

AnimALS

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CHARACTERS

CODY

*A reluctant middle school student, an artist, and fierce observer
Also the voice of SMALL GIRL*

CONNOR the brother

*A recent high school sports star, an optimist, and blindly loyal
Also the voice of IVY (a bunny)*

CARL the father

*An Animal Control Removal Officer, an imposing man, and recovering alcoholic
Also the voice of HARVEY (a possum)*

CATHY the mother

*An alcoholic, an adoring mother, and irrevocably catatonic
Also the voice of MS. WHITEHOUSE and BUBO (an owl)*

BO the brother's girlfriend

*A librarian, a survivor, and a relentless listener
Also the voice of ROADKILL (a skunk)*

Setting

Durango, Colorado

The most populous municipality of La Plata County
Home to Fort Lewis College.

Style

The action of this play is split into two worlds: 1.) How CODY experiences the real world
2.) How CODY interprets the world through her graphic novel *Roadkill...*
until the two collide. Set and props should be minimal, more suggested than literal.

PROLOGUE

If you didn't care what happened to me,
And I didn't care for you,
We would zig zag our way through the boredom and pain
Occasionally glancing up through the rain.
Wondering which of the buggars to blame
And watching for pigs on the wing.

-Roger Waters *Animals* "Pigs on the Wing (Part One)"

Scene 1

(An outdoor patio next to a stump at dusk. A set of stones are ceremoniously stacked by the stump. Bullfrogs croak loudly. CODY wheels in CATHY wearing a pair of headphones around her neck. The headphones play the prologue at an audible level for all. CODY takes out a blanket and thoughtfully wraps her mother. Next she defiantly takes out a notepad, a fist full of Sharpies, and starts to draw. CODY does all this as she conducts full conversation with CATHY who is in no condition to actually respond.)

CODY

I thought it was a frog at first, but it was a mouse. Floating dead in the pool. *(beat)* Did you know there are 28 different species of mice in Colorado?... Yeah. Basically five types: Harvest, Jumping, Meadow, Pocket, and White-Footed. It was definitely *not* a Preble's Meadow Jumping Mouse, they're endangered, and it's the wrong part of the state. I just assumed it was one of those belching bullfrogs. They never SHUT-UP *(She turns her music off)*... Yes, I know! I wasn't allowed in the pool alone, "*certainly not* with no one at home." I just wanted to float-When Connor *is* home all he does are stupid cannonballs. So now, I floated, floated until my fingers turned to raisins. Deep breaths holding me up under the cottonwood - I know, I know, your favorite: "I love how the leaves and the sun make a kaleidoscope." *Anyway*...the sun was below the lowest branch, so the boys would be home soon. As I was getting out when something hopped through the fence, onto the patio, and into the pool. Barely made a splash - Yeah! Like an Olympic diver. I guess that's why I thought it was a frog. And a mouse bobs to the surface of the pool. Under the diving board. Life sunk her to the bottom then death lifted her to the top. I got the net to fish her out and then-

(Headlights. A truck hits the gravel driveway.)

CODY

Weird. He's home early...

(She quickly hides her supplies under her mother's blanket)

- I don't care! Let him find us out here. I *know* I'm not. They *are* away. Fine-*you* tell him.

(The door opens to a panel of CARL in a low brimmed ball cap, backlit, and dominating the threshold.)

CODY

(To CARL)

She ate, had her bath...

(beat)

I just wanted her to get some air before bed.

CARL

It's cold.

CODY

She's wrapped in her blanket. The doppler says it's 68 and won't drop for another hour. I thought a few minutes outside might make for a more restful sleep. For her. For everyone.

CARL

Couple minutes, then back in.

(He lingers. A three-panel progression resolves with CARL at the TV tuned to the History Channel. CODY closes the door.)

CODY

Want to see the mouse? - NO. A drawing, not a dead one.

(CODY retrieves her pad and reveals a rendering of the mouse in a myriad of poses dead and alive that fill the space.)

Here. A Great Basin Pocket Mouse...*He* would have just thrown her in the sack in his truck, so, I brought her to my room. Connor got the hair dryer to dry her.

(Staring at the stump)

Connor and I buried her the next day under the cottonwood.

(Beat. She checks her phone.)

Not yet, it's barely been a minute-he said a "couple," that's two. I'm not pushing it...FINE!

(CODY puts on her headphones and roughly wheels CATHY off. Pink Floyd's "Dogs" plays from CODY's headphones underscores the storyboard panels of CODY's graphic novel depicting the end of the Great Basin Pocket Mouse. All of which falls on the beat. The music cuts out on the final panels of ROADKILL, a spotted skunk and IVY, a bunny. Both are at the grave CODY made of stacked stones.)

IVY

Why are we here?

ROADKILL

Marking a life lost.

IVY

What happened?

ROADKILL

IVY

Lost.
Maybe she was lost?
Or lonely.
A lost soul.
Sad.

ROADKILL

Chased.

IVY

Chaste!?! How can you tell?

ROADKILL

Instinct.

IVY

Instinct? Presumptuous and rude are more like it. *Chaste.*

ROADKILL

Chased. Followed. Pursued.

IVY

Oh, *Chased.* Not virginal, intact, unwed.

ROADKILL

No. Frantic, in a panic. Flustered. Disoriented and driven to depths...

IVY

By what?

ROADKILL

Who.

IVY

Who?

(A panel of HARVEY, a possum, stroking his tail as he stares down at ROADKILL and IVY.)

HARVEY

Who.

(BUBO silently lands above HARVEY who is startled by her voice.)

BUBO

WHO do you think you are?

HARVEY

What the-what are you watching?!?

BUBO

Always. Put that away you sick, sad, slob.
Wasteful.

HARVEY

What's wasteful?

BUBO

A killed creature lacks the zesty taste of life.

HARVEY

She was for me-

BUBO

-YOU! You are nothing! You deserve *nothing*.

HARVEY

Your right. I'm...Sorry-

BUBO

-Sorry don't mean shit if we don't get this squared away.

HARVEY

How?

BUBO

Silence the seekers.

(HARVEY turns back to the two by the pool. BUBO extends her wings, releases a mighty screech she sends HARVEY scurrying away, then she soars away in the night sky. Headlights of an eighteen wheeler replace her blinding yellow owl eyes, and screams by blaring its horn. Blackout.)

Scene II

(A brilliant full moon casts shadows on animal figurines scatter on the floor. CODY intently draws them on the floor of her brother CONNOR's room until his tutor BO opens the door pouring light in. The music continues from the last scene but sbrinks into her headphones that are connected to a turntable with a long cord.)

BO

Cody?

CODY

Shut it.

BO

Excuse me?

CODY

The door...
Please.

BO

Oh.

(BO nearly closes the door and stands in the remaining sliver of light for a beat.)

What are you... writing?

Cody?

CODY

Huh?

(CODY removes a headphone and continues to draw in the notepad.)

BO

Whatcha writing?

CODY

Drawing.

(CODY pulls the shade closed.)

BO

What are you drawing?

CODY

I *was* drawing shadows.

(CODY kicks the door closed, pulls her headphones from the jack, "Dogs" blares. CODY screams in the dark before stopping the music. She turns on the room's light, gathers the animal figurines, stashes them away, and dramatically sprawls on the floor.)

BO

...o-kay... What was that?

CODY

A graphic novel.

BO

Um...oh...you're working on a comic book?

CODY

No. A graphic novel.

BO

Like, more graphic. Explicit sex and violence?

CODY

No...not exactly. *(beat)* Stronger narratives. Challenging themes. They don't condescend to the reader.

BO

Can I see it?-

CODY

-Why are you here?-

BO

-In Conner's room? Why are you here?

(CODY returns to her notebook.)

CODY

Blackout curtains.

BO

Connor.

CODY

They won't be home until...late.

BO

I got a text saying he'd be home soon.

CODY

Another "tutoring" session for the SAT? He and my father are working a double. Connie's constantly working doubles, saving for school, you know college isn't cheap.

BO

No it is not.

CODY

Fort Lewis is, right? What did you study there?

BO

Educational Studies.

(BO pulls the pad from CODY's hiding place purposefully spilling the Sharpies to the floor. As she turns each page images fill the space.)

CODY

What the...

(CODY quickly collects her sharpies.)

BO

Are all these done in Sharpie?

CODY

Do you see them in anything else?

BO

Do you start in pencil?

CODY

(Incredulously)

No.

BO

What if you make a mistake?

CODY

I don't.

BO

Really. No mistakes, huh?

CODY

Perspective.
It all comes from somewhere.
Every mark. Every line.
You make it work.
An eraser limits perspective.

BO

(Presenting the pen.)

“An eraser limits perspective. SHARPIE! For the true artist.”

CODY

As yes, a corporate sellout, a sign of any “true artist.”

(BO turns to the back of the pad and rotates the image of a mangled animal seeking clarity but ultimately it shifts the tone.)

BO

This is certainly more...graphic.

(A series of roadkill sketches spill out of control throughout the space. CODY snatches the pad. All the images vanish.)

CODY

Of course - it's roadkill.

BO

I thought you were the only one in your family *not* obsessed with roadkill.

CODY

I'm not obsessed. Remnants of an earlier project. Whatever. You conveniently overlook the first 86 panels of my graphic novel.

(CODY opens to the first panels. We are at the pool under the mighty cottonwood.)

BO

A *dead* mouse.

CODY

In a *pool*. Ok. Skip a few pages.

BO

A skunk and a bunny.

CODY

A pygmy rabbit and a western spotted skunk: *Spilogale gracilis*- never mind- They're not dead.

BO

But the spotted skunk is missing his tail. What's his name?

CODY

Roadkill.

BO

Definitely *not* obsessed.

CODY

He lost his tail trying to save Ivy, the bunny.

(CODY hands back the notepad as the images of IVY, a white Pygmy Rabbit, fill the space until ROADKILL emerges from the shadows.)

BO

The pygmy rabbit.

CODY

Right.

BO

And a...Spilogale.../gracilis/

CODY

/gracilis/-a western spotted skunk.

BO

A spotted skunk superhero.

CODY

Sorta.

BO

Sorta? Does he know you think that about him? What are his super powers?

CODY

No powers.

BO

No powers. No tail. So why a skunk as your central character?

CODY

Why not? A lonely, misunderstood, nocturnal creature that stinks? Sound like elements of every comic book movie, to me.

BO

Or your average teenage boy.

CODY

My target demographic.

BO

Well played.

CODY

Spilogale gracilis attacks in a hand stand.

(CODY leafs through a series of ROADKILL panels beginning with him in handstand attack pose and continuing in a classic 80s training montage during the following:)

They can spray up to 25 feet. They are omnivorous. They eat everything: roots, berries, leaves, larvae, earthworms, grubs. Some even eat moles, lizards, salamanders. They're like, semi-hibernators, they sleep a lot *and* change their diets for each season. Like humans *should*, better for digestion, but we bitch about better strawberries in January. They also share their dens with *rabbits* and raccoons. Male skunks play no part in raising their young. They are polygamists. *And* Skunks only have one natural predator-Bubo virginianus.

Plus..they're black & white...only one Sharpie...cheaper.

BO

What is the Bubo...?

(CODY sits next to BO and turns to a rendition of the following bird. Only the yellow eyes are projected.)

CODY

Bubo virginianus. The Great Horned Owl. Notoriously bad sense of smell.

*(CODY packs up the markers and cleverly
bides them as the yellow eyes follow the
series of panels of ROADKILL that begin to fill
the space.)*

BO

Huh...What happens to Ivy?

CODY

Currently? Kidnapped.

BO

Ooh, by who? Who does Roadkill save her from?

CODY

A monster.

BO

Like a wolf. Or a bear? OH-something supernatural?

(Headlights. A truck hits the gravel driveway.)

CODY

Man.

*(CODY closes the notepad and all images again disappear, she then
bides the Sharpies in their previous spot, but tucks the pad under her
shirt and into the back of her pants.)*

BO

Man. A worthy adversary.

CODY

A worthy adversary indeed.

(CODY exits blowing past CONNOR and knocks off his bat.)

CONNOR

Who?

BO

Man.

CONNOR

Ah, yes who can only be tamed by the cunning brutality of the WO-man.

(They kiss.)

What was she doing in here?

(CONNOR sees the turntable spinning and drops the needle on the guitar solo in "Dogs" (3:41) and starts rolling a joint.)

BO

Drawing. Have you seen her stuff. Very impressive. The Great Horn Owl, these big yellow eyes that followed you around the room... a Bobu v-

CONNOR

-Bubo virginianus. She shouldn't be doing that.

(BO turns the music down during the following.)

BO

She's working on a graphic novel. It could be a positive outlet for her. Sure some really...intense drawings, but everything is intense at that age. She does it all in Sharpie. Permanent. She has a spotted skunk as the anti-hero. "Roadkill."

CONNOR

Roadkill, again. She's not supposed to be drawing that shit.

(CONNOR bits the joint for relief.)

BO

That's the skunk's name, Roadkill. Some toward the back that were...graphic, but it is a graphic novel. Ivy is adorable.

CONNOR

A pygmy rabbit, right?

BO

Right...

CONNOR

...who gets mutilated...

BO

...Spoiler alert. All I knew is she's currently kidnapped.

CONNOR

Then mutilated. Some fuckin' monster tore the tiny thing apart. Cody found it in pieces, over time, actually.

BO

Over time?

CONNOR

For like the next month she would come across an ear, or paw, or a-

BO

-or a *tail!* Sorry. What kind of animal does that?

(beat)

Connie?

CONNOR

Huh? A sick one. I dunno. A Pack of coyotes probably.

BO

Are coyotes that...clever?

CONNOR

You'd be surprised what one would do to preserve the need to be part of the pack.

BO

How long ago was this?

CONNOR

I dunno. She was a kid.

Her first pet.

She didn't talk for months.

BO

Sure.

CONNOR

She wouldn't talk to anyone. She eventually started texting me.

BO

Any communication, at that point, is good.

CONNOR

Yeah, but, she was nagging me to send pictures of stuff we'd pick up. So, radio silence, then like twenty texts in an hour:

CONNOR

"Anything?" "Come on!!"
"WTF!!!"

BO

What did you do?

CONNOR

What she asked.

BO

You sent her pictures of -

CONNOR

- I know-*I know*-She threatened if I didn't send something gory we would come home to far worse. I sent her...something small...a possum I think, something stupid thing that got mangled on 160.

BO

You sent pictures of actual roadkill? Dead animals.

CONNOR

Yeah. It was stupid.
It got her talking again.

(He takes a bit.)

CONNOR

Carl would go get the the shovel and sack, I'd snap a few shots, until he caught me. Whipped my ass and said we'd both be fired. Then he saw who I was sending it to and really lost his shit. Flew home and finds Cody by the pool scribbling in a notebook full of drawings of the pics I sent. Dark shit. And he snaps. Tears up the notebook, grabs an axe and-

BO

-wait. *An axe?*-

CONNOR

-and just lays into this huge cottonwood we used to have in the backyard by the pool. He was out there hacking at it for hours. Woke me up at six and said "start stacking." He shattered the tree into a million pieces. It covered the whole yard. Ended up filling the whole side yard with stacks higher than my head. Around dusk, I'm almost finished staching, he storms out with a box of Cody's notebooks. Pens, pencils, all that shit. Slams it all down in the center of the yard and silently starts tossing the last logs crushing the box and everything in it. Once we got the last of it in the pile he called for Cody to wheel my mother out. Lit a match and made us watch until the final ember burned out.

(He takes another long hit.)

BO

And where might the patriarch be this evening? The Belle or at Brennan's.

CONNOR

Brennan's. You want a pull?

(BO declines.)

Come on. He's not going anywhere. I took the truck.

(CONNOR dangles CARL's massive ring of keys with a skunk-tail keychain.)

BO

Does he know?

CONNOR

He will.

(He takes another hit).

BO

I don't know how he does it.

CONNOR

What? Work with me? The charm, the hard work, being distractingly handsome...

BO

-No. How can you be sober and hang out at a bar? Surrounded by temptation.

CONNOR

Discipline. That and the constant reminder of my mom's drunken fall that landed her in a wheel chair.

BO

Connie.

CONNOR

How many of Cody's drawings were of actual roadkill?

BO

It was mainly her comic book-

CONNOR

-graphic novel-

BO

-graphic novel. She is really talented -

CONNOR

- how many? -

BO

- Just a few. A couple of actual roadkill. Most were of her novel thing.

CONNOR

Carl's gonna be pissed that she's at it again. He can check my phone; I haven't sent *dick*.

BO

Don't be crude. AND, you better not be sending *that* to anyone mister!

CONNOR

(Not registering the joke.)

Sorry.

BO

(Taking the joint)

I'll relax if you relax. It's good that she is working on something. It's artistic expression, not a literal reflection. A release. An outlet.

CONNOR

Right. Lighten up, Carl, it's "artistic expression."

I'm sure he'll understand.

(CONNOR tosses the keys down.)

BO

Your father has a skunk-tail keychain?! Oh, I've got to read it.

(BO takes a hit. Headlights. A truck hits the gravel driveway.)

CONNOR

Shit!

BO

Damn it Conner!

CONNOR

Guess he had to make it an early night lest the temptation swallow him whole.

(BO hands the joint to CONNOR who quickly hits, extinguishes, and disposes of it in one motion. He sprays air freshener and slams the door shut. Pink Floyd's "Pigs (Three Different Kinds)" begins to play and underscores the following scene.)

Scene III

(As the cloud of air freshener dissipates, a panel of a beaten, bleeding, and bandaged ROADKILL in attack position becomes visible. The keychain starts to glow as CARL opens the door recreating his earlier panel: backlit and looming in the doorway. Our first collision between the real world and the drawn one.)

CARL

I know that smell. *(Breathing deep)* Oh, yes...COWARD.

ROADKILL

CSP-017, what kind of sick bastard has a skunk-tail for a keychain?

CARL

One whose rabbit foot...

(kicks ROADKILL)

...lost its luck!

(A series of panels depict an epic battle between CARL and ROADKILL concluding with CARL dangling his keychain over a battered ROADKILL.)

ROADKILL

Where's Ivy?

(ROADKILL nearly retrieves his tail but CARL is too quick and begins to taunt him by jingling the keychain.)

CARL

HA. Ha-HA-ha...HA-HA-HA...AHHHHHH!!!!

(CARL kicks ROADKILL to the wall with a thud, ending "Pigs (Three Different Kinds".) CARL crosses the room to finish the job, a panel of a silhouetted small girl in a work-shirt appears in the doorway.)

SMALL GIRL

What's so funny?

(CARL and ROADKILL freeze and are silent.)

Hello?

(SMALL GIRL's silhouette shifts in the doorway with each response.)

CARL

Yeah, peanut.

SMALL GIRL

Where's bunny?

CARL

It's a pygmy rabbit, peanut. She's away in her cage for the night.

SMALL GIRL

But I want it.

CARL

You can't always get what you want little one.

SMALL GIRL

.....PLEA-

CARL

-*Why* is she in the cage peanut?

SMALL GIRL

BECAUSE I wasn't playing NICE!!!

(She hurls herself into violent tantrum hitting all surfaces and herself even harder.)

CARL

(Erupting) PEANUT!?!?

(She stops.)

CARL

Sweetheart, you know what, do what you want.

(CARL tosses her the keys. SMALL GIRL squeals and slams the door shut.)

ROADKILL

NOOooo...ooo.

CARL

YES!

(CARL tosses ROADKILL outside through a window. CATHY screams and rushes in the door.)

You're back?

CATHY

What is she doing in there?

CARL

I thought nothing could bring you back. Thought you were done with us.

CATHY

I'm done with *you* Carl.

(She quickly turns back to the door then returning to CARL mortified.)

What did you do?

CARL

What did I do?

CATHY

In there! Why is she...*what* did-

CARL

Calm down Cath.

CATHY

I wonder how you'll clean up this sick mess.

CARL

Careful.

CATHY

I saw blood-

CARL

-Have you been drinking?

CATHY

I saw-*What?*

CARL

Have you been drinking?

CATHY

Oh. Don't do that.

CARL

How many?

CATHY

How dare you.

CARL

I can't leave the kids with you in this condition.

CATHY

Condition!? You got some balls after what I saw in there. Get out!

(CARL creeps closer to CATHY in the doorway.)

CARL

-What did you see Cath? Double?

I'm sorry it's hard to deal with you in this condition.

CATHY

-What are you doing?-

CARL

How many you have? Do you remember? Huh?-

(Feeling cornered, CATHY attempts to leave the doorway. CARL lunges to counter and quickly closes in.)

CATHY

Cut it out, Carl.

CARL

Connor!

-What did you see? Come on, Cath! What didn't you see?

CARL

Connor! Get your mother a glass of water before she blacks out again.
How many drinks?

CATHY

Stop it.

CARL

Connor. Water. Now.

(CARL loudly lurches into the doorway sending CATHY back, she stumbles, then tumbling down the stairs. CARL stands in silent silhouette pressing the doorway. A much younger CONNOR enters overtired with a glass of water.)

CONNOR

...guess she's at it again, huh? I thought she was...whatever.

(The glass of water slips from his hands, smashing on the floor, as he races to the aid of his mother motionless at the bottom of the stairs.)

CONNOR

Ma!

Scene iv

(A school bell rings. CODY sits on the floor next to her locker, finishing her lunch, and sketching. Her open locker is full of discarded markers and crumpled papers. Heels click and drag until they reveal BO, almost unrecognizable in her professional attire, carrying a collection of graphic novels.)

BO

Cody? Did you hear the bell.

(CODY listens to her headphones lost in her drawing of a mule deer in headlights.)

Of course you didn't.

(BO steps closer to remove CODY's headphones-CODY notices the shoes and quickly stands to attention.)

CODY

Oh. It's you.

BO

Yes. It is me and you are late. But, fortunate, look what came in.

(BO hands CODY the stack of graphic novels. CODY comments on a few.)

CODY

Fun Home, good. Watchmen, Sin City of course...MAUS...hmm.

BO

Hmm? The only graphic novel to win a Pulitzer Prize.

CODY

By Art Spiegelman. The guy who designed the Garbage Pail Kids.

BO

He did.

CODY

I guess a Pulitzer doesn't pay the bill.

BO

"Corporate sellout?"

CODY

No, a pragmatist. Who paid for these?

BO

The school?

CODY

The school?

BO

Mr. O'Brien.

CODY

No way.

BO

Let's just say he won't miss his six years of unused library funds. If he does he will be thrilled to know the history department bequeathed the school's first Graphic Novel Collection.

CODY

Impressive.

BO

Just doing my job. Now get to class. O'Brien's?

CODY

No. Whitehouse. Wanna walk me in.

BO

No way.

(BO scribbles out a pass.)

CODY

Shit!-

BO

-Watch it!-

CODY

-I only have Sharpies and we have a test. Whitehouse only allow pencil on tests.

(BO hands CODY the pass.)

BO

You should always have a pencil.

(BO removes the pencil that held her bun in place and slides it behind CODY's ear.)

Good Luck.

(BO clacks off down the hall revealing her bushy black ponytail. CODY takes a breath and enters WHITEHOUSE's class. Second collision of the real world and one that is drawn. These are not panels from the graphic novel but cruder sketches in pencil on spiral bound lined notebook paper of WHITEHOUSE and CODY's classmates.)

MS. WHITEHOUSE

Headphones please.

CODY

They're not even on.

MS. WHITEHOUSE

HEAD...PHONES...NOW. Your guardian can pick them up in the main office on Friday.

(CODY sulks to her seat in the front row. loudly packs her headphone in their case, and slides them to WHITEHOUSE's desk. A few students laugh.)

MS. WHITEHOUSE

Late lunch?...Didn't hear the bell I presume.

CODY

No. I was busy memorizing the drunk you assigned.

(We hear a few more students laugh.)

MS. WHITEHOUSE

Dylan Thomas had been known to drink. So you *memorized* the poem?

CODY

As assigned.

MS. WHITEHOUSE

Very well. A perfect recitation may erase one of your three detentions with me this week?

CODY

Three?

MS. WHITEHOUSE

Tardy-

CODY

-I have a pass-

MS. WHITEHOUSE

-I don't care. Tardy. Headphones. Flippancy.

CODY

Flippancy? Whatever.

CODY

(Effortlessly evocative)

Do not go gentle into that good night,
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Though wise men at their end know dark is right,
Because their words had forked no lightning they
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright
Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight,
And learn, too late, they grieved it on its way,
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight
Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay,
Rage, RAGE against the dying of the light!

MS. WHITEHOUSE

Final stanza?

CODY

(Forgetting.)...fuck-OOPS!

(The entire class laughs.)

MS. WHITEHOUSE

Well *that* is certainly not the last stanza. Profanity punches your ticket to the principal's office. Off you go.

CODY

Wait!

And you, my father, there on the sad height,
Curse, bless me now with your fierce tears, I pray.
Do not go gentle into that good night.
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

(The class applauds. CODY puts her hands behind her back and bows. As CODY turns to exit BUBO lands in a panel overhead. CODY emboldened, quickly turns back to the class with two middle fingers, as BUBO screeches CODY screams.)

RAGE!

(Blackout.)

Scene V

(CATHY's conversation continues under the panels of The Great Horn Owl waking, spreading her wings, and ultimately taking flight.)

CATHY

Who.

Who?

Who was I...before? I keep asking myself: Who was I before the booze? If you want to make a moral inventory you need you know the before to understand the after. I was young. Younger. Single. Not anymore. Married plus two kids. I guess that makes four, not one, anymore. I dunno. Naive for sure. I wanted to be an arborist, study Dendrology, I was obsessed with trees. Silly. I love Cottonwoods, they're my favorite. We have one-had one in our backyard, until my husband had to...had to cut it down. It was sick. Rotting from the inside. Sad, really. This mighty tree reduced to a stump and its roots left to rot. Who was I before the booze? I...I was...I really do miss her.

Six months.

(CATHY sheepishly holds up her six-month recovery medallion.)

Wow. I got two coins to commemorate, not both for me, one for my husband. We hopped on the wagon the same day we just needed different paths to sobriety so I wanted him to have something to mark the milestone. Sorry if I broke...protocol, I just thought, ah- I should be thanking my people here! Jeff, my sponsor, all of you, this entire circle. Each of you. I never...I...just thank you. Thank you all for really...*listening*. "It is empowering to be heard" yes, Jeff, you were right though-"but it's not about being right"-I know, I know, but It feels right, better...*normal*, whatever that is. It's good, this is a good thing, I will let myself have that.

(Cathy admires the medallions in her hand then she reads:)

Unity. Service. Recovery.

(BUBO sails off after the the sun that just setBlackout.)

Scene VI

(The sound of two truck doors slam. A beat. An engine roars. CODY and CARL sit in silence in a La Plata County truck as rain begins to hit the hood and the engine hums. CODY turns on the radio. CARL shuts it off. Beat.)

CODY

Ummm...any interest in hearing my side?

(CARL blares the horn at the rush hour traffic.)

Long day?

(beat)

Ah. Yes. The Silent Treatment.

(beat)

So...are we gonna talk about this?

You first.

I don't know what the big deal is. I did the fu-*reaking* assignment.

CARL

Language!

CODY

Exactly my point. Language. One word in particular. The F-word. Big deal. Words only have the power *you* give them.

CODY

I'm sure Dylan Thomas wouldn't have minded a flourish of the profane in a perfect recitation of his work. You said he was a drunk, right? "Takes one to know one," you said.

(CARL again blares the horn at the traffic and adds an emphatic middle finger.)

And what, pray tell, does that gesture represent?

(CARL sharply glares at CODY before quickly back to the dense traffic.)

Come on. Like you and Connie never let four letters fly right here? In this truck? Please.

(Beat)

No flinging a string of f-bombs during your drinking days?
I bet Ma did. Bet she had a mouth like a trucker. One mother trucker.

(CARL slams the steering wheel, stares straight ahead, and after a tense moment.)

CARL

They called me at work, Cody.

CODY

What?

CARL

They called my work. I had to ask Jerry to pick up my delinquent daughter from detention.

CODY

Oh, so you're embarrassed by your delinquent daughter? How many times did you have to ask *Jerry* to pick up your stupid son? An embarrassing amount I'm sure. And what did Jerry do-hire him! Maybe I should send him my resume.

CARL

Keep up the mouth and see where it gets you.

CODY

Detention instead of suspension for one.

(Referring to CARL's admission.)

Embarrassed.

You're in public *works* not public *service*. You're not the mayor. You pick-up dead shit.

(CARL flicks CODY's lips.)

CARL

Watch that mouth. Yes. I deal death on a daily basis. Every day, every call, carnage. Day in-day out. All of God's good creatures battered beyond recognition. Brutal. They stick in your head like a sick slide show, BUT, that's where it stays. As a *public employee* I am the buffer between the people and the aftermath that their bumper leaves behind. So when they see me, I show them a smile, maintaining that buffer, and always show *everyone...*respect. You may think you're too smart for school, you probably are, but without it, be sure to fax your resume to Jerry cause he doesn't read his email. Then saddle up next to my "stupid son" and waste your life in this friggin truck "picking up dead shit." Welcome to the world of public *works*. The family business.

CODY

A respectful smile must be helpful in distracting the Cleavers from your none too subtle skunk tail keychain.

CARL

Keep it up see where it gets you.

CODY

And Connie is not stupid.

CARL

Your words, little girl, not mine. Want beyond that seat? I suggest you start practicing your shit eating grin and start showing respect to EVERYone. Unless you want to grab a shovel and start peeling pets off the pavement...

CODY

...It's not the family business. It's your business. Connor's going back to school. He's gonna be a vet.

CARL

Right. A vet? He barely finished high school...

CODY

...he's studying for the SATs...

CARL

...and now he's going into the medical field. Wait, Connor is *studying?!?* With you I hope.

CODY

No. Bo.

CARL

Bo?

CODY

Yeah. She's the one whose sister got smacked by a semi by the bridge. Where that cross is. Wonder who had to peel her off the pavement-

CARL

-Alright! He can study all he wants but the fact of the matter is Connor's only ticket to college was his arm and he blew that. I don't need to tell you you're smart-

CODY

-you just did-

CARL

-have you listened to one goddamn word I've said...

CODY

...Stop...

CARL

...No, you will show some respect...

CODY

...*Please* stop...

CARL

... Moving forward: More listening. LESS mouthing off. NO cussing.

CODY

-STOP LIGHT!

(CARL slams on the breaks. They are engulfed in red light. Beat.)

CODY

So. More listening...

(CARL raises his backband, CODY cowers, he places both hands on the wheel. He exhales, the light goes green, and he releases the break. There is a rumble of thunder in the distance.)

CARL

Sorry...you just-

(CODY punches in the cassette tape which plays "Sheep" by Pink Floyd, leaps from the moving truck, and CARL slams on the breaks. ROADKILL and IVY arrive at the edge of 160. CODY fearlessly turns back to her father as ROADKILL deftly recites to IVY the following:)

CODY/ROADKILL

And you, my FATHER, there on the sad height,
Curse, bless me now with your fierce tears, I pray.
Do not go gentle into that good night.
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

(CODY punctuates the poem by slamming the passenger door shut, then points a pair of middle fingers, before darting into the woods.

IVY

Look out!

(ROADKILL dives to avoid the fleeing CODY.)

CARL

CODY!

(Silence. The animals are silhouetted in the break lights of CARL's truck.)

fuck.

(CARL slams the gas and peels out of sight leaving all in the dark.)

Scene VII

(Out off the darkness.)

IVY

Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

That is beautiful.

(The darkness is interrupted by a panel of a single headlight far in the distance. The following series of panels chronicles ROADKILL courting IVY on the shoulder of Route 160.)

ROADKILL

Are you staring at my tail again mister? Eyes up here Romeo. But, it is particularly lush and bushy tonight thanks for noticing.

IVY

The pleasure is all mine, but the beauty of which I speak, is in the stanza. Your tail is in a class of its own.

(A single headlight slowly winds its way closer..)

ROADKILL

...gorgeous, am I right?

IVY

You're not wrong.

(We hear revving from the nearing headlight.)

ROADKILL

Ready?

(The motorcycle roars into view.)

IVY

Maybe?

(ROADKILL offer his paw, IVY clasps it, and they charge to the median as he yells.)

ROADKILL

RAAAAAAAAAAGGGGE!

(They successfully avoid the motorcycle as it zooms past. The tail light bathes them both in red until it gradually fades and disappears over the horizon. The engine hum remains but has eerily warped into an ominous underscoring to the following.)

IVY

Rage, huh?

ROADKILL

Rage, rage against the dying of the light!

Part of my Pa's favorite poem.

IVY

“the dying of the light.”

It reminds me of dusk. The daily battle of day and night. The divide between diurnals to the nocturnals.

ROADKILL

The *Ode to Odocoileus hemionus* he'd call it.

IVY

Odocoileus hemionus. A Mule deer?

ROADKILL

One sacrificed himself for my dad. Took out by a backless Metal Monster.

IVY

Really.

ROADKILL

They do it all the time. “A very noble beast” he'd say, “without them you wouldn't be here.”

IVY

Noble creatures indeed. Heroes in the effort to free us, the Crepuscular.

ROADKILL

I'm nocturnal.

IVY

Okay, nocturnal, with crepuscular tendencies. Skunks and rabbits are often mis-categorized as...

ROADKILL

...You choose to be crepuscular. I choose to be nocturnal...

IVY

...*Nocturnalis*...

ROADKILL

... *I* am not afraid of my predators.

IVY

O-K...well...honestly you don't have many.

ROADKILL

It's quality not quantity. Few predators are more lethal than the Great Horned Owl and, of course, the...

IVY

...Opossum!...

ROADKILL

...NO-Those balding prehistoric fat-fanged marsupials?

IVY

-Opossum!

ROADKILL

-They're *not* a predator of mine.

IVY

-A OPPOSUM!

ROADKILL

-Is certainly not a worthy adversary like Bubo and the Metal Monsters. A opossum could never rise...

HARVEY

(Whispering over the shoulder of ROADKILL.)

-touch it!...

(IVY cringes away as ROADKILL turns towards HARVEY revealing his hairless tail erect between his legs. He loudly slurps the end of a nip of vodka before spinning it around like a pair of nunchucks. Pink Floyd's "Pigs Three Different Ones plays @ (9:22)

ROADKILL

...What the F-

HARVEY

-Language!

(HARVEY smashes ROADKILL in the face with the vodka nip.)

Not a worthy adversary, *bub?*

(HARVEY kicks ROADKILL in the gut and slides towards IVY holding the remaining shards. The glowing outline of tractor trailer truck turns its high beams on in the distance.)

Certainly devilishly handsome. Ain't that right my little peanut?

IVY

So wrong. And, I'm not a peanut, I'm a *nutcracker!*

(IVY bicycle kicks HARVEY's tail to his face sending him back and stunned for moment. The semi edges closer shadowing IVY, IVY tends to the bleeding ROADKILL. The truck lights draw closer, pouring more light, casting them entirely in silhouette.)

IVY

Are you okay?-

(The trucks loudly picks up speed as it edges closer.)

ROADKILL

-Just a *splitting* headache.-

IVY

-Oh no, not on our first date.

ROADKILL

Our first date, huh?

(The truck headlights fully illuminates the area showing HARVEY charging tail first toward IVY.)

IVY!

(ROADKILL tosses IVY to the edge of the forrest to avoid being penetrated by HARVEY's tail. With a quick sweep kick ROADKILL takes down HARVEY with a thud.)

ROADKILL

A predator, please. A sick monster-For sure.

(ROADKILL grabs HARVEY by his tail and spins him 180 degrees. The truck roars closer.)

Get up!

(HARVEY sheepishly rises to his hind legs brandishing the broken vodka nip completely backlit by the truck's headlights and snickers.)

ROADKILL

...A worthy adversary my ass...

(...sheepishly HARVEY lunges at ROADKILL but is easily disarmed...)

...Never!...

(ROADKILL calculates the distance of the truck...)

...Now you're just...ROADKILL!...

IVY

...No!...

(With a ferocious bit ROADKILL launches HARVEY into the path of the speeding truck. ROADKILL triumphantly turns to IVY as the ailing HARVEY desperately snatches ROADKILL's bushy tail. The truck breaks squeal as HARVEY's carcass collides with the mammoth front tire. Despite being mangled by the truck mechanics, HARVEY manages to cling to ROADKILL's tail until they are finally separated leaving ROADKILL's tail pinned under the rear tire and pieces of HARVEY scattered about. The truck shifts into park and bazaar lights flash as the music transitions to the speakers in the truck and fades out. The door opens, a burning cigarette crashes to the pavement, and is crushed by a well-worn steel-toed work-boot. As the second boot lands they pivot, a shovel is removed like a sword being unsheathed, the spade slaps the ground with a spark. The boots whistle "All Around the Mulberry Bush" as they pace the perimeter of the truck with the spade scraping in its wake, periodically scooping up the remains of HARVEY into a sack, while a horrified IVY looks on from the brush.)

IVY

He's coming.

ROADKILL

No shit.

IVY

Do something.

ROADKILL

I am!

(ROADKILL looks at his tail, then reaches for the serrated nip bottle, and without hesitation severs his tail to break free.)

AHH/bb!!!

(The boots pivot toward the wailing creature and ignite a flashlight that spots a tail, a punctured tire losing air, and a pool of blood.)

IVY

(Gasps.)

(The flashlight swings to IVY now petrified in the spotlight. CARL enters holding the flashlight.)

CARL

Hey there sweet thing. Late night for you.

(In the panel IVY cowers lower to the ground.)

No need to be scared.

(CARL tosses a net ensnaring IVY in the panel.)

CARL

I know a little girl who's gonna go wild over you.

ROADKILL

Me first.

(ROADKILL tosses the nip toward the netted IVY)

ROADKILL

Cut loose. Date's not over yet...RAAAAAAAAGGGGGE!

(ROADKILL leaps, latches onto the outstretched hand of CARL, and splatters him in a sickening stream of bloody skunk spray.)

CARL

AHHhh-son of a bitch!

(IVY hysterically backs at the net as CARL tries to pry ROADKILL from his hand.)

CARL

Get OFF!

ROADKILL

(Through flesh-clenched teeth.)

Naaabbb!

(CARL knocks out ROADKILL with his the flashlight finally freeing his hand.)

CARL

Dammit.

(Noticing the condition and stench of his uniform CARL strips it off and flings it into the bed of the truck. He does the same with the sack and shovel, and retrieves a rag. He begins to wipe off blood and CARL raises the quivering bunny to eye level.)

CARL

Look at you little one. Looks like your opossum's in pieces, that stupid skunk's bleeding out, two out of three ain't bad, is it bunny?...

(CARL whistles a slow rendition of "Peter Cottontail" as he knots the net, chucks the bunny in the cab, and fills the tire with fix-a-flat. Panels project ROADKILL futilely dragging himself behind a guardrail on the side of US160.)

(CARL struts to the passenger side, slams the door, kills the hazards, before spinning his wheels in the gravel.)

ROADKILL

...Ivy...

(A panel of CARL laughing in the reflection from the sideview mirror is shown.)

ROADKILL

...Bastard...

(CARL's sick smirk is shattered by a rock slung by ROADKILL who reads the truck's license plate as it trails off in the distance.)

ROADKILL

...CSP-017. I'll find you.

(ROADKILL lumbers onto his back and stares at the stars through the branches as BUBO, The Great Horn Owl, lands on a limb, fixes her yellow eyes below.)

Great.

("Sheep" by Pink Floyd continues from a car in the distance. The glaring eyes of BUBO morph into bloodstained headlight racing toward us before they swerve off into the gravel driveway. The car skids to a stop, the door is flung open, and an incessantly rhythmic door ajar alert accompanies "Sheep." A light goes on in the house.)

Scene VIII

(Flashback to CATHY, a wreck, in shock, she slowly stumbles toward the door of the house. She mutters to herself bathed in the glow of the bloodstained headlights before bursting out.)

CATHY

Cody. Connie!?! Where are my babies? CODY! CONNOR!

(CARL rushes out the door.)

CARL

Shut the fuck up! I just got her back down. Where the hell have you been?

CATHY

Is she...she's...

CARL

She's asleep.

CATHY

She didn't get up- I couldn't see-I couldn't-I didn't even...I dunno...
jesus...No. no. No!

CARL

What the fuck Cath?

CATHY

I couldn't see-

CARL

-Couldn't see what Cath?-

CATHY

-a young...girl, a jogger, she came out of nowhere. I think she's...she's...

CARL

-What girl?

(CARL tries to shake it out of her.)

What did you do?-

CATHY

-She's dead-I mean she couldn't—CODY!

CARL

—*SHUT-UP*, get inside.

(CARL lets CATHY go and she melts to the ground. CARL goes to the car extinguishes the headlights, kills the engine, slams the door, and grabs a hose to rinse any remnants from the front of the grill.)

Where'd it happen Cathy?

CATHY

What?

CARL

The jogger! Where?

CATHY

Uh, off 160, somewhere...

CARL

Somewhere. What mile marker?

CATHY

What mile marker?! I didn't see a whole human-Carl! You think I noticed a friggin mile marker-

CARL

-Did you get off East or Westbound to get home?

CATHY

What?!?

CARL

Focus-Cath. *Think*. Remember anything around you?

CATHY

...Um...

CARL

Christ Cathy.

CATHY

Sorry! Sorry, I'm *sorry*-

CARL

Sorry don't mean shit if we don't get this squared away.

CATHY

Ok!...let me think...I...I, um-just passed the Walmart-

CARL

-Same side or on the Exxon side?-

CATHY

What side? Uh-I don't know....same?-same side-yeah. I think-I believe so-

CARL

-Are you drunk?!?

CATHY

No. What?-I mean, last night we were...you said "one last bender"-

CARL

-and we both passed out together, in our bed-

CATHY

-I woke up, OK! I had HAVE a splitting fucking headache. I grabbed a beer, went for a ride for, for...for some fresh morning air, and, and...*ob my god.*

CARL

You grabbed a beer for the road?!

CATHY

Hair of the dog asshole.

CARL

Hair of the dog?! Are you shitting me? Cold turkey is was we decided-

CATHY

-What *you* decided. There are different ways to skin a cat Carl.

CARL

Or kill one.

CATHY

Fuck you.

CARL

Where's the beer Cath?

CATHY

It was just one!

CARL

The can? Where is it? Is it in the car or did you toss it? Where is it?...

CATHY

...I-I-I...

(CARL quickly crosses to the car.)

CARL

If it's in the car we're fine? Fuck. Think!

CATHY

I am! I tossed it...I think.

CARL

...Christ, Cath!

CATHY

No. I did. Under the bridge. I was under the bridge across from the River Trail!...(closing her eyes)- the bend under 160. I tossed the can and then I...I.....-why was she on the road and not the trail? *Why?!*

(CARL gets in the car.)

Where are you going?

CARL

Sleep it off Cath.

(CATHY stands up in defiant determination.)

CATHY

I *am* NOT-

(CARL springs from the car and snarls through gritted teeth.)

CARL

-*shut up* and sleep it off! You know what-fuck it. Make a scene. Wake 'em both up. When Connie comes down ask him if he knows the girl you killed from class. Good luck getting her back to sleep. Go-head. Hell, let's get the neighbors up-

CATHY

-Stop it!

(CARL slowly turns back to the car and begins to exit.)

What are you doing?

CARL

My job.

(CARL exits, the car door opens, closes, the engine roars, and tires reverse on the gravel. As the headlights turn away CATHY slides down the wall and is left in darkness.)

CODY

Ma.

Mommy!

Mom?

Scene ix

(The flickering light of the TV shows BO and CONNOR on the sofa. The storm escalated outside as BO reads in the cradle of CONNOR lap who is transfixed to the following National Geographic special:

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bt3X8MJgJWo&feature=youtu.be>)

TV NARRATION

This is the Great Horned Owl's time. She's one of the largest and most powerful species in America. As dusk turns to dark he looks down into a forest clearing. Her eyes are tuned to optimum night vision. More importantly, she listens.

(The narration fades yet underscores the following.)

BO

So, are we done?

CONNOR

(Mimicking) "This is the Great Connor's Time..."

(CONNOR goes in for a kiss.)

...Stalking his prey.

(BO sits up.)

BO

Seriously. Studying? Are we done?

CONNOR

Stalking, Seriously, Studying...a...an alliteration: the occurrence of the same letter or sound at the beginning of adjacent or closely connected words. I guess the education never stops.

BO

It does with the TV on.

(BO shuts off the TV.)

CONNOR

Is National Geographic not educational? Mr. O'Brien would beg to differ - it was the cornerstone of his curriculum.

BO

The SATs are a week away, so, studying is the difference of whether you sink or swim.

CONNOR

SAT, So, Studying, Sink, Swim. Five point alliteration. Awesome.

BO

Asshole.

CONNOR

Ah!

BO

Yeah, well, here's another: shut-up, study, or be single.

CONNOR

That's rich. Why are you going?

BO

My talents are being wasted here.

CONNOR

That's because you are not utilizing all of them.

BO

You have yet to be deserving all of them sir. Good-bye.

(BO starts to leave.)

CONNOR

Will I see you tomorrow?

(BO stops and stares.)

BO

Really.

CONNOR

What? Is that a no?

BO

Tomorrow.

CONNOR

Yes. Tomorrow. Friday.

BO

Friday?...

CONNOR

...uh...I think so. Today's Thursday, right, so yeah-Friday?

BO

Friday the 2nd.

CONNOR

Okay, now that's settled: Will I see you on Friday, November the 2nd?

BO

Bye Connor.

(Headlights. A truck hits the gravel driveway, the horn blares, and it starts to pour.)

CONNOR

Let me give you a ride.

CARL

(offstage)

Connor!

BO

I'm fine.

CONNOR

Am I missing something?

(The horn blares again followed by a rumble of thunder.)

CARL

CONNOR!

CONNOR

YEAH! *Comin'!*

What did I do or *not* do this time?

BO

You should take a lesson from the *Bubo virginianus* and "listen."

(CARL storms in.)

CARL

I've been calling you.

CONNOR

And I answered.

CARL

I call. You come. Understood.

CONNOR

Yes sir.

CARL

Now get in the truck and help me find your sister.

BO

What happened to Cody?

CARL

She ran off-what are you doing here?

BO

I was helping Connor study for his SAT next Saturday.

CARL

Studying, huh? Is that what they're calling it these days.

BO

Specialized tutoring actually. Parents pay top dollar for their remedial students to be prepped for the SAT. They view it as an investment towards their child's future earning potential.

CARL

You're paying her? How much?
Get in the truck.

(CONNOR restrains his answer.)

CONNOR

What about Ma?

CARL

Go.

(CONNOR grabs his coat and goes to the truck.)

So, what about babysitting? \$20 bucks an hour? Is that top dollar?

(CARL crumples a twenty dollar bill before offering it to BO.)

BO

I don't want your money. I'll stay with your wife.

(CONNOR bursts back.)

CONNOR

Sbit/Your sister's/ anniversary. Sorry.

CARL

/Language/

CONNOR

The cross. 5:13am. I'll be there.

BO

Find Cody.

(CARL ushers CONNOR out. The truck doors swing open, slam shut, then shift into reverse spraying gravel. Tires squeal on the pavement and race off into the distance. BO stands in the stillness until it is interrupted by CATHY's moan from the bedroom which morphs during the transition into the call of The Great Horned Owl)

Scene X

(CODY sits on a milk crate just below an ornate curbside memorial cross that says "RAIN." She is listening to "Sheep" (4:32) on her headphones as she scribbles out a page, the last panel of ROADKILL belly up, she fills with black. A panel of BUBO perched on a support beam of the bridge appears.)

BUBO

Where did he go?!

CODY

Who? Who!

BUBO

Not Funny.

(A series of panels plot a flurry BUBO's of fly-by attacks on CODY ultimately tossing the notebook to the ground.)

CODY

He would think so.

(CODY retrieves her notebook.)

BUBO

Where?

(CODY uses the notebook to deflect another attack from BUBO.)

CODY

I erased him.

BUBO

You work in ink.

CODY

Blacked out. Technically.

(BUBO again swoops down and clutches CODY, lifting her off her feet, sending her headphones crashing to the ground and releasing the music throughout the space.)

BUBO

Where is he?

CODY

He's in here.

BUBO

Where?

ROADKILL

Everywhere. RRAAAAAGGE.

(CODY flips through the notebook as series of ROADKILL panels pinball around the space until one separates CODY from BUBO's claws sending her crashing to the floor. CODY then orchestrate the ensuing battle between ROADKILL and BUBO. The fight ends with ROADKILL once again being overwhelmed by his adversary and sent splintering through the memorial cross despite CODY's effort to avoid the demolition.)

CODY

STOP!

(CODY slams the notebook shut to silence everything. She kneels by the rubble of the memorial cross.)

CODY

shit! Shoot-shoot-shoot. What did you do...um...*dammit*-Bubo.

(CODY throws the notebook down in disgust which projects three panels:

1.) a pair of utility truck headlights stopped at the traffic light in the distance.

2.) a mule deer silhouetted by the moon that has just peeked through the parting clouds.

3.) BUBO perched menacingly extending her wings.)

(The light turns green.)

BUBO

Merely protecting myself from the poison of *your* pen. Why don't you turn the page on your foul smelling friend so I may have my evening feed!

CODY

We both you know you have a terrible sense of smell.

(BUBO swoops down as CODY dashes to retrieve the notebook but trips badly in the middle of the road. The truck roars from one direction as the clacking hooves of the mule deer charge from the other. Just before impact, the deer daringly leaps, CODY shields herself with the notebook, and she disappears behind a panel of protection of the majestic mule deer and the fleeing BUBO. The truck blares its horn but the deer stares steadfast, braces for the impending impact, but the truck swerves. The passing sideview mirror clips an antler sending the beast spinning, splintering the mirror, and sends us into the truck cab with a noticeably younger CONNOR and an intoxicated CARL.)

CARL

Ahhhh, you chicken shit. Lost a game of chicken to a damn *mule* deer. And you broke my damn mirror. Guess we know where your allowance is going the month now don't we?

CONNOR

....

CARL

When I ask a question. You respond. Understood.

CONNOR

Underst-

(CARL gives CONNOR a Charley horse punch to the arm.)

yes sir.

(CARL rolls down the window, tosses a beer can out, and cracks open another.)

CONNOR

But you wanted me to hit it.

CARL

Come again?

CONNOR

You said "hit it!"

CARL

Yeah and you pussied out.

(CARL gives CONNOR another Charley horse.)

CONNOR

You also say "on these roads no /creature does damage like a deer."/

CARL

/creature does damage like a deer."/ Damn right.

CONNOR

So the way I see it I dodged probably a year's worth of allowance.

CARL

Oh, big man wants to talk economics? Where does that money come from big shot?

(CARL plants another Charley horse.)

CONNOR

(Wincing.)

You.

CARL

And what do I?

CONNOR

What?

(CARL lands the most punishing charley horse yet.)

CARL

What do I do?!

CONNOR

“You pick up dead shit”-

CARL

-Language-

(CARL dope slaps CONNOR.)

CONNOR

I'm driving!

CARL

Then drive. I pick up dead shit.
So will you if you don't get your shit together.

CONNOR

Language-

(CARL cut him off with a paralyzing jab to the arm.)

CARL

-Big shot, got a big mouth, with his big day tomorrow. Fancy schools sending scouts with your golden ticket out of here, huh? Not if you don't get your *shit* together at school. They won't give a *shit* what you can do on the field with no diploma. No diploma and you'll stay right here, picking up dead *shit*, everyday with your old man. So...remember: No carcasses. No cash. Make yourself essential. Kill or be killed. Big shot.

(CARL connects with another sloppy punch that leaves CONNOR's arm limp. CONNOR floors the accelerator.)

CONNOR

Coyotes.

CARL

Coyotes?

CONNOR

-A pack of 'em. Straight ahead.

CARL

Bastards beat us to the punch.

CONNOR

Eye for an eye.

CARL

That-a-boy. It's a straight shot from here. Kill the lights so they don't scatter. Stay straight. Like fish in a barrel-kill the lights!

(CARL reaches over and slaps off the lights.)

CONNOR

I can't see shit.

CARL

You will.

(The engine races and resolves into the sound of a white noise machine.)

Scene xi

(CATHY's room. White noise, constellations from a night lamp, interspersed with CATHY vocalizing discomfort. BO enters silhouetted in the doorway, finds the lamp, and turns the sound machine off. She leaves the constellations twinkling and turning ever so slowly.)

BO

Hello? Mrs. Fahrion? You okay?...

...I put some water on for tea.

(BO sits on the edge of the bed.)

...They stepped out to...they should be back shortly. Mr. Fahrion asked if I would stay, so, of course I...we haven't formally met.

...Bo...

BO

We haven't met..at all. actually. Connor has made sure of that. Us not meeting. Though he has afforded me the privilege of your husband.

...Oh, Carl...

Sorry. I'm sorry. It's just hard to see how, or where...I just don't see Connor in him or thankfully him in Connor. He must be all be you. Thankfully. I dunno. Was he always like this? Even not sober? Sorry, too familial.

BO

That Cody is something though...her own thing entirely. Talented for sure. I'm sure she's shown you her secret drawings- her graphic novel? Of course she has. Certainly familial in a *Wizard of Oz* kinda way. Twistedly brilliant. I can't wait til it's finished...

...Um...

I should probably... you should probably go back to sleep. I'll go take the kettle off the-

(BO goes to exit but CATHY clasps her hand.)

BO

...Oh, okay, I...I'll just...

(They sit still holding hands under the constellation undisturbed by the stones being hurled onstage.)

ROADKILL

Help me!

CODY

What?

(A panel of ROADKILL tossing more rocks.)

ROADKILL

Help me!

CODY

How is this gonna help? The cross is destroyed.

ROADKILL

Stack them.

CODY

How?

ROADKILL

You know how? The report you did for O'Brien on cairns.

CODY

A cairn's not a cross-

ROADKILL

-but it is a ceremonial stacking of stones found in spiritual and religious traditions across the globe and throughout history.

CODY

Thank you National Geographic.

ROADKILL

No thank you. Meant a lot to us. You and Connie making memorials marking our dead.

CODY

Carl doesn't allow that anymore.

ROADKILL

Connie still does it. Now shut up, show some reverence, /and start stacking/

BO

/he was stacking/ stones when we met. Just a few steps from her cross, my sister's memorial, he said was it was a...cairn...

(Panels plot the process of constructing the cairn.)

CONNOR

...

BO

Who?

CONNOR

A raccoon.

BO

A raccoon?

(CONNOR snaps a photo with his phone of the carefully stacked stones.)

For posterity?

CONNOR

For my sister. He was rabid, they usually are when they stumble out during the day.

BO

Well thank you...*(reading)* Officer C. Fahrion.

CONNOR

Connor.

Connor Fahrion, La Plata County Roadkill Removal Officer.

Connie-Sooo, what brings you to the scenic side of 160.

BO

Marking a life lost.

CONNOR

Oh. Sorry. Who.

BO

My sister.

(CODY picks up the notebook and sees a detailed pencil sketch of ROADKILL and IVY staring at the cross. CONNOR disappears, CODY sit and draws the cairn rising from the splinters of the shattered cross, as BO continues with CATHY.)

I don't talk about her much. I have with Connie. You might've known her. She was like a local hero. A track star, state champ. Up every morning before dawn. Got up in the dark *every* morning to train. 10K every day. I couldn't do it *one* day while she took *no* days off. It got her out of the house which was a good thing. She'd spend all day running away and I'd spend all night escaping in books. Night and day. I envied her discipline though. Her routine. Same route. Same time. Everyday.

BO

That's how Ms. Whitehouse knew when the call came over her scanner. 5:13am: teenage runner struck on 160. She screamed so loud my mother ran over to her house to help her. Woke me up too. The one time I did get up in the dark.

ROADKILL

It's getting dark.

CODY

It's been dark. It is dark. Owls are out and I'm outta ink.

(CODY smacks the stack of stones. The kettle begins to rumble.)

This isn't *right*.

ROADKILL

Not enough stones. I'll get more.

CODY

Not enough period. This sucks!

It's disrespectful.

Dammit.

(CODY begins picking up the splinters of wood.)

ROADKILL

Did you know her?

CODY

It doesn't matter. Somebody did. Somebody cared enough, makes the effort to remember, to maintain it. To mark a life lost. Forever. For as long as I can remember it has been here. Undisturbed. Until now. Fuck!

ROADKILL

Fix it.

(A panel of ROADKILL flinging the notebook at CODY.)

CODY

How?

ROADKILL

How did I break it?

CODY

Good point.

(ROADKILL turns to a blank page in the notebook.)

CODY

No pen.

(ROADKILL slides a pencil behind her ear.)

CODY

Where'd you get that?

ROADKILL

You should always have a pencil.

CODY

Ok. But I only use Sharpie.

ROADKILL

If you care, you'll compromise.

(CODY starts sketching under the street light, the kettles screams ready, and BO goes off to silence it. CATHY stares motionless at the constellation as it continues to spin. CODY sits under a streetlight as her stone sketches start stacking in front of us. The steam is shut off. Silence. CODY gets a text notification, reads it, but does not respond.)

Scene XII

(CARL and CONNOR in the cab of the La Plata County truck splits with BO methodically steeping the tea, CODY silently sketching, and ROADKILL at the watch.)

CARL

Any word?

CONNOR

Nope.

CARL

You sure.

CONNOR

Did you hear my phone?

(CARL lands a painful punch forcing CONNOR to exhale and the streetlight to burst over CODY. BO begins typing on her phone as CODY uses her phone to light her pad.)

CARL

Is your ringer on?

CONNOR

Yup.

(Silence.)

CONNOR

What don't you use the app?

CARL

What...app?

CONNOR

The search thing you have on our phones. 360...something.

CARL

How did you-Cody.

CONNOR

Cody. Of course.

CARL

Damn.

(CARL working the app while BO sends a text, sits, and waits for the tea.)

Deactivated.

Christ.

(BO's text comes in with her custom notification.)

CONNOR

That's not Cody.

CARL

How do you know?

CONNOR

It's not her ringtone.

CARL

Gimme your phone.

CONNOR

It's not her-

CARL

-Then who?

(CARL plants another punch making one of the tea cups BO is preparing to go crashing to the floor, causing CATHY to stir. BUBO dramatically darts across the following panels and lands dangerously close to CODY but is diverted by ROADKILL. CATHY's discomfort continues from her room.)

BO

SORRY. Just a little accident. Be right there.

(BO finishes the clean up.)

CONNOR

Bo.

CARL

The tutor.

CONNOR

Right.

CARL

People pay her for that?

CONNOR

She makes a lot of money tutoring.

(BO types, then erases, types again, then sends. She stirs for a second before retreating to CATHY's room with the lone cup of tea.)

CARL

I thought she worked at the library?

CONNOR

Yeah, but she makes a lot more tutoring.

CARL

A lot of stupid people I guess.

(CODY and CONNOR both receive a text. CARL looks at CONNOR's phone. CODY reads...and almost responds before returning to make the final touches to her drawing.)

What did she write a book?

(CONNOR quickly retrieving the phone.)

CONNOR

She is a librarian.

Where'd she jump out?

CARL

What?

CONNOR

Where'd Cody jump out?

CARL

Few blocks from school. Past the light where they still haven't replanted that cutaway to the trail.

CONNOR

Oh. OK.

(CODY snaps a picture of her work and sends it to BO. The flash ignites the following:

- Panels of another attack from BUBO chasing off ROADKILL and CODY

- CONNOR makes a forceful u-turn causing CARL to hit his head.

-BO receives CODY's photo.)

CARL

Take it easy!

(CARL whacks CONNOR another punch who screams and accelerates out of sight.)

CONNOR

RAAAAAAAGGGGE!

(CONNOR's scream thrusts CATHY from her bed. BO enters silhouetted with a teacup that she quickly places down to race to CATHY's aid. With some struggle CATHY is now safely in her wheelchair.)

BO

I gotcha. All right. *(sigh)* There we are...hmm...okay. I guess we can add this to the night's excitement. Are you...you seem, alright, anyway... the boys stepped out for a minute. They should be back soon...I hope. Um.

(BO takes in the storm outside. Each rumble of thunder or clap of a lightning bolt reveals a panel of CODY and ROADKILL racing through the woods waterlogged.)

Cody...ran off. So Carl says. You should know, I mean...They're going to pick her up. She'll be glad to get out of this. She's fine. One tough cookie, as you well know. My mother was always a wreck when she didn't know where we were. Woeful and wailing one minute but when we got home her tears /stopped/

(BO snaps her fingers. The storm abruptly stops. BO and CATHY disappear behind panels of the following:)

ROADKILL

/Stop it!/

CODY

How'd you do that?! I thought you didn't have superpowers.

ROADKILL

I don't. I was not endowed by my creator.

CODY

It's not a comic book it's-

ROADKILL

-a Graphic Novel. Whatever. Where are we?

CODY

What?! I was following you.

ROADKILL

We were being chased. Both running from harm's way.

CODY

So, where the hell are we?

ROADKILL

In the woods. We are in the woods.

CODY

Correct, but that does not answer the question of *where the-*

ROADKILL

-DUCK!!

(Both avoid another panned attack from BUBO.)

Now, back to you lecturing me about my lack of animal instincts.

CODY

This is your turf. Point out a MAN-made road and I'd get us out of here no problem.

(A pair of cars turns into view revealing a road in the distance. ROADKILL points to the road, CODY hits him, and puts her headphones on. Pink Floyd's "Sheep" (8:06) plays.)

CODY

To the road!

(BUBO attacks again.)

CODY/ROADKILL

RAAAAAAAGGGGE!

(CODY, ROADKILL, and BUBO scream into battle as the truck screeches into view while CONNOR swerves in reaction from another punch from CARL. Panels of each member of the chase

randomly flash in front CONNOR throughout the scene and with more frequency as it becomes closer to actual impact.)

CONNOR

Cut the *shit!*-

CARL

-Excuse-

CONNOR

-ENOUGH! The arm's dead dad! You made sure of that a while back. That is why I'm sitting here, in this truck, with you. Right? Just what you wanted. So by all means beat it broken again old man.

CARL

Keep up the mouth big shot.

CONNOR

Or what Carl?

CARL

I made you and I can break-

CONNOR

-Done! Made and broken. I am. Bravo big man. Want a medal? Here you go.

(CONNOR tosses CARL a six-month medallion.)

CARL

What's this?....Unity....Service. Recovery- month. Oh, some AA bullshit.

CONNOR

Right, AA bullshit, so beneath you. You had the will to quit all on your own.

CARL

What are you in the program now?

CONNOR

You didn't need a meeting 'cause you had a family.

CARL

I thought potheads went to NA. This is what? Your 6 month gold star? Let me know when it's been six years, then we can discuss celebrating your sobriety.

(CARL flicks the medallion back at CONNOR as its twin falls to the floor from CATHY's wheelchair. BO is startled, picks it up, and sit next to CATHY to examine it.)

CONNOR

Six years...sober?

CARL

Yeah. Six years and I'm not celebrating.

CONNOR

I'll drink to that.

(CONNOR punches the dash which springs open the glove compartment.)

CONNOR

Why don't you pour me one Pop.

CARL

A cup old cold coffee?

CONNOR

A bit stronger than coffee, isn't it?

(CONNOR grabs the thermos, rips off the cap, and chugs.)

AAaahgg. That's some coffee Carl. Want a swig?

Swallow some of that liquid courage.

No?

More for me.

(CONNOR takes another large gulp emptying the thermos then letting it crash down on the floor mat.)

CONNOR

Like old times, huh? In a Freaky Friday kinda way.

(CONNOR turns up "SHEEP" then lands a mighty punch on CARL causing ROADKILL to suffer a mighty fall baling CODY just before the road.)

Sober for six years you say?

CODY

Get up!

CARL

Before your mother's fall. I know that.

CONNOR

Why stop?

(A flurry of panels display the mule deer rushing into action.)

ROADKILL

Keeping going.

CARL

Why'd I stop drinkng?-

CONNOR

-Being a drunk-

(CARL turns down the music.)

CARL

-I had responsibilities. Two kids to care for.

CODY

Not without you.

(CODY offers her hand to ROADKILL. A flurry of panels depict all on a mad dash to an inevitable collision.)

CONNOR

You didn't care before. I can remember you both blasted for many a birthday, celebrating a bit too hard at our single-digit achievements.

CARL

No father is faultless my son. Check your phone.

CONNOR

Six years sober. So, I was sixteen. Sixteen years of shirking responsibility. So why stop?

CARL

Does it matter? I stopped. Your mother didn't and it put her in a wheelchair.

CONNOR

Funny. You want to know where I got that chip? Ma had it in her hand when she fell.

(CONNOR blast the music once again.)

CARL

Stop!

CONNOR

What?!?

CARL

STOP!

CONNOR

You can't stop the truth.

CARL

Stop!

(IMPACT: Music out. Each players is paused in a personal panel at the moment of impact. A flash of light accompanies the sound of the collisions. A sudden burst of glass scatters the panels into shards of slow motion cascading throughout the space. As the panels dissipate the power goes out on BO and CATHY leaving all in the dark. BO ignites a lighter to illuminate an empty room.)

BO

Mrs. Fahrion? Cathy?

(BO searches for CATHY leaving all in the dark once again. A panel slowly fades in a roadside perspective of the crash. Things slowly become clear. We hear from the truck.)

CONNOR

You alright?

CARL

Are you?! At least this night isn't all for naught.

(The door to the cab squeals open and shut just as a pair of headlights peak over the horizon.)

CARL

Sober up, get your sorry ass out here, and pick up your mess. Hit the floods. Must've knocked out the headlights on impact.

(Headlights persist in a drunken erratic pattern.)

Hit the hazards too. Let that sauced semi see what's up.

(A new panel shows a pair of white knuckled hands squeezing the steering wheel. Through the windshield CARL's silhouette is crouched and tugging with something to the side of the road. The looming headlights seem to gain speed.)

CARL

C'mon Connor, stop fucking around, and get out here.
You sent them both into the opposite lane.
Lights on, *now!*

(CONNOR does nothing.)

(The headlights roar like a lion. CONNOR flashes the utility truck's floods on and off blinding the truck driver; The truck driver blares his horn. IMPACT: Tires squeal as the semi's taillights swerve and race on. CONNOR leaps from the cab bathed in the red of the brake lights of the semi until they quickly leave him in the dark. CONNOR points his flashlight at three corpses. The mule deer, BUBO, and CARL are etched in panels from a bird's eye view. As CONNOR returns to the truck to retrieve his tools there is a rustle in the brush across the street. CONNOR flashes his light, illuminating the final panel of a broken and entangled ROADKILL. CONNOR clicks off the flashlight leaving us in the dark with the sound of bullfrogs while "Pigs on the Wing (Part Two)" swells and fills the space.)*

Scene XIII

(Distant flood lights accompanied by flashing hazards begin to light up the Farbion backyard. CATHY's wheelchair is by the pool. On it, sits a single sheet of paper. "Pigs on the Wing (Part Two)" is now blaring from the house.)*

YOU KNOW THAT I CARE

(Truck tires hit the gravel, engine off, the hazards are extinguished, the flood lights remain on.)

WHAT HAPPENS TO YOU

(A beam of light spots the chair and frantically searches the empty pool.)

CONNOR

Ma?!
MA!

(CONNOR enters backlit by the floods wielding a flashlight in one hand and a bandaged and bundled spotted skunk in the other.)

“AND I KNOW THAT YOU CARE”

CONNOR

Hello? BO?! *Hello!*

(CONNOR exits into the house in search of anyone.)

“FOR ME TOO”

CONNOR

(From inside the house.) Cody.

“SO I DON’T FELL ALONE”

CONNOR

CODY!

“OR THE WEIGHT OF THE STONE”

CONNOR

Anybody!!

NOW THAT I’VE FOUND SOMEWHERE SAFE

TO BURY MY BONE.

(The music shuts off. CONNOR emerges from the house working his way back to the wheelchair.)

CONNOR

Looks like it’s just us little one.

What’s this.

(CONNOR carefully sets the skunk down in the wheelchair replacing the sheet of paper. As CONNOR looks at the drawing, the music turns back on in the house, a self-portrait of CODY in a t-shirt that says “Ha, Ha, Charade You Are” fills the space.)

CONNOR is entranced by the image, an homage to the storytelling nature of a Frida Kablo self-portrait, and ignores "Pigs on the Wing (Part II) as it plays out from (00:59)

AND ANY FOOL KNOWS A DOG NEEDS A HOME,
A SHELTER FROM PIGS ON THE WING.

(SPLASH!)

END OF PLAY

epilogue*

You know that I care what happens to you,
And I know that you care for me too.
So I don't feel alone,
Or the weight of the stone,
Now that I've found somewhere safe
To bury my bone.
And any fool knows a dog needs a home,
A shelter from pigs on the wing.

-Roger Waters *Animals*
"Pigs on the Wing (Part Two)"