the water, swim far out and just let myself sink to the deepest, coldest part until I felt like myself again.

Maelstrom

You didn't get that far, did you?

Young White Man

No.

Maelstrom

I would know if you did. *I* am the deepest, coldest part of the ocean.

Young White Man

I saw Theo. Standing in the wrong sand.

Maelstrom

This part of the beach /is whites only.

Young White Man

/This part of the beach is whites only.

Maelstrom

But, of course, he *knew* that. Didn't he?

Young White Man

I wanted to embarrass him the way his father embarrassed me.

Maelstrom

Humiliate him.

Young White Man

Yes.

Maelstrom

So . . . *humiliate* him.

Young White Man

BOY!

Black Boy

. . .

Young White Man

YEAH, YOU! WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

Black Boy

. . .

Young White Man

IT'S WHITES ONLY! GET OUT!

Black Boy

. . .

(The sea birds gather. Their squawking turns into shouting. The Black Boy looks out at the voices.)

Young White Man

(to Maelstrom) And he stood there. Mute. We weren't friends, but he had no reason to expect that from me and the shock on his face nearly stopped me, but I'd shrank away from his father and my pride had been battered into the shape of something else. Something that sat heavy and hot and writhin' in my gut. Something that wouldn't stop eating it's way out until –

Maelstrom

Until . . .

Young White Man

Until that part of me had *satisfaction*.

Maelstrom

So . . . *get* satisfaction.

Young White Man

(Shouting at the boy.)

GET YOUR *FILTH* OUT OF OUR WATER.

Black Boy

. . .

Young White Man

YOU SHUT YOUR FUCKING MOUTH! DON'T UTTER A FUCKING WORD AND GET YOUR BLACK ASS OUT O' THAT WATER! NOW!

(The voices rise behind the Young White Man, echoing him.)

(to Maelstrom) And that's when I heard them. Behind me. A mob. Shouting with me. Yelling at Theo to get out of the water. Only a few at first, but the voices kept multiplying at my back. I could *feel* them in my chest. Filling my lungs. Soon, I couldn't distinguish between what *I* wanted and what *they* wanted.

And *Theo* was . . .

Maelstrom

He straightened his back. *(To the boy.)* Didn't you?

(The Boy straightens his back defiantly.)

Young White Man

Yeah.

Maelstrom

He covered his ears with his hands.

(The Boy covers his ears much like he did in scene one.)

Young White Man

Why would he do something like that? *(To the Boy)* WHY WOULD YOU DO SOMETHING LIKE THAT?!

Maelstrom

Why *would* you do something like that?

Young White Man

YOU HAD TO KNOW WHAT /WOULD HAPPEN!

Maelstrom

/You *had* to know what would happen if you did.

Young White Man

YOU HAD TO KNOW!

Maelstrom

. . . SPEAK!

Young White Man

(to Maelstrom) All I wanted to do was make him leave. I wanted to *shame him*. To *break* him. To *wither* his spirit. To see him . . . *dim*.

Maelstrom

Is that all?

Young White Man

What?

Maelstrom

Is that *all* you wanted?

Young White Man

I - Yes.

Maelstrom

Then tell me . . . how you got from here . . .

(She places the bloody rock back in the same hand he was holding it in at the beginning of the scene.)

to here.

(He looks at the rock, then at the Boy. Splashes in the water.)

Young White Man

I thought it was rain. At first. Then, I realized. They were throwing rocks at him. We were throwing . . . I was throwing rocks at him. Rocks smaller than this at first. But we were a singular entity by then. Me, the mob, the sharp stones. We were a current unto ourselves, and they, we, *I* kept moving closer and closer.

(He moves toward Theo. He mimes throwing rocks.)

And they, we, I kept throwing and throwing and throwing rocks at his body until we started hitting him.

(The Boy takes a few rocks to the body.)

They, we, I surround him. We are purpose. We are hatred. We, I, are quickly over him.

(The Young Man moves over the top of the Boy, raising the bloody rock overhead. The Boy is wide eyed with fear, but never looks away.)

Maelstrom

You told him again, didn't you?

Young White Man

I did. I TOLD /YOU!

Maelstrom

/He did.

Young White Man

I TOLD /YOU.

Maelstrom

/Again and /again.

Young White Man

/AGAIN AND AGAIN!

Maelstrom

Just /leave.

Young White Man

/LEAVE!

Maelstrom

Just

Young White Man

LEAVE!

Maelstrom

JUST

Young White Man

I'LL CRACK YOUR FUCKING HEAD OPEN!

(Maelstrom moves near the boy.)

Maelstrom

(to the Boy) And you didn't move, did you?

(The Young Man is distraught. He threatens with the raised rock.)

Young White Man

(thin and pleading) Please. Please . . . go. Don't make me do this. Don't make me do this.

Black Boy

. . .

Young White Man

. . .

Black Boy

. . .

Young White Man

. . .

Maelstrom

And then, the most inexplicable thing of all.

(The Boy spits at him.)

You are once again, *humiliated* in front of your own people. By one of *them*.

(The Young Man becomes enraged, and hits the Boy in the skull with the rock several times until his body goes limp in the water. The voices that once surrounded him are now gone. There is no sound but that of his ragged breathing and the water lapping over the Boy's body.)

Maelstrom

Shhhhhhh. Hush now. Hush. The swell. The pull. Hush now.

(The Young Man drops the rock into the water. We hear sea birds overhead. Maelstrom moves to the Boy, and with great care, she cradles his head in her lap.)

(to the Young White Man) And then?

(The Young Man backs away. We hear the gentlest waves.)

Young White Man

And then they, we, I . . . left him in the water. The crowd was . . . They were just somehow . . . gone, and I, I just . . . sank into the wet sand and watched the ocean try and try and *try and try* . . . to give his body back to the shore. You were trying to give him back.

Maelstrom

He wasn't done. Living on the land. He was not meant to reside within me yet. *You* were not meant to reside within me yet.

Young White Man

Me? . . . *(small)* Oh.

Maelstrom

"Oh."

Young White Man

You're the coldest, /deepest part.

Maelstrom

/I am the *coldest*, deepest part.

(She kneels and cradles the Boy's lifeless body.)

Breathe.

(With a sharp, violent intake of air, the Boy wakes up. He lays in her arms, exhausted.)

Why? *Why* didn't you fight back?

Boy

. . .

Maelstrom

. . .

(The light begins to change as an office is slowly illuminated. There's a low hum of electricity. The Boy hears this. Feels it.)

Boy

What is that?

Maelstrom

Shhhhhh. Listen. History is calling you. We'll do this again. *Very* soon.

(Light fades on the beach.)

Four

A modern office. Top floor. Chanting from the growing crowd outside. THEO is leaning against the desk. He wears a gray suit. There is a breakfast cart in the corner. He sips from a glass of juice and reads over the documents from earlier this morning. YVETTE enters with her own set of documents folded under her arm and carrying a briefcase. She stops in the doorway when she sees Theo.

...

Yvette

...

Theo

...

Yvette

...

Theo

(casually waves)

Yvette

... Get your bony ass off my desk.

Theo

Good morning to you, too.

Yvette

Mhm.

Theo

(holding up the documents) Hey I just realized something. I don't like being named in lawsuits.

Yvette

...

Theo

'vette.

Yvette

Seriously, move.

Theo

Yvette.

Yvette

I don't like it either, *Theo*.

Theo

So ... ?

Yvette

Hell of a crowd out there.

Theo

You've spoken to legal, /right?

Yvette

/I'm surprised is all.

Theo

Okay -

Yvette

That under the threat of losing your fortune, you managed to brave the outside world and /mingle with the rest of us.

Theo

/You know, I hesitated before leaving the house, 'cause something told me you'd set a fucking record today and to go back and get my stopwatch!

Yvette

. . .

Theo

Twenty seconds?! Thirty?!

Yvette

I would bet my child's trust fund that you haven't been outside in . . . at least, what, seven or eight days?

Theo

. . .

Yvette

Ten? And keep your voice down. People *work* here. In case you forgot.

Theo

. . .

Yvette

. . .

Theo

Hey, you want a sip of this *juice*, it's really fuckin' incredible. It's like a papaya with some, like -

Yvette

No, I do not want a sip of your fucking *juice*. It's *my* juice anyway, put it down. Put it down!

Theo

. . .

Yvette

. . .

...

Theo

Yvette

(she stifles the urge to cry)

Theo

(taking out his pocket square) Here.

Yvette

What the hell are you doing?

Theo

I'm offering you my handkerchief.

Yvette

Well . . .

(She folds it expertly and puts it back in his jacket.)

Don't do that.

Theo

Fine. I'd rather you get your snot on yours anyway.

Yvette

(smiles)

Theo

(smiles)

Yvette

(Looking out the window, down at the crowds.) That's a lot of hurt down there.

Theo

You *have* spoken to legal, haven't you?

Yvette

What do you think?

Theo

They're gonna want to schedule depositions /soon.

Yvette

/Oh, some other things you may have forgotten. We're a half-billion dollar company. We get sued all the time. Everybody hates lenders. I've got this.

Theo

This isn't a disgruntled customer/ this is –

Yvette

/Answer me this. Since when do you care? About what happens here?

Theo

We need to –

Yvette

Don't lecture me on what "we" should do Theo! I'm an *expert* on the things "we" should be doing, okay?!

Theo

Fine.

Yvette

There's *one* desk in this office!

Theo

. . .

Yvette

"I just can't *do* this right now. I don't wanna talk about why." Remember? Four months, Theo, I don't see you. Don't hear from you. We'll notify *you* with your deposition date. *Okay?*

Theo

. . .

Yvette

. . .

(Shadows across the glass.)

Sea birds?

Theo

What?

Yvette

Shut up..

Theo

Okay.

Yvette

Okay.

Theo

. . . Good speech, by the way.

Yvette

Suck it. And for *God's sake*, drink the damn juice, *eat something*. You look thin.

Theo

Thank you?

Yvette

Are you eating anything that resembles food these days?

Theo

Of course, I'm eating, Yvette. If I wasn't eating I'd, you know, be dead.

Yvette

You look pale, too. You look *thin* and you look *pale*. Humans need sunlight, you know?

Theo

Don't *mother* me.

Yvette

So, I *shouldn't* ask about therapy?

Theo

I don't mind telling you about therapy at all. It was a hell of a half a session.

Yvette

Theo.

Theo

He thought I was *Agoraphobic*.

Yvette

You are Agoraphobic! *And* you're an asshole!

Theo

I *choose* not to go outside. Okay. It's my fucking choice. *Obviously*.

Yvette

What happened to you?

Theo

Nothing, I . . . I'm just not you.

Yvette

Excuse me?

Theo

Aw, *Jesus*, don't get all - I meant you, as in your *type*, not you, you know, personally. *Sort of*.

Yvette

...

Theo

...

Yvette

...

Theo

Look, I know I disappeared on you. I know you missed me.

Yvette

... You know what it's like? It's like waking up and realizing that one of your organs has been harvested. After you get over the disorientation, and the pain, you're still left with the fact that something was stolen without your knowledge or permission. It leaves you with the most *extraordinary* anger.

Theo

So, you're saying that, I *stole* me, from you?

Yvette

Yes. And also, *fuck* you.

(He smiles a bit at this. Eventually, so does she. The crowd noise rises a bit. They both glance at outside. Yvette goes and looks down at the street.)

Theo

This lawsuit claims fraudulent chain of ownership.

Yvette

Yep.

Theo

... Know anything about that?

Yvette

..... Nope.

Theo

...

Yvette

...

(A few more Grackles at the window. The crowd chants something indecipherable at this height.)

So much anger down there.

Theo

Sure.

Yvette

They said he had a cell phone?

Theo

What? No, he was jogging.

Yvette

Who?

Theo

The guy that was shot. He was jogging.

Yvette

What are you - A *boy* got shot. Fourteen. He was holding up a cell phone, and -

Theo

When was this?

Yvette

Last night.

Theo

...

Yvette

It's been all over the news.

(Theo goes to the glass panel and looks down as well.)

Theo

I don't understand.

Yvette

It's awful. I almost got out of the car and joined them.

Theo

Why? It won't change anything. Not a single thing will be different because of this . . . *commotion*. Look at 'em. Pouring in from every corner. All that emotion multiplying by emotion. This seemingly exponential *grieving* is catharsis, not *change*.

Yvette

(hearing this from him shakes her a bit)

Theo

...

Yvette

. . .

(More Grackles.)

Theo

And these damn *birds*. All morning.

(A knock at the door.)

Come back later!

(Another knock at the door.)

I said, not /now!

Yvette

/Theo.

(And another.)

Theo

Jesus /Christ!

Yvette

It's *legal*. Come in! I left instructions to be interrupted, no matter what.

(Eirene enters wearing a business suit, carrying a stack of files.)

Theo

Um . . . what the hell is *this*?

Yvette

Hi, are you /from –

Eirene

/I'm Rania, from legal. I'm here to discuss . . . sorry, uh –

Yvette

It's ok. This is my brother, Theo.

Eirene

Oh, *you're* Theo.

Theo

What the hell *is* this?

Yvette

Something wrong?

(Eirene extends a firm hand.)

Rania Warner.

Eirene

What do you think you're doing?!

Theo

I'm not sure what you mean?

Eirene

Theo? Can you calm down?

Yvette

You're a Lawyer?

Theo

That would be how I got hired in the legal department.

Eirene

I know her.

Theo

You two have met?

Yvette

Sorry, no. Maybe you're mistaking me for someone else.

Eirene

Do you have a sister?

Theo

I do, but she's *much*, much older than I am.

Eirene

(*The birds squawk, seemingly in response.*)

Theo

I paid her for sex.

Eirene

Excuse me?!

Yvette

Jesus, Theo!

Eirene

I don't know with whom you have me confused, but I suggest you *work that out*, before I file a lawsuit myself!

Theo

...

Yvette

...

Eirene

Ms. Williams.

Yvette

Yvette.

Eirene

Yvette. We should prepare.

Theo

Yes. We should.

Yvette

Shut your mouth.

Theo

Let me see your eyes.

(He approaches her.)

Eirene

Get, away from me!

(Yvette grabs Theo. The crowd's chanting spikes, seemingly in response to the violence.)

Theo

Fine! I'm fine!

Yvette

Maybe you should leave!

Theo

No, I . . . can't now, she's . . . I –

Yvette

Apologize!

Theo

...

Yvette

Now!

(Yvette stares her brother down. Eirene smirks and mouths the word “now” behind her back for Theo to see.)

Theo

Fuck.

Yvette

Wrong words!

Theo

(insincere) I’m sorry, okay?! My apologies. *Rania.*

Eirene

Apology accepted. Theo. *Theodore.*

Theo

...

Yvette

Okay. What do you have for me?

Theo

Yes, what do you have for us?

Yvette

Just. Don’t talk. Okay?

(A little light shines on a memory. Sea birds squawk. We see the Young White Man at the beach. The Black Boy floats lifelessly in the tide.)

Eirene

Basically, the lawsuit asserts that when your Great Great Grandfather started Williams Financial, then known as Family Lenders of Chicago, he used funds obtained from the sale of one Reese Stockyards in December of 1919.

Yvette

So this, *(consults the documents)* Alexander Reese is a relative.

Eirene

Yes. *(To Theo)* A namesake.

Yvette

How did he come to own the Stockyard?

Eirene

According to the Reese family, he didn’t.

Theo

Meaning what?

Yvette

Shut it. Listen.

Theo

...

Yvette

Meaning what?

Young White Man

(weakly) You come out of there. COME OUT OF THERE! She wanted to give you back, you come back!

(Present day Theo turns his head almost in the direction of the Young White Man.)

Eirene

They claim your Great Great Grandfather signed financial documents when he wasn't legally recognized as the owner of the company.

Yvette

My family has owned this company since 1919.

Young White Man

THEO!

Theo

(almost whispered) What is /that?

Eirene

/Your family has owned this lending corporation since then, yes. But if they can prove your family sold their company out from under them, it could be damaging.

Young White Man

Come back. /Come back.

Yvette

/How damaging?

Eirene

Catastrophic.

Yvette

...

Theo

...

(The commotion outside get louder, stronger.)

Young White Man

My father won't speak to me. He knows I was here when they, we, I - He *knows*, I –
THEO!

Theo

What . . .

Yvette

You okay?

Theo

I feel a little . . .

Yvette

We'll figure this out.

Young White Man

He *disowned* me. Put me out in the street. I don't have anywhere to go. I don't have .
. . . COME OUT OF THERE!

(The ocean roars. Maelstrom and the Boy appear from the waves.)

Eirene

Hush now. Hush, hush.

Yvette

What?

Eirene

It's okay, Yvette.

Theo

I feel, I think, I . . .

(Theo leans against the desk.)

Yvette

You okay?

Theo

What's happening to me?!

(Theo goes to the window. The sea birds cast shadows over his face.)

Young White Man

Look what you did.

Black Boy

. . .

Yvette

This has always been /ours.

Young White Man

/Look what you *took* from /me.

Yvette

/They can't take our company from us.

Eirene

It is possible. If it's true.

Young White man

I have nothing! /*Less than nothing!*

Maelstrom

/Less than nothing.

Black Boy

. . .

Young White Man

Say something!

Yvette

Theo?

Theo

. . .

Yvette

You okay? /Say something.

Young White Man

/Say something!

Maelstrom

Don't you hear it?

Black Boy

. . .

Yvette

/Theo?

Young White Man

/THEO!

Maelstrom

There. /You hear that?

Eirene
/You hear that?

Black Boy
Yes.

Theo
I do.

Yvette
What are you two talking about?

Theo
Birds. The ocean. Voices.

Yvette
Theo!

(Theo goes weak and falls to the floor. Yvette goes to him, holding his head.)

Black Boy
I hear it.

Maelstrom
History is calling you.

Young White Man
I TOLD YOU TO GET OUT OF THAT WATER! I TOLD YOU TO GET OUT OF THAT
WATER! I TOLD YOU TO GET OUT! GET OUT GET OUT GET OUT!

Maelstrom
It's calling you.

Yvette
Call someone!

Eirene
Someone is already here. She's making room for him!

Black Boy
History?

Yvette
' the fuck are you talking about?!

Maelstrom
The past. The *future*. In time, it's *all* history. Now, go.

Young White Man

I'll drag you out of there myself.

(The Boy, unsure, looks at Maelstrom.)

Maelstrom

It's okay. He can't hurt you, anymore. Go. You'll find your way.

(The Boy walks out of the water, past the Young White Man. They look at each other. Then, the Boy picks up his clothes from the sand.)

Young White Man

(to the Boy) You don't belong here.

Maelstrom

(to the Boy) No, you don't. But then, you knew that, didn't you?

Black Boy

Yes. Yes, I did.

(The Boy enters the present day.)

Maelstrom

(to the Young White Man) Now. You come with me.

Theo

She wants me to go with her!

Yvette

Who!

(Maelstrom extends her hands and violently attacks the Young White Man, pulling him into the ocean.)

Theo

I'm afraid, I'm . . . I can't –

Yvette

I don't know what to do! Tell me what to do!

Eirene

Let him go.

Yvette

No!

Young White Man

NO!

Maelstrom

(As they struggle) I am the /deepest, coldest part! I am the *swell*! I am the *pull*! With me you are *out* of the dark, and *into* the dark. There is *no* end to me!

Theo

(Whispered) /She is the deepest, coldest part. She is the swell. She is the pull. With her, I'm out of the dark, and into the dark. There is no end to her.

Young White Man

Please don't. Please . . .

(She drowns him. She stands as his body floats at her feet.)

Yvette

Please help me with him.

Eirene

He's coming very soon.

Yvette

Who's coming.

Eirene

Alex Reese. I called to him. *Summoned* him.

Yvette

Why did you do that?

Eirene

Because, I'm not a nice person, Yvette. *Because* all of this . . . *commotion*? This emotion multiplying by emotion, this exponential grieving, this . . . *suffering*, is nothing but *catharsis*. I, we, I . . . am *squarely* set upon *change*.

(THEO moans.)

Yvette

It's okay. It's okay.

Eirene

Your world is about to fracture.

Yvette

What?

Eirene

Don't worry. You won't remember a thing.

Maelstrom

Sister.

Eirene

Sister.

(Maelstrom raises her arms and the sound of the ocean rises, the flock of birds swells. At the same time, Eirene raises her arms, there is the sound of protesters engaged in violence, in chaos, shouting, and shouting for change.)

FIVE

A heartbeat in the darkness that quickens and fills the space. A burst of light, a sharp intake of breath, and The Boy wakes up next to Theo in Yvette's office. They were sleeping in the exact same position. Theo remains asleep, lost in another nightmare. The Boy looks around, wide-eyed with fear and curiosity. He is wearing a gray suit. Theo wears hand-me-down swim trunks and an old t-shirt. The Boy locks eyes with Eirene.

Eirene

Shhhhhhh. It's okay.

Black Boy

Where am I?!

Eirene

Ohhhh, somewhere between there and here, then and now.

(Another heartbeat quickens and dies out.)

Do you want some juice? I dare say it might be *papaya*, if you can believe that.

Black Boy

Nah. Who's dat?

Eirene

He's . . . a traveler. Like you.

Black Boy

I'm ain't nothin' like that, lady. I'm jus' tryin' to get home.

Eirene

Home. Okay. Well, that's complicated.

Black Boy

What'chu mean?

Eirene

It doesn't exist anymore.

Black Boy

. . .

Eirene

(With a laugh.) Well, I guess it wasn't *that* complicated. And also not funny. My apologies. Note to self: Homelessness is not funny.

(Theo stirs. Another heartbeat quickens and disappears.)

Black Boy

...

Eirene

Aren't you going to ask me who I am?

Black Boy

No.

Eirene

Well, why on earth not?

Black Boy

'Cause o' your eyes.

Eirene

Oh. Is it the flecks of gold? The way they catch the light?

Black Boy

Naw, I just know dey ain't right. Like dat otha woman. Dey look like what you think eyes are *supposed* to look like.

Eirene

... Note to self: Next time –

Black Boy

How do I get outta here?

Eirene

You don't. Have some juice.

Black Boy

I 'on't like juice.

(He notices he's wearing a suit.)

Whose suit is this?

Eirene

That remains to be seen.

(Theo stirs. Another heartbeat quickens and disappears. The Boy takes notice, but says nothing. A little noise from the chaos makes its way in. The Boy goes to the glass panel and looks down.)

What do you see?

Black Boy

Anger and helplessness, crashing into each other over and over again.

Eirene

Why?

Black Boy

Because someone died. A man. Forearm against his throat. He couldn't breathe. Lungs were in *spasm* for air.

Eirene

How do you know that?

Black Boy

I can *feel* it. That fight for oxygen. That *sickening* panic.

Eirene

Why bother with empathy, Boy? There's nothing to be done about it now.

Black Boy

. . . Maybe.

(Another heartbeat quickens and disappears. The Boy looks around, following the sound. There is a sudden shift in him.)

I suppose you'll explain that.

Eirene

Depends.

Black Boy

As well as how my diction has suddenly evolved.

Eirene

Possibly.

Black Boy

And why I'm suddenly concerned where a woman name Yvette has gone.

Eirene

She went to get some help for him. She won't find it. The halls will eventually lead her back here.

(Theo wakes up.)

Eirene

Hello.

(Another heartbeat quickens and dies off.)

Theo
What the hell is that?

Eirene
A heartbeat.

Theo
I *know* it's a –

Eirene
Then don't ask silly questions.

Black Boy
I think what you meant to ask was: *Why* in the hell is that?

Eirene
...

Theo
Why is he wearing my clothes?

Black Boy
Probably the same reason you're wearing mine.

Theo
Rania?

Eirene
Eirene.

Black Boy
With and "EI?"

Eirene
Why, yes!

Theo
Oh, *fuck* that! That shit stops now. I want out of here!

Eirene
That's why I'm here.

Black Boy
Expand on that please.

Theo

OKAY! I'm . . . *confused*, and pissed off, and wearing some sort of *vintage* swimwear that I *know* ain't mine and –

(*The crowd noise spikes.*)

Wha's that?

Eirene

What do you think it is?

Theo

It's . . . It's . . .

(*The Boy looks at him. There is a sudden shift in Theo.*)

It ain't none o' my concern.

Eirene

No?

Theo

Naw. I see dis all tha time, where I'm from. *All* da damn time. Every day I hear about somebody dat knows somebody dat done got beat, or strung up in front of some *cacklin'* mob, or one day they just plain up and *vanish*!

Eirene

Stolen.

Theo

Yeah, *gone*.

Black Boy

. . .

Theo

Every day I'm afraid. Every day I wonder, "If I walk 'round this corner, is dat gone be it? Is dis the day I 'on't make it home?" I'm scared! It's *on* me all da time! You know, *thick*. *Heavy*. It stoops my shoulders, it's so *damn* heavy. I'm so sick 'o avoidin' it every day! Runnin' from it! I'm tired o' feelin' hunted! Sometimes I just wanna come out of hidin', come outta tha shadows and look the hunter in the eye. Let 'im know, dat I won't give 'im tha satisfaction of chasin' me down like some *animal*.

Black Boy

So you run /towards it.

Theo

/I'll run toward it.

(*A little light shines on a memory. A mound of sand at a beach. Theo steps onto it.*)

I'll do somethin' unexpected.

Black Boy

Almost inexplicable.

Theo

I'll be scared at first.

Black Boy

Yes.

Theo

I'll wanna run.

Black Boy

But you won't.

(Theo takes off his shirt and goes to the water's edge, putting his feet in. Maelstrom appears as we hear the sound of sea birds overhead. Theo looks up.)

Maelstrom

They make an awful racket, don't they?

(Theo looks at her . . .)

That noise. Tears at the sky.

(The light fades on the memory, leaving the Boy and Eirene alone in the office.)

(Eirene walks a glass of juice over to the Boy.)

Eirene

Would you like some juice?

Black Boy

I'd love some.

(She hands him the juice. He takes a long sip.)

Is that papaya?

Eirene

. . . How do you feel?

Black Boy

. . . What's next?

(Another heartbeat quickens.)

Eirene

You should catch that.

Black Boy

Why? How?

Eirene

Put your hand over your chest.

(He does so. The heartbeat slows to a steady pace. He takes a deep breath. The lights change. We are fully in the office. Fully in the present. The chaos outside rises a bit. Eirene takes his face in her hands, looks into his eyes.)

You're supposed to be here. But then, you know that, don't you? Theo. Theodore. Namesake.

Black Boy

Yes. Yes, I know.

(She kisses his forehead and exits. He goes to a glass panel and looks out. Yvette enters in a rush.)

Yvette

Theo?!

(The Boy turns to her.)

Theo

Why are you yelling?

Yvette

You're up!

Theo

So are you!

(She goes to him. Feels his forehead.)

What the hell are you doing?

Yvette

Well . . . I was feeling your forehead.

Theo

Well, don't do that.

Yvette

Where's Rania?

Theo

Don't know. Juice?

Yvette

No, and I told you to put that down! We have work to do.

Theo

We?

Yvette

Don't make me regret this.

(A moment between them, then Theo takes off his jacket. They divide the stack of files that Rania brought it and begin going through them.)

(The lights fade on the scene.)

SIX

The lights rise hot on the office. Theo and Yvette are a little upstage of Alex, who looks out the window down at the chaotic scene in the streets. He wears a black suit and a serious expression.

Alex

I've never seen anything like that. Driving in, I thought they'd flip my car over. You should see their faces up close. It's kind of terrifying. And that poor man. Dragged behind a car like that. Tragic.

Theo

...

Yvette

...

Alex

Thank you for seeing me.

Yvette

We didn't invite you.

Theo

Our lawyer is –

Yvette

Unconventional.

Alex

My appreciation, all the same. This is a beautiful building, by the way. Stands out in the landscape.

Yvette

My husband's cousin from New York is an Architect. He designed it for us.

Alex

Grey Leighton. Leighton Architecture.

Theo

Yes.

Alex

Amazing work. Incredible detail.

Theo

We'll tell him you said so.

Alex

Thank you.

Yvette

Now, if that's all we can do for you . . . ?

(Alex smiles at this. The crowd noise swells.)

Alex

Obviously, you're aware that I've taken a good look at *your*, and I use that word loosely, company. Steady growth for almost a century. You've fought off two hostile take-overs and the crash in oh seven. And mostly under your direction, Yvette. Impressive.

Yvette

Diversification is key. People were renting in droves, so lending to apartment developers made sense. It got us through the lean times.

Alex

Certainly.

Theo

We didn't keep this company afloat so that we could give it away to you.

Alex

Believe me, I was as surprised as you were to find out about our families.

Yvette

Where's your family now?

Alex

Texas mostly. Beef country. Before it was stolen, this company -

Yvette
Let's not start off on the wrong foot. Alex.

Alex
We went back to the meat business. Livestock.

Theo
So, you're doing well.

Alex
We survive.

Yvette
Then, it begs the question.

Alex
Why put you through all of this?

Theo
...

Alex
Like you said, diversification is key. Another company in our portfolio would –

Theo
So, this isn't about retribution?

Alex
I won't lie to you Theo. It's a *little* about retribution.

Theo
...

Yvette
Retribution based on conjecture won't get you very far.

Theo
It might even get you a countersuit.

Alex
Is that a threat?

Theo
It certainly seems so, doesn't it?

Yvette
Theo.

Alex

No, no, it's fine. Look, your family has built something incredible here. I understand wanting to hold on to it.

Theo

Something like this will destroy the reputation of the company. If you won, and you won't, but if you did, there would be nothing left.

Alex

Well, maybe I don't care. Maybe, I want to see this beautiful crystal tower shattered into billions of little pieces. Maybe that's just my way.

Theo

Well, we can start with the window when I *throw* you –

Yvette

Theo.

Alex

Listen to your sister. *Theo.* I know that she's the level-headed one. The one that steers the ship. I half expected to not see you here. I know you've been gone a long, long time.

Theo

. . .

Yvette

We have all the documentation we need to prove that our Great Grandfather started this business legitimately. In 1920.

Alex

History has a way of painting in broad strokes. Your Great Grandfather worked for mine at my family's meat packing plant in the stockyards.

Theo

I know my family's history.

Alex

Do you?

Theo

Our Great Grandfather worked for twenty years before leaving and starting his own company, which was no small thing, believe me.

Alex

Where did he get the money?

Theo

You don't listen very well.

Alex

Would it surprise you to know that for a time, your Great Grandfather ran my family's company for three months before he left.

Yvette

...

Theo

...

Alex

My Great Grandfather had disappeared. It was rumored that his son was involved in an incident.

(The crowd noise swells, the panels rattle.)

Theo

What incident?

Alex

Terrible accident. A boy at a beach near Lake Michigan. I don't know. But I do know that he disowned him, then disappeared.

Theo

What was the *incident*?

Alex

Honestly, I don't know.

Yvette

Where did you get this information?

Alex

Stories passed down. Old newspaper articles. The summer my father disappeared, was particularly violent. There were terrible riots here in the city. Across the country.

Theo

I know.

Alex

It was in the city paper. 1919. Alexander Reese, my Great Grandfather, and one of his sons disappeared within a day of each other.

Theo

So it was reported?

Alex

It was.

Yvette

Someone followed the story, made sure it was news.

Alex

They did.

Yvette

Well, how nice for you, and your family. To have the disappearance of two of your family members documented during that time? During that awful summer. We lost family during that time as well. Theo, will you grab that article about our family member that disappeared.

Theo

There isn't one.

Yvette

(sarcastically) Well, Theo, I'm *shocked*. Will you check again please?

Theo

(Theo doesn't move) Certainly. Nope. *Still* not here.

Yvette

Interesting. *Surprising*.

Theo

Well, no, not /really.

Yvette

/No. . . . Not really.

Alex

That's a shame. . . . My Great Grandfather resurfaced in Texas. Houston. His son did not.

Theo

I'm sorry, what.

Alex

I said, "His son did not."

(Chaos outside.)

His son, who should have taken over his father's company, did not *resurface*. He's gone. Erased from history.

Yvette

. . .

Theo

. . .

(The noise from outside begins making its way inside.)

Theo

I /see.

Yvette

/I see, now.

Theo

I see you now.

Alex

Not only did your Great Grandfather steal my father's company and sell it without actually owning it, he used the money to found what would become this corporation, he made sure that his son stayed out of the way.

Theo

I see you now.

Yvette

Are you kidding me?!

Alex

These were tense times. There was so much violence and death during that summer. Murders got lost in the tide of strife all the time.

Yvette

What is this, some story your family passed down through the generations?

Alex

Your family owes me a debt.

Yvette

Oh, so this is about money?! You looking for some sort of *reparations*? Want a nice big fucking check, Alex? Lot's of zeroes and commas? Is that what all of this preamble and *history* was building to? You think you deserve some payoff for the injury *others* suffered for you? Do you think what you're doing, what you're *seeking* bears any dignity in any way?! If your kin was truly murdered. Truly hunted down and stolen from your family. Wouldn't he want the wrong admitted, rather than watch you take a sum of money and simply go away? And what you think happened, *didn't*! Our history, our truth is out there –

(The sound of the chaos outside invades the space fully. They look around.)

Alex

I'm not stopping the lawsuit!

(The sound continues to invade.)

Yvette

Of course, not. But, your *version* of things is wrong.

Alex

I have *documentation*! I have *recorded* history!

Yvette

Like you said, history, at times, paints in broad strokes. Either purposeful, accidental, or at the whims of the self interested, things get left out. If you want to play it this way, I'll gladly see you in court. You've looked into our company, our family. You know that we can afford to fight you until you simply forget why this started in the first place.

(The chanting, the chaos, is all around them.)

Alex

I'll watch this place burn.

Theo

Alex. *Alexander*. Namesake. Do you hear that?

(Theo takes him to the window. The sounds of the protestor's mixes with the sound of thousands of Grackles; their shadows against Theo and Alex's bodies.)

Do you hear that! All of that is the full force of hundreds of years of injustice. That is pain, and anger, and loss. That is thousands of arms reaching up toward us begging me to hurl your body to them.

(Maelstrom and Eirene appear, arms outstretched)

To let them grind you up, tear you apart at the joints. All of that commotion, all that emotion multiplied by emotion, all that exponential grieving visited upon you over and over and over again would only serve to destroy you, would only serve as catharsis, as purgation.

(He pulls Alex away from the window.)

But that is only release. And release has always seemed to prove itself temporary. I am *squarely* set upon *change*. The present must find a way to forgive the past.

(He lets Alex go, and steps away from him.)

Alex

You owe me what I lost!

Yvette

We'll see what a Judge has to say.

Alex

...

(Alex exits.)

Yvette

What does he have?

Theo

I don't know. But I'm not going anywhere. I'm not going anywhere.

Yvette

. . .

(All the noise gives way to the sound of the ocean, to the breaking waves. Theo and Yvette are gone. Eirene strips Alex back down to his swimsuit. He is the Young White Man again. Maelstrom puts her arms around him, they sink to the bottom of the ocean. Eirene walks to the mound of sand. The lights shift . . .)

SEVEN

A little light shines on a memory. Theo enters and sees Eirene on a mound of sand. He wears a hand-me-down swimsuit.

Sea birds squawk overhead.

It is Summer. Sometime between then and now.

Black Boy

Hi.

Eirene

Hello.

Black Boy

Um.

Eirene

Would you like to sit?

Black Boy

Okay. Here? With you?

Eirene

Yes, Boy, with me.

(Theo sits.)

Are you alone?

Black Boy

Yes.

Eirene

Aren't you lonely?

Black Boy

A little. But I seem to want it this way. If dat makes sense.

Eirene

It seems to.

(Theo smiles a bit.)

Black Boy

We're ain't s'posed to be here, you know?

Eirene

We are and we aren't.

Black Boy

Okay, I 'on't know what dat's s'posed to . . . I wouldn't want you to get hurt or nuthin' out here.

Eirene

Fair enough.

(She gets up and begins to exit.)

Black Boy

Hey.

(She turns to him.)

Wha's your name?

Eirene

. . . Yvette.

Black Boy

Yvette. That's . . . that's nice.

Eirene

Thank you.

Black Boy

Oh, my name /is –

Eirene

/Shhhhhh, hush now. Hush. Enjoy the ocean. The swell. The pull.

Black Boy

. . .

Eirene

Goodbye.

Black Boy

See you around?

Eirene

That's entirely up to you.

Black Boy

. . . What?

Eirene

Never mind. Look.

(He looks out and sees the Young White Man and Maelstrom in the water.)

Black Boy

Who is that?

(He looks back. Eirene is gone. He stands to get a better view of the sight in the water.)

(The Young White Man sees him on shore.)

Young White Man

Who is that?

Maelstrom

That's a very, very complicated and layered question you just asked.

(He looks at her.)

All I can tell you is: I don't know.

Young White Man

I haven't seen anyone in years. More than years.

Maelstrom

Eras and eras.

Young White Man

Can I go and talk to him?

Maelstrom

You know what happens when you try to escape to land.

Young White Man

I don't want to – I do, I *do* want to escape, you don't like it when I lie – but right now I'd settle for someone to talk to.

Maelstrom

Are you tiring of my company?

Young White Man

You're not this person *down there*. *Down there* you're just black and cold, and crushingly deep.

Maelstrom

Fine. Go. But if he doesn't want to talk to you, we'll never visit the surface again.

Young White Man

That's not fair.

Maelstrom

It's a risk. Risk is inherently unfair if you lose. Go before I change my mind.

(The Young White Man walks over the Theo. He stops just short of the shoreline. They stare at each other.)

Young White Man

. . . Hi.

Black Boy

. . . Hi.

(The sound of a mob slowly bleeds in. The young men look around.

What is that?

(The sound continues to fill the space.)

Young White Man

It's history. It's the now; the full weight of the way things are.

Black Boy

What are they saying?

Young White Man

I've been here a long, long time. And I've learned that it depends who is listening. What do you hear?

Black Boy

They're saying . . . "Drown him. *Punish him.*" What do you hear?

Young White Man

They're saying . . . "He doesn't belong here. Make him pay."

Black Boy

Should I listen to them? Should you?

Young White Man

. . .

Black Boy

. . .

(And they stand there in the fading light against a chorus of anger and violence . . . the Young White Man in the ocean, the Black Boy on the shore, on the cusp of decision, of history, of perhaps . . . change.)

(Lights out.)

END OF PLAY