

REDEMPTION GAME
by
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Where were you when I laid the foundations of the Earth?...When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?
Job 38.4, 7

This alone is what I wish for you: knowledge.
To understand each desire and its edge,
to know we are responsible for the lives
we change. No faith comes without cost,
no one believes without dying.
--Rita Dove, *Demeter's Prayer to Hades*

And I discovered to my joy, that it is life, not death, that has no limits.
--Gabriel Garcia Márquez

CHARACTERS

AMANDA – Female, queer. Uncertain in so many ways. She moves between ages and moments in her imagination.

TECH BRO - A tech bro, wears lots of Carhartt and Ben Davis gear. Brews his own kombucha.

AMANDA'S UTERUS - A uterus that has gone on the lam.

COWBOY - A type of iconic American cowboy. Good listener. Not much of a talker.

THERAPIST - Highly ineffectual therapist.

SKEE BALL ATTENDANT – Female who has lived without the luxury of uncertainty, only a dull terror of the everyday. **ATTENDANT's** voice code switches between that of a working-class woman, a game show host, and a bland suburban ghost. She should never be played for laughs but only for illumination which, in some cases, may inadvertently prove humorous.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT - Speaks in the same weirdly calm and modulated voice as the **CAPTAIN**. Uses index and middle finger of each hand to point to anything and everything.

DOG - A thoughtful, sensitive dog. In a bad way.

ROOSTER - An unusually compelling rooster with no particular axe to grind.

OWL - An owl.

Various passengers on the airplane and **RANDOM OFFICE FOLKS**.

NOTES ON DESIGN

Projections are used throughout and can obviate the need for set elements/props.

NOTES ON CASTING

Theatre should strive for racial and ethnic diversity in casting. Racial demarcation and, in some cases, gender demarcation have been left intentionally open. Unless specified otherwise, actors of all races and ethnicities should be considered for the roles as diversity in casting is a primary goal. Different casts will create different meanings. That's OK. It is, in fact, preferred. In addition to other themes, this play is about the performance of identity and therefore will vary based on the actors chosen to play the roles and the interpretation of the collaborators.

REFERENCES

¹<https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1990-04-15-mn-1978-story.html>

²Skee Ball is an arcade game, one of the first "redemption" arcade games, games that reward the player proportionally to their score, often in the form of tickets that can be redeemed for prizes. It is played by rolling wooden balls up an inclined lane. The object of the game is to collect as many points as possible by having the ball fall into holes which have different point values. The reward for high points often comes in the form of tickets which can be exchanged for prizes.

SETTING(S)

Office Space
Therapist's office
Deepest Wyoming
An old-school arcade on a Jersey Shore boardwalk
A dilapidated apartment in Bed-Stuy
An airplane
A bedroom
A child's bedroom
Gate #33 at the Detroit Airport

TIME

Present day. Also, times before and after that. The time operates in a non-linear fashion, like an incoming and outgoing tide.

SCENE ONE

*AMANDA enters, stands alone in a single spot. A screen projection of a single glass of water.
AMANDA speaks directly to the audience.*

AMANDA

A single moment.

No. That's not quite right.

*(Projection changes to that of a mighty waterfall,
Niagara)*

The wretched accumulation of a million moments.

Mountain run offs, meandering creeks, stagnant scummy ponds, all crashing down on me at once.
Concussive. Punishing.

Waterfalls look pretty but they hurt like hell.

They're deafening.

*(We hear the crash of a tremendous waterfall.
AMANDA yells to the audience over the din)*

Loud, right??!

(Waterfall noise stops)

Here's what happened.

*(Light come up to full. AMANDA adjusts to her new
surroundings. She is in a an office space. Desk chair
appears. She sits)*

I was at desk.

(Desk with computer appears)

At job.

(Cubicle walls appear)

Not "my desk" or "my job" cuz those things aren't mine. I'm very precise about language these days.
Can't be too careful. Definite articles. They're tiny but they can change everything.

So, at desk, at job. At office job.

*(The space begins to fill out. **RANDOM OFFICE**
FOLKS rush back and forth, doing office things. A
break room begins to emerge--a coffee machine, a
bowl of fruit, a microwave, etc.)*

Office job is office job.

I'm not welding steel joists, poaching black cod, wiping up baby vomit. I'm "at office job". It's a state of
mind, a *place* of mind. Nowhere in particular, just somewhere enough to keep you from being anywhere
else.

Like so much of life, it's an issue of ass in chair.

*(**TECH BRO** saunters into break area. Pours a cup
of coffee and just hangs, taking up his space.)*

It was hip, enlightened office. One that encouraged the use of reusable straws. Bamboo. Stainless steel. Fair
trade coffee.

*(More office stuff. **RANDOM OFFICE FOLKS--**
assistants, couriers, supervisors, interns--scurry
about, chattering, showcasing their busy-ness.
AMANDA continues to address the audience even as
these people interact with her.)*

I was encouraged to *believe* I was taken seriously.

(RANDOM OFFICE FOLKS say random office things to AMANDA, not waiting for any real answers, e.g., "I read that report? I'd love to get your feedback?" "Where are we with the Redmond Account?" "Any actionable items I need to be aware of?" Stuff like that.)

I even started to *suspect* I was taken seriously.

But what, *really*, did I know?

OFFICE FOLKS

(To AMANDA, In unison)

NOTHING!

AMANDA

Knowing. Knowledge. Track these words like you got an eight point buck in the crosshairs, searching for that line that runs from tear duct to tear duct. An inch above that, there's yer kill shot. That's the trouble I'd gotten myself into.

(AMANDA's attention turns away from audience and to the office space. She's shuffling papers, on her computer, busy. TECH BRO is still hanging, watching her, almost amused.)

TECH BRO

Yo. 'Manda.

(Beat. AMANDA acknowledges TECH BRO with a lift of her chin but says nothing)

'Sup. Howzit hangin'. Alohaaaaa. How hops it? You get *down* with your bad self!

AMANDA

(WTF?)

Hi?

TECH BRO

How 'bout you make my dreams come to "fruit-ition"?

(TECH BRO tosses AMANDA a Granny Smith apple)

AMANDA

(Again, WTF?)

His dreams? What about mine?

TECH BRO

Have a bite!

(AMANDA begins to speak but TECH BRO cuts her off)

Don't say I didn't warn you. That shit is crisp as hellfire.

(TECH BRO laughs)

Just joshing. At ease.

Still chuckling at his secret joke and quite pleased with himself, TECH BRO exits. AMANDA puts apple down on her desk. She stops, as if she's heard something [do we hear it too?] She look intently at the apple. Shakes it off, back to her desk, then again, as if she hears the sound but louder, she looks at the apple. She picks it up, looks around to see if anyone is watching and takes a tentative bite. She chews and, suddenly, gay glitter falls from the sky, covering her. No one except AMANDA notices.

AMANDA

(To audience)

I didn't know before I put that apple against my lips--my teeth digging in, gaining purchase, ripping and excising, the sweetness and juice reduced to a mealy chum at the back of my throat--his wasn't *an* apple, it was *the* apple. Once that masticated mush made its way down my throat and settled in my guts a change...how can I...it was sort like...

(At a loss)

Glitter shoulda been my first clue. Glitter, as the old gay old wise ones say, is never insignificant. Attention *must* be paid.

So what happened? I remembered every thing--every goddamn single thing-- I'd willed myself to forget. I saw what I saw, felt what I felt. It was *knowledge*. In the biblical sense. Of fucking and being fucked. The *knowledge* of knowing. A regurgitation of awareness. The waterfall.

I saw who and where I was.

And *that's* when it left.

My joy.

The flight, the absence, the hollow space where it had once lived. All because I'd let myself *know*, because I bit that apple.

(Projection of the apple)

My joy.

Did someone steal it? Did it leave on its own steam?

(AMANDA takes another bite out of the apple, chews it, looks around at RANDOM OFFICE FOLKS)

Didn't matter. Fact is, it was gone.

(Erupts at RANDOM OFFICE FOLKS)

This is bull-FUCKIN'-shit!!!!

(RANDOM OFFICE FOLKS notice, continue to mill about, but with more speed, almost frantic, throwing frightened glances at AMANDA)

You heard me! Don't be acting like you don't know!!!

(RANDOM OFFICE FOLKS scurry even more quickly, giving AMANDA wide berth.)

Has anyone seen it? Has ANYONE seen MY JOY!?

(RANDOM OFFICE FOLKS are now frightfully alarmed, behaving in strange ways and, finally, fleeing as if from a burning building. AMANDA stands alone at her desk. She addresses audience again)

Not that my joy and I were so intimately acquainted. Like many women, I was joy averse. Joy was a stranger I'd mostly ignored, confining it to dark corners, convinced there would be some perfect time--just not today--when I'd take her out on the freeway and opened 'er up. If I was good, if I was patient the time for joy would come. But being a good girl always bites you in the ass. Never do what the world tells you to, no matter how they spin it. It's a racket. Greatest Ponzi scheme ever. So--

(Projection of a long, empty highway leading to a vanishing point)

--sick of my shameless neglect--not to mention this *(gesturing to office)* bullshit--

(To RANDOM OFFICE FOLKS)

THAT'S RIGHT I SAID BULLSHIT!

(To Audience)

--my joy skedaddled.

Up and left.

Took a powder.

Scrammed.

I was a all by my lonesome. Soaked to the bone by the waterfall.
Hell, I didn't even have a serpent for company.

(Projection of a cartoon snake)

But I didn't need a snake to tell me which way the wind was blowing. Snakes make shitty weather vanes.
Lack the necessary tensile strength. My cheeks could feel the winds just fine. They were blowing west.

(We hear the opening whistle from The Good, The Bad, and the Ugly. AMANDA going into a momentary trance, closes her eyes, as if trying to remember something, then opens her eyes.)

She's headed west. Off to find her territory I said.

(Beat, AMANDA shifts into a more instructional mode)

A tangent. But related.

(A projection of a map of Wyoming. AMANDA has a laser pointer. She employs it.)

This is Wyoming *(Beat)* Oh. Sorry. Wrong slide.

(A projection of a chart of female reproductive anatomy, like you'd find in a medical textbook)

This is us.

(To audience)

Some of us at least. You know who you are. You other folks, just sit tight.

(Returning her attention to the chart)

Now most women have no idea what their parts are, don't know the difference between a Stradivarius, a clitoris or a uterus. Yeah, they all have that "us" sound at the end so we suspect a connection. But it's little more than a vague hunch. In this muddle of girly membranes, moisture and whatnots, where exactly is joy located?

(AMANDA looks to the audience for a beat. No answer)

Truth is, joy moves around a lot. An itinerant peddler of bits and bobs, a distracted dreamer. Doesn't care so much for settling down. No real longitude or latitude to be had.

(Beat, continues with laser pointer)

Ya got yer vagina. That's a long row to hoe.

(Beat)

Ya got yer labia. Humid and occasionally enjoyable. Like an all-inclusive Caribbean getaway where racism's served with fruit drinks, paper umbrellas and a wedge of lime. But it's too sweet. It sickens. So we won't go there today.

(Beat)

Ya got yer fallopian tubes, the background greenery in some cheap supermarket bouquet. Baby's breath, fallopian tubes, and twelve red roses. Each rose hand-selected by an undocumented immigrant in Ventura Country. Courtesy of a viciously efficient coyote. He knows what the boss wants. Boss says, "I don't want people from Mexico city, they talk too much. I want the Oaxaqueños. They're passive, like burros."¹

(Beat)

Roses. So romantic.

(Beat)

The clitoris? That's a whole other can o' worms. Who's got the energy? Not me. Let's just put a pin in that for the moment.

(Beat)

Ouch.

(Back to chart)

Then ya got ole' reliable. The uterus. Bleeder of potions, font of babes, some would say the very essence of the feminine. And, if the tall tales men tell are true, seat of all things hysteric and imagined. Only part of a woman that matters enough for entire countries to go to war. A kind of undiscovered country. Murkier than death though. Capable of swallowing a man in just one bite. Made Ahab quake in his salt-water Wellies. It's all right there. Just gotta read between the lines.

(Beat)

I tell you all this because, when my joy decamped, something else snuck out, hot on its tail.

(AMANDA circles uterus on chart with laser pointer)

This bad boy! The ol' sneaky Pete. *(Beat)* Name's not Pete though. That much I can confirm.

(Beat)

Joy and my uterus. Two runaway brides. My joy was that last chopper outta Saigon, teetering on the embassy roof, straining to fly under the weight of all that terror. My uterus was the stowaway, clinging to the landing gear for dear life, dangling in the wind. A refugee. Just plain fed up.

(UTERUS crawls out from under the desk, from beneath AMANDA's legs, dusts herself off and then with a flip of the hand...)

UTERUS

Mama needs some me time.

AMANDA

And that's how it happened.

UTERUS

She's not wrong.

(UTERUS exits, in disgust)

AMANDA

I want them back. My joy. My uterus. They *belong* to me. This is America. When something belongs to you, you got rights. Inalienable rights.

(Beat)

No, not those kinds o' aliens. Motherfuckin' NASA? Bible belt bullies? They find out aliens got joy, let alone uteruses, watch out. They'll will be all up in that shit.

No one likes an alien uterus.

But again, that's another story.

(Beat)

This tendency of mine, to digress, to tell one story until it spills into another and another and yet another--it costs me. You try surviving the world when you can't control the stories that fall out of your mouth. Good luck with that. Boyfriend don't wanna hear that shit. And the ladies? Don't even get me started. I've had 'em both and when the rubber meets the road most folks just want what they want--ham and cheese on slices of buttered vagina. Hold the mustard.

(Beat)

So. My joy was MIA, my uterus was on an extended bank holiday. The situation was dire. What was I gonna do? I rang a therapist.

(AMANDA pulls out cell phone and dials. In separate area, lights up on THERAPIST answering his phone)

THERAPIST

How may I direct your call?

AMANDA

Therapist expert?

THERAPIST

Speaking.

AMANDA

Need some expert therapizin'. Stat.

THERAPIST

Wise choice.

Checking calendar

Checking calendar

Checking calendar

Right.

When.

When? AMANDA

When can you get here? THERAPIST

Now? I was expecting the scarcity model. AMANDA

That's just marketing. Abundance doesn't sell. THERAPIST

Clever AMANDA

In reality I'm wide open. THERAPIST

Only a man could say that without/ AMANDA

Gotta keep folks on their toes. THERAPIST

Toes ain't the body part I'm concerned with. AMANDA

Pardon? THERAPIST

I'll tell ya when I see ya. AMANDA

Oh. Hold on. THERAPIST

My rates just went up. *(Beat)*

Seriously? AMANDA

Invoice is in the mail. THERAPIST

BLACKOUT

SCENE TWO

A simple stage. A timeless place. Sounds and images connote the American West, a promise of something bigger, better, with infinite possibility. Again, we might hear the opening whistle from The Good, The Bad, and the Ugly. A deserted and derelict filling station somewhere in Wyoming, circa 1971 is suggested through lighting and a few props-- a rusty Coca-Cola sign swinging on its hinges, a tumbleweed or two. The sounds are the sounds of a vast wildness, both internal and external.

*A log sits lengthwise in the middle of the stage, in front of the station. **COWBOY**--the American cowboy of our collective imagination--sits on the log, his thoughts and actions slow and solitary. He's not going anywhere and has no particular plans beyond sitting. He wears chaps, a cowboy hat and chews languidly on a stalk of wheat, something to keep his mind occupied and reduce the need for talk.*

*As he sits, the **UTERUS** enters, taking in the surroundings briefly before going to the log and sitting next to **COWBOY**. They don't look at each other or acknowledge each other but each knows the other is there. After a few beats **COWBOY** touches the brim of his hat, a silent greeting.*

Morning.	UTERUS
Ma'am.	COWBOY
Know where a girl might find a place to rest her head?	UTERUS
Pretty quiet round these parts.	COWBOY (Beat)
You're telling me.	UTERUS
Can't say I mind though.	(Beat)
Yup.	COWBOY (Beat)
Place don't offer much in the way of givin'. Other hand, don't take much from ya' neither.	COWBOY
Hmmmm	UTERUS

Kinda place that just lets you be. COWBOY

I can feel that. UTERUS
(Beat)

Not from around these parts, huh? COWBOY
(More beats)

No. UTERUS
(Clearing her throat)

Didn't think so. COWBOY

What gave it away? UTERUS
(Beat)

Dunno. COWBOY
(Beat)

Maybe/
(Another beat, UTERUS looks at him expectantly)
Something uniquely distaff 'bout ya is all.

Ah. UTERUS

Not a criticism, mind ya. Just my two cents. COWBOY

That's fair. UTERUS

... COWBOY
(Touches brim of his hat again as a kind of thank you)

Air's sweet. Sweeter than I imagined. UTERUS

God's own country. COWBOY

COWBOY reaches in his shirt pocket, pulls out a tin of Skoal, puts a wad between his cheek and gum. He goes to return it, then realizes his manners and offers some to UTERUS.

Dip? COWBOY

Thanks, but no. UTERUS

COWBOY returns tin to his pocket. COWBOY and UTERUS sit in a comfortable silence for a few moments, taking in the sounds and the air. UTERUS becomes animated, a desire)

Actually, you know, I *will* try some if you don't mind. I've never/
COWBOY retrieves Skoal, UTERUS takes some and sticks it wherever a UTERUS might stick her dip.

What do I?/

COWBOY
Just keep it there til it's nice and wet. Give it a chew. When the juice comes, ya spit.
COWBOY demonstrates and spits, an impressive spit. UTERUS gives it a go--her doesn't travel far but it's a decent first effort.

Hah! That was fun! UTERUS
(Short Beat)
May I have some more? Do you mind?

COWBOY
(Proffering the tin once again)
Not a'tall.

UTERUS takes more, chews a bit and then spits. A much better spit this time. UTERUS is pleased with herself.

You're gettin' the hang now. COWBOY

I am. I think I really am! Who'da thunk? UTERUS

COWBOY
Don't surprise me none. You bein' of the female persuasion and all.
Hell, women in these parts can do *anything*. Seen it with my own two eyes more times than I can count. Birthing babies, fixin' fences, healing wounds, burying their dead. Seems like there's always one around when a horse goes lame or a well runs dry. Soup to nuts. Way I see it, if a woman tells me she likes dip, then she likes dip.

End of story? UTERUS

End of story. COWBOY

COWBOY spits. UTERUS spits. It's both a joining and a punctuation.

It's just the beginning, though. Of mine. I'm just starting out. UTERUS

Visiting? Or y'all thinking of putting down roots? COWBOY

UTERUS

(Uterus shrugs)

Guess I'll know when I know.

COWBOY

(Tapping the Skoal tin in his shirt pocket)

Simple pleasures. S' where it lives.

(UTERUS offers a quizzical look)

Shucks. Don't make me say it.

UTERUS

Ah! My joy.

(Beat)

She's lookin' for it, ya know? Lookin' for me too. I can feel her out there. Wantin' me. Wantin' her joy. But I need time. Want to feel the dirt between my toes. The terrain, filled with livin' things. *My joy.*

COWBOY

(Beat)

Yup, that right there. 'Swat we all crave. For me? Some chaw. Sounds of a rooster breaking in the mornin'. An unexpected tender kiss. The hound asleep at your feet, dreaming of nothing but running that great beyond. S'all right there.

COWBOY spits. UTERUS spits. Satisfaction.

COWBOY

Time for some shut-eye.

UTERUS

(Gesturing to his shoulder, the one nearest her)

You mind?

COWBOY

What else's a cowboy for?

COWBOY tilts his hat over his eyes. UTERUS leans her head on his shoulder. COWBOY leans into her. They shore each other up, quietly, on their log as the sounds of the American west wrap around them, like a soft blanket. They sleep.

BLACKOUT

SCENE THREE

A therapist's office chair sits on stage in a spot. It is not overly plush but neither is it totally utilitarian. Next to it a small three-legged table holds a box of tissues and a clock. AMANDA enters and sits in the chair. She takes a tissue out and holds it, as if anticipating tears. Lights come up to reveal another, more plush chair, a clear power/status differential between the two. AMANDA stares expectantly at the second chair; looks around, checks her watch. As she does this, THERAPIST enters and sits, a pad of paper in one hand and a pen in the other. As if a finger has just been taken off a pause button we are mid-session.

You seem to be describing/	THERAPIST
What are you saying?/	AMANDA
I'm not <i>saying</i> /	THERAPIST
This is so odd/	AMANDA
I'm trying to <i>locate</i> /	THERAPIST
I don't even know you.	AMANDA
All the more reason to trust me. Objectivity. Statistics. Credentials.	THERAPIST
This is so <i>queer</i> /	AMANDA
Oooo. I'm listening/	THERAPIST
No.	AMANDA
No?	THERAPIST
Queer in the old-fashioned sense.	AMANDA
Oops.	THERAPIST
What?	AMANDA

Nothing. THERAPIST

But if you're asking, yes. Also Queer. AMANDA

So no oops then? THERAPIST

You tell me. AMANDA

No you tell *me*. THERAPIST

Tell you what? AMANDA

In exactly what *direction*/ THERAPIST

All of them. AMANDA

Ambitious. THERAPIST

Omnivorous. AMANDA

A sense of/ THERAPIST

Alienation? AMANDA

I wouldn't use that term. THERAPIST

You wouldn't? OK. A feeling of/ AMANDA

Let's not get hysterical. THERAPIST

That's not / AMANDA

Imagine measuring it. A quantifiable thing. A distance from some essential/ THERAPIST

It feels *very* essential/ AMANDA

A lack of--/ THERAPIST

A lack? AMANDA

A space. THERAPIST

A uterus-sized space? AMANDA

Citation needed. THERAPIST

A joy-sized space? AMANDA

No such thing exists in the literature. THERAPIST

A lack of a penis? AMANDA

That we *do* recognize as clinically signifi-/ THERAPIST

Odd. AMANDA

I was just trying to offer information/ THERAPIST

About a penis. Where's the uterus information? It's the wild west out there. AMANDA

I don't subscribe to that model. These are frameworks, narratives. We choose which of them are/ THERAPIST

We choose? Like a group decision? AMANDA

As the penis goes, so goes the nation. Whereas the uterus is more of a *transnational*/ THERAPIST

Speaking of uteruses, mine's gone AWOL. AMANDA

Oh THERAPIST

That's... (Taken aback)

In what way? (Beat)

AMANDA

Piqued your interest?

THERAPIST

Uterus is Checkpoint Charlie if the species is to survive--

AMANDA

A medical exam won't support my argument. But what do doctors know?

THERAPIST

Cut, poison and burn for one. Actually that's three things.

AMANDA

They won't work.

THERAPIST

Can you think of a better way?

AMANDA

Geography. What's on the map. What's left out. Missing things. Space.

THERAPIST

That's rather/

AMANDA

The space of something *there*, that *should* be there but isn't. I can feel it's outline, its borders. The dirt, the scrub brush, the waterfall. The terrain itself. Something between my toes. Where I'm *at!*

THERAPIST

A place/

AMANDA

Inside.

THERAPIST

Your/

AMANDA

Joy.

THERAPIST

(Furiously scribbling on notepad)

I see.

(To AMANDA)

Just to be confirm. A space?

AMANDA

Big enough for my joy. A place to go. A chance to fill myself up, fill an entire imagined borderland.

THERAPIST

With?

AMANDA

Not babies. I never wanted/

So not the usual then/ THERAPIST

Not with dicks or fingers or toes/ AMANDA

It takes a lot to get a toe up a uterus. You realize that. THERAPIST

Don't tell me what I have room for. AMANDA

Well/ THERAPIST
(*Flustered*)

My joy. I hear it knockin'. I want it back. AMANDA

Your joy. THERAPIST

I want it back/ AMANDA

Your geography/ THERAPIST

I want it back. AMANDA

When you say "geography"/ THERAPIST

I want it back. AMANDA

When you say "joy"/ THERAPIST

I want it back. They're gonna see my joy. AMANDA

"See. Joy." THERAPIST
(*Scribbling on pad*)

And my uterus. AMANDA

"U-ter-us"/ THERAPIST
(*Scribbling on pad*)

AMANDA
Everyone wants a piece. But still they won't see it.

THERAPIST
And by "everyone" you mean?/

AMANDA
Everyone.

THERAPIST
(Scribbling)
"Every. One"
I see/ *(THERAPIST doesn't see but pretends to)*

AMANDA
All my parts. I want 'em back.

THERAPIST
Let me float a question/
(Beat)
Do you remember where you last saw it?
(Beat)
Your joy.
(Beat)
Your uterus.
(Beat)
Both. Either.
(Beat)
That, traditionally speaking, is the best way to find the things you've lost.

AMANDA
(AMANDA seems on the brink of knowing the answer but at the last moment it keeps slipping away.)
Back when I was...
(Beat)
During the...
(Beat)
It must have been...
(Beat)
Geography...
(Beat)
Her? Him?
(Beat)
Damn.

THERAPIST
We've got five minutes left. And you've been talking. A lot. But take your time.

AMANDA
I/
(Beat)
I/
(Beat)
I/

You want it back. THERAPIST

I/ AMANDA

Oh. THERAPIST

Looky there. *(Indicating clock on table)*

Time's up. Off you go. *(Beat)* Remember, last place you saw it. It's not rocket science.

But/ AMANDA
(Rising to leave, then turning back to therapist)

Joy. *(A statement? a question.)*

Looks like someone's got a plane to catch. THERAPIST

BLACKOUT

SCENE 4

UTERUS and COWBOY playing a game of horseshoes. There's an old school Coca-Cola machine suggested in another area. They continue playing horseshoes throughout the scene. They're not keeping score, just passing the time. Occasionally one of them will get a ringer. Mostly not. UTERUS throws a horseshoe with joyful abandon.

COWBOY

There the ticket, nice n' easy.

UTERUS

So many things I've never done before.

COWBOY

Said it 'fore, I'll say it again. Simple pleasures.

UTERUS

You sure do know how to live.

COWBOY

Huh. Never really thought about it. How to live. I just done it is all. Living just happened while I was busy doing somethin' else.

UTERUS

What a refreshing perspective!

COWBOY

You want refreshing? Hold on now...

(COWBOY ambles over to cola machine, inserts some quarters, gets two glass bottles of Coca-Cola.)

Iced cold Coca-Cola. *That's* refreshing.

UTERUS

Ooo. That's my first. Wow.

COWBOY

That's real cane sugar there, none of them chemicals 'n stuff like/

COWBOY stops himself

UTERUS

What?

COWBOY

I was gonna say, like where you come from. *(Beat)* Pardon my manners.

UTERUS

I don't take offense. I fled. It's true. Suggesting a definite lack of geographic satisfaction. I wanted to get outta there. *Needed* to get out of there. Too much noise. Demands. Too much talkin', all the time talkin'.

COWBOY

Too much jawing makes a mind muddy.

UTERUS

The fog of war.

COWBOY

That's kinda poetic. Lots of poets 'round these parts. You can hear them in the wheat, riding the dust that's carried on the wind.

UTERUS

Just poets?

COWBOY

Naw. Geckos, Alligator lizards, blue-tailed skinks. *(Beat)* The noble dragonfly.

UTERUS

Well, those aren't the words of a poet. Or a dragonfly. I can tell you that.

COWBOY

A cattleman then?

UTERUS

A soldier. I'm paraphrasing of course--

COWBOY

'Ain't a schoolhouse for miles around. Don't worry yourself none about schoolmarm with the stick. That's all in the rearview.

UTERUS

(She recites)

"War is the realm of uncertainty--all action must be planned in a mere twilight--like a fog or moonshine--givings things exaggerated dimensions and an unnatural appearance."

(Beat)

Carl von Clausewitz.

COWBOY

He from Lubbock?

UTERUS

Prussia actually.

COWBOY

That's a mighty relief. Never met a man from Lubbock worth his salt. Snarly, small, screwed-down devil eyes. A man who don't know how to keep his beard clean and shiny, know what I'm saying?

UTERUS

I trust you.

(Beat)

Which way is Lubbock?

COWBOY

(Pointing off into the distance)

Thereabouts.

UTERUS

Remind me to avoid that direction.

COWBOY

Friends don't let friends go to Lubbock. Fact is, I got my doubts 'bout that whole entire state.
They clink Coca-Cola glasses. More horseshoes.
 You ain't leavin' yet are ya?

UTERUS

No. Just wanna be clear on things that need avoiding.

COWBOY

Workin' yer plan.

UTERUS

Yup.

COWBOY

So *(beat)* you're pretty educated then.

UTERUS

Most of it I picked up downrange. All the struggling and cogitating happens up top. But I gotta way of retainin' things. It's in my nature you could say.

COWBOY

How so?

UTERUS

'S how I'm built. Retainin', holding, catching, incubating. What I'm bred for.

COWBOY

I hear ya. Birds gotta fly 'n all that.

UTERUS

But even God took that seventh day off. Chance to catch your breath. Smell that sweet air and exhale slow and soft.

COWBOY

Beatin' heart rests half the time.

UTERUS

That it does. That it does.

(Beat)

What about the other half?

COWBOY

Horseshoes!

UTERUS

Horseshoes!!

*They clink Coca-Cola bottles again. Throw their last horseshoes. **COWBOY** meanders over to collect them all, bring them back for another round. They begin to throw again, in silence.*

COWBOY

Some friendly advice?

UTERUS

'Course.

COWBOY

This is a fine place to take a little rest. Can't think of none better. Dry and silent, like any good piece of earth. But it's also flat as a plank and wide open too. Things that wanna find ya' have a way of finding their way here, a way of seeing. The long view is what I'm saying. Not a lot of shade trees. No hunters' blinds.

UTERUS

You know your geography, own your terrain.

COWBOY

That I do. That I do ma'am. I belong to this place. People pass through and don't even notice me. Might as well be a jumpin' cholla cactus or some brushwood scrub.

UTERUS

I envy you.

COWBOY

Ain't nothing of my doing. Accident of birth. Where I'm from. Also where I'm goin'. You, though, I imagine part of you is set on someplace else.

UTERUS

Possibly.

(Beat)

Probably.

COWBOY

Don't need to know the plan. But 'cha gotta plan for what ya need.

UTERUS

Right now I'm just making it up as I go along. Never left before. Never believed I could. I was always just servin' a purpose, without any say over what that purpose was. Just took my lumps and kept on takin'.

COWBOY

Gettin' by. We all got some of that in us. Just keep on keepin' on.

UTERUS

Yup.

COWBOY

That'll keep you dry and warm most days. But when folks come looking, that's when you gotta get--you know...

UTERUS

Creative?

COWBOY

That right there.

UTERUS

Never been expected to be creative. The good soldier. Obedient cannon fodder.

COWBOY

Don't sound like much in the way of a good time.

UTERUS

No cold Coca-Cola. No horseshoes. No quiet. No dip. No resting on a log watching the milky way rise above you, raining down its secrets.

COWBOY

Man can't live without joy.

UTERUS

I ain't no man.

Beat. Horseshoes. Maybe another round of Cokes.

COWBOY

What would your Mr. Clausewitz say?

UTERUS

"Courage, above all things, is the first quality of a warrior."

COWBOY

Warrior someone who knows to fight when fighting is what's needed. Ain't a man or woman.

UTERUS goes quiet, considering all that's been said. She wanders over to the stake and collects the horseshoes, then walks slowly back to where cowboy is standing.

UTERUS

Y'up for another?

COWBOY

Sounds like a plan.

(Touching the brim of his hat and gesturing for her to begin.)

Ladies first.

BLACKOUT

SCENE FIVE

An airplane. Dim lights. The smooth swoosh of air fills the cabin. An occasional polite ping from the flight deck, random clearing of throats or a sneeze from a passenger. AMANDA's in an aisle seat, leafing through the in-flight magazine. It's been a smooth flight over great distances but has only lasted a few moments. FLIGHT ATTENDANT wanders up and down the aisle, tending to passengers. CAPTAIN's voice comes over the speaker.

CAPTAIN

Gooood mornin' folks. Hope you're enjoying your flight to Detroit with Joy Airlines. We've sure enjoyed having you. If you look out of the right side of the plane you can see a small child's drawing of New Jersey just off to the left. It's a confusing and visually immature. A combination of fusilli and elbow macaroni glued onto a thick slice of green construction paper. It started out as a dinosaur, but this is where it ended up.

*(The sound of impressed passengers "ooooohhh",
"aaaahhhh")*

The crew will be coming through the cabin as we begin our descent. Please check around your seats for any trash that needs disposing.

(More gentle pinging and airplane sounds)

Will the passenger in #21C please make yourself known to the flight attendant. Thank you.

AMANDA, in seat #21C pushes a call button above her head. FLIGHT ATTENDANT heads down the aisle towards her seat.

AMANDA

(To FLIGHT ATTENDANT)

Is there a problem?

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Everything's fine. But we're gonna need you to get out now.

AMANDA

What? But we're in/

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Here ya go. Let's get you strapped in.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT stands AMANDA up, attaches a parachute to her back and sticks a poorly fitted crash helmet on her head.

AMANDA

But I don't/

FLIGHT ATTENDANT adds a flotation device to the ensemble.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

In case of a water landing.

AMANDA

Wha/

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

And, whatever you do, don't blow into the red tube. It's a myth. Won't do a damn thing. Though you might sink faster.

AMANDA

Sink?!!!!/

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

You're listed here on the flight manifest as looking for your joy. And something about geographical lady parts. Anyhoo, this is where you get off. Macaroni Art, New Jersey.

AMANDA

It was supposed to be a dinosaur--

FLIGHT ATTENDANT hustles AMANDA to the door of the plane, opens it, a strong wind rushes in, the sound of the airplane grows louder.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Yes, well, no accounting for imagination. Especially at that age.

AMANDA

But/

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

(Pushing AMANDA out the door of the plane, then yelling loudly after her)

Oh, and keep an eye out for that uterus of yours while you're at it.

AMANDA

(O.S., the sound of AMANDA's voice getting further away as she falls)

JOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOYYYYYYYY!

FLIGHT ATTENDANT shuts the door, fixes his/her hair and anything else that got mussed and returns to tending to the passengers.

CAPTAIN (V.O.)

For those of you *not* looking for joy, we'll be landing in Detroit shortly. Flight attendants, prepare for landing.

We hear the polite "bing" of the cabin, followed by the unsettling roar of engines, lowering of wing flaps, getting louder and louder and louder until a sudden stillness hurls us right into the next scene like a slingshot.

BLACKOUT

SCENE SIX

An old school boardwalk arcade in Jersey. The zings, wings and bada bings you'd expect to hear. Other sounds--sugar-high children and spent parents, the curious breathing and curdling of pedophiles lurking in unseen corners are mixed in. Outside, the Atlantic rushes in and out, in and out, and yet, somehow, it's always high tide, the threat of submersion.

AMANDA enters dragging the remnants of her parachute, crash helmet and flotation vest. She sheds them, rolling them up into an awkward ball and stashes them behind a sandwich board reading "SKEE BALL. 25¢ a Game!"²

AMANDA's office attire has been replaced by a "Life is Good" t-shirt and a pair of cargo shorts. The t-shirt is a complete and total lie.

SKEE BALL ATTENDANT stands behind a glass case, leaning over it, reading a newspaper. Her hair is permed, a home perm. She wears polyester pants with an elastic waist. They're a bit too short. Not in a cool way, just in a short way. She wears white ankle socks, plastic slide sandals and a short-sleeve, button-down shirt with mallard ducks on it--likely purchased at a TJ Max. She makes the outfit work, somehow owning it and rocking it. Everything she says sounds like a command being delivered to a subordinate. It isn't. At least not all the time.

AMANDA wanders to the bank of Skee Ball lanes. They're the red-headed step children of the arcade, forgotten, cast aside for bigger, noisier things. Reaching deep into the pockets of her cargo shorts she pulls out a pile of quarters, cupping them in her hands. She is lost. She catches SKEE BALL ATTENDANT's eye.

You need help?	SKEE BALL ATTENDANT
I just--	AMANDA
WHAAAAT?	SKEE BALL ATTENDANT
I'm on the lookout for my joy. Last time I was here I remember--never mind--I just wanna play is all--	AMANDA
Play what--?!	SKEE BALL ATTENDANT
My joy	AMANDA

SKEE BALL ATTENDANT

No game called joy.

AMANDA

Skee ball. I used to...I think there was joy here. I saw it. Or I remember it. Don't know which.

SKEE BALL ATTENDANT

No, no, no. You're mis-remembering. All kids here miserable! Why you think there're so many lights and bings and bongs? Why do you think every game's all about getting a ball in hole? We love sticking shit in holes. All promises but nothing really feels good.

AMANDA

I remember playing. I think I remember joy.

SKEE BALL ATTENDANT

You confusing sugar, sticky fingers, cheap crap from China with joy.

AMANDA

Are you sure? I don't remember you.

SKEE BALL ATTENDANT

I don't remember you either. But I know you. Kids are all the same. Like goats. Simple.

AMANDA

I am a Capricorn, if that's what you--/

SKEE BALL ATTENDANT

Shut up with your white voodoo.

AMANDA

No need to be rude.

SKEE BALL ATTENDANT

Not rude. Honest. Maybe you don't like honest.

AMANDA

AMANDA shifts the coins to one hand and cradles them against her body. She takes her free hand, picks up a quarter and taps it, insistently, on various spots on the Skee ball machine. It's as if she's trying to create an opening that refuses to emerge.

There's no place for the quarters/

SKEE BALL ATTENDANT

(Shaking her head at stupid AMANDA)

Stubborn, stupid goat. Wrong way. Here. I'll show you.

SKEE BALL ATTENDANT leads her to an old school gum ball machine, the kind that dispenses Chiclets or Jawbreakers to raise money for the Rotary club.

Here. Put the money in there.

AMANDA inserts one quarter, then another, then another.

AMANDA

How many do I need?

Depends on how hard you play. SKEE BALL ATTENDANT

It's been a while. AMANDA

Been-a-while money? SKEE BALL ATTENDANT
SKEE BALL ATTENDANT makes a mezza-mezza gesture with her hand, estimating the cost of "been a while"

Two dollar fifty. AMANDA inserts seven more quarters. Stops. Looks at SKEE BALL ATTENDANT expectantly.

SKEE BALL ATTENDANT
(Yelling at AMANDA roughly)
 One more for baby Jesus and good luck!!! Now turn the damn knob!

AMANDA turns the knob on the machine and, after a brief moment, a skimpy sprinkle of glitter falls on her from above. A disappointment.

When do I get my prize? AMANDA

You want a prize, eh? SKEE BALL ATTENDANT

Um...yes? AMANDA
(Again, a question? A response?)

You want something. You got *(beat)* desire. SKEE BALL ATTENDANT
(Leaning in close to AMANDA, almost menacing)
 Know what that means, doncha?

No? AMANDA
(Trepidation)

It means... SKEE BALL ATTENDANT
That menace hangs suspended in the air between them...and then 180 degree transformation into a frenetic 70s-style game show. SKEE BALL ATTENDANT has her game show voice on. Applause signs!!! Everyone clapping for no apparent reason!!! It's so exciting!!! We don't know why!!! We don't care!!!!

Amanda Jones!!!!
 Come!!!
 On!!!
 Down!!!

AMANDA

But I'm already here!!!

SKEE BALL ATTENDANT

Well, that's just great! Because. THIS. IS. SKEE BAAAAAALLLLLL!!!!

(Sound of crazed canned applause and cheering)

A game of skill.

A game of nerves.

A game that excavates every rock-hard, unpopped kernel of dollar-store popcorn that ever got stuck in the pack of your throat and woke you up in the middle of the night bathed in flop-sweat, alive with the knowledge that you will---

(SKEE BALL ATTENDANT yells this part one word at a time in unison with the unseen studio audience)

NEVER!

BE!

GOOD!

ENOUGH!

(Crazed canned applause and cheering)

Let's get ready to play!

(More crazed canned applause and cheering)

Who's got balls for little Amanda here?

AMANDA

I'm not so little, really, I just--

SKEE BALL ATTENDANT

Who's got her balls?

(The ROOSTER enters and plops himself into AMANDA's arms)

How 'bout that folks! Let's have a big round of applause for Amanda!

(More crazed canned applause and cheering)

AMANDA

I can't play Skee ball with this. What is this?

SKEE BALL ATTENDANT

Amanda wants to know what it is folks! Let's tell Amanda what she's won!

(Again, SKEE BALL ATTENDANT yells this part one word at a time in unison with the unseen studio audience)

IT'S!! A!! COCK!! You asked for balls! We delivered. Technically a penis, but why quibble?

(Flatly, in a bland suburban voice)

Seriously, Amanda. It's just a cock. Don't overthink it.

An uncomfortable silence, almost unbearably long, ensues while AMANDA stares down at the ROOSTER. She then carefully, without malice, releases the ROOSTER and watches it walk away. We watch along with her.

AMANDA

That's not gonna work.

Nuh-uh. Nope.
(Beat)
 Sad.

SKEE BALL ATTENDANT

I kinda feel bad for the cock.

AMANDA

Join the club, sister.

SKEE BALL ATTENDANT

I was looking for my joy. And something about my uterus. And a map.

AMANDA

You got the wrong arcade, Goat Girl.

SKEE BALL ATTENDANT

Do over?

AMANDA

(SKEE BALL ATTENDANT starts blankly at AMANDA then rolls her eyes)

I'm willing to pay.

AMANDA spills all the quarters into SKEE BALL ATTENDANT's hands as an offering. SKEE BALL ATTENDANT stares, disgusted and exhausted, at the heap of quarters, issuing a deep sigh, twirls her finger in the air like a film director indicating "let's go again". Lights go down and then quickly come up again on the same--but also a very different--arcade. The machines but no sound coming from them. Everything is greyed out, like a film that has been reverse-colored. The ROOSTER wanders aimlessly around the space, pecking and hopping. SKEE BALL ATTENDANT is leaning against the glass of the case that holds cheap prizes flipping through a copy of People magazine. AMANDA enters, same clothes, and looks around, more confused by the silence than by anything. SKEE BALL ATTENDANT doesn't look up. When she does speak it is with the bland suburban accent.

Help you?

SKEE BALL ATTENDANT

Skee ball. I played here when I was a/

AMANDA

Gotta a card?

SKEE BALL ATTENDANT

I've got quarters.

AMANDA

Gonna need a card. Put money on the card, swipe and get your balls.

SKEE BALL ATTENDANT

AMANDA

I still get tickets, right?

(SKEE BALL ATTENDANT stares at her blankly)

You trade them for prizes.

SKEE BALL ATTENDANT

No prizes, just credit. To play more games. Circle of life.

AMANDA

But/

SKEE BALL ATTENDANT

Yeah.

AMANDA

That's different than it used to be.

SKEE BALL ATTENDANT

Just goes round and round and round. And where it stops? It doesn't.

AMANDA

That's *(beat)* unsatisfying.

SKEE BALL ATTENDANT

Isn't it all?

Beat. AMANDA looks around. Looks at SKEE BALL ATTENDANT. SKEE BALL ATTENDANT goes back to her magazine. AMANDA looks at the bank of Skee Ball lanes, back at SKEE BALL ATTENDANT. Follows the ROOSTER for a moment as it pecks, hoping for something.

AMANDA

Nice rooster.

SKEE BALL ATTENDANT

Came with the place. Crazy, right? Brings me no joy.

AMANDA

Yeah. I'm getting that.

ROOSTER exits

BLACKOUT

SCENE SEVEN

Back in the Western imaginary with UTERUS and COWBOY. They're on horses--stick-style hobby horses.

UTERUS
Modes o' transportation matter.

COWBOY
True.
(Short beat)

UTERUS
Otherwise how do you tell the here from the there? Geography.

COWBOY
Gettin' there is half the fun of gettin' gone.

UTERUS
Hmmm.

COWBOY
Careful. Up ahead. Explodin' cactus.

They each lean to the outside, going around the cactus--real or imaginary--giving it wide berth.

UTERUS
(Struggling a bit. Her pony is skittish)
Whoa Nelly!

COWBOY
Don't look at it is all. Keep yourself inside yourself and both eyes on the horizon.

UTERUS
Gotcha.
(Beat as they pass cactus)
What comes out? When it explodes.

COWBOY
What you'd expect from any prickly thing. More than one voice.

UTERUS
Disdain?

COWBOY
Grief.

UTERUS
Domination?

COWBOY
Despair.

Derision? UTERUS

Shame. COWBOY

Makes sense. UTERUS

You're kinder than I am ya know. *(Beat)*

COWBOY
Naw. It's just the sky. So clear and constant that it's worn me to a smooth nub. Just pith, gist, and nitty gritty is all. You're new to these parts, bound to be sharper. Vigilant.

*UTERUS and COWBOY ride silently for a while.
COWBOY begins humming a quiet, lonely tune. Horses
dance a slow clip-clop.*

UTERUS
(Beat)
Is it wrong? That I feel sorry for it. The cactus.

COWBOY
Lil' bit of compassion ain't never done a body harm. Imagine the same's true for a cactus.

UTERUS
How must it feel? To have so much inside you, to be so swollen with heat and water that you erupt, forced to become a part of the atmosphere.

COWBOY
Could be like dyin'. Could be a relief. Depends on your perspective.
(Beat)
By the way--

What? UTERUS

Name's not Nellie. COWBOY
(Indicting his horse)
This here is Beatrice.

UTERUS
(Leaning over to stroke Beatrice's cheek)
Sorry Beatrice. Pleased to make your acquaintance.

COWBOY
Girl like her, figured she deserved a fancy name.

Good girl Beatrice. UTERUS

COWBOY
Couldn't be anything but. It's in her bones. No one need presume to tell her so. She knows the secret.

What's that? UTERUS

COWBOY
That every girl's a good girl. Every boy too. N' everything and everyone outside and in between them parts.

Smart. UTERUS

COWBOY
That she is. Just got accepted to get her P-H-D from Important University.

Impressive. UTERUS

Ain't it? Gonna miss her somethin' awful. Proud of her though. COWBOY

Who wouldn't be? UTERUS

Got accepted to all o' em: Important University, Posh University and Salt of the Earth University. Hefty fellowship from Important though. We're not fancy or rich 'round these parts, so we appreciate the helpin' hand. COWBOY

Lucky. UTERUS

Plus, she loved the campus. Rolling hills. Hard winter wheat for days. Connections too. Them's important. COWBOY

Who you know. It's key. UTERUS

Yup. And this girl knows herself. Inside and out. Plus she knows how to be alone. Most important connection there is, right there. COWBOY

She the CEO of Beatrice. UTERUS

Naw. She ain't no business. Just *in* the business of bein' Beatrice. COWBOY

Only business that really matters. UTERUS

True. COWBOY

(*Beat*)
'Cept for tacos trucks. Everyone deserves an exemplary taco.

UTERUS
 Inalienable. Rights that is. Taco rights. To whom many tacos are given, many tacos are expected.

COWBOY
 JFK?

UTERUS
 Ask not what you taco can do for you...

COWBOY
 Indeed.

UTERUS
 Does a body good.

COWBOY
 That it does.

UTERUS
 I've enjoyed tasting things.

(Beat)
 Here, I mean. Don't normally get to taste where I'm from. It's been, well, to be honest it's been alarming.

COWBOY
 'larmin'????

UTERUS
 In a good way.

COWBOY
 Oh.

(Beat)
 You got me thinkin' o' fire engines and tornado sirens.

UTERUS
 They have their charm. Prick up your ears. Mother nature's back in town.

COWBOY
 Well, they're necessary that's for darn sure.

UTERUS
 Indeed. Safety first.

COWBOY
 Survival.

UTERUS
 Shelter.

COWBOY
 Even the coyote needs a place to rest his head, knowing he can lay off coyote-ing for a while. Sweet dreams, ya' know?

Hmmm. Sweet. UTERUS

Sour. COWBOY

Spicy. UTERUS

Bitter. COWBOY

Umami. UTERUS

Don't know that one. COWBOY

Think anchovies. UTERUS

Them little fishies? COWBOY

The most wee of the sea. UTERUS

Pack a wallop though. I'll give 'em that. COWBOY

Plus pickled jalapeños on nachos that shatter in yer mouth, like glass. Guava paste licked off the tips of a lover's fingers. The elusive endless noodle. Soft-boiled egg sopped up with abandon and a crusty roll. UTERUS

Hmmmm. COWBOY

They alarm all of me. Make me feel alive in a way that begs for weepin'. UTERUS

All yer talk's kickin' up my appetite. COWBOY

Feeling a might peckish myself. UTERUS

What's that? What that you say? *(Leaning her head down towards Beatrice)*

Beatrice says she wouldn't say no to a taco. *(To COWBOY)*

Well, as Beatrice goes, so goes the nation. COWBOY

UTERUS

(As if a distant memory has been triggered)

Yes, that's true.

COWBOY

Tacos it is.

(Pointing)

That-a-way.

Direction of the clip-clopping changes. The howl of a sleepy coyote. The hoot of an owl.

OWL (O.S.)

Who?

(Beat)

When?

(Beat)

Wherefore?

UTERUS

‘Mportant questions right there.

COWBOY

Hmmmmmm.

(Long Beat)

It's good.

UTERUS

What is?

COWBOY

Feedin' a lady. One of life's great joys. Everyone always wondering what they can do to be happy, like it were some magical scarecrow they're chasing through a cornfield. Ain't that hard. Need some joy? Find yourself a lady to feed. Simple as that. Soul satisfying too. I think to myself--don't do tons of thinkin', mostly just wonderin'--but I think what if everyone put down whatever it is they're holding onto so tight--a rock, their rage, their shame--and just fed a lady? What a world that'd be, huh?

UTERUS

I'd like that world.

COWBOY

But folks don't let themselves *know* how much they'd like it is all. No imagination. That's the problem.

UTERUS

‘Tis.

COWBOY

Folks don't see. Imagination needs mapping too. Needs bein' tender, bein' tended *to*. You get me? The map *and* the territory.

UTERUS

Can only give back what it gets.

COWBOY

‘xactly

What you said 'bout feedin'--
 UTERUS

Yup.
 COWBOY

Longest sentence I've heard you speak.
 UTERUS

If it does someone good talkin's worth the effort. If not, better to just mind yourself.
 COWBOY

Hmmm.
 UTERUS

Not long now till tacos.
 COWBOY

Really know your way around, don't you?
 UTERUS

Gotta know the map. Gotta know the terrain. They ain't always the same. So you gotta be forgivin'.
 COWBOY

You had to do a lot? Forgivin' I mean.
 UTERUS

Less than some.
 COWBOY

Less than most.
 (Beat)

What's the trick?
 UTERUS

Like anything else. Practice, practice. More practice. Ain't never any excuse not to practice.
 COWBOY

Like I said, you're kinder than I am.
 UTERUS
 (Beat)

Longitude and latitude. Just gotta find your whereabouts is all. 'S easy when you're succulent, built to hoard water and covered in prickly armor. You, you're pure flesh. Need a lot more care is all. Time and care.
 COWBOY

Tender care.
 UTERUS

And tacos.
 COWBOY

Right up yonder.
 (Pointing to taco truck in the distance)

Hey. My treat.

UTERUS

Much obliged.

COWBOY

(Touching the brim of his hat)

Beatrice likes hers vegan. Extra onions and hot sauce.

(Beat)

Well she's full o' juice, ain't she?

UTERUS

'N ready to burst.

COWBOY

I sure am gonna miss her.

(Beat)

BLACKOUT

SCENE EIGHT

*AMANDA is back on the airplane, in the same seat.
CAPTAIN's voice comes over the speaker.*

CAPTAIN (V.O.)

Folks we know you have your choice of carriers and wanna thank you for choosing Joy Airlines this afternoon. If you look out the left side of the aircraft you'll see a straight white man in his early 30s, a hopeless alcoholic who, despite the love of friends and family, turns everything around him into complete and utter shit.

*(The sound of impressed passengers "ooooohhh",
"aaaahhhh")*

Some say it's a disease and that he can't help it. But that's always a bit hard to swallow/ This is America after all. We get things DONE!

*(The sound of impressed passengers "ooooohhh",
"aaaahhhh")*

With the cloud cover it may be hard to see if he's on a bender or in a dry spell. But wet or dry, a drunk is a drunk is a drunk?

(The sound of passengers murmuring "You ain't kidding", "True dat!", etc.)

The crew will be coming through the cabin as we begin our descent. Please check around your seats for any trash or unwanted newspapers. Oh, and will the passenger in 21C please make yourself known to the flight attendant. Thank you.

AMANDA, in an echo of her previous scene, pushes the call button above her head in seat #21C. FLIGHT ATTENDANT heads down the aisle towards her seat.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Did you enjoy your nuts?

AMANDA

I'm back.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

I'm sorry, Miss, if you want to be up front in first class that's technically an upgrade/

AMANDA

Back on the plane I mean!

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Oh, 21C! Long time no see.

AMANDA

You pushed me outta the cabin door!

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

I didn't recognize you without your parachute.

AMANDA

Where are we going?

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Detroit. Just like last time.

AMANDA

Can you get me a complimentary beverage please.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Sadly, our beverage service has ended. But I can take your empty nut sack.

AMANDA

I didn't have any nuts.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Oh right, you're the one with the geographic uterus. The one lacking all terrain.

AMANDA

How do you know about that?

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Oh, everyone knows about it.

AMANDA

Everyone who?

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

On the plane, in the airport, in your life. Here, there, everywhere. Really passenger 21C? You can't go around yapping about your rogue joy or renegade uterus without us all noticing, can you? I may be just a flight attendant but that doesn't make me stupid.

AMANDA

I never said you were/

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

OK, I'm stupid! Stop screaming!

AMANDA

I wasn't/

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

I'm afraid.

AMANDA

Of what?

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Afraid I'm gonna hafta ask you to stand up.

AMANDA

Oh no/

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Come on, this ain't your first rodeo.

AMANDA

But I thought we were headed to Detroit.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

We are. All we do up here is go to Detroit.

(Beat)

Detroit, Michigan

(Beat)

Detroit, Maine

(Beat)

Detroit, Alabama

(Beat)

Detroit Texas

(Beat)

Detroit, Illinois

(Beat)

Detroit, Tennessee

(Beat)

Detroit, Kansas

(Beat)

Detroit, Oregon

(Beat)

We gotta lock on alllll the Dee-troits.

AMANDA

So many?

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

A yet even with all those Detroits somehow you'll never be good enough.

(Briskly shifting gears)

OK, sugar. We're gonna need you to get out now.

AMANDA

But I wanna go to Detroit.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Ever thought you'd hear yourself say those words?

(Wresting AMANDA from her seat)

Let's get you strapped in. We'll be over Bed-Stuy in a few.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT stands AMANDA up and again attaches a parachute to her back and, again, sticks a poorly fitted crash helmet on her head.

AMANDA

But I don't/

FLIGHT ATTENDANT adds a flotation device to the ensemble.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

In case of a uterine landing.

AMANDA

Wha-?/

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Oh, and, whatever you do--

AMANDA

I know. Don't blow into the red tube.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

What? No. I was gonna say don't give him any cash. You know he'll just spend it on booze. No matter what he says. *(Pause)* OK, here. This is where you get off.

AMANDA

He was supposed to be the one--

FLIGHT ATTENDANT hustles AMANDA to the door of the plane, opens it, a strong wind rushes in, the sound of the airplane grows louder.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Yeah, well, no accounting for high-quality human connection, is there?

AMANDA

But/

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

(Pushing AMANDA out the door of the plane, then yelling loudly after her)

Say hi to the ex for me!

AMANDA

(O.S., the sound of AMANDA's voice getting further away as she falls)

JOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOYYYYYYYY!

FLIGHT ATTENDANT shuts the door, fixes her hair and returns to the passengers.

CAPTAIN (V.O.)

For those of you *not* visiting an alcoholic ex, we'll be landing in Detroit shortly. Flight attendants, prepare for landing.

BLACKOUT

We hear the polite "bing" of the cabin, followed by the unsettling roar of engines, lowering of wing flaps, getting louder and louder and louder until a sudden stillness hurls us right into the next scene like a slingshot.

SCENE NINE

*A one room, railroad-style apartment in Bed-Stuy. Sounds of the city, traffic, children playing, music coming through the window. The furnishings are minimal, but not in a cool way. In a depressing way. A table--something picked up from the streets--is off to the side. Several bottles sit on table--beer, whiskey, tequila--mostly empty as well as a plate of half-eaten food that's been sitting there way too long. There one wooden chair tipped up against the table. An easy chair--another dumpster diving gem--and a cheap dog bed on the floor along with a non-functioning TV. **DOG** is on the dog bed whimpering, on and off, then falling into a deep sleep. He is close to death.*

***BOYFRIEND** goes to him, comforts him then sinks back in the easy chair, crying and drinking.*

***AMANDA** enters, dragging her parachute and holding her crash helmet. She dumps them on the floor and then quickly goes to the **DOG**. **BOYFRIEND** joins her at **DOG's** side.*

I never wanted to come back here.	AMANDA
I knew you would.	BOYFRIEND
How long has he been like this?	AMANDA
He's dying.	BOYFRIEND
I know. Why else would I come back?	AMANDA
For me.	BOYFRIEND
There's nothing I can do for you.	AMANDA
I tried to look after him. I'm not the best at/	BOYFRIEND
If only I'd come sooner. I thought we were headed to Detroit.	AMANDA
Detroit?	BOYFRIEND
Don't ask. It's a whole thing.	AMANDA

What made you come? BOYFRIEND

You did once. Ancient history. AMANDA

I couldn't help it. I was sick. BOYFRIEND

He's sick! AMANDA

You loved me. You loved him. BOYFRIEND

I still love him. AMANDA

BOYFRIEND
(BOYFRIEND returns to chair, sinking)
 It was the best thing we ever did, loving him.

He doesn't blame you. AMANDA

I know. *(Crying)* BOYFRIEND

He should. AMANDA

Why would you say something like that? BOYFRIEND

You took his life. I want it back. AMANDA

I took it? BOYFRIEND

I want it back. AMANDA

Doesn't matter what you *want*. Matters what *happens*. *(Beat)* Won't be long now. BOYFRIEND

My joy. I want it back. AMANDA
(Beat)
 Plus my uterus is missing.

Wow. And I thought I was lost. BOYFRIEND

AMANDA

You had no right to get that lost.

BOYFRIEND

But you can while away the hours looking...for what? A uterus? Joy?

AMANDA

Once I thought it was here, with you.

BOYFRIEND

Still could be.

AMANDA

Do you remember *anything*?

BOYFRIEND

Remembering hurts my head.

AMANDA

You were dry when I found you two. Then what? Five, six months and suddenly one day I'm waking up to the sound of blood and vomit splashing in the toilet. Between the spitting and gagging you'd beg me for more. *I'll take the car. Probably hit a dog. You can't live with that, can you?* You knew what to say to get me to do your dirty work.

BOYFRIEND

I needed my medicine.

AMANDA

And he'd just sit beside you.

BOYFRIEND

He's always loved me.

AMANDA

I didn't want to know.

BOYFRIEND

You left me.

AMANDA

I left your habit.

BOYFRIEND

I needed you here. That's how you love people. You're *with* them. It's geography. We were alone without you.

AMANDA

You had him. But you didn't care. It was never enough. You're a black hole. I had to leave. I said, "I want it back."

BOYFRIEND

I don't look in mirrors anymore. I stopped that when you left.

AMANDA
(Softly stroking THE DOG's head)

Look at him.

BOYFRIEND

Sad specimen. Just like his Daddy.

AMANDA
 Self pity's always been your kibbles and bits.
(THE DOG lifts his head, whines for BOYFRIEND)
 He just wants you.

BOYFRIEND

And you.

AMANDA
 I always loved him. But it was *you* he wanted. He knew I could get by, on my own. He knew you couldn't.
 You killed him.

BOYFRIEND

Dogs die.

AMANDA
 We all die. Just depends on how quickly, whether you fight it or help it along.

BOYFRIEND

I needed you.

AMANDA
 I saw what your needing meant. *(Beat)* He needed you, would always wait for you. You'd call from some
 sticky phone booth and he'd hear your voice through the line. His body would tighten, his ear prick up.
 You were his joy.

BOYFRIEND

Was I ever your joy?

AMANDA

I thought so. Once.

BOYFRIEND

I can love.

AMANDA

You can need.

BOYFRIEND

I want it back.

AMANDA
 How do you even remember. You were too busy in your bottle.

BOYFRIEND

Guess we're both killers then.

I didn't kill it. AMANDA

I want it back. BOYFRIEND

IT? You didn't even know/ AMANDA

Did *you* know? BOYFRIEND

I *saved* a life. AMANDA

I want it back. BOYFRIEND

You don't get a do over. This isn't a game. AMANDA

You sure. You loved to play. BOYFRIEND

I saved him. From you. From us. AMANDA

It was a boy? BOYFRIEND

Nothing. AMANDA

He was inside of you. You took him. Give him back. BOYFRIEND

Give you someone else to kill? Now I want *my* joy. I want it back. AMANDA

You'll never erase me. I'm inside of you. Just like he was. Once something is inside you it never really goes away. BOYFRIEND

*AMANDA spoons the **DOG**, rubbing his brow, maybe singing quietly and sweetly, kissing him. **BOYFRIEND** cries. Downs some more whiskey.*

Remember that first night together? AMANDA

We fucked. Talked about 70s movies. BOYFRIEND

AMANDA

He laid on top of us, straight across both our legs, like he was willing us to be together. You pulled out that VHS of *Two-Lane Blacktop*.

BOYFRIEND

James Taylor. Everyone thinks he's so sensitive. But you can see in every frame. Total dickweed.

AMANDA

You said, *Never as much air conditioning in Florida as everyone thinks there is*. I thought you were crazy. But you were just telling me who you were.

BOYFRIEND

Don't remember that. Not the way you tell it.

(BOYFRIEND goes over to THE DOG, cradling him in his arms)

How much longer?

AMANDA

Not long. What will you do? With his body?

BOYFRIEND

They'll burn it. Give me back some ashes.

AMANDA

You won't go with him?

BOYFRIEND

I can't watch that.

AMANDA

There's a little door. He'll know you're there though, right up until the end.

BOYFRIEND

I can't.

AMANDA

You won't.

BOYFRIEND

I can't.

AMANDA

Then you never deserved him.

THE DOG breathes one last breath, and dies.

I want him back.

BOYFRIEND

You can't leave. You took our joy.

AMANDA

What are you going to do? What were you *ever* going to do?

(Cradling DOG, she moves to exit.)

I'll bring you the ashes. You can cry into them.

BOYFRIEND

Bitch

AMANDA

There it is. Your true face. That's why you can't look in mirrors. You can't stand the sight.

BOYFRIEND

I don't know what you're talking about.

(Beat, then desperately)

I want you back. I know you.

AMANDA

No. You don't. You're just afraid of dying.

AMANDA exits with DOG. BOYFRIEND is alone, with his bottles.

BLACKOUT

SCENE 10

*The airplane again, but AMANDA's not in her usual seat.
The CAPTAIN speaks.*

CAPTAIN (V.O.)

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen. We know you have your choice of carriers and we wanna thank you for choosing Joy Airlines this afternoon. We have a report from air control of an interloper hanging onto the wing of the plane trying to gain access to the cabin. Luckily, it's just passenger 21C. Still looking for her joy. She's a stubborn one, I'll give her that. Say hi to everyone 21C!

Outside one of the windows we see AMANDA, wearing her crash helmet, desperately trying to hang on to the plane and mouthing "Help me!" over the roar of the engine.

We'll be taking evasive maneuvers so make sure you keep those seat belts fastened good and tight. Also, this is the gay part so if you find yourself experiencing overwhelming feelings of either nausea or titillation here's a bag in your front seat pocket. Hit the call button right above your head and your the flight attendant will appear with flat ginger ale and the reassurance that most of you are still straight. Where's our girl gonna look for her joy next? Looks like it's lady parts time! Up here in the cabin we're gonna keep the pedal to the metal. 21C, you know the drill!

Plane banks strongly to one side. AMANDA appears again in the window, eventually losing her grip and falling away.

AMANDA (V.O.)

Jooooooooooooooooooooo!

BLACKOUT

SCENE 11

*The bedroom of a Manhattan apartment. **ONE NIGHT STAND** is sitting up in bed. Between her legs, under the covers, is a lump. The lump is **AMANDA**. The lump starts to move roughly and moan, more from a hangover than from pleasure.*

ONE NIGHT STAND
Whatcha looking for under there, spare change?

AMANDA
Not exactly. *(Beat)* Depends.

ONE NIGHT STAND
On what?

AMANDA
Never mind. *(Beat)* I'm getting the feeling this is multifactorial.

ONE NIGHT STAND
Meaning?

AMANDA
Nothing *(beat)* Jesus, that was a rough ride

ONE NIGHT STAND
You can lose the helmet.

***AMANDA**, barely noticing she was still wearing it, takes it off and puts it aside.*

ONE NIGHT STAND
Better.
(Searching the nightstand for her cigarettes, pulling one out)

Want one?

AMANDA
You know I don't smoke.

ONE NIGHT STAND
Do I? It's hard to keep track of these things.

AMANDA
Of whether I smoke?

ONE NIGHT STAND
No, of the days. And the nights. One bleeds into the next. I'm so busy. Busy. Busy. Busy. But you gotta love it, right? The madness, the rush. Doing and deciding. It gets the blood going.

AMANDA
It does?

You hungry? ONE NIGHT STAND
 No one's ever asked me that before. AMANDA
 No one? ONE NIGHT STAND
 Pretty basic stuff. *(Beat)*
 I do have this strange craving for tacos. Cactus and pony meat--no, wait, vegan pony meat. It bleeds like real meat but instead it's crammed full o' vegetable joy. Is that weird? AMANDA
 I have potato salad and a peach. ONE NIGHT STAND
 With lots of onions and hot sauce. AMANDA
 They're both a little iffy. ONE NIGHT STAND
 The onions and hot sauce? AMANDA
 The potato salad and the peach. ONE NIGHT STAND
 I'll pass. AMANDA
 Probably best. Don't even remember where they came from. ONE NIGHT STAND
 You're not here much, are you? AMANDA
 I have people to manage those things. ONE NIGHT STAND
 You important? AMANDA
 You might say that. ONE NIGHT STAND
 Would you say that? AMANDA
 I would. Yes. Definitely. ONE NIGHT STAND

AMANDA

Least you know who you are. I don't know anything about you. An intimate detail here and there, a smell, something salty. But nothing of note.

ONE NIGHT STAND

That's enough. Everyone's on a need-to-know basis. It's how I keep things tidy.

AMANDA

I got that.

ONE NIGHT STAND

Good.

AMANDA

Just a heads up. I'm having a bit of a...thing...right now. With knowing. It's clogging up my brain

ONE NIGHT STAND

Then let me clear that up for you.

Leans over and kisses AMANDA

AMANDA

That's nice. But it doesn't really clarify anything.

ONE NIGHT STAND

I'm thinking we should go away somewhere. Get out of the city.

AMANDA

I don't have any money to/

ONE NIGHT STAND

I'll take care of it.

AMANDA

I don't/

ONE NIGHT STAND

Let me do what I do.

AMANDA

Where do you want to go?

ONE NIGHT STAND

Trees. Some grass. Maybe a bird or two. Someplace where no one knows us.

AMANDA

No one knows us here. Why would that be any different?

ONE NIGHT STAND

Helps me keep it that way. I don't like complications.

AMANDA

Is that what you think--?/

ONE NIGHT STAND

Good. Agreed. Let's keep it that way. *(Beat)* OK, wanna go again?

AMANDA

Give it a minute, will ya?

(Beat)

Don't you have somewhere to be? You said you're important. Plus I'm still hungry.

ONE NIGHT STAND

You trying to get rid of me?

AMANDA

How's that work? This is *your* place.

ONE NIGHT STAND

Oh, right. Let's keep it that way.

AMANDA

You keep saying that.

ONE NIGHT STAND

I wanna be transparent.

AMANDA

Uh-- *(laughter)*

ONE NIGHT STAND

What?

AMANDA

You're serious?

ONE NIGHT STAND

Why wouldn't I be/

AMANDA

You just don't--Transparency doesn't strike me as your *thing*.

ONE NIGHT STAND

I offered you a peach. And potato salad. And a weekend in the country. With birds.

AMANDA

Yeah, but.

ONE NIGHT STAND

It's what I have. It's everything. I'm offering you everything.

(Beat)

What were you expecting?

AMANDA

Nothing. Really. Nothing.

ONE NIGHT STAND

Ok then.

AMANDA

I barely remember you. I was expecting to slip away in the middle of the night. Stubbing my toe on your bedpost. T-shirt on backwards. The streets aren't safe at night, I know, but the darkness is so brilliant. I can think in the dark.

ONE NIGHT STAND

You can't think here with me?

AMANDA

Is that what you wanted me for, thinking.

ONE NIGHT STAND

...

AMANDA

Didn't think so.

ONE NIGHT STAND

You do this often?

AMANDA

I just met you last night.

ONE NIGHT STAND

You know what I mean.

AMANDA

You mean fucking?

ONE NIGHT STAND

Yes. I suppose that's what I mean.

AMANDA

Everyone does it all the time. Unless they don't. I'm no different.

ONE NIGHT STAND

Fucking strangers.

AMANDA

We're not strangers. We fucked. It's one of the more efficient ways of deciding whether someone is worth knowing.

ONE NIGHT STAND

Look who's clever?

AMANDA

I'm not. I just get the obvious things. Doesn't take a genius.

ONE NIGHT STAND

Genius is overrated.

AMANDA

...

ONE NIGHT STAND

You don't agree.

AMANDA

No. I was just thinking.

ONE NIGHT STAND

That again.

AMANDA

It's one of those words--genius--people like to throw it around. Like rice at a wedding. Like a tic.

ONE NIGHT STAND

You wanna get married then?

AMANDA

Whoa, whoa, whoa. I don't even know what I want to eat.

ONE NIGHT STAND

Tacos. With cactus and pony meat. Vegan pony meat. Lots of onions and hot sauce.

AMANDA

I'm impressed.

ONE NIGHT STAND

If you want things you have to plan.

AMANDA

I can't think that far into the future.

ONE NIGHT STAND

I think of my future every single moment. I never bother with the present. It's a waste of time if you ask me. Too sticky and sweet.

AMANDA

Like an all-inclusive Caribbean getaways where racism's served with fruity drinks--

ONE NIGHT STAND

--paper umbrellas/

AMANDA

--and a wedge of lime.

ONE NIGHT STAND

It sickens.

AMANDA

It does.

ONE NIGHT STAND

I prefer the cool, blue tones of what's still to come.

AMANDA

So when we were fucking you weren't thinking about fucking?

ONE NIGHT STAND

I was thinking about a lot of things. Fucking was in the mix though. Don't worry.

AMANDA

Worry?

ONE NIGHT STAND

Don't think you don't matter.

AMANDA

But I don't. Not to you.

ONE NIGHT STAND

You don't know that.

AMANDA

I do. Again. Common sense.

ONE NIGHT STAND

I don't know about that.

AMANDA

Yeah? What's my name?

ONE NIGHT STAND

....

AMANDA

What do I like?

ONE NIGHT STAND

Not potato salad an peaches. Clearly.

AMANDA

You expect me to just dive in without checking the expiration date.

ONE NIGHT STAND

You *are* a thinker.

AMANDA

It's not something I try to do. It happens when it happens.

ONE NIGHT STAND

It's not as much fun walking home in the daylight.

AMANDA

No it's not.

ONE NIGHT STAND

So what will you do? At home?

AMANDA
Eat something. Take a shower. Watch TV.

ONE NIGHT STAND
You could do that here.

AMANDA
I could.

ONE NIGHT STAND
Let's do it again.

AMANDA
I'm busy too ya' know.

ONE NIGHT STAND
Doing what?

AMANDA
Looking for my joy.

ONE NIGHT STAND
Oh, that's a bad idea.

AMANDA
Why?

ONE NIGHT STAND
Joy's a slippery one.
(ONE NIGHT STAND puts her hand under the covers, between AMANDA's legs.)

Like this.
(AMANDA closes her eyes and moans quietly. ONE NIGHT STAND moves her hand to a different, deeper spot.)

That too.
(AMANDA moans, also more deeply)

Best you can hope for?

AMANDA
What?

ONE NIGHT STAND
Peace. Maybe some pleasure.

AMANDA
You could be right. Or you could be full of shit. Either way *(beat)* I'll take that peach.

ONE NIGHT STAND
I warned you, it's iffy.

AMANDA
Yeah. *(Beat)* Tell me something I don't know.

BLACKOUT

SCENE 12

UTERUS and COWBOY are sitting together on the log. UTERUS is wearing COWBOY's hat. Both are holding a tumbleweed over their heads. Rain falls around them, with the occasional flash of lightning and thunder, but they both remain dry.

Who'da thunk. UTERUS

How's that? COWBOY

Tumbleweeds. UTERUS

Makes a kinda sense though. No one better than 'n a tumbleweed at catching stuff. They're the pickpockets of the desert. Wiley. Survivors. Pretty much live offa rain and air. COWBOY

And tumblin'. UTERUS

That's the secret sauce. Never look behind 'em, only forward at where they might go. Always forward. COWBOY

Soldiers. UTERUS

But without the unnecessary killin'. COWBOY

Warriors. UTERUS

Indeed. COWBOY

That's a good word there. *(Beat)* Warriors. Don't make war unless you hafta. Master themselves. Thoughtful. Like poets.

Forgot to thank you for the hat. UTERUS

Don't mention it. Man's hat is his bond. Gotta have a code or whaddya worth, right? COWBOY

Poor. UTERUS

A poor excuse. Pure excuse. It's women taught me to watch out for that. COWBOY

UTERUS
You're welcome.

COWBOY
Credit where credit is due is what I say. It starts to rain, you always gotta think of that hat as the greater good. My protection is yours as long as you need it. Shouldn't just be my needs leadin' the pony. Other needs matter too.

UTERUS
Altruism?

COWBOY
Gosh no. Selfishness.

UTERUS
I don't get ya'.

COWBOY
That hat you're wearing. That's my north star. Been keeping me covered, safe for I don't know how long. You save up the love. Bank it. Keep it under your hat. It accrues. Like interest. Something you can use as a present, an offering when the world needs it. This way I'm never lonely. Look at my life. Got all this space. Got me Beatrice. Got you sitting up on this log. Got the protection of the noble tumbleweed. I'm a rich man. Letting go and givin'. That a man's work. Man who don't know that, well, he's living a small life.

UTERUS
You know, between the hat and this tumbleweed--

COWBOY
What?

UTERUS
I've never felt this before. Hold on. I'm having a new feeling. Right here in my center.

COWBOY
Good feelings I hope.

UTERUS
Good. Yes. But more'n that. Unknown. Unprecedented.

COWBOY
You got words?

UTERUS
Safe.

COWBOY
Them there's a biggie.

UTERUS
Why does that make me wanna cry? I should be happy. But the tears are welling up inside me and they got no place to come out. Feels like I'm gonna explode.

COWBOY
 Yup. Sounds like safety. A cactus.

UTERUS
 This is what it's like?

COWBOY
 Yup. Big hands holdin' ya. Big sky, endless horizons. Jumping from a tall, red rock into a swimmin' hole. Able to swallow it all and never get full. A warrior.

UTERUS
 I don't want to fight. I'm tired of fighting.

COWBOY
 Ain't about the fight. 'Bout reading the terrain, the swells and dales of the battlefield.

UTERUS
 Love is a battlefield. Girl I knew said that once.

COWBOY
 Sounds 'bout right.

UTERUS
 Yeah

COWBOY
 You're gettin' ready, aren't ya?
A huge flash of lightning

UTERUS
 That was a big one.

COWBOY
 'Twas.

UTERUS
 I'm getting ready. That's how it comes to you don't it. A flash.

COWBOY
 Yup.

UTERUS
 Comes in a flash. Everything lights up for a second, then the dark. Then you wait for another flash. Accumulation of flashes.

COWBOY
 They add up.

UTERUS
 I left in a flash, ya know.

COWBOY
 That's usually how that happens. A before and an after.

UTERUS
Plot point. Head east or west. Any decision'll do.

COWBOY
Tumble along, find your wind.

UTERUS
I think I'm gonna need to get goin' soon.

COWBOY
Only you can tell where the wind is taking you.

UTERUS
But I'll wait.

COWBOY
For?

UTERUS
Just one more thing. Gotta pick the pocket with this here tumbleweed.

COWBOY
Hat's all yours as long as you need. Like they say on them airplanes. Put the tumbleweed on yourself first and don't ever be afraid to share your hat.

UTERUS
Words for living.

COWBOY
Words for tumbling

(Beat)
Tumbling for joy.

BLACKOUT

SCENE 13

Back on the airplane, AMANDA is sitting in the same seat. The FLIGHT ATTENDANT floats.

CAPTAIN V.O.

It's that time folks. Our *final* trip to our *final* destination. We'll be descending into deepest Detroit in just a few moments--cloud cover is thick and we might encounter some pretty good chop. We'd like to extend a special welcome to 21C, since this will be her final flight with us. If you look out the left side of the aircraft you'll see--well, the right side too--actually, any side'll do--you'll see--*sweet merciful Zeus with a cardboard thunderbolt spray-painted gold*--it's 21C's mother!

PASSENGERS erupt into wild applause.

AMANDA

No. No!

CAPTAIN V.O.

'Fraid so 21C. Gonna be an emergency sea/air/other side of the mountain landing for you this time. We're coming in fast, head first, and without the faintest idea of who you are.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Ain't it always the way.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT hustles AMANDA to her feet, dragging her to the cabin door.

AMANDA

My crash helmet?!

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

That reserved for our Diamond Elite customers. Sorry, 21C. Accident of birth and all.

AMANDA

At least give me a parachute!

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

All out I'm afraid.

AMANDA

I'm the one who should be afraid!

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

You are 100% correct.

AMANDA

You just can't leave me hanging. You gotta give me something to soften the blow.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

We do have these lovely doilies you could use, hand crocheted by your mother, or her mother, or some other mother. All the mothers from way, way back. Just hold on tight to the edges and you'll get everything you ever wanted.

AMANDA

That's not true!

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

No, it's not. But it's very important you believe it. Believing is magic!

AMANDA

(Regarding the doily)

This thing is full of holes.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

As a wise Skee Ball attendant once said, don't overthink it.

AMANDA

I can't/

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

(Pushing AMANDA out of the plane)

Out you go!

AMANDA

Joooooooooooooooooy!

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

(To AMANDA)

You just keep tellin' yourself that sweetie and I'm sure it'll happen for you!

(Shutting door, to herself)

Poor little fucker.

BLACKOUT

SCENE 14

A child's bedroom. A child-size table and two tiny chairs are downstage. A toy tea set is on the table with a cup and saucer for each chair. DARLENE, AMANDA's mother, sits sideways (facing the audience) on one of the chairs, trying unsuccessfully to settle herself because the chair's so damn small. Her pocketbook is on her lap, and she's clutching it with both hands, staring straight ahead, a deer in the headlights. AMANDA enters, chaotically windblown, disheveled and awash in doilies, bundles of them clutched in each hand.

Jesus!
AMANDA

Language!
DARLENE

AMANDA
How is that "language"? Jesus was a real person.

DARLENE
Stop making this about me. And while your at it, leave Jesus out of it.

AMANDA
It's like yelling "Steve!" or "Sally!" Just a name.

DARLENE
I will not be mocked.

AMANDA sits down in the opposite chair, facing DARLENE. The chair is so small her knees jut out and up. DARLENE remains facing forward, uncomfortable but committed to her choice. She responds to AMANDA but does not look at her.

Though I have to say, I'm surprised. You're never been one to arrive unannounced. Let alone stay.

AMANDA
Who says I'm staying?

DARLENE
You sat down, didn't you?

AMANDA
I'm just taking a load off. All this travel. It discombobulates.

DARLENE
Maybe if you didn't spend all your time running around, you'd finally be able to get somewhere. Always chasing after something. Never willing to see what's right in front of you.

AMANDA
Maybe. You've known me longer than I have. It's just--I've never really thought of myself that way.

DARLENE
Well how do you see yourself?

AMANDA

Stuck, still. The world rushing past me.

DARLENE

The grass is always greener isn't it?

AMANDA

No, no. Greener pastures were your thing.

DARLENE

I have no idea what you mean.

AMANDA

You would stand perfectly still, looking out at the world. Looking at everything that was better. In my mind's eye I always see you just standing and longing.

(Beat, acting it out)

Loooong.

(Beat)

Pause.

(Beat)

Loooooooooong.

(Beat)

Another pause.

(Beat)

Like that.

DARLENE

(Shifting her position slightly)

You're making this up.

AMANDA

You didn't believe everyone had it better?

(Beat)

Or, at the very least, that you had it worse.

DARLENE

There's nothing wrong with wanting better things.

AMANDA

You want what you want. You get it or you don't.

DARLENE

Is that some sort of riddle?

AMANDA

Just a point of view.

DARLENE

I know your tricks. Implying some sinister motive behind everything I do and say. I thought you'd have outgrown that by now.

AMANDA

Yet here we are. Look, I didn't have a plan. But you fly round and round Detroit at certain unexpected altitudes and sooner or later the plane drops you where it drops you. Just gotta put on your big girl pants and make the best of it.

DARLENE

I wouldn't know. I've never been in an airplane. Never had the luxury.

AMANDA

Not missing much really.

DARLENE

I'd like to know for myself, thank you.

AMANDA

It's very confining. A cage, but without the perks. Not even a water bowl. And they'll make you check that--

(Indicating pocketbook)

You sign away your civil rights, sit and stand when they tell you.

DARLENE

Sounds like life.

AMANDA
(Laughing)

You're not wrong.

DARLENE

Don't sound so surprised.

AMANDA

Not surprised. Just...

(Beat)

Yeah. Surprised.

DARLENE

No one's laying a hand on my pocketbook. I'll tell you that much. Some things are sacred. You don't mess with them. But you're entitled to your our point of view. God knows I've never been able to stop you.

AMANDA

You make me sound relentless.

DARLENE

Your word. Not mine.

AMANDA

It can be yours too. We can share.

DARLENE

Is this a trick? Because I'm in no mood.

AMANDA

No tricks.

DARLENE

Let's keep it that way.

I don't want to fight.

AMANDA

Then let's not drag this out. I've got clothes in the dryer.

DARLENE

We should at least...

AMANDA

How do you take yours?

(Motioning to tea set)

Invisible.

DARLENE

Me too!

AMANDA

You sound surprised. Again.

DARLENE

AMANDA mimes pouring tea into two cups. She "drinks" her tea. Without turning and looking, DARLENE struggles to find her cup. AMANDA gently pushes it towards her so her hand finds it. DARLENE drinking the imaginary tea.

Not surprised. Relieved. And curious

AMANDA

You know what they say about the cat.

DARLENE

People say all kinds of things about cats. Pussies this. Pussies that. Doesn't make them true. Just things that fall out of mouths, lots of air and spit getting pushed around.

AMANDA

Well, I think they're devious. Cats.

DARLENE

That's a theory.

AMANDA

And curious about what, by the way?

DARLENE

Something I've always wanted to ask. Guess I had to be dropped from a great height to get up the nerve.

AMANDA

Well, enough suspense. Out with it.

DARLENE

Let's finish our tea first.

AMANDA

AMANDA and DARLENE “drink” their tea. AMANDA is also carefully removing the doilies stuck to her and stacking them neatly on the table. DARLENE watches her.

DARLENE
My left butt check is falling asleep. I won't last much longer.

AMANDA
Right then. Tell me. Why didn't you?

DARLENE
Why didn't I what?

AMANDA
Kill me.

DARLENE
(Affronted)
I have no idea what you're talking about.

AMANDA
Please. Don't misunderstand. No blame.

DARLENE
What kind of mother do you think--/

AMANDA
All that time up there, those low oxygen levels above the clouds. Air's thin. It changes a person. So really I'm just asking.

DARLENE
I wanted you.

AMANDA
You wanted something.

DARLENE
(Sputtering)
I don't--

AMANDA
When you knew, knew the thing you wanted wasn't me, why didn't you *(beat)*, ya know. That.

DARLENE
What?

AMANDA
Tell the truth.

DARLENE
Truth is a luxury.

AMANDA

Mercy is in short order. Supply chain issues.

DARLENE

I didn't...*(Beat)* I thought I hid it well.

AMANDA

I knew.

DARLENE

When?

AMANDA

Before I was even born. I tried to tell you but I think I might have failed. More than once. Something always got caught in my throat. I think we're actually built that way. To forget. When you're on the inside-

DARLENE

In prison?

AMANDA

In utero.

DARLENE

Oh.

AMANDA

It's like there's this little pony express--

DARLENE

I always wanted a pony.

AMANDA

It's engorged, throbbing and insatiable and always travels at breakneck speed.

DARLENE

Did you ever want a pony?

AMANDA

Every girl wants a pony.

DARLENE

Something steady and loyal. To carry me to the places I wanted to go. At least I think so. Times I can't remember that far back. Remembering hurts my head.

AMANDA

Lots of that going around.

DARLENE

Is there?

AMANDA

I don't remember much. Flashes, images, a cramp here or there. Lots going on. But this pony--uterus pony--it took messages back and forth 'tween you and me, you and me. And the mail never stopped.

That pony never stopped running. Not to eat, drink, or rest its legs. And it didn't care about you. You're just a sack of blood and nutrients to be mined. Kept you alive, but just barely. Not that things were so swell on my end. People like to talk a good game. *So safe, so warm.* Truth is it's pretty cramped and noisy. And the food all tastes the same. Understand I'm not complaining. I'm just giving you the geography, the map. I didn't want you to feel badly. If you'd known that I knew--

DARLENE

I don't want to think about that.

AMANDA

It would've been worse.

DARLENE

It was so hard just to look at you, stare down at my belly, watching you taking over.

AMANDA

I know. And I knew then. The way an animal knows. The way its teeth chatter and hiss when it sees a predator. Nerves fire. Blood flows away from the gut. Instinct, isn't it? Children really are little beasts. No one likes them. I honestly don't know how anyone manages. I mean, kudos to you for sticking it out. But that still doesn't change the fact of it. There, I can see it in your face even now. You wanted me dead.

DARLENE

. . . .

AMANDA

So why didn't you do something about it? I wouldn't have held it against you. *That's* what all that longing was about after all. Not two-story colonial, the kitchen island, the Cadillac.

DARLENE

Maroon with the cream leather interior. That's one classy car.

AMANDA

You'd look for them. In the parking lot outside Macy's. A fancy store.

DARLENE

I wanted better things.

AMANDA

You'd hold tight to my hand and weave through the cars and when you'd see it/

DARLENE

The kind of car you arrive in. Not just for getting from here to there. Modes o' transportation matter.

AMANDA

You'd let the tips of your fingers caress it as we walked past, drag them along the chrome while you squeezed my hand. Tighter and tighter. I pretended it was because you wanted to keep me safe.

DARLENE

You have to hold a child's hand.

AMANDA

"She thinks a car will make it better." I thought. "Instead she's stuck with me."

DARLENE

You were always perpetually dissatisfied. That's your problem.

AMANDA

Aw, mum. I wasn't dissatisfied. Really, I wasn't.

DARLENE

What them?

AMANDA

(Turning her tea cup over, in the air)

I just knew the tea wasn't real.

DARLENE

. . .

AMANDA

But I was. Real.

(Beat)

That was the dealbreaker.

(Beat)

No hard feelings. Really. But I did need to say it. And to give you back you doilies.

DARLENE

But they're so pretty, don't you want to keep them? Pass them on?

AMANDA

No one to pass them on to even if I did. You keep them. Too full of holes for my taste.

AMANDA takes a handful of doilies and holds them towards DARLENE. For the first time DARLENE turns to her, takes them.

AMANDA

See? Wasn't so bad, was it?

Their eyes remain locked for a moment, each with a hand on the doilies. Then, slowly, something in DARLENE give in. AMANDA moves her chair over beside DARLENE. DARLENE rests her head on AMANDA's shoulder.

AMANDA

It's OK. I can stay as long as you need.

AMANDA pulls her closer. DARLENE exhales.

BLACKOUT

SCENE 15

Detroit Airport. Gate 33. The sounds are sterile, repeated announcements of “See Something, Say Something”, “3-1-1 for carry-on liquids”, “For passengers flying to New Orleans, this flight is completely full”, etc. Otherwise, physically and sonically, all the air has been sucked out of the place. The air is drenched with smell of Cinnabon, Annie’s Pretzels and Five Guys--the airport opiate of the masses. Everyone here seems expendable.

*At the gate there is a row of plastic molded chairs--the kind attached, four in a row, to a horizontal metal beam. **UTERUS** sits on one of these chairs, at the end of the four. She is expansive, spilling out everywhere, searching out any possible comfort. She’s not ashamed or shy. It’s a comfort she feels is owed her.*

***DARLENE** sits facing **UTERUS**, on another row of four chairs. **DARLENE** has made her body as compact as possible. Imagine a ship with its sails furled, floating silently down a river with no passengers in sight.*

***UTERUS** extends her legs into the space between them in a very “unladylike” manner. **UTERUS** yawns, stretches out her arms and legs, maybe scratching an armpit or vigorously wiping her face with both hands--like a man applying aftershave--in an effort reinvigorate herself from the surrounding torpor. Every movement and sound she makes is visceral, instinctive.*

***DARLENE**, who previously kept her eyes focused somewhere in the middle distance, shoots a very short and then increasingly longer glances at **UTERUS**, each more disapproving than the one before it. In these moments **DARLENE** may also clear her throat or something like that in hopes that **UTERUS** will notice and dial it back. **UTERUS** doesn’t notice--or maybe she does and she just doesn’t care. **UTERUS** isn’t playing that game.*

*Instead, **UTERUS** tries (unsuccessfully) to contort herself into a position that might allow for a nap, but the slippery unforgiving plastic molded chairs don’t allow for it. **UTERUS** sighs a loud frustrated sigh. She tries again and is even less successful this time. Perhaps she slides right off the chair and bangs her head against it, letting out a “shit”, “fuck”, or “Goddammit”. With this, **DARLENE** shoots **UTERUS** a major scolding stink eye. **UTERUS** clocks this and responds with a “WTF?” look/gesture. **DARLENE** averts her gaze, ignoring **UTERUS**.*

They sit in silence--a kind of cease fire--for a moment.

***DARLENE** opens her pocketbook, pulls out a tissue and blows her nose with as little noise as humanly possible, tucking the tissue discreetly into her sleeve. **UTERUS** rolls her eyes at **DARLENE**’s dainty, performative femininity. **DARLENE** sees this, looks away again. She then goes back into her pocketbook and fishes out a Butterscotch hard candy. She pulls carefully at each end until the wrapping unravels and pops the candy into her mouth without touching it. She folds the wrapper into smaller and smaller folds and tucks it into her pocketbook. While she’s in there, she retrieves a rosary--cream-colored beads with a small metal crucifix attached. **DARLENE** then closes her pocketbook with a satisfying snap.*

***DARLENE** sucks quietly on her candy, moving the sweet around her mouth with a strangely agile and muscular tongue. As she does this she fingers her rosary beads, perhaps even soundlessly mouthing the words to the prayers in a way that is very practiced and natural.*

***UTERUS** watches this whole dance and we see her reflexive impulse to mock **DARLENE**. She squelches that desire, however, and instead is drawn in, captivated by the combination of **DARLENE**’s swiftly moving hands and her acrobatic butterscotch sucking. It feels primal, sexual, voracious and **UTERUS** is increasingly enthralled, as if she’s watching an ancient religious rite reach its climax.*

UTERUS' attention and DARLENE's meditations begin to mirror each other. DARLENE's body loosens, the passion animating her and stretching her out. The intensity of their connection begins to slice through the space between them. The mother--whose eyes had closed--slowly opens one eye and then another, taking in the full weight of UTERUS' presence. For a moment it seems she might be put off, but she has the opposite response. She is opened up and allows UTERUS inside her bubble. DARLENE opens her pocketbook, still clutching the rosary, and removes a second butterscotch candy, handing it to UTERUS with an arm extended. UTERUS takes it and slowly pops it into her mouth, sucking. UTERUS and DARLENE share a slow nod, DARLENE returns to her rosary and UTERUS to her napping efforts.

SCENE 16

***COWBOY**, sitting on his log, whittling a piece of wood into a pointed stick. There's a pot of coffee brewing over the fire. **AMANDA** enters, stands beside him. The **OWL** from before hoots.*

Who? OWL (O.S)

Seen her? AMANDA

Yup. COWBOY

Where she's headed? AMANDA

Can't say I recall. COWBOY

Hmmm. AMANDA

***COWBOY** gestures for **AMANDA** to sit down on the log beside him. She does, her body folding like a flimsy lawn chair.*

Coffee? COWBOY

***AMANDA** nods in the affirmative. **COWBOY** hands her a blue and white speckled ceramic mugs. She holds it out while **COWBOY** fills it with coffee. **AMANDA** takes a sip. She's surprised. She looks at **COWBOY**, back at her coffee and back again at him.*

Not to yer likin'? COWBOY

Not at all. Is there/ AMANDA

COWBOY
Eggshells? Yup. Smooths it out. Lady who passed these parts--oh, I don't know how many years ago now--I don't collect memories exactly like y'all do--it's all happening--whaddya call it?-- simultaneous like. It's all one time.

This woman-- AMANDA

COWBOY

She showed me the trick. The eggshells. Said it would take away the bitter. One of the best lessons I ever learned. Could tell she knew what she was doin'. Knew that bitterness inside out, backwards and forwards.

AMANDA

In other words, just a woman.

COWBOY

You're a smart one. Don't need my two cents. I suspect you know just fine.

(Beat)

But she wasn't "just".

AMANDA

How's that?

COWBOY

You said "just" a woman. Ain't no such thing. Every one is more than their just.

They drink their coffee silently, together.

AMANDA

I knew that. I know that.

COWBOY

Course you do.

AMANDA

No. I lied. I didn't know that. It just came to me now, when you said that.

COWBOY

. . . .

AMANDA

I'm just tryin' to find my edges is all. Trying to find my way back to her.

COWBOY

Read the terrain. That's how ya do it.

AMANDA

She was somethin', huh?

COWBOY

. . . .

AMANDA

That's the kind thing you can say about just about everyone. "She was somethin'." King, queen, peasant, saint, serial killer. "She was somethin'". You can take it however you want, hide behind it. Deny, deny, deny. Like those non-denial denials. 'Member them? Watergate? Ever hear o' that? No one talks about it anymore and pretty soon all the players'll be dead and it with just be an old movie with old actors and they'll die too. No memory. Worst kind of death.

COWBOY

You wanna know.

Yup. AMANDA

Was you loved? COWBOY

Was I? AMANDA

Looks like someone's got a plane to catch. COWBOY

BLACKOUT

Scene 17

*Back at Gate 33, Detroit. Another day. The sterility has been wiped away, replaced by a Fellini circus meets 1978 Studio 54 meets 1982 Pyramid Club. Bodies, sweat, glitter, a thumpa-thumpa of an old-school disco beat. Lovers quarrel and kiss passionately. More glitter. It's a kaleidoscope. The smell of soft brown sugar and weed covers everything. Willie Wonka's factory without the indentured servitude of the Oompah-Loompahs. Pure joy from skin to guts. **FLIGHT ATTENDANT** stands behind the desk at the gate, two turntables, mixing tunes, driving the beat. The music is pure envy and so, so hot. **UTERUS** and **DARLENE** enter from opposite sides of the stage, each dressed in running gear. **DARLENE** is wearing a racer's bib (#29) like she's just come from a half-marathon. They meet in the middle with a raucous full-body hug, squeeling like schoolgirls. As they hug, the outlines of the world blur around them and it's like someone has turned the volume down, like we're looking thru an old Viewmaster and only **DARLENE**, **UTERUS**, and **FLIGHT ATTENDANT** are popping.*

Good mornin'!	DARLENE
Good mornin'	UTERUS
It's great to stay up late!	DARLENE
Good mornin'. Good mornin'. To you!	UTERUS/DARLENE
How's the half marathon?	UTERUS
Ready for a whole!	DARLENE
Wow. You are lookin' <i>fine</i> .	UTERUS
You're snoop doggin' it yourself.	DARLENE
That's good. Sounds good.	UTERUS

Sure is. DARLENE

I was just-- UTERUS

(Sound of a loud crash in the distance.)
Oh wait, wait. No worries. That's just Terminal B. We should be fine. You were sayin'--

I am on fire is all. DARLENE

Me, I was just doing a slow and steady two miler. Looks like you're in some serious competition. UTERUS

Serious. I guess. Don't try to think about it. Just havin' some fun. See, I even got the bracelets. DARLENE
DARLENE holds out her arm to UTERUS. She's wearing three of those silicon bracelets. She points to each in turn. Each has one word on it.

Havin'.

Some. *(Beat)*

Fun. *(Beat)*

Spectacular! UTERUS

Guess they had to do something with all those leftover Livestrong thingees. DARLENE

Time stops for a moment.

You feel that? What was that? UTERUS

Temporal shoutout to all the cancer homies who've come before. 'Cept Lance. He can suck it. DARLENE

You're saucy. UTERUS

I used to make sauce. Vacuuming, sauce, diapers. The whole catastrophe. It was bad sauce. Never really had a feel for it. But now I AM the sauce. Just spreadin' it around. DARLENE

Honestly! And here I thought you were dead. UTERUS

Me too! Twinners!

DARLENE

So, what?--

UTERUS

Met me a cowboy.

DARLENE

No! Where?

UTERUS

Church!

DARLENE

No.

UTERUS

YES!

DARLENE

Of all the places.

UTERUS

DARLENE

Ash Wednesday. Sitting in the church hall after. Some of his ashes dropped into my Coca-Cola.
(Imitating COWBOY voice)
Pardon me, Ma'am, can I get you a fresh one?

UTERUS

Dar, you scamp!

DARLENE

I know! He keeps air in a mason jar. We have water balloon fights in the cereal aisle of the Krogers. Go roller skating every Tuesday night. He's very into the politics of roller rinks. Speakin' of which. Time for me to roll. You comin' with?

UTERUS

Naw. Got someone coming in, should be arriving right about now.

DARLENE

'Kay. Catch you later.
(Noticing arriving passengers starting to de-plane at Gate 33)

Looks like they're comin' in hot.
(DARLENE starts to run off to re-join the race)

Don't be a stranger!

DARLENE exits. UTERUS moves closer to Gate 33. Random folks file out. Then AMANDA emerges. She sees UTERUS. They each offer a tentative way. It's a bit awkward, but not because it's uncomfortable. Only because it's new.

UTERUS
(To AMANDA)
Hey there stranger.

AMANDA
Hey.

A short awkward beat. Then, an offering--

UTERUS
You hungry?

AMANDA exhales for what feels like the first time.

AMANDA
Famished.

BLACKOUT

END OF PLAY