

ACT ONE, Sc. 1

Darkness.

A slow light rises, revealing that the entire back wall, from floor to ceiling, is made of closed doors, in various shapes and sizes.

A canopy of stars lights up the back wall. Heavenly clouds roll across the stage.

A beautiful pearly gate appears through the divine clouds.

A Broadway fanfare heralds the arrival of NANNA. A stylishly dressed 88-year-old, she sits atop a full luggage cart, wheeled out by invisible angels. The cart stops in front of the up-stage right door.

NANNA

Thanks for the lift, boys. Now be so kind as to put my bags in my room and there's a fin in the future for you.

She hops off the cart, which rolls back off-stage.

She tries the gate. Locked. Spins around, happy and eager, singing to the rolling clouds.

NANNA

(singing and dancing, away from the gate)

Heaven, I'm in Heaven,
and my heart beats so that I can hardly speak
and I better find the goddamn happiness I seek
when I'm up in Heaven dancing cheek to cheek!

Radiant, she looks out over the audience.

Hello? Anybody home?

(looking out into the darkness) Nice place you got here. Could use a little more light, no? But nice, right?

(calling out into the darkness) Helloooooo--

You're out there watching me, I can tell. Just like always, right? Don't be shy, come on out where I can see you? Yoohoo?

I cannot wait to finally meet you, after all these years.

And by the way, I feel *fabulous*, thank you very much. Got my hip back, my legs, my eye, my roots, my favorite dress, got rid of that goddamned iron lung and I quit smoking! Fabulous!

Pause. We hear the sound of a lonely wind blowing.

You know what, if I'm a few hours early, just open the gate and I'll sit in the lobby till the room is ready. Not a problem.

No response.

Guess not.

Alright then, how about a drink. No big miracles here, just a Dewars up. Whatever you have.

So I'm here now. Here I am. Where the hell am I?

(sings with mounting agitation) Dancing cheek to cheek..

She sings again, trying to find God out in the darkness over the audience. Behind her back, the Pearly Gates are swallowed by the clouds.

During Nanna's song, the gates are replaced by a massive, foreboding structure known as the Stick Woman: a cage made of sticks and branches in the shape of a woman, used for the purposes of human immolation.

TIAMET, Mother Goddess of the Universe, is trapped inside the cage. She is a large, corpulent woman with wild, almost living ropes of hair, whose body is covered with painted runes. She sits on a muddy, stump-like throne. Her hands are manacled together with a long chain. She holds onto the bars with both hands, focused on Nanna.

*[*Note: the full revelation of the imprisoned Tiamet should emerge from the darkness, so it times out with the end of Nanna's song*

NANNA

(singing) Oh, I'd like to climb a mountain
And reach the highest peak
But it doesn't thrill me half as much
as taking off these goddamn shoes cuz my dogs are howling , high
heels two sizes too small but "let's put her in these, she's dead, she
won't notice anyway" so where the hell is everybody in –

(angrily) HEAVEN, I'M IN HEAVEN,
AND MY HEART BEATS SO THAT I CAN BARELY
GODDAMN SPEAK ALREADY SO WHAT IS IT LABOR DAY
JUST OPEN THE GODDAMN GATES SO I CAN FIND THE
FRIGGEN HAPPINESS I SEEK!

Nanna turns around to try the gates, but she is suddenly face to face with Tiamet, trapped in the cage.

Tiamet hurls herself against the bars of her cage like an enraged animal, straining to escape. She screams in a forgotten, percussive tongue.

TIAMET

EEE KI KI KI AKKA GAI GAI KAKA KLIKI DI KLOW KLOW
KLOW!!

Nanna jumps back and immediately prostrates herself on the ground, covering her head with her hands.

Tiamet continues to struggle with the cage, to no avail. Each crash thunders in the infinite void. Exhausted, Tiamet slumps to the ground, whimpering quietly.

Nanna rises slowly. Stares at Tiamet from a safe distance.

NANNA

Uhm, hello, I uhm I hate to be rude, but you're supposed to be God?

Tiamet shakes her head "yes".

Uh huh. Well. Very nice to meet you. I got to tell you, you're not what I expected, not that your not every bit as magnificent and fabulous as I always pictured you'd be, because of course obviously you are.

Love the hair.

It's just, I mean where's the shimmering aura, the celestial blue and white robes, the choir of angels, I mean this is heaven, right, I want to see some friggen angels already.

Tiamet starts to weep, holding the bars of her cage. Nanna slowly approaches her.

Shit. I'm not here five minutes and I make God cry. This is not good.

Uh, excuse me again, God--Do you--hi--do you need a little help? Here, I have a Kleenex, give it a good blow, hon.

Nanna takes a Kleenex out of her sleeve, and tries to give it to Tiamet. But as soon as Nanna puts her hand on the cage, a huge shock runs through both their bodies, as a million volts charge into them. Both Tiamet and Nanna scream, hands locked together.

The sticks of the cage expand and spread across the stage as other sticks rise along the perimeter of the stage, until the cage envelops the entire space

TIAMET

IKKI KI KI KI KI AKKA AKKA AKKA AKKA--

NANNA

(finally pulling away) What the hell is going on here, goddamnit!!

TIAMET

KILLI KALI KALI KAI KAI KALIKALI KI KI KI--

The canopy of stars vanish. The heavenly clouds disappear.

The lights swell with Tiamet's tidal roar, as she conjures up the vision of Joe. He is a handsome man in his early-thirties, naked except for his black socks and the Teddy Bear he clutches in front of his groin.

NANNA

NO NO NO--

Lights up on Joe in THE EXTRA BEDROOM. I.V bottles, bedpans, pills, plastic containers and medicines of all varieties cover the vanity and night table. Bunnies and Teddy Bears and pretty clouds are painted on the walls.

Like an archeological site, this bedroom is layered with different levels of purpose and intent. Used for clothes storage, it was meant to be the future nursery for their child, but was recently converted to a hospice room to care for the comatose Nanna in her last months of life.

Joe is stuck in a position of grief, crying. Tiamet sits back on her stump, watching.

Enter JOAN, early thirties, attractive, dressed in a black slip and pearls. She carries a pair of leopard skin bikini briefs in one arm, and Joe's dark suit and shirt and tie in the other.

She stands in front of him, puts the bear under one arm, and crouches, holding open the briefs. Like a little boy, Joe steps into the briefs as Joan pulls them onto his body.

She gently kisses his stomach, works her lips up his torso to his mouth. He is trembling, craving both contact and escape. As they are about to kiss, Joe hesitates and pulls away.

JOE

I'm sorry.

JOAN

There's my good boy.

NANNA

What the hell is this?

JOE

It's over.

JOAN

Yes. It's over.

NANNA

What's going on already--

JOE

She saved my life, Joan.

JOAN

She had her license, Joe.

JOE

Do you think this is funny?

JOAN

It's been a long six months, Joe.

NANNA

My grandson. His wife. So friggen what?

JOE

I'm sorry.

JOAN

After tonight, we can go on with our lives.

JOE

This is not about us.

JOAN

I'm here for you, Joe.

JOE

Nanna.

NANNA

Jesus Christ Almighty.

JOAN

It's alright, Joe. I'm here. *(she rocks him in her bosom.)*

Joe nuzzles his face in-between Joan's breasts.

NANNA

What the Hell am I doing here--

JOAN

My father called. He sends his condolences.

JOE

Is he coming?

JOAN

If he doesn't pass out.

JOE

At least he called.

JOAN

Joe.

JOE

Joan.

JOAN

Just a thought. A tiny light bulb.

JOE

What.

JOAN

It's been a long time, Joe. Perhaps we should skip the reception at your Mother's house, come back home right after the wake, dim the

lights, break out the jellies, process your pain in the warmth of my woman's embrace.

JOE

Please, Joan, have a modicum of decorum.

JOAN

Get up, Joe. We're running out of time.

Tiamet screams.

Lights out on Joe and Joan.

TIAMET

Ki Ki kok kok kom kim kim kim kincom Incom Incom-plete trans
trans-feral incomplete. (*struggling to find the words*)
Madre—Zabyt'ie—Bog—Mon Dieu—Kletka kletka kletka—
Vishwas ghat!!! Verges Verges Vergessenheit—Trahison Mutter
Madre Matar Maman Mat Ma Mamma Mamma Mamma!!!!
[*Mother—Oblivion—God—God—Cage—Betrayal—Oblivion—
Betrayal—Mother*]

NANNA

Mama? Mother? Something about a mother?

TIAMET

Cy-kull broken. Go----back.

NANNA

Go back?

TIAMET

Chodo! Bachao! Ende der welt! Go back!
[*Free me, Save me, End of the world*]

NANNA

Give me a friggen break, I just got here--

TIAMET

(*screeching*) GO BACK ACK ACK ACKACKACKACKACK--

Tiamet gestures; a light comes up on Joe and Joan, still dressed in their underwear. They are now 17 and 18 respectively. They swim in the ocean. Joan wears two streaks of white sun block below her eyes.

TIAMET

In the Beginning.

JOE

Greetings.

JOAN

Salutations.

Here we go again. **NANNA**

Witness! **TIAMET**

Uhm, nice day. **JOE**

Excellent. **JOAN**

Cogito ergo sum? **JOE**

Amor vincit omnia. **JOAN**

Cool. My name is Joe. **JOE**

My name is Joan. **JOAN**

Hi Joan. **JOE**

Hi Joe. **JOAN**

Cool. Uhm, I think I'm getting a cramp. **JOE**

What did you eat. **JOAN**

Bologna. **JOE**

How long did you wait?. **JOAN**

What time is it-- **JOE**

2:47. **JOAN**

Not long enough. **JOE**

The music rises dramatically as he drowns. She saves him, pulls him to shore, forces the water out of his lungs with mouth to mouth. Joe sputters and coughs.

NANNA
Made for each other. Let's go.

JOE
You saved my life.

JOAN
I have my license.

JOE
Thanks.

JOAN
You're welcome. You live up there?

JOE
No, you know, my uhm, my Nanna. Summer vacation stuff.

JOAN
Cool. My name's Joan.

JOE
Cool, my name's--(*catching himself repeating the introduction*) Oh my God--

JOAN/JOE
Deja vu!

JOAN
Right?

JOE
So, uhm, I like your cream.

JOAN
Thanks. You have curly lips.

JOE
(*pulling back, shy*) Uh huh.

JOAN
Oh. Right. Uh huh.

JOE
Well no, I mean you know--

JOAN
Oh sure yeah no, I mean no right yeah--

A long awkward pause.

NANNA
Fascinating.

They look away from each other. Joan tries to find a reason not to leave, but finally rises. Joe struggles to find the words.

JOAN

So anyway I guess you know I mean right--

JOE

Uh huh--

JOAN

I'll keep my eyes on you, I mean open I mean you know, go easy on the bologna--

JOE

Right.

JOAN

Right.

JOE

Okay.

JOAN

Okay.

JOE

Right.

JOAN

Okay.

JOE

Okay.

JOAN

Right.

JOE

Right, okay.

JOAN

Okay, right--

JOE

Right

JOAN

Okay--

JOE

Okay.

JOAN

So anyway, right--

Nanna leans in to the scene and nudges Joe as Joan is just about to leave.

NANNA

Say something, dummy!

JOE

Joan--

JOAN

Joe?

JOE

(blurting out)

Washington, Adams, Jefferson, Madison, Monroe, Adams, Jackson,
Van Buren, Harrison, Tyler, Polk, Taylor, Fillmore, Pierce, Buchanan,
Lincoln, Johnson, Grant, Hayes--

JOAN

(hooked)

Garfield, Arthur, Cleveland, Harrison, Cleveland, McKinley,
Roosevelt, Taft, Wilson, Harding, Coolidge, Hoover--

JOE/JOAN

(in a joyful duet)

Roosevelt, Roosevelt, Roosevelt, Roosevelt, Truman, Eisenhower,
Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, Ford, Carter, Reagan, Bush!

JOAN/JOE

Excellent.

They look at each other dreamily, hopefully.

JOE

Legion of Superheros. Favorite?

JOAN

Ultra Boy.

JOE

Phantom Girl.

JOAN

Avengers: The Vision.

JOE

Wanda the Scarlet Witch!

JOAN

Lord of the Rings.

JOE

Gollum.

| | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Gandalf. | JOAN |
| The Iliad. The Odyssey. | JOE |
| Gidra. | JOAN |
| Megalon | JOE |
| Godzilla. | JOAN |
| Destroy All Monsters! | JOE/JOAN |
| First season, Mork and Mindy. | JOAN |
| "Fly and be free!" | JOE |
| Benny Hill-- | JOAN |
| "What's that in the road? A head?" | JOE |
| H.P. Lovecraft. | JOAN |
| "The Dunwich Horror"! | JOE |
| Oh my God-- | JOAN |
| "The Dunwich Horror"!!! | JOE |
| Excellent! | JOAN/JOE |
| Joan. | JOE |
| Joe. | JOAN |
| Joannie-- | JOE |

Joey-- **JOAN**

Oh me-- **JOE**

Oh my-- **JOAN**

Amo amas amat-- **JOE**

Amamus amatis amant. **JOAN**

They kiss, tentatively at first, then deeply and with great passion.

We hear an explosion of wedding bells and the end of Mendelsohn's Wedding March.

Tiamet gestures: a light comes up on the bed.

TIAMET
5 years.

Joe and Joan's wedding night--they are now kissing very passionately on the bed.

As they continue locked in their kiss, Tiamet places a groom's top hat on Joe's head; a bridal veil on Joan's.

Deep in the throes of passion, Joan slips her hand inside his briefs, grabs onto his penis. He shudders and pulls away.

JOE
I'm just not ready, Joan.

JOAN
Maybe you don't like girls, Joe.

JOE
No, aside from the 1995 National Boy Scout Jamboree, I am predominantly heterosexual. I have a merit badge.

JOAN
I don't want to rush you.

JOE
Thank you.

JOAN
But when Joe--

JOE
Soon.

JOAN

Soon.

JOE

Soonmaybe.

JOAN

(kissing his neck) Breathe into my hands, Joe. Into the heat of my palm.

Joan removes his top hat, places it high on his lap, covering his groin. She starts to massage his neck and back.

JOE

You do know I--uhm, I mean I've never.

JOAN

I know. Neither have I.

JOE

Neither have I.

JOAN

We found each other. We waited.

JOE

I want to more than anything. I dream about it 24 hours a day.

JOAN

(rubbing up and down his body) I'm your right brain Joey, your left lung--

JOE

But uhm know what there's some stuff--

JOAN

Your inner thigh--

JOE

You should know--

JOAN

I'm yours, Joe, I'm here for you--

JOE

Scared of--

JOAN

My sweat. My breath. My hands.

JOE

Scared of the dark. Icky cocky ick.

Joan tries another avenue.

JOAN

(the big risk) Yubba looba yana moomoo?

JOE

(with hope) Licky plotzin pubielubie yum yum--

JOAN

Good boy, Joey.

JOE

Joey loves Joannie Mommy pubie lubie.

JOAN

Joannie's good widdle nibbiewibbler--See, there's nothing to be ascairedy-cat of, Joannie Mommy will protect Joeyboy forever and forever--

JOE

Joey wants to, but--

JOAN

Joannie here for Joeyboy sugarbone--

Joan gently feels underneath the hat, and smiles at the discovery of his engorgement.

JOE

(gasping) Oh Joansoonsoooooon—

NANNA

(feeling awkward) Uhm, can't we fast forward here?

TIAMET

Watch. Learn.

JOAN

Keep breathing into my hand, little spunkolator, Joannie keep you safe and warm--

JOE

(panting) Joey--trust--

JOAN

I promise you--

JOE

Believe--

JOAN

Come into Joannie now, Joeyhead—

JOE

Now soon now yes--

Safe inside Joannie— **JOAN**

Safe-- **JOE**

Yes-- **JOAN**

Yes-- **JOE**

Yes— **JOAN**

Joan- **JOE**

Yes-- **JOAN**

Wait-- **JOE**

What-- **JOAN**

This-- **JOE**

He pulls a packaged condom out of his hat.

And there's a flag on the play! **NANNA**

We're married, Joe. We're allowed. **JOAN**

Clothe the Living Sun King, oh Holy Joannie Aman-Ra-- **JOE**

Oh Joey why-- **JOAN**

No glove no love. Have reasons. **JOE**

Well, uhm, ok I guess sure Joe--anything you want-- **JOAN**

She deftly rips open the package with her teeth.

One step at a time-- **JOE**

Yes, Joeyhead, yes-- **JOAN**

I love you, Joan. **JOE**

Me too you, Joe. **JOAN**

He dives mouth first into her bosom. Lights out on them.

Warp. Clot. Oblivion. **TIAMET**

Oh please, it's a rubber, not the end of the friggen world. **NANNA**

Tiamet gestures; a light comes up on Joan on the bed; Joe stands holding a clipboard as he goes down his checklist. Their arousal rises with each item.

7 years. Watch. **TIAMET**

Day 16 of menstrual cycle. **JOE**

Check. **JOAN**

Triphafal birth control pill. **JOE**

Check. **JOAN**

Ortho All-Flex Diaphragm. **JOE**

Check. **JOAN**

Gynal Two Spermicidal Jelly. **JOE**

Check. **JOAN**

Delphin Contraceptive Spermicidal Foam. **JOE**

Check. **JOAN**

He lowers his underwear, revealing his large, erect penis away from the audience. Nanna covers her eyes.

JOE

Industrial strength Trojan-Enz prophylactic with Spermicidal Lubricant.

Joan gleefully snaps a rubber to life.

JOAN

Check.

She rises on her knees to Joe. Holds the end of the rubber open wide, inviting Joe to enter.

JOE

Oh Joan.

JOAN

Oh Joe—

She snuggles the rubber seductively onto his cock. He shivers with anticipation.

JOE

Amo—

JOAN

Amas –

JOE

Amat—

JOAN

Amamus –

JOE

Amatis—

JOAN

Amant--

JOE

Happy anniversary darling--

JOAN

Lassie come home!

He leaps on the bed. Tiamet pulls the sheet over the top of them.

Nanna tries not to watch, but can't help it.

Their love-making is wild and athletic and all contained beneath the false-skin of the bed sheet. Joan is very vocal, Joe is silent. Joan is on top.

At the height of orgasm, Joan rips through the sheet in powerful abandon, her whole body shaking in ecstasy.

JOAN

Oh Mighty Hymen Song, devour thou the hunger of ages to swim in
the secret center of blazing night.
Oh Joy, Oh Rapture!
Oh Mighty Mighty Hymen Song.

Woof!

Lights down on them.

NANNA

She's good, she's very very good.

Tiamet gestures towards the bed. Blast of thunder and lightning.

Lights up on Joe and Joan, tangled around each other, sweating, smoking. Joan holds the filled condom. Joe grins, giddy and satisfied.

JOAN

Oooooo pubielubie bam bam, rip it out of mamma--

JOE

(like BamBam from The Flintstones) bam bam, bam bam, bam bam,
bam bam--

JOAN

(laughing) Good boy--

JOE

Bam bam--

JOAN

Good boy--

JOE

Bam bam--

JOAN

Good boy

JOE

Bam bam--

JOAN

Good boy--

JOE

(shifts gears) Okay, new topic.

Joan examines the filled condom as if it were a precious jewel.

Know what I'd like, Joe? **JOAN**

A Marlboro, Joan? **JOE**

I'd like it if you made some kind of sound, Joe. **JOAN**

Oh. **JOE**

Lights rise on the Wall of Doors as they start rattling. No one notices but Joe. He tries to hide his sudden terror.

During. At the moment of. I think it would be a good thing. **JOAN**

But I don't like to make sound. **JOE**

I think it would help you. **JOAN**

It's a semi-private experience. **JOE**

It might give me some warning. **JOAN**

Don't you—don't you enjoy it, Joan? **JOE**

On the contrary, Joe, I thrill to the pounding laptide straining within the faux membrane of your lubricated caution. **JOAN**

Goody. **JOE**

I tingle. **JOAN**

Me too. **JOE**

But it's time we stopped using a rubber, Joe. **JOAN**

Joan tosses the rubber into the wastebasket, making the shot without even looking.

The Doors rattle louder. Something is pressing against them, trying to break through.

JOE

AIDS, Joan. The danger, the peril, the world.

JOAN

We're both negative, Joe, we've both only ever slept with the other. I think it's safe for Tommy Turtle to poke his little head out from inside his shell and hunt up some yummy truffle pie.

JOE

Really? Ya think?

She blows in his ear.

JOAN

You've come so far, Joe. It's time to come all the way.

JOE

(with mounting confidence) Have I? Have I really? I have, haven't I? I really, really have! Bam bam, bam bam!

JOAN

I want to feel your flesh your cock your cum, I want to feel you.

JOE

Maybe it's time to peel the banana, huh, Chiquita?

JOAN

Give yourself to me, Joe. Unfettered.

JOE

Other people do it, don't they.

JOAN

A few hundred million Joe. Don't be afraid, I'll be right there with you. Just once.

JOE

Just once?

JOAN

To start, Joe.

JOE

Well, maybe, I dunno, maybe I could just once real fast?

JOAN

One little baby step is all it takes.

Joan massages his manhood under the sheets.

JOE

Oh baby baby baby baby---

JOAN

Oooooo, who's my swollen jungle bambam king?

JOE

That would be me, oh yes Joan yes yes--

JOAN

Your sperm cells are chomping at the bit, Joey. Why not treat them to the endless feast spread out in the banquet hall of my uterus?

JOE

Well, since you put it that way—

He eagerly jumps on top of her.

JOE

Let's do it again. Right now, while nobody's looking.

JOAN

There's my good Joeybone!

JOE

Wait.

JOAN

What?

JOE

I need time to regroup.

Joan looks at her watch as Joe cups her breasts.

JOAN

5-4-3-2 and —

JOE

Okay, Ready.

With a fast roll, they switch positions. She climbs on top of him, working her womanly charms onto his manly attributes.

NANNA

Is it me or is it getting warm in here?

JOE

Oh, Mommy that feels so good to Joeybone.

JOAN

Mommy wants to feel the full, unfettered wave of Joey's thick love drench her arid fertile crescent.

JOE

Oh Joannie Mommy the Nile is on the rise, stop don't stop oww yes—

JOAN

Make me wet Joey, I want to feel what you've been keeping inside all this time—

JOE

(ready to make the leap) Oh Joannie don't stop, you're right, Me Jockstrap Happy Bam Bam Sun God, yes—

NANNA

(averting her eyes) Whoa, hardcore!

JOAN

Whooeee Joey bone so hard so fast so good so so so so
ooooohhhhh--

Joe and Joan lock in unrestrained love. The Wall of Doors is about to burst open.

JOE

Yes, Joannie, yes, new man new man new man new oh god in heaven
yes--

JOAN

Oh yes Joe, so good, so yes yes yes—

JOE

Joan yes, so fast, so free so so so—oh my god so fast about to,
about to—

JOAN

Yes Joe don't stop now don't stop don't--

The phone rings. Joe pulls out immediately, bucking Joan indecorously off him, moments away from exultation. Lurches for the phone.

JOAN

No!

TIAMET

Yesssssssssss.

JOE

(into the phone; suddenly very grave) Yes? Mother. Yes. She did?
It does? You do? It will? Can I? Alright. I'll meet you there.

He hangs up. Trembles.

JOE

Nanna, Joan. She's gone into a coma. I've got to go.

He exits, sobbing.

JOAN

What about me, Joe?

Lights out on Joan.

NANNA

The point being?

TIAMET

Chosen. Mantle. Vessel. Goddess. Joan.

NANNA

You gotta be kidding me here. Joan?

TIAMET

Return ensure return assist.

NANNA

Now you listen to me, Emily Dickinson, I served my time, if Joanie's the new vessel, congratulations.

TIAMET

Help needs return needs she help your--

NANNA

(with ire) Forget it, I am not going back down there, I have had enough of the disease and the complaining and the paranoia and the violence and the sadness and the bitter frustrations-- all I want to do is take my panties off and hit the goddamn jacuzzi.

TIAMET

Hands fingers eyes help help baby Blank Bleeding baby Betrayed
Broken baby Battered Baby baby baby --

NANNA

Slow down--

TIAMET

(fast) Hands Fingers eyes teeth tongue nose mouth cunt baby cock
baby cunt cock baby cock cock cock cock--

NANNA

Christ, I need a cigarette--

TIAMET

(screaming) Destiny shirk, Fate shrug, Conception deny, Shirk shrug
deny death oblivion child help!!!

NANNA

Don't get your bowels in an uproar, La Suprema, I thought we were just vessels for you, for your, your whatever, your maternal spirit, something like that, right? I mean that's what I understood, anyway, no interference, we just let it happen according to your Big Plan. All of a sudden you want me to go back and futz with the goddamn flow of things, I mean what the hell gives here already?

TIAMET

Chaos Future Flames Decay End. End of. Time.

NANNA

End of time.

TIAMET

Child. Hope. Child.

NANNA

Child. Joe and Joannie's child?

TIAMET

(whispers) Savior.

NANNA

Savior.

TIAMET

Savior.

NANNA

Holy shit.

Nanna sits on the bed. Next to her sits Joe, dressed in his leopard underpants. He nuzzles his face in-between Joan's breasts. Joan is dressed in her slip and pearls.

TIAMET

Now. Tonight. This night. Seconds ticking.

We are now back at the first Joe/Joan sequence: the Present. Nanna watches the scene like an anxious coach.

JOAN

Joe.

JOE

Joan.

JOAN

Just a thought. A tiny light bulb.

JOE

What.

JOAN

It's been a long time, Joe. Perhaps we should skip the reception at your Mother's house, come back home right after the wake, dim the lights, break out the jellies, process your pain in the warmth of my woman's embrace.

NANNA

Do it, Joe, do it!

Joe pulls away from her.

JOE

Please, Joan, have a modicum of decorum.

JOAN

Get up, Joe. We're running out of time.

Struggling to control his tears, Joe picks up a framed photograph of Nanna.

JOE

I don't understand how she could just up and die like this, Joan.

JOAN

Now Joe, let's step back and see if we can't find some sort of explanation: Nanna was an 88 year-old diabetic woman living in a respirator; she had one leg, no kidneys, half a lung, two types of cancer, and a perforated bladder; the vision in her one remaining eye went after the last stroke and she'd been spitting up blood for a month and a half. She was, medically speaking, somewhat akin to a bowl of Alpo.

NANNA

Hey--

JOE

Joan!

JOAN

Honeybunny, it's the truth, you're too close to the source of pain, you grew up with the woman. I'm lucky, I just married into it, I feel no pain whatsoever.

JOE

She was my Nanna, Joan. She was my world.

JOAN

Yes, I know that honey, and I'm sure that if she were alive, which, by the way, she is not, she would agree that it is better to throw in that messy old towel than to stay plugged into some horrible machine stinking up the room while you consume everybody's time and money towards absolutely no reasonable end or purpose.

JOE

You are unbelievable, Joan.

JOAN

I am merely trying to put this whole tedious situation into perspective for you, dear. How's 'bout a kiss, Joe?

JOE

Dear God Joan don't go oral on me now. I simply cannot deal with it.

JOAN

(with strained patience) Joe darling you haven't dealt with it in over six months, not since you moved her in with us--

JOE

Nanna needed me, Joan. I had no choice.

JOAN

Neither did I, Joe. You transformed what was intended to be our hypothetical child's nursery into a 24 hour death watch so you could spend every available second mulling over the Wonder Corpse that Wouldn't Die. Well Joe now she's dead and all I want is but half a tablespoon of spousal attention.

NANNA

Give it to her kid, don't be shy.

JOE

Joan be patient my life is awash.

JOAN

I am filled with patience, I am a veritable hospital of desire.

JOE

I haven't been able.

JOAN

We were so close, Joe, trembling on the lip of change.

JOE

I can't think Joan--

JOAN

It will all be over before you know it, Joe.

JOE

The wake ?

JOAN

Our lives. Kiss me, Joe.

JOE

I don't know you Joan what can you be thinking while you know Nanna is expecting us and we are already late.

JOAN

She's not expecting us, Joe, she's dead. Kiss me, goddamnit--

JOE

Respect for the dead, Joan--

JOAN

Fuck the dead, Joe--

NANNA

Watch it you--

JOAN

We've reached critical mass--

JOE

But Nanna--

JOAN

Nanna can rot, Joe, better her than me--

NANNA

Bitch.

JOE

You are a deranged woman, Joan, a sick sick piece of over-sexed sacrilege and I have got to go.

JOAN

Oversexed? I haven't experienced carnal pleasure in half a year, not counting the daily flashes of auto-arousal that come naturally with good housekeeping.

JOE

But Joan, tonight of all nights--

JOAN

Nanna's long-awaited demise has slapped me awake with the harsh finite quality of our lives and I now have my demands: Testosterone must be nourished, beards must be grown, glands must be used and emptied. I expect immediate satisfaction in this, Joe, and what better choice of symbol than today--let the barren past be buried with precious Nanna while you plant the seeds of your dynamic potential with me.

JOE

Joan you are sick.

JOAN

Blowey, you're the sick one and my patience is just about up--

JOE

You are making a fool of yourself, Joan.

JOAN

I am worth it, Joe, I have staggering needs.

JOE

It's getting late.

JOAN

The time is ripe.

JOE

I'll tell Mother you were running a low-grade fever.

JOAN

Low grade my ass, baby, I am positively dripping with napalm, I am being burnt at the stake, burn the witch burn the witch burn burn burn the witch--hurry sweetums, call the firemen, Mommy needs the big red fire hose Blowey hose me down before I go Super Nova--

JOE

Joan, get dressed or I am going to have to kill you.

Thunder and Lightning roar.

Joan throws herself spread-eagle on the bed.

JOAN

Yes yes yes I am ready, sweetness, my casket is wide open, the grave is fresh and inviting and six feet deep, steady, Joe, lower the coffin in nice and slow, inch by inch, say your prayers and meet your maker for today is the Day of Judgment and the Dead shall rise again!!!

JOE

I'll give Nanna your love.

He goes to leave.

NANNA/TIAMET

Go, Joan, go!!

She tackles him to the ground. He extricates himself.

JOAN

I am tired of waiting--

JOE

I love you Joan.

JOAN

Convince me, Joe.

JOE

But I have to go.

JOAN

Why Joe--

JOE

Nanna, Joan--

Joan screams. Rips the picture away from him. She breaks the frame, tears the picture into tiny pieces.

JOE
NANNA!!!

He frantically tries to put the pieces back together.

JOAN
Nanna is dead, Joe, but I am alive, I am vital, I am charismatic, I am
HERE GODDAMNIT--

JOE
You killed her!!!

JOAN
Nanna is dead, Joe, if I could nail the coffin closed I would--

JOE
Nanna--

JOAN
She's dragging us into the ground with her, damn it--

JOE
Nanna--

JOAN
Joey--

JOE
Nanna--

JOAN
I want to make love with you Joe!

JOE
DO IT YOURSELF DAMN IT!!!

He slams out the door.

JOAN
I can't Joey. I need your help.

She sits on the floor, weeping.

The lights snap off her as Tiamet rages. Her deafening voice booms in the vast darkness.

TIAMET
I - NEED - YOUR - HELP!!!!!!!!!!

NANNA
(trying to unclog her ringing ears) Sorry, hon, can you speak up?
Hey, waitaminute, if you're the goddamn All-Powerful Mother
Goddess of the Whole Entire Friggen Universe, then why can't you
do it yourself, huh? Tell me that!

Blast of thunder and lightning

TIAMET

Ragnarok, Walpurgisnacht, Apokock ock ock --o--lypse—End of the world.

NANNA

(to herself) You had to ask.

TIAMET

Choices chances Choices One: Journey back through door facilitate transference consummation conception savior —

A light glows on the isolated door up-stage center.

Choices Two: Journey back through womb actual repeat ocean sack endurance breath 88 year cycle despair decay human slow rotting flesh spirit agony frenzied lather spittle blood lifelivingwrenchingpaindeathmulchingvoid. Do not pass Go, do not collect 200 hundred dollars.

NANNA

So. Okay. I go back. What's in it for me? Eternal peace, divine happiness, cosmic awareness?

TIAMET

Jacuuuuuuzzi.

The door opens. Tiamet points out the door.

NANNA

Shit.

She crosses through the door, which closes behind her

Tiamet sits back on her muddy throne, fades into the shadows, humming/moaning a sad lullabye.

ACT ONE, Sc. 2

The lights rise on Nanna's wake. An open casket. Nanna lying peacefully An individual kneeling pew in front of the casket.

The music and thunder fade as Joe enters, looking off-stage and waving good-bye.

From behind the scrim, Tiamet supplies the voice of Joe's off-stage Mother.

TIAMET

Joey, come back to the house with us, there's a nice spread.

JOE

Y-yes Mother, alright.

TIAMET

She loved you, Joe. Let her rest now.

JOE

I just need five minutes alone.

TIAMET

Then you'll come.

JOE

Then I'll come.

TIAMET

Who's my good boy, Joey?

JOE

Uhm, that would be me.

TIAMET

Your mother loves you Joey.

JOE

Yep.

TIAMET

Five minutes, Joe.

JOE

Five minutes.

He takes a few calm steps. Stops. Collapses in grief. Bawls.

He pulls himself together. Stands. Walks a few steps. Collapses in grief. Drags himself to the tiny kneeling pad next to the casket.

JOE

Nanna.

Thunder.

How could you leave me like this? You can't be dead. I won't allow it. You are my Nanna.

He sees a smudge of rouge on her cheek. Takes out his handkerchief. Cleans it.

There. Much better.

I have to tell you something, Nanna. Something terrible. Something you don't know. About me.

Sighs.

You look so different.

He looks around. Sees no one. Kisses her cheek.

Nanna.

All those bologna sandwiches. The summers in Montauk. Carol Channing backstage. The postcards. The holiday pig. Christmas is over for me, Nanna. There will be no more joy. Only grief. No joy, no pig, no Nanna. No more surprise parties. No more midnight suppers. No more heated political discussions. No more shimmy shimmy.

I don't know what to do. I stole your hairbrush, Nanna. The pink one. It still has your hair in it from before you went bald. I cry every time I use it. There is a void, Nanna. A gap. A space. A hole. I am empty now. Alone. Lonely. No one can ever know the emptiness I feel. In a crowded room, tonight at this wake. Alone. With M-Mother, Father. Alone.

With Joan.

Thunder.

Especially with Joan. This is the only woman in the world who perceives the numbing depth of my pain, yet still my sorrow reverberates and amplifies against her good intentions. She thinks I need relief. But I don't. I just need my Nanna.

I need to tell you something, Nanna. I need to tell you –

He breaks down, weeping. He starts coughing. He looks around, makes sure he is alone, and lights up a cigarette, puffing as he cries.

JOE

Good Lord, I'm trembling. Grief can be so exhausting.

Suddenly, Nanna sits up in the casket.

NANNA

Try aerobics.

Thunder and lightning. Joe looks up. Screams.

Ok, it was just a thought.

Joe screams.

Joey--

He screams.

Joey--

He screams.

SHADDUP!!

He stops.

Thank you.

JOE

Dear God, I'm hallucinating.

NANNA

No you're not.

JOE

Yes I am.

NANNA

No you're not.

JOE

Yes I am.

NANNA

Joey, kiddo, look at me.

JOE

(quietly) Nanna.

NANNA

Help me out of this thing, willya--

JOE

(helping her out) How can this be, Nanna, are you a ghost?

NANNA

No, I'm a Rockette. Of course I'm a ghost, you stupid.

JOE

Then I am terrified, I truly am. All the hair on my body is standing on end--there is a cold sweat on the back of my knees, I want to look away, run screaming from the room, lose my mind in a puddle of hard liquor--

NANNA

Hit me with a stick willya, kid, I'm dying for one--

JOE

(automatically lighting her a cigarette) Nanna--you've come back-- to me--but why-

NANNA

Why do you think.

JOE

Because I'm special, because I was your favorite, because my grief was so powerful it called to you from beyond the grave?

NANNA

Try because you're a pain in the ass. *(she grabs the whole pack of cigarettes)*

JOE

Nanna, no.

NANNA

Joey, yes.

JOE

But Nanna, I love you.

NANNA

I'm dead, Joe, everybody loves me.

JOE

This must be a mystic Sufi vision, a moment of clarity hitherto known only to the Swirling Dervish of old, some vital message from the hereafter.

NANNA

Whatever. Just give it a break and let me rest already --

JOE

But you just died, don't I get a period of adjustment?

NANNA

Sure you do, but you get off on the wrong foot, it screws up your whole friggen life--

Nanna suddenly gets dizzy; totters.

Whoa--

JOE

Nanna--

NANNA

It's okay, kid, I just caught a rush from the formaldehyde.

A low rumble of thunder. From behind the scrim, Tiamet whispers:

TIAMET

Thalo na me soscees—Mero—Nanna—Nanna—
[Save me, Child]

Nanna looks up to the sky.

NANNA

So where's Joan?

JOE

Uhm she's sick.

NANNA

She's a goddamn horse, Joe, where is she.

JOE

She must be insane with loss, Nanna. All she wanted was a bout of sexual intercourse, but I have no energy for procreation, only for grief.

NANNA

Are you for real!

JOE

I don't want to forget you.

NANNA

You won't. Believe me, Joe, the pain won't go away, but it will subside if you let it.

JOE

I'm going to miss you.

NANNA

Good. It's nice to be missed.

JOE

I'll always think of you.

NANNA

Lilacs are my favorite.

JOE

Remember the bologna sandwiches, Nanna?

NANNA

No.

JOE

Yes you do. With the mayonnaise.

NANNA

Did I like them?

JOE

Nanna, you used to make them for me every summer when I came to visit.

NANNA

I don't remember.

JOE

Sure you do.

NANNA

Joey, I don't remember.

JOE

But you have to.

NANNA

Joey, I had 6 children, and 21 grandchildren. If you think every bologna sandwich is of vast importance to me, you are sadly mistaken.

JOE

I remember them, Nanna.

NANNA

That's nice.

JOE

Mother never made me a bologna sandwich, Nanna. Never ever.

NANNA

Your mother can't cook, kid.

JOE

I don't want you to be dead. I love you so much. I can't go on like this, Nanna.

NANNA

Like what, Joe?

JOE

Like all I am is a bug pinned to the wall by what was, a prisoner of refracted history.

NANNA

Well that's not good, is it.

JOE

Every night I wake up certain someone is in the room.

NANNA

You read too much.

JOE

I haven't slept since I was three.

NANNA

You're a good boy, Joey. Your wife is a lucky gal.

JOE

My wife is a goddess. I'm going to lose her. I'm pushing her away.

NANNA

So don't push her away.

JOE

Uh huh.

NANNA

Tell me something, kid, when's the last time you and Joannie did it?

JOE

You mean milk and cookies?

NANNA

Yes, Joey, milk and cookies.

JOE

Well, I guess since before the coma.

Thunder and lightning. From behind the scrim, Tiamet clucks:

TIAMET

Apokock ock ock ock ock--

Nanna gestures to the heavens to "zip it shut already!" She turns back to Joe.

NANNA

What's up, kid--

JOE

Oh you know it's uhm oh boy I mean uhm...

NANNA

Nanna loves Joey--

JOE

Joey loves Nanna.

NANNA

(gives him a piece of candy) That's my good boy.

JOE

Joan's had a very hard life--you know about her hand--

NANNA

Her father, that goddamn alcoholic sonofabitch--

JOE

She's so strong.

NANNA

She's got nice tits.

JOE

Oh, Nanna, I think she wants a baby.

NANNA

Great, kid. Impregnate her. Tonight. She deserves it.

JOE

Part of me wants to. When I pass them in the street, Nanna, oh my heart. The little eyes, the little cheeks, the little fingernails. Everything is so little.

NANNA

It makes them easier to hold, Joey.

JOE

I think about how nice it would be to have somebody run up and wrap themselves around my foot like a boot so I can give him a ride across the room. All that unconditional love.

NANNA

Worth all the rest of it.

JOE

They're so little, Nanna, they're so easy to break.

NANNA

You have to be careful.

JOE

I could drop it.

NANNA

But you won't.

JOE

I could stick it with a pin. I could pour hot water on it. I could dry it in the microwave like a poodle.

NANNA

Just think about loving your baby and everything else will take care of itself.

JOE

There have actually been moments when I thought I might be able to accept responsibility for someone other than myself. Someone who, for a little while, thinks I'm a god.

NANNA

That's my boy.

JOE

And then I think, I made it out alive because I had my Nanna. Every summer. Every weekend. My Nanna was there for me to run to.

NANNA

Don't mention it, kid.

JOE

And then I think who will be Nanna to my son. Who will be there waiting for him. My mother, of course. And I think I would rather drown it in its first bath.

NANNA

Goddamnit, stop looking for excuses Joe. You and Joannie should have a dozen kids by now--go home and start your friggen life already, it's a full moon and the meter's ticking--

JOE

But Nanna, I can't.

NANNA

Why not!!

JOE

Because I am consumed with your grief goddamnit!

NANNA

The world doesn't stop spinning for one old woman, Joe, stop goddamn hiding behind me--

JOE

Nanna, I need to tell you something--

NANNA

I don't want to know nothing.

JOE

I've never told anyone, not even Joan. It's about Mother, about what she--what she did to me—

TIAMET

Help me Joey, help me--

NANNA

I don't want to hear nothing bad about my daughter, understand? She taught you how to walk, Joe.

JOE

Yes, and I've been meaning to thank her for that.

NANNA

Whatever it is, forget about it. Move on already.

JOE

That's what I'm trying to do.

TIAMET

Good boy Joey--

JOE

I know she loves me, but she--

NANNA

I said I don't want to hear it!! *(she slaps him across the mouth)*

JOE

(whispering) She hurt me Nanna.

TIAMET

Good boy --

NANNA

(Giving him another candy) Here honey, Nanna make it all better.

JOE

Uhm, I don't think candy will help.

NANNA

Goddamnit, Joe, dead people live in the past, you know what I'm saying--

JOE

I am dead, Nanna.

NANNA

No, Joe, I'm dead!

JOE

Well so am I!

Joe cries.

Nanna steels herself, but despite her resolve, she strokes his back. Shakes her head. Looks imploringly to the sky.

Tiamet bellows fiercely.

TIAMET

TIME! NOW!! ACTION!!

NANNA

(to Tiamet) But what, I don't know what to do—

TIAMET

IMPROVISE!!!

The light focuses on the open casket. A wind blows past Nanna. Tiamet runs her fingers flittingly along her own body.

Silence. Nanna suddenly understands what she must do. She looks to the sky, hesitant to follow her divine instructions.

TIAMET

(cooing) Nanna love Joey.

NANNA

Oh no, no, please, I can't—

TIAMET

Your choice. Your move. Your life. Again and again and all over all over again.

NANNA

(to Joe) You really do love me, don't you honey.

JOE

More than I can say.

NANNA

It's nice to be loved isn't it.

JOE

Oh Nanna.

He cries. She hugs him. A distant rumble of thunder.

NANNA

That's ok, Joey, Nanna's right here—Nanna keep Joey safe Nanna here for little Joey boy, I would never hurt poor little Joey boy always remember that Joey no matter what shhhhhh, faaanana, faaaaanana--

She edges them towards the casket.

She's here for little Joey. Nanna loves Joey.

JOE

Joey loves Nanna.

NANNA

Joey loves Nanna.

JOE

It just isn't fair.

NANNA

You're right, Joey, it's not fair. But look how nice the coffin is--

JOE

Nanna, no--

NANNA

Don't be a scaredy-cat, Joe, look how comfy--all this nice satin--see?

She puts Joe's hand in the casket. A low rumble of thunder.

See how nice--so soft, and it's waterproof, too.

JOE

It is nice.

NANNA

Would you like to sit in it, Joey?

JOE

Nanna--

NANNA

Just so you won't be afraid of it. Go on, Nanna wants you to.

JOE

But what if I break it--

NANNA

You won't.

JOE

But--

NANNA

Do it for Nanna.

JOE

Well, ok, but just for a second.

He hops in the casket.

NANNA

See how nice?

JOE

It is comfortable.

NANNA

Lie back in it.

JOE

Uhm...

NANNA

Go ahead, it's alright.

JOE

Ok.

He lies back. Rumble of thunder. Immediately sits up.

Yes. Very nice.

NANNA

Don't you like my coffin, Joey?

It's lovely, really. **JOE**

Nanna's new condo. **NANNA**

Yes. **JOE**

Nanna loves Joey. **NANNA**

Joey loves Nanna. **JOE**

Come give Nanna a kiss. **NANNA**

Nanna. **JOE**

Come on-- **NANNA**

Joe kisses her on the cheek. She puts her arms around him. Kisses him deep on the mouth. A huge blast of thunder and lightning. He pulls away. Hyperventilates.

Nanna loves Joey--

Jesus. **JOE**

Come to Nanna, Joey-- **NANNA**

She stalks him around the room.

My knees, the ground, the earth-- **JOE**

Is it my breath Joey-- **NANNA**

You're my Nanna, Nanna. You shouldn't slip me the tongue like that. **JOE**

Can the lecture kid, I been around the block. Don't Joey love Nanna? **NANNA**

Yes he does, but all things in moderation. **JOE**

NANNA

No one's looking, honey, and there's a satin-lined love-nest just a'calling our names.

JOE

I don't know what to say. You are talking incest and necrophilia.

NANNA

I know. Come on.

JOE

Don't do this to me--

NANNA

ooooo my loins are just a'twitching, kiddo--take me--

She grabs him, plants another kiss on him. He pushes away from her, falls, crawls away in fear.

JOE

You of all people--the nausea, my head--stop

NANNA

I can't stop--Nanna loves Joey--

JOE

Get back in your box, leave me alone--

NANNA

In your heart of hearts, haven't you always wanted to suck on Nanna's sticky little kumquat--

JOE

(getting sick) I'm going to vomit--

NANNA

Let Nanna give Joey some nice candy--

JOE

Rip my eyes out, my tongue, anything but this--

NANNA

Don't be such a baby--

JOE

Run--get away--must get away--must think--

NANNA

Stop thinking, Joe--

JOE

Must run--

Stop running, Joe--
NANNA

Joan, back to Joan--
JOE

That's right, Joe, go to Joan--
NANNA

Home, safe, Joan, help--
JOE

Go the hell home and make your wife a mother--
NANNA

Run--
JOE

Make her happy--
NANNA

Run--
JOE

Make yourself happy for once in your friggen life already--
NANNA

JOE
I AM NOTHING NANNA I AM THE WALKING DEAD I WILL
NEVER BE HAPPY AGAIN--

He runs from the room into the night.

Joey--
NANNA

A deep roll of thunder.

Joan. Now.
TIAMET

(quietly) Shit.
NANNA

Move it or lose it.
TIAMET

Thunder and lightning. Nanna hops back in the coffin, pulling the lid down after her.

As the lights fade out on the scene, the rumbling thunder mixes with Tiamet's mournful lullabye.

ACT 1, Sc. 3

The lights come up on the Bedroom, which has exploded in chaos. Every possible drawer hangs open, its contents spewed out in manic disarray. Much of the medical equipment set up for Nanna's care has been recklessly pushed aside.

Joan, still dressed in her slip, finishes writing a letter at the vanity. She stuffs it in an envelope marked JOE, seals it, bursts into tears. She gathers her resolve, and places the letter in front of a large framed photo of Joe, again naked with the Teddy Bear, though this time he is grinning.

She knocks Nanna's medicines off the vanity top into an open cardboard junk box on the floor. She pulls sweaters out of a drawer and folds them neatly in an open suitcase.

The music and thunder fade.

JOAN

Good-bye Joe. Pookems rathead nippleface. Wave bye-bye.

I am leaving, Joey, packing my bags for the Great Beyond. And why? I'll tell you why. Because I am a dead woman clothed in living flesh, Joe, a woman made by your own design. Thank you ever so much, love.

Joan picks up a bed pan and tosses it into the junk box.

I hope you have a nice life, Joe, a nice long, pain-wracked, disease ridden life full of teeming bedpans and intravenous dinners.

Thunder rumbles. She kicks a drawer out of her way; notices a pair of Joe's underwear, picks it up. Sniffs it.

Joey my love. Joseph. Joe. Mojo bloweyhead nippleface.

I'd like to thank you, Joe, for selecting me from all the multitudes, for matching your needs to mine, for coaxing my trust with your love, for stoking me with your passions, for pinning me to the wall with the promise of fulfillment, for eating my liver on a daily basis and leaving me to rot in the slow decay of your abandonment. You're such a pookems.

I am a jilted woman, Joe, tossed over in the full sticky bloom of sensuality for that foul-breathed succubus grinding you in the head scissors of her maternal thrall.

It's funny, isn't it, Joe, when the priest said till death do you part, I assumed he was talking about you and me, nipplehead, but as it turns out, he was talking about you and Nanna.

Thunder and lightning. She drags a steamer trunk out of the closet. Starts throwing clothes and belongings into the trunk.

Nanna Nanna Nanna. Dear Old Nanna. Dear Old Dead Nanna.
Dear Old Dead Stinking Corpse Rotting in Hell Nanna.

Nanna my darling love, so sorry I couldn't be there to bid you a cheery bon voyage, but I was far too consumed with the dreadful waste of my own young and potentially fertile life to come and grieve at the Shrine of the Almighty Ovary, Oh Balding Spawn Queen of the Dead.

I wish I could have been there, Nanna my love, standing amidst all the weepy, teary-eyed issue of your stinking loins, because had I been there, Nanna, I would have bid my final adieus by hacking apart your fetid remains with my own delicate yet determined woman's hands right there in front of all your magpie offspring.

But I didn't.

Because I have lost, Nanna.

Despite all my need, Joe is still yours, now and forever, he belongs to you.

And I am alone.

Joan opens the closet door. Nanna hands her a lovely negligee. Low rumble of thunder.

Thank you, love.

Joan closes the door.

Yes, Nanna, you win and I lose and as your life is over, so too is mine. I believe Plato said it best when he said--

She stops. Opens the closet door.

Nanna?

NANNA

(throwing her arms open wide) Hiya, kid.

Thunder and lightning blast. Joan considers the sight before her, drops in a dead faint.

It's gotta be my breath. Joan, honey, come on, wake up--

She leans down, slaps Joan in the face just as she is reviving.

JOAN

Thank you darling, but that was completely unnecessary.

NANNA

You passed out on me kiddo.

JOAN

Merely a synaptic break as I reeled from the ghastly vision of such preternatural horror.

NANNA

That goddamned cosmetician, I know--(*smoothing out her rouge in the mirror*)--Look at these cheeks, willya--

JOAN

I am fine now, I assure you.

NANNA

Then get the hell off the floor and come say hello--

JOAN

Alright love.

Joan rises. They stand looking at each other. Thunder rumbles.

JOAN

So Nanna, you're dead.

NANNA

That's what they tell me.

JOAN

How exciting for you.

NANNA

Yeah, I don't know.

JOAN

You just have to apply yourself, love, put some effort into it.

NANNA

Thanks.

JOAN

Well then, I'd love to just stand here and commune with the Grossly Un-Natural, but I must write a melancholy finit to the current chapter of my life.

Joan packs with a vengeance. Nanna smokes; picks the negligee up off the floor.

NANNA

Ooooo now this I like. Silk. See-through. Perks up the nippies.

JOAN

My funereal ensemble. (*she grabs it away from Nanna*)

NANNA

Joannie, what the hell's the matter.

JOAN

Nothing's the matter.

NANNA

Why are you running away, Joan?

JOAN

Why have you come back, Nanna?

NANNA

I asked you first.

JOAN

It's none of your business.

NANNA

Come give Nanna a hug, kiddo.

JOAN

Please don't touch me, Nanna--

NANNA

But I'm your Nanna, Joannie--

She gives Joan a big hug. Thunder and lightning erupt. Joan screams and breaks away from Nanna.

JOAN

You are not my Nanna, Nanna, you are merely a collection of heartbeats and false teeth and cheap wigs and sagging breasts and fake limbs and now you are dead.

NANNA

Cheap wigs my ass--

JOAN

You are the past and the past must be washed away, but you are far too strong a stain, Nanna, my husband is so defined by his dysfunctional devotion to a rotting sack of flesh, that he has gone and buried his head in your grave and there is not a thing I can do about it.

NANNA

Look Joan, I love the kid as much as you do, but the fact is he grew up scared of his own shadow. It's time he took responsibility for his own life, he's not a little boy anymore--

JOAN

He's afraid.

NANNA

He's a selfish little brat is what he is.

JOAN

He is my husband, Nanna. For all his shortcomings, all the frustration and anger he causes me, he is still the only man who can divine the meaning of my silence. He makes me laugh until I am wet, he makes me cry with a joke, he is my breath, he is my thought, he is my husband.

A distant rumble of thunder.

NANNA

So he's the one, huh?

JOAN

Yes, Nanna, he is the one.

NANNA

So what the hell are you running away from--

JOAN

I need all of him, Nanna, I cannot share him, not with anyone, and most especially not with you.

NANNA

But Joan, I don't want him.

JOAN

Yeah, well, you got him.

NANNA

Goddamnit, Joan, no one's waiting in the kitchen with a silver platter. No one helps you, ever. You gotta be strong.

JOAN

I'm tired of being strong, Nanna, I just can't do it anymore--

NANNA

You want a child, don't you.

JOAN

Yes I do.

NANNA

And Joey doesn't.

JOAN

He's never even made love to me without a condom, Nanna. He's afraid

A rumble of thunder.

NANNA

Why do you want a baby, Joan--

JOAN

I am a woman, Nanna, I will not be denied the joyful pain of motherhood.

Thunder. Pause.

NANNA

Why do you want a baby Joan--

JOAN

I want a family of my own, Nanna. I want a second chance.

Thunder. Pause.

NANNA

Why do you want a baby Joan--

JOAN

Life is so short, Nanna.

NANNA

Yes it is.

JOAN

Everybody dies.

NANNA

Yes they do.

JOAN

Everybody gets hurt— Why can't they just love us, is that so hard-- why does it always have to hurt--

NANNA

Sometimes people cause pain without meaning to.

JOAN

What do you know about pain? You're dead, there's no more pain for Nanna. But Joan, that's a different story. Joan is filled with pain, every memory, every pore, every bone in her body, in her hand.

NANNA

You're a very strong woman, Joan.

JOAN

I'm nothing. I can't even snap my fingers.

NANNA

Can you whistle?

JOAN

(with rising ire) I don't want to whistle, I want to snap my fucking fingers, do you understand that?

NANNA

Got it.

Joan slowly backs Nanna to the wall with her anger.

JOAN

And do you know why I can't snap my fingers? Because my daddy loves me. Loved me. Loves me. And all I got from his love was pain. How is that possible.

NANNA

That pain made you strong.

JOAN

Shove it up your ass, old woman. That pain made me a cripple . Because Daddy loved me so much, he used to kiss my hand sometimes, he'd hold it in his big hand and kiss it.

NANNA

You're father loved you.

JOAN

Yeah. Until he got to the bottom of the bottle. And then he'd squeeze it so hard, he'd forget his own strength, that one night, holding my hand I could feel the bones sliding one across the other, snapping, scraping, popping, and I couldn't catch my breath. I tried to scream but my little throat couldn't shape it, this sound just sort of gurgled out. And he thought I was laughing. He just keep squeezing and kissing my hand. Until he passed out.

NANNA

Life is full of accidental pain.

JOAN

Tell me, you're dead, right? Is there a god? Is he up there? Is he out of his mind? Or is it just a sick sense of humor?

NANNA

Uhm, actually, it's a she.

JOAN

Well, you tell her for me I think she's doing a lousy job. You tell her for me I'd like to tell her what I think, you tell her I'd like to—Nanna?

Discordant trumpets and pounding drums explode the air. Bands of light rip across the room. Nanna suddenly shudders and shakes, her body invaded with the oversized spirit possession of Tiamet.

A light rises on Tiamet sitting on her muddy throne. Her manacled arms gesture powerfully. Drums pounding, winds howling.

Slowly, Joan backs away in awe of the vision

Tiamet and the possessed Nanna speak in concert.

NANNA/TIAMET

The beginning of the universe is the mother of all things
The Deep Mother never dies, her gateway is the root of heaven and
earth
Upon her womb spins the Axis Mundi
Through her womb walks the history of her children
Within her womb hangs the fate of the world

JOAN

(dumbfounded) Oh my God-- Who— who— who are you?

NANNA

Tia--Tia--

TIAMET

Tiamet.

NANNA

Mother

TIAMET

World

NANNA

Time

NANNA/TIAMET

God

JOAN

(meekly, with a tiny wave) Uhm, Joan.

TIAMET

Goddess.

NANNA

Mother. Child.

TIAMET

Savior.

NANNA

Savior.

JOAN

Excuse me?

TIAMET

The world's Hope

NANNA

Your child and Joe's--
Sins of the past cleansed

TIAMET

Chosen Joan Joe child tonight--
Tonight Child
Messiah Child
Full Moon Child saves the world
Conception Spontaneous Tonight

NANNA/TIAMET

Arise! Awake!
Approach the High Boons and comprehend them
The sharpened edge of a razor, hard to traverse, a difficult path is this

So say the Wise

A rumble of drums resonates deep within the Universe. The lights begin to fade solemnly on Tiamet.

JOAN

Uhm, hello—excuse me—Excuse me?

The lights bump back up on Tiamet. She and Nanna are surprised by Joan's call.

JOAN

I'm sorry, but I just have one or two questions.

TIAMET

Speak daughtersister ask--

JOAN

Well, obviously, I'm in the middle of some post-traumatic, quasi-Sufi variation of what the Hopi call "Big Hot Wind." Fabulous. Chosen, baby, savior: got it. So here's the question: Why me?

NANNA

You hit the friggen lottery, dummy, shut up and take the money.

TIAMET

But beauty daughtersister, why not you?

JOAN

Because I'm a mess. Because my life is falling apart. Because anyone I've ever loved has been, oh, castrated by fear and pain and abject frustration.

TIAMET

God comes into the world through pain. Through cracks. Through the Imperfect Vessel. God comes where she is needed most.

JOAN

Yes, but why tonight? Are you telling me that if we conceive ,
excuse me, spontaneously I believe was the word, tomorrow night,
that this child won't be the--the—

TIAMET

Savior.

NANNA

Savior.

JOAN

Savior.

TIAMET

Bingo.

JOAN

Uh huh.

TIAMET

All part of a plan. Faith. Trust. Believe.

JOAN

No, I'm sorry, but it's just not going to happen.

TIAMET

Daughtersister, he is but a man—

NANNA

Pull some friggen teeth if you have to—

JOAN

I've pulled all the teeth in his head, Nanna, there is nothing left but
throbbing gums.

TIAMET

Tonight daughtersister Tonight
The Universe has held it's breath waiting for tonight
The stars realigned, the Great Mother waits for completion
The Matrix of the Universe will not be denied Tonight

JOAN

Yes, but—

TIAMET

What?!?

JOAN

You're God. You're in chains. What's that all about?

TIAMET

I need your help Joan. Help me. Please. Help me, Joannie.

JOAN

But you're God. You're supposed to help me. I don't understand any of this.

NANNA

Once—

TIAMET

Once –

NANNA

Once upon—Once upon time—

NANNA/TIAMET

Once upon a time--

TIAMET

Once upon a time before there was a Time, there was Tiamet, the Mother, the Beginning the Middle the End. Full and glowing rising and falling. In the dark in the night. Lonely. Alone.

And so from herself she made a child, a son, a beautiful smiling heavenly Son shining in the dark in the sky at her side. And she named him Apsu, Child of Light

And soon Apsu grew into a man and Tiamet took him into her as Consort, as Lover. And he filled her with the thick girth of his being, harbored snug inside the empty place inside the Mother. And they were together as one in the Universe knowing the love of what they were missing. The perfect love of the Missing Piece.

And from the first perfect love of Tiamet and Apsu flowed the New Gods, Child Gods, small, infant, filled with power, filled with promise, needing and suckling the love of the Mother, of God.

And seeing this, Apsu the Lover grew jealous, wanting Tiamet all for himself. In a rage, Apsu ate the Child Gods, swallowed them whole like clams sucked trembling from the shell.

And when the next generation of Child Gods appeared from her loins, Tiamet hid them away in a cave, putting stones in their swaddling clothes and jealous Apsu swallowed the swaddled rocks thinking them his children, and was content.

And the Child Gods grew tall and strong, hidden away and safe from the gaze of the Father. Fearing for their lives, the Child Gods joined together, raising arms and slaying the father Apsu, killing the lover and son of Tiamet, of God.

Her heart echoing with the loss of her Love, Tiamet despaired and cried for the Missing Piece in her soul. As all the life drained out of the world, the corpse of summer withered and froze and hardened while Death threatened to consume the world.

But before the last star could die out, before Time could stop, the Child Gods drew lots together and chose one of their own to take the place of the dead father Apsu, to offer up a new lover and consort of the Mother, of Tiamet, of God.

And looking upon her new Lover, Tiamet once again was happy. Complete. No longer alone. For a full year life raced back into the world, skipping and singing and loving and growing like fruit on the branches, like birds from the nest, like children in fields of grass.

And yet, as frost crept over the fields and the year saw its end, Tiamet's heart hardened at the memory of her dead lover Apsu. Tiamet the Mother turned to her children and demanded a sacrifice to honor the memory of the dead father, to ensure the renewal of life in the world, the constant tide of youth in the universe.

Tiamet rightly demanded the Consort Lover King must die and be replaced year after year after year, to stave off the endless winter that would swallow the world, and Tiamet's heart, forever.

And so the Consort Lover King was killed and replaced at Tiamet's side with a new Consort Lover King and life flowed back into the world year after year after year and the Mother was happy and for a time the world, too, was happy, singing the King must die, long live the King.

And then not very long ago, there was Marduk, Son Consort Lover King. Marduk the mightiest of all the bright shining Sons of Tiamet, Marduk blazing in the sky, Marduk the most beloved Right Hand of God. And Tiamet was happy as never before filled and fulfilled and joined together and made whole once again with the love of her Angel Son Lover King Marduk.

But when Marduk saw his life ending with the approach of Winter, he saw the end of his joy as the Lover of God and he did not want to die, he did not want to sacrifice his life for the world to live, he did not want to live in service to God. Marduk the Proud wanted to live forever, to rule, to take the world away from Tiamet so that he instead might live and rule forever.

And so in secret, Marduk the Rebel, the Angel, the Lover of God, gathered the Sons of God and spoke in their ears and convinced them to fight at his side and together they attacked Tiamet, they raped the Mother, they assaulted God. They sought to conquer Heaven.

But the Mother Tiamet drenched in blood fought back in fury and slaughtered all the Sons of God but Marduk, the Rebel Angel, the Missing Piece, the Beloved of God. The two battled, Marduk and Tiamet ripping into each other, the war in Heaven raging, the battle of light and dark, the hacking limbs the bleeding sky the tortured moans of pain, of God

And in a moment, toe to toe, mingling her breath with his, Tiamet the Mother knew the absolute treason of her own flesh, as the One she loved above all others broke her heart.

Numb with the poison of Marduk's violation, too sad to fight her own child, Tiamet lowered her arms to the betrayal of her Son and hung her head.

Sensing the impossible moment of victory at hand, Marduk aimed his mighty shaft and let loose a terrible blow that blasted into the Mother into Tiamet into God and cut her in two. And the war in Heaven was over. And God had lost.

And from the broken body of Tiamet, Marduk the Son the Demon the Rebel Angel recreated the heavens and the earth and all the waters and all the men and all the women in his own image. The Son was now the Father the Father was now the King and the King was now God. The Mother was defeated imprisoned outcast, was thrown out of Heaven and condemned to Darkness.

And then Marduk, the Rebel the Angel the Demon told the Great Lie.

Marduk told the men and the women that pain was life, that evil was balance, that man was conqueror, that woman was conquered, that order must be preserved through rule and power. That He was God and Tiamet was--Eve. And Man believed the Great Lie, and that belief was the Fall of Man, and all of it blamed on Woman.

And Man wrote it down in a book. And he called it good.

And here we are today. And God needs your help.

NANNA

Too strong to wipe out, she filters back into the world, her spirit reappears in secret, in darkness, with new faces, new names, new vessels to ensure the quiet presence of the Mother, of Tiamet, always different but always the same—

| | |
|------------------|---------------|
| Diana | TIAMET |
| Hecate | NANNA |
| Mary | TIAMET |
| Athena | NANNA |
| Aphrodite | TIAMET |
| Medusa | NANNA |
| Kali | TIAMET |
| Isis | NANNA |
| Odudua, Sekhmet | TIAMET |
| Ixciana, Suzette | NANNA |

TIAMET

Latisha, Nanna

NANNA/TIAMET

Joan

TIAMET

Help me. Save me
Time will stop forever tomorrow
Tonight is the hope
Your child is the hope
Now is the time

NANNA/TIAMET

If you have eyes, then see
If you have ears, then hear
Release the Mother to once again lead to rule to set her children free
as once it was in Time before Time

The drums go silent. Tiamet sits on her muddy throne, and waits silently for Joan's response.

Nanna shakes, released from the trance.

Joan thinks, stares at Nanna and Tiamet.

A low rumble of thunder. Silence.

JOAN

So you're telling me some grand celestial plan was responsible for having my childhood beaten out of me as a little girl. That I was supposed to live my life making sure my father wouldn't choke to death on his own vomit after passing out in the middle of the living room from two six-packs and half a pint? That the black eyes and split lips and broken bones I got for dragging him home from an endless night of nameless bars are the credentials that elect me to Divine Portal status, that the hell of my life was all part of a fucking plan?

NANNA

Trust me, honey, all the pain and suffering and sacrifice you've been through were designed to strengthen you to perpetuate the legacy of a thousand thousand foremothers.

JOAN

Don't ask questions just sit back and enjoy the ride--that's one hell of a legacy you and those thousand thousand foremothers want me to perpetuate--

NANNA

Goddamnit, Joan, you want a baby, you plant both feet and fight for it--

JOAN

Do I have to save God and the universe in order to have a baby with my husband? Let someone else do it. I've been saving people my entire life, and I can't do it anymore, you have no fucking idea what I went through--

NANNA

(shaking her) And you have no friggen idea what *I* went through and what I've done and what I know and I am telling you I never stopped fighting, not once--I fought for my husbands I fought for my kids I fought for each breath in that friggen hospital. I fought every cell that splintered off and goddamn multiplied into a cancer that cracked my ribs every time I took a breath because I didn't want to die God only knows why but I wanted to live and now I'm dead. And there's no friggen way I am coming back to go through it all over again just because you don't want to join the rest of the world but you got to, Joan, so stop your friggen thinking and just have the goddamn baby, now before it's too late--

JOAN

No, I—I cannot accept the role of fulcrum for my species. Inwardly flattered though I may be.

NANNA

I don't give a shit if you're flattered, I will not be buried with the rest of my children, I will not be the end of the line because I don't want that responsibility, got it ? Pick up the ball or it ends right here, right now.

JOAN

Fine. Then let it end.

TIAMET

Woman, what did you say?

JOAN

I said fine, then let it end.

Tiamet rises, approaches Joan. Nanna backs away, fearful.

TIAMET

I thought you were the Vessel, I thought you had the Power, but perhaps you are nothing but a spineless pair of tits terrified of her own pussy--*(slaps her; thunder)*

JOAN

(she staggers back from the blow) You-you slapped me.

TIAMET

Go ahead, Joan, let your husband's fear rule your life, you're no woman, you're just a smelly unclean hole shaking in her boots--*(slaps her; thunder)*

JOAN

Knock it off, tubby , why do I have to clean up your mistakes—

TIAMET

Goddamned victimized little cunt --

Tiamet goes to slap her again, but Joan powerfully catches her hand before it can hit her face. Holds it there.

JOAN

(in a deep voice) I said watch it.

Suddenly, a huge blast of thunder and lightning dances around them as they arc with the Illumination of Power.

Nanna, still holding the negligee, shakes with them, caught up in the spiritual backdraft.

With great effort, they release hands. Instantly the thunder and lightning disappear.

Tiamet smiles, glides back away from Joan to her stump.

Joan tingles, shaken at the power coursing through her.

JOAN

(to herself, with sudden insight) Only way...Only hope...tonight...

NANNA

(holding her head) Whoa. Feel that air vibrating, Joannie?

JOAN

Well, it's now or never, isn't it? Nanna, supposing, just supposing mind you, that I do, in fact, accept the fabulously pivotal mantle you and -- uhm -- God, I guess -- offer, can you promise me my daughter never has to endure the pain and anguish I went through? Can you promise me she will have the normal childhood I was denied? Can you promise me she will grow up happy?

Nanna looks past Joan to Tiamet, who shakes her head 'no'.

NANNA

(lying) Joan, I promise. *(thunder)*

JOAN

(she takes the negligee back from Nanna) Alright Nanna, deal.

Instantly, Nanna is joyfully up on her feet, hugs Joan--a peal of thunder.

Tiamet smiles radiantly. Lifts up her stump-like throne, raises it over her head and smashes it to pieces on the floor.

Nanna and Joan look at each other. Grabbing onto the back of a chair Nanna cackles, and smashes it to pieces . After a beat, Joan smiles and laughs tentatively. Picks up a small box, tosses it on the floor

A brilliant flame appears in Tiamet's palm.

TIAMET

Free the Mother
Liberate Tiamet

Release God

She swallows the fire and laughs as the lights go black for the End of Act One.

ACT TWO

Ten minutes later.

A light appears on Tiamet singing Peggy Lee's FEVER.

Lights up on the bedroom. Nanna smokes a cigarette. She has been very busy.

Glowing candles light the disheveled room. All the wood furniture, logs from the fireplace, clothing and other combustibles have been piled into a Grand Funeral Pyre, atop which sits the queen-sized mattress.

Thunder and lightning as the lights go down on Tiamet.

Joan enters, singing FEVER. She looks stunning: she wears the black silk negligee, black mules, and a long black lace scarf around her neck. She dabs a touch of expensive perfume behind her ears, in her cleavage.

NANNA

Fabulous.

JOAN

Oh stop. A little color perhaps?

NANNA

No, here.

She opens the scarf and drapes it over Joan's head and face like a wedding veil. Grabs three lilacs from a vase, hands them to Joan.

NANNA

Gorgeous.

JOAN

And you're sure this little boulevard farce will slap Joe unto action?
We couldn't just sit down like other people and talk to him?

NANNA

Words mean shit, kid. Remember, make him think you're going through with it--

JOAN

Right. You say "Approach the pyre, Wo-Man"--

NANNA

"Approach the pyre, Wo-Man", you get all the way up to the top of the mattress, I'll light the flame, you scream for help, he realizes what a schmuck he's been, jumps to the rescue, crushes you in his arms, presses you down with the full weight of his manly love, unzips his pants, reaches in and whips out his thick, dripping--

JOAN

Yes, dear, I get the picture.

NANNA

Bing bang boom: baby.

From off-stage, we hear an urgent pounding on the door.

JOE

(desperate) Joan--

The women race around the room making last minute adjustments. Nanna kisses her scotch-taped, re-framed photograph and places it shrine-like next to the vase of lilacs on an end-table at the top of the pyre.

Joan and Nanna give each other the thumbs up; Nanna hides behind the pyre.

JOE

(pounding on the door) Joan--Joan darling--Joan darling
lovegoddess--Joan let me in, open the door--Joan--*(throws himself against the door)*

Joan walks casually to the door.

JOE

Joan--*(throws himself at door)*--owww--Joan--*(throws himself at door again)* Joooooan--

Joan opens the door; the night storm howls in the blackness beyond. Joe hurtles past her, landing flat on his face. Joan shuts the door.

Joan snaps into supplicant position; Joe doesn't notice. He pulls himself up to his knees.

JOAN

You're late, sweetums.

JOE

Home--

JOAN

You were gone such a very long time--

JOE

Safe--

JOAN

You're soaked, Joe--

JOE

Lost running hours blur where what where home --Home. Joey home.

JOAN

Full sentences, Joe.

JOE

Home time thinking alone help. Need your help.

JOAN

(snapping back into supplicant position) How delightful for me.

JOE

Want need you me you. Baby. Too. Also. Want baby. Truth. Do. Really.

JOAN

(surprised) Stop. Say it again.

JOE

Want baby. Help me Joan. I can do it. I can. I think.

JOAN

(with increasing elation) We can, Joe.

JOE

So confused. So tired of running. Head throbbing.

JOAN

You're serious Joe.

JOE

End of night, darkest, coldest, hold till dawn--

JOAN

Joe. Joe, I'm suddenly flushed with hope— Oh, Joe--

Joan picks up a towel from the chaos, sits behind Joe on the floor. She dries him off. Hugs him.

JOE

Joannie lick--

JOAN

Joey--

JOE

Joey need nipple tongue, Joannie---

Joan takes an embarrassed glance towards Nanna, hiding behind the pyre.

JOAN

Well, uhm, Joe, out here, where everyone can see?

JOE

We're all alone, Joan.

JOAN

Yes, of course, but what if?

JOEY

Pwease Joannie head nipple tongue, pwease, pwease---(he sobs)

JOAN

It's alright, bloweybone, Joannie is here for her little Joey boy--

Joan bares her breast, and puts her nipple in his mouth. He suckles. Calms down.

Nanna watches in bemused disgust. Thunder rumbles, she looks up, "what can I do". She catches Joan's eye, gestures to her watch.

Joan gestures for a little patience. During the following, Nanna smokes a cig and listens with growing anxiety.

JOE

Joan.

JOAN

Joe.

JOE

I'm scared, Joan.

JOAN

I'm here, Joe.

JOE

Is the room vibrating?

JOAN

It's merely the storm.

JOE

What am I doing here, Joan.

JOAN

You're suckling, Joe.

JOE

I mean it's all over so quickly, how can we ever know that we're doing what we're supposed to be doing instead of what we're not and telling ourselves that we are.

JOAN

That's why people get married, Joe.

JOE

To add to the confusion?

JOAN

To help figure it out. It's supposed to be easier with two.

JOE

It is?

JOAN

Yes Joe. Theoretically.

Rumble of thunder. Tiamet appears, silent.

JOE

Know what I wish?

JOAN

That you were never born?

JOE

Besides that.

JOAN

What, Joe?

JOE

That this were all of it.

JOAN

All of what.

JOE

The world, Joan. I wish that this room were the world and that I could stay here in this room the world with you forever and ever. Wouldn't that be nice, Joan, if we had no mothers or fathers or memories and that all the days gone by never went beyond this room? Wouldn't that be nice?

Rumble of thunder.

Joan?

JOAN

I'm visualizing, Joe.

JOE

I think it would be nice Joan. We could create ourselves all over again because we would be clean of memories, Joan, we would be free of the world touching us too hard and breaking our fingers and all the soapy hands that ever were couldn't reach us if this room were the world, Joan. We could be Mother and Father and Daughter and Son and everything else because there wouldn't be anyone but us.

JOAN

Yes, Joe, that would be nice.

Pause. Rumble of thunder.

JOE

We're pushed screaming into this world, covered in blood, held upside down by some faceless god appraising us like a leg of lamb in a butcher shop, wrapped up, sent home, tossed in the oven and devoured for dinner--

JOAN

Or sung to at sleepytime. Or praised for learning how to tie your shoe. Or loved for being the saving grace of someone else's miserable existence.

JOE

The problem is we live surrounded by gods who slip and act like people.

JOAN

We are capable of raising them successfully, Joe. We are given that option.

JOE

Yes, Joan but why are so many of us chained to radiators. Or used as ashtrays. Or pin cushions. Or punching bags. Or fondled in our baths.

JOAN

I wish I could answer that. I can't.

JOE

Neither can I.

JOAN

There is love, Joe. You have to trust it, no matter what.

JOE

You can't trust love, Joan, not when it's wrapped and stroked and held tight in the sweat of a palm that's much bigger than your own in the dark when you're supposed to be asleep and the hand creeps in underneath and wakes you up but your Mother's voice in the dark keeps whispering--

JOE/TIAMET

Sleep Joey go back to sleep--

JOE

And you make believe you're asleep but you're wide awake in the dark with the hand underneath the sheets and your throat wraps itself into a knot to stop you from screaming and your guts pull in and pick up out of the water like a salmon panting for air on a hook and your heart tries to break free from your chest and suddenly one night something inside you begins to enjoy the firm grasp of the palm in the dark under the sheets and this is when your soul leaves your body for the next 30 years and from then on forever every pleasure you happen to carve out of life is somehow butchered to half its estate because deep down in your guts beneath the covers you can't trust what might be love can also be good.

TIAMET

Good boy, Joey, good boy--

JOE

And you have only yourself to blame because you must have enjoyed it because that's biology, if you didn't enjoy it it couldn't have happened so it's all your fault and you've mangled the rest of your life by enjoying the absolute weight and power of her palm under the sheets in the dark and later in the bathtub behind the locked door in the full light and the greased control of the soap in her hands in the warm bath behind the locked door. And it's all my fault because I didn't scream.

Pause. She clings to Joe, pulling him into her.

A huge blast of thunder and lightning roars as Joe places his head in Joan's lap. Nanna is angry. Agitated.

NANNA

(to herself and to the Heavens) None of this is my fault, I am not to blame here.

They *think* too much is the problem, you can't think about things too much you just got to keep punching that's the only way. You stop to think, you die. I never stopped to think about it, I did alright, I got through it in one piece, did I complain, did I let it stop me? Damn right I didn't.

Don't think about it, don't think about anything. Forget. Keep moving. Faith, have faith. All part of the Big Plan. The Big Big Plan. So finish it already.

Thunder. Nanna stomps out her cig.

Joe and Joan breathe quietly as the elements subside around them.

JOAN

I'm so sorry, Joe. I'm so so sorry.

JOE

Uhm, thanks.

JOAN

My poor baby, my little babyhead Joeybone --Joannie protect her little Joey boy, trust me Joe --

JOE

Do you love your father, Joan?

JOAN

Do you love your mother, Joe?

JOE

Yes.

JOAN

Yes.

Rumble of thunder.

JOE

It's a wonderful life, Joan.

JOAN

So I've heard, Joe.

JOE

Thank God I have you.

Nanna catches Joan's eye, gestures to get the game started.

Joan shakes her head "no". Nanna shakes her head "yes". Joan shakes her head "no".

JOAN

Joey, I'll never let anyone hurt you again, I'll make it safe.

JOE

I love you Joan.

JOAN

I'm here for you Joe. You have to trust me.

JOE

I trust you, Joan.

JOAN

We have to keep pushing, Joe.

JOE

I do so admire your leadership qualities, Joan.

JOAN

You can't let what happened stop you, Joe. We're not children anymore, we're adults. We can do it, I know we can. You have to take the chance. With me. And with our child.

JOE

I promise, Joan.

JOAN

We have to make it happen. Tonight, Joe.

JOE

Tomorrow, Joan.

JOAN

Joe, now. You said you were ready.

JOE

I said I think I was ready.

JOAN

You can't keep hiding, Joe. Our future starts now.

JOE

Soonmaybe, Joannie mommylick.

JOAN

Oh my God. You haven't heard me. I'm wasting my breath.

JOE

Joey heard you.

JOAN

It's out of my hands now. Don't blame me for what's about to happen.

JOE

But Joey's responding.

JOAN

Your needs, your pain, your life. Of course! You're the baby, Joe, why do we need another one?

JOE

Pwease Joannie, not now--

JOAN

My bones are turning to chalk.

JOE

Can't we talk about it tomorrow, slippydoo--

JOAN

Nothing changes, Joe. All I do is apologize for the inability of men to live up to their potential.

JOE

Joey sorry--

JOAN

It's not your fault. It's my fault.

JOE

I think somebody needs her milk and cookies, salt-lick Bambihead--

JOAN

I'm fucking trapped.

JOE

Joeyhead loves his big patient strongywongy nippletongue--

JOAN

(Spreading briquettes and lighter fluid around the pyre) There's no way out. This is the only way.

JOE

But Joey is trying to tell you maybe he's juicy horny swollen stickyhead, pookemwoowoolips--

JOAN

Goddamnit Joe, enough with the baby-talk.

JOE

Alright then, fine. Look, Joan, thanks to the aforementioned mystic Sufi vision, I am telling you I have seen the folly of my ways and am now merely trying to rectify a dire situation by snuggling back into the abandoned prophylactic of our love--Come Joan, both penis and testicles doth giddily await the touch of your masterful embrace as supplicants before the Altar of your Devotion.

JOAN

That means children, Joe. Offspring. Descendants.

JOE

Yes, but until then, couldn't we just get a dog?

JOAN

As I suspected. I will not be deterred from my course.

She dabs the lighter fluid behind her ears, in her cleavage.

JOE

Soak me up, Oh Bounteous One, I am yours for the ravishing--

JOAN

How delightful.

JOE

I have a mighty dangler emblazoned with your name across it,
lipshine--

JOAN

Pardon me, dove--

JOE

(Finally notices the room, Joan's outfit) Joan, you've re-arranged the
furniture--

JOAN

I thought you'd never notice--

JOE

Dear lord, Joan, is that lighter fluid?

JOAN

Do you like it, Joe?

JOE

Just what do you mean by this fateful pile of wood?

JOAN

You needn't worry yourself, Joe, I'll be done in a second; and well-
done in two.

JOE

But I love you Joan.

JOAN

(stuffing The Wall Street Journal as kindling into her negligee) And
I love you, Joe, but that is my curse. You see, despite the fact that I
am obviously a shining example of Modern Woman--intelligent,
beautiful, creative, managerial--I am nonetheless shackled by an
irrational, enabling love for a man who is so quarantined by the
torment of his own dysfunctional childhood that he is unwilling to
fulfill my destiny in the fecund Workshop of Regeneration.

JOE

My brain is still a'swirl from this evening's supernal interlude, Joan,
give me a break already.

JOAN

Joe, you speak of mystic Sufi visitations as if they were forces you
alone were privy to, but hear me now and know--Joan, too, is conduit
and sensitive to the preternatural gods that do blow the dark winds of
night. *(she closes her eyes, starts a low, nasal chant)*

JOE

Joan darling--

JOAN

"Come you spirit that tends on mortal thoughts--"

JOE

(grabbing her arm) Joan, really now, must you be so histrionic--

JOAN

(snapping at him like a three-headed guard dog from Hell, sending him sprawling) GODDAMNIT JOE KNOCK IT OFF WILLYA?
(pulls it together) Interrupt not the Ritual of Ultimate Enablement.

JOE

Oh dear.

JOAN

"Come you spirit that tends on mortal thoughts, unsex me here and fill me, from the crown to the toe topful of direst cruelty. Come Mighty Nanna, thou serpent maned agent of blood dimmed dikè, make thick my blood, stop up the access and passage to remorse, that no compunctious visitings of nature or husband shake my fell purpose nor keep peace between the effect and it. Come, Nanna, thou succubine archangel of feminine cyclicity, come to my woman's breasts and take my milk for gall, you murdering minister, wherever in your sightless substance you wait on nature's mischief. Come thick Nanna, and pall thee in the dunkest smoke of hell, that my lighter sees not the flame it makes, nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark to cry, "Hold, Hold!"

With a grand flourish of Incantational Gesticulation, Joan welcomes the spirits of the night, and in a huge clap of thunder and lightning, Nanna appears on the top of the mattress.

Her hair and garments have been transformed to the latest Avenging-Fury-from Hell chic. The thunder and lightning dance around her as she cackles hideously.

NANNA

Who so beckons me from beyond the veil of immortal dusk and dares disturb the doomsleep of the dreaded avenger known only as Nanna?

JOE

(backing up in fear) No, no, get away, I told you to leave me alone!!

NANNA

SILENCE WHELP!!

JOAN

Oh most powerful of all midnight Furies, it is I, the fair and lovely Joan, that has summoned you to aid me in my most dire misfortune.

NANNA

Speak, female.

JOE

Joan, please, come away from there.

He grabs her gently, but she shrugs him off.

JOAN

Hear me, Oh Wise One, I stand before the raging inferno of your majesty as the tiniest of humble flames so that you might smile upon my lot and grant me my single request.

NANNA

And what is that request, female?

JOAN

Oh Most Supreme One, I want to bathe in the flames of hellish baptism, drink the fiery nectar of the dead, and forget.

JOE

Your request is most granted, Wo-Man.

JOAN

Oh thou Inimitable Incendiarian, deliver me unto the Liebestod!

JOE

Dear God NO--*(he throws himself at Joan's feet)*--

JOAN

(immobile, yet enjoying her position of power) Faretheewell, Joe, my once potential neo-primate. When next your groin fills with the hot blood of passion, many years hence, remember the lovely name of Fair Joan.

NANNA

You Joe are but Man while Joan is Wo-Man, creator and destroyer of all she surveys. Wo-man is strong, Joe, Wo-Man knows the vile weakness of words and the surging power of fighting for what she wants.

Joan pulls a lighter from her pocket, holds it in front of her at the base of the pyre. Nanna gestures; the lighter in Joan's hand shoots out a huge flame. Joan tries to hide her surprise.

JOE

Jesus Christ, Joan, stop! One minute you're three years old in a perfect world, the next you're a wrinkled set of bones lying in a coffin looking up at the world through plastic eyes. Time is the most precious part of me, Joan. It's all I can give you. My time.

JOAN

It's not enough.

JOE

It's all I have.

JOAN

I want more than your words, I want more than your fear, I want more than your desperate tears in the night because the world has ripped you apart and made you sad, as if you were the only one. I want you to grow up and act like my husband because my husband

is a man of power and intellect and sex and smell and is father to my children, Joe. I need to have a child. Even as we speak, every cell in my body is shaking with the need to splinter off and multiply, Joe, I need this and I want this because I want to be a life-giver, Joe; I want my womb to split open and sing to the world that I have a child and I am powerful because of that. I can be ruler and shaper and center and I want you to be there by my side as my consort and my friend. I need you to help me, Joe, I need you to help me make a baby because we can make sure she grows up avoiding our pain and our mistakes. I can provide that she will make a success of the life I give her instead of limiting myself to the failures of my own.

Rumble of thunder. Pause.

JOE

(quietly) Tomorrow, Joan. I promise.

JOAN

(to Nanna) Deliver me unto my fate, oh Foul Breathed Mid-wife of Tartarus.

Thunder rumbles. The lighter shoots out another huge flame.

NANNA

Approach the pyre, Wo-Man, the Liebestod awaits--

JOE

Can you honestly throw away all the galloping years of secrets we've shared, all the millions of hours rushing home to be with each other, all the tumescent minutes of--

JOAN

Put a lid on it Joe, I want a life and a husband and a baby, and since I'm striking out in all three, I might as well burn in Hell.

JOE

But I love you--

She smacks him across the face.

JOAN

I hate it when you tell me that.

NANNA

Approach the pyre, Wo-Man!

JOE

Don't leave me--

JOAN

Make me stay--

JOE

Tell me how--

NANNA

Goddamnit, Wo-Man, approach the friggen pyre already!!!

JOAN

Give me a baby--

JOE

Just like that--

NANNA

WAGON HO!

JOAN

You may blow in my ear first, but yes Joe, just like that.

NANNA

Joan, I'm waiting for you to *approach the pyre, Wo-man*—

JOAN

(*to Nanna*) Forget it, Nanna, what's the point?

JOE

Can you just once stop reinforcing my powerlessness by being so powerful all the time?

NANNA

Joan, now--

JOAN

You only want me to enable your co-dependent dysfunction--

JOE

Well so do you--

NANNA

SHADDUP!!

Nanna opens her arms and the biggest clap of thunder and lightning rocks the house. Joe and Joan fall to the floor.

NANNA

You kids make me vomit, trapped inside all your goddamn bullshit big words while the full moon is flying right out the friggen window--now shut your yap and get your bony ass up here, Joannie, we're gonna char grill some tenderloin like we should have from the start--

Thunder and lightning; Nanna gestures powerfully to Joan.

A light rises on Tiamet, chanting intensely in the background. Nanna is the only one who can see her.

TIAMET

Keh Kali Keh Kali Keh...

As though pulled by supernal forces, Joan's body lurches, against her will, up the pyre to the mattress where she holds up the lighter.

JOAN

Joe, help me--this is real, Joe, it's not a game anymore--

JOE

Excuse me? Not a game anymore?

JOAN

They're going to kill me, Joe--

NANNA

(desperately stalling) Stop talking and give it to her, kid, this is your last chance before we Shake N' Bake the chippy--

JOE

Excuse me, but I am suddenly feeling rather manipulated.

JOAN

Jesus Christ Joe help me--

With all her might, Joan conquers the flame and drops the lighter. Lights out on Tiamet.

JOE

(with rising ire) Is this elaborate pyrotechnic melodrama your idea of opening my eyes to the inevitable joys of fatherhood, after all I've just told you, Joan--

NANNA

Stop talking--

JOE

This is not a game--

JOAN

It was her idea, Joe! I didn't want to do it.

JOE

This is my fucking life--

NANNA

I don't want to hear this--*(starts her way down the pyre)*

JOAN

I thought I could help you.

NANNA

Poor little Joey--*(picking up a broken chair leg from the pyre)*

JOE

I don't need your pity.

NANNA

That's good, Joe, cause you're never gonna get it. *(hits him hard across the back with the chair leg)*

JOAN

Leave him alone--

NANNA

Stop protecting him.

JOE

I don't expect you to understand what she did to me, Nanna, but--

NANNA

I know exactly what she did to you, I'm not stupid Joe--

JOE

You know? You knew?!?

NANNA

She's my daughter, Joe, of course I knew--

JOE

Oh please please don't tell me this, I do not want to hear this--

NANNA

(hits him with the chair leg) Some things you don't talk about.

JOAN

Joe, get me down from here--

NANNA

Some things you wish didn't happen, but they do. You accept, you friggen move on. How many times I got to tell you--

JOE

I was three fucking years old--

JOAN

I need your help--

NANNA

The world is held together with friggen cracks, Joe. My father made mistakes. I made mistakes, your mother made mistakes, you're gonna make mistakes. Goddamn deal with it.

JOE

You let her do it--

NANNA

Everybody's got a locked door, Joe.

JOE

You knew--

NANNA

No one's allowed in, no one can help. Nobody helped me, Joey, it's part of growing up.

JOAN

Don't listen Joe--

JOE

You let her do it--

NANNA

You let that stop you, you're gonna die a friggen 3 year old--stop thinking about what went wrong and get your goddamn sorry ass up there and try to get it right--(*hits him with the chair-leg*)

JOAN

I'm warning you, leave him alone--

NANNA

You can't get pregnant talking about it, Joan--

JOAN

The man is in pain--

NANNA

So who isn't honey, get over it already--

JOE

Get over it Nanna? That's your advice?

NANNA

(*hits him with the chair-leg*) Goddamn you Joe yes, get over it and grow the hell up already--

JOE

(*through tears*) Nanna--

NANNA

GROW UP!!!!

She is about to hit him again, but he grabs her hand; his minefields are about to go off.

JOE

NannaNannaNanna--(*pulls her head to him, kisses her on the forehead*) You're right, Nanna, right as always--(*he grabs the chair leg from her, throws it back on the pyre near Joan*) You are dead fucking right. (*he lunges away from her*)

JOAN

Joey please , I'm right here--

NANNA

No more talk Joan.

JOE

Joey finally gets to play Grown Up--(*he picks up the lighter fluid, drenches himself with it*)

JOAN

Jesus--

NANNA

What the hell are you doing--

JOE

I am a man Nanna, I will be clean. (*he leaps up to the mattress, next to Joan*) MommyJoannie time for wittle Joeyboy's bath--

NANNA

Goddamnit it Joe that's not what I mean--

JOAN

Talk to me, Joe--

JOE

Joey dirty MommyJoannie Joeyboy needs a bath pwease MommieJoannie

JOAN

Joe stop--

NANNA

There was nothing I could do, Joey--

JOE

(*to Joan*) You're not the only one who gets to play this game--(*he grabs her violently, pulls her up into him*)

JOAN

My hand-

NANNA

(*to the heavens*) Help me, I need your help--

JOAN

Stop--

JOE

You want little Joeyboy's peepee to be all clean so he can give you a little baby don't you but we need the soap where is the soap--(*he reaches down, picks up the lighter*)--

NANNA

Where are you, it's all going wrong, help me!

JOAN

(*trying to get away*) You're upset Joe--

JOE

(grabs her arm) No Joan I'm alive. And I'm dirty . And I hate it. And now I have the soap. *(he flicks the lighter in front of her face)* Here MommyJoannie. Take it. Take it. Take it. Take it.

JOAN

Joe--

NANNA

Help me, goddamnit!!

JOE

TAKE IT!

Trembling, Joan takes the lighter; Joe grabs her from behind, caressing her sexually, guiding her hand with the burning flame along her body.

Tiamet glows in the background, echoing Joe's memories as the voice of his Mother. Nanna is the only one who hears her. [Note: Joe's speech should flow seamlessly.]*

TIAMET

(cooing) Joey Joeyboy--

JOE

The door is locked, Joannie, the tub is full of bubbles little Joeyboy won't say a word because little Joeyboy loves his Mommy and doesn't want the big man to take him away so little Joeyboy won't even breathe--

JOE/TIAMET

Good boy Joey good boy--

JOE

And the tub is full of bubbles Mommy loves Joey so don't make a sound and let's take the soap down and clean him nice and good and soap doesn't hurt much Joey soap is good stop crying Joey stop crying--

JOE/TIAMET

Help me Joey help me--

JOE

And Joey is trying not to breath because he is only three years old and will stretch if you push it way on in again and again to clean him all the way up inside don't cry Joey your Mommy loves you--

JOE/TIAMET

Help me Joey--

JOE

Mommy Joannie push real hard because Joey can't hide it in anymore because Joey is about to explode so push Joannie take the soap and the wooden brush and push it in and scrub inside, let Mommy use her hands Joey, let Mommy inside with her hands and

soap and brush to clean all the dirty parts of little Joey don't scream
Joey let Mommy stroke Joey's little peepee like a little man and take
the soap and push it in hard so hard again and again until the water
turns red and don't see Mommy cry Joey don't see Mommy's tears
as she rams the soap in all the way up his little hole and out his
mouth so he will never say a word again push fucking god push--

JOAN

*(breaking away from him, throws the lighter away from her, she
falls to her knees)* Jesus Christ Stop--

TIAMET

(suddenly the voice of Joe's Mother as a scared little girl: to Nanna)
Mommy help me Mommy make him stop--

NANNA

(shocked; to Tiamet) Martha, my little Marthy, no--

JOE

But I can't stop it never stops it's in the room Joan it's in my blood--

TIAMET

Grampa stop--Mommy--

JOAN

You can break away--

NANNA

(to Tiamet) Stop this now!

JOE

No Joan she's in every shadow of the house and she will always win
because I am my blood and so are you Joan--

TIAMET

(whimpering) No Grampa don't please --

JOAN

You're wrong--

NANNA

I'm not listening--

JOE

(with sad sincerity) My God Joannie how I love you--

TIAMET

He's hurting me Mommy--

JOAN

I can help you--

NANNA

No goddamnit!

JOE
Give me your hand, Joannie--

JOAN
I can take care of it--

NANNA
It's all wrong!

JOE
(cradling and kissing her hand) You're so strong, Joan, nothing you
can't do--

TIAMET
Help me Mommy--

JOAN
Yes, Joey, yes--

NANNA
No--stop--no--

JOE
Yes, Joan, the pillar of strength with all the excuses, that's why you
love me you need a victim so your father can keep breaking your
bones and you can keep suffering and taking care of things--you
wouldn't be happy if I were just Joey you wouldn't know who you
were--*(he starts squeezing her hand)*

TIAMET
(crying) Mommy, please--

NANNA
I can't go through this again--

JOAN
Joe, my hand--

TIAMET
It hurts!

JOE
We should work together on this Joan--

TIAMET
Help me--

JOAN
Please stop--

NANNA
(to herself) No, don't think--

JOE

I'll get plastered and you can tear my insides out with a bar of soap and a scrub brush and I can beat you senseless and break your bones because that's what they want I mean I want I mean you want I mean we want right Joannie, so love me and rock me and hold me so I can love you and show you how good you are by beating Daddy's little girl black and blue, Joannie, come here to Daddy--

TIAMET

Help me--

NANNA

Trapped--

JOAN

(in great pain) Crushing it--

NANNA

No power--

JOE

Come to me Joannie, your Daddy loves you--

JOAN

Hurting me--

JOE

Say you love me--

NANNA

No choice--

JOAN

Stop Joe-

JOE

Say I love you Daddy--

JOAN

I--I--

NANNA

(to Tiamet) This is all your fault!

JOE

SAY I LOVE YOU DADDY--

JOAN

(through her pain with her free hand, she reaches the broken chair leg) I HATE YOU--

A mighty blast of thunder and lightning; she takes a savage swipe and knocks him across the head with the chair leg, sending him off the pyre to the floor below; he lands at Nanna's feet.

JOAN

Joe.

JOE

(weakly, after a pause) Joan. I'm still alive.*(he cries quietly)*

TIAMET

Good boy, Joey, good boy.

Broken, and at a loss, Nanna strokes Joe's head.

NANNA

Faaaanana--faaaaaanana--

JOAN

It's too late for that, Nanna.

NANNA

It's not my fault, Joan, it's all part of the plan--

JOAN

Fuck your plan.

NANNA

What the Hell was I supposed to do goddamnit--I--I don't know what to do--

Rumble of thunder; the thunder and lightning build through the following scene.

TIAMET

Faaananaa--fananaaaa...

JOAN

Leave us alone.

NANNA

I wish I could--

JOAN

Take all the ghosts in this house with you and let us live in peace.

NANNA

I'm not perfect, nobody's perfect--

JOAN

Fuck you old woman, why didn't you break down the goddamn door and save him--

NANNA

You think pain begins and ends with you --

JOE

I'm sorry Joan--

JOAN

Look at the world you made for us and tell me you couldn't have stopped it--

NANNA

(making her way up the pyre) Good people do bad things, Joan, that's part of being human, you can't hate people for being human--

JOAN

(spitting in her face) You make me ill, oh Wondrous Mother of us all.

Stunned, Nanna pulls back from Joan, wiping the spit from her face as she makes her way back down the pyre. A dark light bulb has gone off in her head.

TIAMET

Help me Joey, Help me--

JOE

I'm sorry--

NANNA

God help me.

JOE

I'm sorry--

JOAN

No, I'm sorry. You trusted me, you finally opened up to me and I played games with you.. I love you so much.

JOE

You do?

JOAN

Yes, Joe, I do. I love you.

TIAMET

Help me--

NANNA

(to Tiamet) I hate you.

JOAN

We live in dung and feed on pain and the world is trembling about to explode and I love you Joe.

NANNA

I hate you--

TIAMET

Child, future--

You lied to me-- **NANNA**

We have no future-- **JOAN**

Good doesn't matter-- **NANNA**

We have no past-- **JOAN**

Love-- **TIAMET**

Love doesn't matter. **NANNA**

We have only now-- **JOAN**

God-- **TIAMET**

God doesn't matter. **NANNA**

Save God. Help me. **TIAMET**

I thought we had a chance. We don't. **JOAN**

God is demented, Joe-- **NANNA**

All we have is each other. **JOAN**

God hates us and we call it love. **NANNA**

That's a miracle, Joe. That's enough. **JOAN**

Love-- **TIAMET**

Soaked in blood-- **NANNA**

The Child, The World-- **TIAMET**

The world is rotting away--
JOAN

Bloody fingerprints--
NANNA

The world hates children.
JOAN

Tiny broken skulls—
NANNA

We're trapped.
JOAN

Trapped.
NANNA

Trapped!
TIAMET

We have to be enough for each other --
JOAN

The world is too big to go on--
NANNA

We have to get through the night Joe--
JOAN

Love me, help me--
TIAMET

Rotting behind good intentions--
NANNA

Together--
JOAN

Joan--
JOE

Nailing our children to the wall , ripping their guts out--
NANNA

Forgive me, Joe. I don't want to turn into someone who could let that happen--
JOAN

We're on a train headed for a wall afraid to stop--
NANNA

Help God--
TIAMET

JOAN
Let the future happen by itself.

NANNA
Tonight, Nanna gets brave, Joey, tonight Nanna stops the train--

JOAN
(reaching out her hand) Give me your hand Joe trust me--

TIAMET
Stop no please--

NANNA
(to Tiamet) You hear me--

JOAN
Get me down from here--

TIAMET
No—

JOAN
Help me live.

NANNA
I'm pulling the plug--

TIAMET
No!

JOE
(rising slowly) I'm coming Joan--

NANNA
(to Tiamet) I fucking hate you--

JOAN
You can do it, Joe— Save me!

NANNA
And it's all your fault--

JOE
(reaching for her hand) Oh God Joan--

JOAN
Yes--

TIAMET
NO!!

NANNA
(unlocking her rage) IT'S ALL YOUR FAULT--

Years of anger flood through Nanna as she opens her arms wide to the night sky. Instantly, there is a deafening crack and the storm goes silent.

The entire pyre is enveloped in a blazing Cone of Fire. Joan screams in pain, collapses, her blood boiling in the heat.

Tiamet writhes in pain.

JOE

(rushing the pyre) Joan!! (reaching for her)

TIAMET

(in pain) Mommy!

NANNA

Nanna is finally going to take away all the pain, Joe, after all these years, Nanna is going to make it all better, let it all die out in a great clean breath of fire and start up fresh again with some friggen motherless sponge at the bottom of the ocean--

JOE

Joan--(trying to reach her)

TIAMET

Help me!!

NANNA

Nanna's going to show you the inside of love, Joey--

Nanna plugs his mouth with a deep kiss. He screams from within the kiss, as if she were biting the tongue from his head. Weakening in her grip, he manages to push away from Nanna. His knees buckle and he falls to the ground. She stalks him.

During the following, Tiamet supplies the voices of Joe's Mother as both a little girl and an adult, shifting between sexual victim and sexual perpetrator.

JOAN

Joe!

TIAMET

Joey help me Joey help me--

JOE

Stop--

JOAN

I'm burning, my blood--

NANNA

You're right, Joe, I can't let you have that child and pass it down because you will Joe it's in your blood and I can't let anymore little babies be born to be broken Joe--*(he barely evades her with a dive roll)*

TIAMET

It hurts Mommy make him stop--

JOAN

Fight her Joe--

NANNA

This is the world we live in so stop your weeping and come to Nanna--

Trembling, he lurches away from her; legs shaking, body numb, senses dimming.

JOAN

Help me--

JOE

S-Stop--

TIAMET

Help me Joey Help me--

JOAN

You're not a little boy--

TIAMET

Mommy please Mommy help--

NANNA

I have no choice--

JOAN

You're a man--

TIAMET

Grampa stop--

JOE

Stop touching me--

NANNA

What else can I do, what else do I know, Joey, I love you--

JOAN

I love you--

TIAMET

I love you Joey--

JOE

Stop loving me--

NANNA

We're contaminated Joe, we feed on our young because we don't know any better, it's all my fault and it's not my fault, it's the way of the world Joe--

TIAMET

Help me--

JOE

Help me--

NANNA

Who helped me, Joey--

JOAN

She has no power, Joe--

TIAMET

Stop—

JOE

Stop--

NANNA

I tried Joey. I prayed to God. I prayed every night to make it stop when he came into my room. With his hairy back and the sweat from his thighs sticking like paste to my body my little body. His groans shaking my bed, covering me with paste, telling me not to scream. Splitting me in two, just a little girl and her daddy. That's where I learned to turn away, Joe. I learned how to ignore it all, I learned how to pray and I prayed and I prayed it would stop with me when I had my own little girl my own little Marthy--

TIAMET

Mommy no—

NANNA

But I was wrong Joey. It just got worse because she was next my own daughter Marthy she was next. I tried to ignore what he did my father did, did to me, every night did to me. But worse, it got worse, when he closed the door behind to my daughter's room and locked me out, my own little Marthy's room. Worse when I stood on the other side of the door and turned away from the locked door from the muffled screams from the shaking bed because now it was her turn. Marthy's turn his grand-daughter my daughter your mother because what else did I know, Joe, that's all I knew so whose fault do you think it really is Joe--

TIAMET

Mommy--

JOE

You're killing me--

TIAMET

Help me--

JOAN

She's dead, Joe--

She clamps his shoulders from behind--his strength saps in her grip. As she speaks, she rubs her hands over his body as though bathing him.

TIAMET

Stop--

JOE

Stop--

NANNA

I can't stop Joey . I got to burn away all the pain and all the sucking and all the tongues in-between the little legs behind the locked doors in the shadows and the smell of Daddy pounding into me like a mad bull at bedtime calling my by my mother's name because she was dead and I was alive and I had a hole and I belonged to him and he was sad and Mommy was dead because I was alive and it was all my fault. I can't let him do it anymore I can't ignore what he did what Poppa did because he's still doing it Joe. His hands reaching down through me through my daughter. His hands all over you Joe like they'll be over your baby Joe and tonight I finally make him stop. So let's get this over with and burn in Hell where we belong with Mommy and Daddy and Granma and Grampa and Adam and Eve like one big happy family Joe --

TIAMET

Joey--

JOE

Joan--

JOAN

It's not your fault Joe--

NANNA

This is the end of the line Poppa—

JOAN

You have the power--

TIAMET

No--please--

JOAN

You can forgive her--

TIAMET

No--

Don't-- **JOE**

You can forgive yourself-- **JOAN**

This is where I say no-- **NANNA**

No-- **TIAMET**

You can save me-- **JOAN**

D-Don't-- **JOE**

You can save us-- **JOAN**

(*limp*) Don't— **JOE**

This is love, Joey-- **NANNA**

With a short sob, she kisses him on the mouth. TIAMET rages Thunder and lightning explode around them in a wild dance. Joe's struggles grow weaker as Nanna drives him to his back.

Tiamet's mad cacophony hits a climax; the wall of doors rumbles on its hinges.

Nanna's hand reaches, slowly, trembling, hovering above Joe's penis through his pants. Just as it is about to descend, Joe suddenly surges to life, pushes Nanna off him, and screams--

JOE
DON'T!!!

Silence. The doors stop rattling. Tiamet pants with expectation.

The Cone of Fire fades with the thunder and lightning. Joan sputters with relief.

JOE
Don't kiss me. Don't hold me. Don't lick me. Don't stroke me.
Don't touch me. Don't. Don't. Don't. Don't. Don't.

NANNA
(*weakly*) Joey--

JOE
(*standing*) DON'T!!!!

NANNA

Marthy--

JOE

It is my life Nanna , I want it back --

NANNA

(trying to rise) Poppa--Marthy--Joey--

JOE

I am alive Nanna--

NANNA

(coughing) So sorry—Forgive--

JOE

You are dead. So die.
Please.

NANNA

Forgive me--

JOE

I--I—yes.

Joan and Nanna cough. Joe walks to Tiamet's on her throne.

TIAMET

Joey, I'm sorry, I'm so sorry--

JOE

No. Me. Me speak. Me.

TIAMET

Alright, Joe.

JOE

You hurt me more than anyone should ever be able to hurt anyone else. I hate you for that. And I hate myself for hating you because I love you.

We're prisoners. Both of us. As long as I hate you for doing what you did to me, I'll hate myself for who I am because it's part of me. It will always will be part of me. But it's not the only part of me.

We can go on like this, trapped, in pain, waiting to finally die.

Or I can free us both. I can release us from that moment. I can let the world begin again. I can set my life in motion.

I can forgive you. I can forgive myself.

As Joe kisses Tiamet on the cheek, all the bars and sticks that circle the stage fall lifelessly to the ground.

The manacles drop from her wrists.

TIAMET

Joey, my Joseph--

JOE

I forgive you. I won't forget, I can't forget. I should never forget. But I can forgive. I can forgive you. I can love you again.

She touches Joe's cheek.

TIAMET

Joe. Thank you.

JOE

You're welcome.

TIAMET

Your mother loves you, Joe.

She gently kisses him on the forehead.

JOE

I love you too. Now go, please.

TIAMET

You're a good man, Joe.

Tiamet shimmers, glows in a divine light. A fabulous choir of angels sings as she is released back into the Universe, disappearing into the darkness.

Joan calls from the bed

JOAN

(quietly) Joe--

JOE

Joan.

JOAN

Joe--

JOE

(silencing her with a gesture, not looking at her)

Wait.

We have each other, but we are not alone.

We live in a world sick with history. The only way to survive that history is to embrace it. And learn from it.

I cannot abandon my will and follow you like some innocent child.

All I can do is stand with you.

And fall with you.

And crawl ahead with you.
That is our only hope, Joan, our lone salvation. (*closing his eyes,
gambling his life on her response*) Whaddyasay, Joan--deal?

JOAN

(*after a tiny beat*) Yes, Joe. Deal.

A rumble of thunder turns into the joyful heartache of the Liebestod. Joe whirls around on the wave of music, rips open his shirt, and proclaims to the world:

JOE

I am alive, Joan, I am bursting with rabid, untapped machismo, with wild rivers of sap that have yet to run, a young man rife with potential, a raging flood of flesh and blood and hopes and dreams, standing tip toe on the pinnacle of the world reaching for the heavens with my whole life ahead of me, a life that must needs include you, Fair Joan!

He turns to her with a flourish, rips his clothes off as he makes his stoic way up the pyre to Joan. She reaches out her arms and says:

JOAN

Come, Joe. Fill me up with love.

As Joe makes his stoic way up the pyre, Nanna rises to light her final cigarette.

NANNA

Well, *that* was fun.
(*looks up to the heavens*) Anything else? No? You're sure now?
You want me to pick up some Hagen Daz on the way up?

The closet door opens with a moan, the blackness inside beckoning for Nanna's return.

Nanna slowly enters the door as it begins to close.

NANNA

(*coughing*) Done. Sleep.
Dream.

Shestops, looks up at Joe and Joan kissing on the pyre.

Joe. Joan.
Prepare.
Eyes open. Hearts open.
(*coughing*) Best intentions.
Dreams.
Nightmare.

They kiss, start making long overdue love. Nanna is at the door now. Coughing hard

(*coughing*) Good. Evil.
(*coughing*) Same hand. Same heart.
Same breath. Same same same.

Just as the door is about to close shut:

NANNA

(coughing from the cig) I really gotta quit.

She flicks the cigarette directly into the base of the pyre, and disappears into the closet. The door swings closed behind her. The music swells as Joe and Joan are lost in their hard-won ecstasy.

Suddenly, smoke puffs up from the kindling. Joe pops his head up. Sniffs. Joan pulls him back down as they inch rapturously closer towards conception.

Quietly, fire erupts along the bottom of the wood and begins its ravenous trek up the pyre.

Even as she rocks in passion, Joan reaches behind her, grabs the vase next to Nanna's picture, and without missing a beat, pour's the water directly onto the fire, dousing it completely. She replaces the vase and grabs onto Joe as they gallop round the Mountain of Delight.

JOAN

Sound--something--say something--Joe--now

JOE

God--Joan—I feel God Joan –

JOAN

Joe--God—

JOE

God, Joan—

JOAN

Yes—

JOE

YES!

JOAN

YES--

JOE

YES, YES--

JOAN/JOE

YES!

Both Joe and Joan shudder, climaxing simultaneously.

As Joan's eager ova embrace the chosen sperm, all the doors open; the Dawn flows in. They hold each other in a moment of joyful stillness as the lights fade to black.

THE END