

BOTTLE FLY

By Jacqueline Goldfinger

2017 Winner, Yale Drama Prize

2018 Reading, National Theater (London)

2018 Mix List, Steppenwolf Theater

2018 Finalist, International Book Awards

Agent: Susan Gurman, The Gurman Agency

Playwright: Jacqueline Goldfinger, Jacqueline.goldfinger@gmail.com

Time/Place:

Present day. An old barn reconstituted into a bar near the Everglades in rural Florida.

People: 4F, 1M

-K: 20s, Woman, Open Ethnicity, Otherworldly in a hard packed red clay way, Cannot speak, Sings instead, “A little slow” (as we say in the South meaning that she doesn’t have a major mental health issue but is just a bit slow on the uptake and needs some guidance)

-Rosie: 40s, White Woman, Owns and runs the bar, Cal’s wife

-Cal: 40s, Man of Color, Rosie’s husband, Oil Rig worker

-Ruth: 50, Woman, Open Ethnicity, Looking for answers later in life, Penny’s lover

-Penny: 20s, Woman, Open Ethnicity but first preference is Seminole or Hispanic, Tough, Bee Keeper-Tradition Keeper

Florida is an incredibly ethnically diverse state and the Everglades region is reflective of that diversity. Seminoles and other Native Tribes, whites, blacks, Cubans and Hispanics have lived there for centuries. Please cast to reflect the ethnic reality of the region if at all possible.

Accent

Florida is a bizarre state with many variations on the Southern accent. Do not worry about the accent. Just go with the rhythm and flow of the words. These folks talk as they live; hard, fast, with heat.

Music

This is a play with music. You can license short-term, acappella live performance rights. Licensing information is available at the back of the script. If you do not want to license the music, a list of replacement public domain songs, that are less recognizable but work well within the play, is available from the playwright.

Elements of Style

-A slash (/word/) indicates overlap.

-Brackets [word] indicate an unspoken word. A sound and/or movement should indicate the meaning of the words.

-Dots after a character’s name ... means that something unspoken yet meaningful is going on between the characters.

“What is your aim in Philosophy? To show the fly the way out of the fly-bottle.”

–Wittgenstein

ACT ONE

1. Early That Morning

As lights rise, we see an old ramshackle barn. The barn is two stories high and wide enough to store 12-foot stalks of sugar cane. The walls can be wood planks or aluminum sheets. Regardless, there are holes in the walls after decades of use. Paper and newsprint have been pasted over the holes.

The first floor of the barn has been repurposed. It is now a small rural bar with a few mismatched tables and chairs. There's an old army cot in the corner. There are three exits: one to an off-stage first floor bedroom, one to the porch leading outside, and a ladder leading up to a small loft.

The second floor is the small loft. We cannot see into the loft but can see the ladder used for entrance and exit.

K (female, 20s, earthy, a little slow) sits on the army cot on the first floor.

K sings beautifully; flawed and raw but with an underlying grace.

K
(sings *Dream A Little Dream of Me*)

*Stars shining bright above you,
Night breezes whisper I love you,
Bees buzzing in the sycamore tree,
Dream a little dream of me.*

From the second floor loft, we begin to hear the low buzzing of bees.

K

*Say "night-ie-night" and kiss me.
Just hold me tight and...*

(tries to push across the chasm between her mouth and her brain)

...

*And...
And...you can,
Dream a little dream of me.*

The buzzing from the loft gets louder.

K sings louder to push them away.

K

*SWEET DREAMS TILL SUN-BEAMS FIND YOU,
Sweet dreams that leave all worries behind you,
But in your dreams whatever they be,
Whatever they be.
Whatever they beee.*

The buzzing is monstrously loud. The bees are flying down from the loft and descending upon K.

K tries to get away.

K

*Beee. Beee. Beeeeeeeeee.
DREAM A LITTLE DREAM OF-*

K screams, slaps at the bees.

K

*BeeeeeeBeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeDreeeeaaaaammmmmmm...gggg
.aghhhh...Dreeeeceem...*

Rosie (female, 40s, white, tough) enters, wears a bathrobe and holds a fly swatter. She swats the bees away from K like a momma bear.

ROSIE

/Goddamned motherfuckers/

K

/aaaaalittttttllllllleeee...ggggg.achhhh...ghhhh.../

ROSIE

(calls to the loft)

/Jesus H!/
/

K

/eammmmmmmmm...offffffffmeeeeeeeee.../

ROSIE

/Beelze/

K

/ahhhhguhhhhguhnhhh/

ROSIE

/Bulb!/
/

K

/Meeeeeeeeeeeeee.

The buzzing retreats. The bees fly back up to the loft.

Rosie comforts K.

ROSIE

It's okay. Hey, girl, K, girl,

Ackhggggghhh

K

Shhhh, just, shhhh now,
Where is it? Where is it?

ROSIE

Rosie feels around in K's pockets.

K
(in pain)

Dreamalittledreamofmedreamalittledreamofmedreamalittledreamofmedreamalittledreamofme.

ROSIE

It's gonna be,
Okay.
It's gonna be,
I'm gonna evict those snatch eating bitches.
You'll see, you'll see, okay, okay, here girl.

Rosie pulls an antique crystal doorknob
out of K's pocket. Gives it to her.

ROSIE

Here.

K accepts it like communion. She rubs it.
She calms down.

K

DDDDDDD...
Dream a little dream of me.

ROSIE

I know, honey, I know.
It's o-
It's gonna be, okay.

I got you.
I got you.

K

...

ROSIE

It's gonna be okay.
Miss Rosie got you.
You're my dream girl,
My perfect dream.

K

[Yes, I am. I am.]

...

[And I am safe.]

...

Ruth's voice is heard from the off-stage
loft.

RUTH'S VOICE
(from loft, off-stage)

I am so so sorry about that.

Rosie screams up to Ruth.

ROSIE

Pack your bags!
And your damn bees!
And get out!

RUTH'S VOICE
(from loft, off-stage)

It will not happen again. I swear-

ROSIE

K got, she got,

Stings.
She's got damn, what look like she walk through nettles,
Spanish bayonets, palm stickers, and shit.
All up on her arms.
All over her,
Good thing she dressed.
Otherwise, she'd be all eaten up, even in her private places.
You got to take them and go.

Ruth (50, female, uncomfortable in her own skin) appears at the top of the loft ladder.

RUTH

I was just checking/

ROSIE

/Like I fucking care/

RUTH

/As it got colder.
Just checking/

ROSIE

/Do you not hear me, girl?/

RUTH

/Making sure the bees feed./

ROSIE

/You deaf, dumb, and-/

RUTH

/Please let me-/

Ruth descends the ladder awkwardly. She is not used to this.

As Ruth descends, Penny (20s, female, muscled, farm-hand healthy) enters from outside, wears work gloves, pants, boots and lugs an empty beehive.

Rosie does not see Penny enter.

ROSIE
(to Ruth)

/You deaf, dumb and a pussy licker?
That's three strikes,
An' you out, bitch.

PENNY

Hey!

Rosie sees Penny.

RUTH
(to Penny)

It's okay hon.

Penny ignores Ruth and addresses Rosie.

PENNY
(to Rosie)

We paid through the month.
And we fixed the roof-

ROSIE
(lies)

Not much fixin to be done.

PENNY

The big hole.
In the south corner.
Ripped off in that last blow.
You gonna tell me?

Listen, I didn't ask for-

You didn't not ask for-

Nobody asked for K to get all bit up by your damn bees neather.

That shuts Penny up.

That's truth.

I am really so sorry about that.
I would never-

Well you did.

-Intentionally-

Road to hell-

It was an accident.
It won't happen again.

-Paved smooth with 'em.

ROSIE

PENNY

ROSIE

PENNY

RUTH

ROSIE

RUTH

ROSIE

RUTH

ROSIE

RUTH

Just an accide-

ROSIE

K got a place here.
No questions asked. K got one.
K can do what she wants.
But you just money guests.
You know what money guests is?

PENNY

We kno-

ROSIE

Not you,
She.

(to Ruth)

You know what money guests is, Ruth?

RUTH

I, I, I, I don't but
I get the sense, the feeling that your,
Connotation is that-

Penny descends the ladder.

ROSIE

Money guests means I got to house you.
Got to feed you. Because I need your money.
But you not a real guest.
You don't got no real place here.
K,
She's, got a
Real place here.

PENNY

Yeah, but we pay all the same,
So we some kind of guests.

The kinda' ones you need.

(re: Ruth)

So back offa' her.

And we gonna be big money guests soon.

So you best be nice, or we'll take our big money guest selves off somewhere else.

Ruth goes to K.

RUTH

I'm so sorry, K.

K
(confusion)

...

RUTH

Okay?

It won't happen ever again.

The bees, I won't drop their hive, ever again.

K
(forgiveness)

...

(release)

...

K makes a show of putting the crystal doorknob back into her pocket.

RUTH

Okay.

See, we're all fine.

ROSIE

...

PENNY

...

RUTH

....

ROSIE

...

PENNY

...

RUTH

....

ROSIE

...

Shit. Fine.

...

But you only paid through the rest of the month.
Then I want this shit out of here. You and your beasts.

RUTH

She can't harvest until the summer.

PENNY

(quietly to Ruth)

Let it lie.

RUTH

But Rosie needs to understand-

PENNY

Let me do it!
Just, sorry, just
Let me do it. My way.
Please.

ROSIE

(to Penny)

You think you a man now, girl, you think, you a husband or somethin'?

Get on out right now, you thinkin' that, goin' 'gainst God, Nature an' Good Sense.

RUTH
(to Rosie)

Look, lesbians have been around since,
The Isle of Lesbos, in Ancient Greece, was-

ROSIE

I'm gonna throw up.

Penny silences Ruth with a hand on her
arm. Moves her towards the ladder.

PENNY

Nothin' much you can get out of anger.
Let her cool.

(to Rosie)

Dawn cracked.
Might as well get up and out for the day.

Penny and Ruth climb up the ladder to
the loft.

ROSIE

Might as well.

Rosie checks on K.

ROSIE

You okay, Lady K?

K nods.

Rosie folds K's blanket.

Penny disappears into the loft.

Ruth's at the top of the ladder.

RUTH

So sorry, again.
I'm really, I'm just clumsy, I guess.

ROSIE

[That] Don't make up for it.
Think 'bout where you're gonna go to at the end of the month.
Sure as shit ain't gonna be here.

Ruth disappears into the loft.

K

[I got to go soon, too.]
...
...

ROSIE

No, you ain't got to go nowhere, lady bug.
Not ever, ever.
Don't you worry about that.

K

[I got to.]
...
...

ROSIE

They'll clear out.
It'll just be us again.
And Daddy Cal.
Cal'll be home soon, we'll have a little party.
Just the three of us, once they're gone.
Just us, love.

K

[I'm sorry.]
...
IIII...ghhgh...

...
Ssssssss....

ROSIE

Shhhhhhh...

No, no, no. Don't you worry. Here.

(puts her hand on the door knob in K's
pocket)

Hold on to that and let me get my day things on.

K

(sings *In the Still of the Night*)

...ghhhh...

Innnn....

IIIIIn the still of the night

ROSIE

Oh, I like this one.

K

*As I gaze from my window,
At the moon in it's flight,
My thoughts all stray to you.*

*In the still of the night
While the world is in slumber,
Oh, the times without number,
Darling when I say to you*

ROSIE

I love you, my girl.

[I'll] Be right back.

K

*"Do you love me, as I do you?
Are you my life to be, My dream come true?"*

Rosie exits.

K

*“Or will this dream of mine fade out of sight.
Like the moon, growing dim,
On the rim of the hill,
In the chill,
Still,
Of the night?”*

Warm light streams through the paper that covers the walls of the barn; the transcendent connection between K’s seen and unseen worlds. (For a visual reference, see John Fraser’s “Collage Works 1994-2002.”)

Later, when K speaks to the audience, warm light shines through the paper, bathing her world in a transcendent glow, a visible connection of the seen and unseen worlds, a past and future perfect, that contain her reality.

K stands tall and straight for the first time, her inner self freed from the constraints of her outer shell.

She takes the crystal doorknob out of her pocket, tosses it in the air, catches it, puts it back.

She addresses the audience.

K

She touched my fault-line and I awoke.
The first time, on the side of a knotted dirt road, run red with streaks of clay and white with streaks of sand, lapping up my unknowingness, she woke me.
I had slept in that field since...like discarded lumber.
Since...being laid fallow, by the death of love.

Since being made gone, by a family, government issued at birth, that never transformed water into wine, paperwork into blood.

...

It was too much.

...

I don't blame them.

They finally had their own baby, didn't need a pretend one, and grandma had been left to the ground. So they set me free. To be found.

(looks to Rosie's room)

She stroked my forehead.

She brought down the fever.

She fed me.

She gave me a blanket.

She called me K.

And when I came back around,

I woke to a life inside my life.

To this, screaming echo layered like paper on paper, decade on decade.

The doctor says the talking part of the brain is different from the singing part.

He says, it's a blessing from God that she can do anything really,

After that delivery. No air. She could be full stupid, not just half.

I learned the songs my government issued grandmother had played on the record player across long humid afternoons.

Her sounds squeezing through walls of water thicker than school paste a heavy drip drop drip drop drop drop drop down into my ears.

I spent hours there, listening, afraid moving would break the sound, afraid to sweat, to stink, to make myself dirty and unacceptable within the beautiful noise.

The music pushed away the stink and rot of my days.

Pushed away the unlucky in life and love.

The music my companion.

My drunk translator.

(looks to Rosie's room)

The bees know, that I don't make her happy any more.

That she's sick of me, like my first family got, after grandmother's death.

The bees, they sing themselves so they understand.

They hear.

They know.

And they punished me.

I should go,
So Cal will stay home,
So life will be easier,
So she will be happy.
I can't tell her: I love you. I am grateful for you. I know make everything
wrong, and that's why the bees, they weren't stinging me, they were singing
me away. I know, but I can't,
I can't say,
Not in a way that she will understand.
Goodbye.

(sings)

*Like the moon, growing dim,
On the rim of the hill,
In the chill,
Still,
Of the night.*

K returns to her slumped form.

Lights return to normal.

There's a soft humming of bees from the
loft, and some almost imperceptible
laughing and chatting.

Rosie enters in day clothes, carries a bag
of peanuts, a cookie sheet, and a small
bucket.

She sits across from K.

They shells peanuts. The nuts go onto a
cookie sheet for toasting, the shells go
into a bucket to be thrown out.

The nuts make a soft rhythmic "plink"
when they hit the cookie sheet.

Plink. Plink. Plink. Plink. Plink. Plink.

There's a thump from the loft. And then another. A stifled "Oops!"

Rosie throws the nuts harder onto the sheet.

Plink Plink PlinkPlinkPlinkPlinkPlinkPlink.

Another thump and a loud shushing.

Rosie throws 'em harder and faster.

PLINKPLINKPLINKPLINKPLINK
PLINKPLINKPLINKPLINKPLINK
PLINKPLINKPLINKPLINKPLINK

The thumps and shushes and occasional muffled laughter continue until Rosie is throwing the nuts so hard onto the cookie sheet that they sound like hail on a tin roof.

The nuts bounce off the cookie sheet and onto the floor. K bends down to pick them up, but the falling nuts hit her on the head. They hurt!

PLINKPLINKPLINKPLINKPLINK
PLINKPLINKPLINKPLINKPLINK
PLINKPLINKPLINKPLINKPLINK

There's a continuous series of bangs and a loud moan and that's finally too much for Rosie:

ROSIE

Swear to God,

You don't get those hands outta those cooters and get down here for lunch,
I'm gonna snatch 'em out myself.

The banging and moaning stops.

RUTH
(off-stage from loft)

Well, that would be quite rude.

PENNY
(from off-stage loft)
(to Ruth)

Shhhh.

(calls down stairs)

Sorry, Sorry Miss Rosie.
We didn't think you could hear.

ROSIE
(to K)

You just wait.
When Cal gets home,
When he gets back, they'll stop.
They will.
Can't be doin' all that in front of a man.

K

[Um, they probably will keep on?]

Penny comes down the ladder with a
small glass jar of honey still on the comb.

PENNY

Thought you could use this for the peanut butter.
Drop it into the blender, instead of the oil,
Make it cream and smooth,
And Sweet.
Orange Blossom Honey sweet.
For Cal.

(telling)

I hear he likes your peanut butter and honey.

ROSIE
(blushes, 'cause he does)

Don't be gross.
Good Lord.

K laughs.

ROSIE
(good natured)
(to K)

Enough outta you.

(to Penny)

End of the month.

PENNY

Come now.

Ruth comes down the ladder.

RUTH

Sorry. Again. So sorry.
Didn't mean to-

ROSIE

What cha'll mean don't matter.
What you do matters.

RUTH

So I just can't do anything right?

ROSIE

No, not particularly.
How 'bout y'all do something useful for once?
Just sittin' up there, watchin' those bees do their business,
How about you do some business?
How about you find something useful to do?
Ain't gonna find no lazy ass reparations bullshit around here.

Money don't fall off trees.
Waitin' for bees to do a job for you, so you can reap what they sew,
What kinda' business is that?

RUTH

It's the kind that will save the world. Re-pollination.
Colony collapse is a significant concern in the broader environmental
spectrum of-

ROSIE

Shut the fuck up.
Bees right here. We right here. It's fine.
All I want to know is what you gonna do? For yourself. For my girl you got
stung up so bad.
How you gonna say sorry?

PENNY

(to K)

Hey K.
Hey girl.
How about we go out to on a boat today?
You like that?

K

(you're talking to me?)

...

PENNY

Yeah, you wanna go.
Out, on the water, feel the wind in your hair,
Cool water spray up your arms,
On your face.

K

(heck, yeah)

...

ROSIE

You ain't taken her out on no boat.
You don't got no boat to take her out in.

PENNY

I got a friend who's got one.
We'll make it a great day for K.

(to K)

We'll ride down some side stream
Ain't no one else seen before.
Undisturbed, the way it first was laid out,
Like God's own image over the dark earth.
They say He spread out his hand, stretched his fingers wide,
Pressed his palm hard down into the mud,
An' that dent in all his creation is the Everglades.
It's the only piece of this earth that's shaped just like him,
Like his outstretched hand,
And so He filled it with all the best things.
Alligators, turtles, great blue herons, egrets, maybe even a panther or two.

K is excited.

ROSIE

You can really take her on a boat ride?

PENNY

I can.
I know a guy.
I've been drivin' since I was knee high to a honey bee.
Let us go?
Let us be use-ful, for a day.
Let us make amends.

ROSIE

...
...
...

K

[Please!]

...

...

ROSIE

Okay.

But be careful.

An' take her raincoat, for the wind and water.

It's out dryin' on the porch.

An' make sure her hair stays tied back so that the salt don't get too far down into it. Salt on the scalp'll make her itch for weeks. And-

K kisses Rosie on the cheek.

ROSIE

Okay.

Stay safe.

And listen to 'em. You hear me, K?

You listen good.

K nods.

Lights shift.

2. That Night

Penny and Cal (40s, male, full of regret) sit
at the bar drinking beer.

PENNY

Daddy and Momma always pretended it wasn't real.
Like it was just girls being friends.

CAL

Instead ah' girlfriends.

PENNY

Yeah.
But then they walked in on me with the neighbor girl.

CAL

Can't come back from that.

PENNY

Nope.
Lickin' your girlfriend's asshole
In your parents' marriage bed
Pretty much says it all.

Cal nods.

They drink.

CAL

...
...

PENNY

...

CAL

I got a family to think about. And other folks threw y'all out.

Penny nods.

CAL

Well, they know your daddy.
And your daddy's daddy.
And he ain't shy about advertising The Exile.

PENNY

Yeah, well, he can go fuck himself.

Cal laughs.

CAL

Yeah, you sure his.

PENNY

I ain't none of that man.
What he put up in people's faces,
Like he got,
Walkin' around like Jesus gave him grazing rights on the fields of morality
never plowed. Like he's fuckin',
Like he never-

CAL

Just like him.

PENNY

(a threat)

Hey!

(more control)

I'm sayin',
It comes up on you like a a a a a
A blade of light in the shade.
Like you under an old oak tree in the afternoon
Laid out underneath on a blanket,
Eyes closed, drowsing.
And all a sudden the breeze shifts,
The branches shading you move, just a millimeter and just for a second,

And for one frightening and glorious moment
A little blade of light cuts right through your eyelid, a burst of reds and
oranges explode and you almost feel that you can see something beyond
sense. That you can see, through, things to the heart of the matter. In
blindness there is the only real sight and for a split second you feel,
Glorious. Transcendent. Special. Right with the world.

CAL

I don't see what's that's-

PENNY

Like out on the rig.
You got moments when everything feels, strong and right.

CAL

...

PENNY

Yeah, you do. I see it.
Daddy always wanted things to be right, be good,
But then when that right comes along,
That gift from,
I don't believe in God no more,
But that gift from the natural world that makes us, almost-angels, helps you
taste a bit of what's sweet, so you can live this life a little easier,
He says "no." He says-

CAL

Get out my house.

PENNY

Yeah.

(looks up to loft)

But we got to stay, stay put until harvest season,
Because I got all the bees I raised,
By myself, my lot, since I was little.
I got 'em all up there, and I can't afford to move 'em,
To move us, to get,
I got to get my feet under me.

I need somewhere that blade of light
And my clay feet
Can live together in peace,
But that takes money and time.

CAL

And Rosie don't want to give you that.

PENNY

No shit.

...

(come on, you know)

...

...

CAL

I got this ex-Marine on the oil rig. White boy.
A ginzel, a rookie, on the rig at least.
He in the bunk right under me.
I come off a 24-hour shift. Rough one.
Hurricane storm tipped us,
Ride like a roller coaster that keeps you drownin'.
You feel like, I'm gonna drown on a dry boat,
You feel like, you touch that forever in a quick moment.
...
You up in the rig, tryin' to keep it all together,
While you tossed around harder than bowling pins.
This substitute, boy, he says that he looked at me out there,
On that riggin', keepin' the whole bit together with my bare hands,
An' I come back in,
An' he laughs an' says, you looked like the devil out there.
That's how I always thought the devil looked.
A big dark strong thing, pullin' everythin' apart.
...
I was holdin' it together, I says.
I's holdin' the world together for 12-hours while you slept.
An' he just laughed again and said,
"Sure Mr. Devil Man, sure. Don't get my bunk wet."
He walks off.

He thinks he's sleepin' right below the Devil hisself out in a rig in the Gulf.
'Cause ah what he's been told to see,
Not what he actually seen.

...

I don't know if what you two get up to in that loft is...

I don't know.

But I know you ain't hateful.

You seein' what you is, not what you told.

I know you fixed Rosie's roof so the rain don't blow in when I'm away.

I know that you'd protect K, when it comes to it,

That you jumped in alligator water for her today.

I don't think it'd hurt too much if y'all stay until the harvest.

PENNY

Your wife don't see it that way.

CAL

I'll let her know my mind.

She takes that into account. Sometimes.

Penny laughs.

CAL

Don't laugh now.

(re: telling Rosie)

Just got to find the right time.

Penny stops laughing.

They drink.

PENNY

...

...

CAL

...

...

K, Ruth, and Rosie enter.

K has a bandage around her foot, limps.

Rosie looks pissed.

CAL
(to Rosie)

Hello, my love.

ROSIE

I hope you put that beer on her tab.

CAL

She jumped in after-

ROSIE

Oh, after,
Well, after does a whole lot of good,
When you fall in the water before.
I mean it's that deep-

Cal kisses her which shuts her up, for a
minute.

ROSIE

-after the rains an' all and-

Cal kisses her again.

ROSIE

-it's not like she can swim.

Cal kisses.

ROSIE

I mean, it's not that deep,
But it's slippery.

CAL
(to Penny)

Y'all just gonna have to let her finish.

ROSIE
(to Cal)

This is not funny, Cal.

(to Penny)

You shoulda' called sooner. Right when it happened.
I coulda' been there sooner.

PENNY
(pulls phone out of pocket)

No service out there.

ROSIE

Well, she's in pain most the afternoon 'cause ah (of) you.

CAL
(to Rosie)

Come on, Rosie. I missed you.

Ruth settles K at her table.

Rosie goes to Cal.

Rosie, Cal and Penny settle at the bar.

ROSIE

And that man at the hospital-

PENNY

The doctor?

ROSIE

No, the other one.

RUTH

The orderly.

ROSIE

NO! That man who carries-

PENNY/CAL

The orderly.

ROSIE

Well, you don't have to gang up on me.
So this other man, this orderly,
He comes up to us,
Like we're trash in the bucket,
He comes up and he says, she can walk to her room.
And I says, no sir, no she cannot walk. Look at her foot.
He says, she's a strong one. She's a buck. She be fine.
You swamp people, you can take it.
And he wheels away.
Motherfucker pushes the wheelchair the other direction.
So I go on up to him...

RUTH

She did. She really did.

ROSIE

...I go on up and I stand right in front of that chair,
And I stop him,
And I says, what that mean, what you say, what that mean exactly?
And he looks at me all like...

Rosie makes a condescending face.

RUTH

He did. He then-

ROSIE

I say, you mean it's okay she be in pain,
She hurts, because, why, because we don't live in town.
We live hard and you gotta make it harder?
Then he gets this flush all over him.

And he says, it was a compliment.
And I says, ain't no compliment, if my girl hurting,
You take care of her.
You supposed to ease suffering, motherfucker,
Not keep it on. Not some folks meant to suffer
More than others
On your say so.
'Cause they walk across fields to work.
There's no glory in suffering that can be eased.
So you gonna wheel your skinny ass around right now
And you gonna pick up my girl
And you gonna roll her over to her room as gentle as a mother hen warming a
newborn chick. Otherwise, you gonna see who's gonna suffer today.
...
...

CAL

And?

ROSIE

I never did see a black boy go white as a bed sheet.
K got her ride to her room.

RUTH

In silence.

PENNY

She's fixed now though.

ROSIE

She be okay.

(to K)

Right, K, baby? You be okay?

K nods.

ROSIE

Good girl.

Well, I'm glad of that.

CAL

We all are.

RUTH

You just out to annoy me today.

ROSIE
(to Ruth)

What now?

RUTH

I tol' them, they got to leave.
They stung up K.
Battered her foot to pieces.

ROSIE
(to Cal)

We got her right out.
She leaned over to look for fish and-

PENNY

And got a sprained ankle.

ROSIE

Yeah, well...happens.

PENNY

Happens.

ROSIE
(disdain)

Rosie pops a new beer for Cal, hands it to him.

Penny signals "My beer's done, too."

PENNY

...
...

ROSIE

...
...

PENNY

...

Rosie relents, pops her one.

ROSIE

This one's goin' on the tab.

(to Cal)

How long you go 'fore you go back?

CAL

Two days.

ROSIE

Two!

CAL

Two before my next hitch.
They got a new rig startin' up.
An intelligent well. With little robots that'll look after it,
After we set it up. Get it in running order.
Get it ready for electronic Toolhands to come in.
They'll be monitoring the wells from all the way up in New York,
Out in California. Where ever those electric eyes go.

ROSIE

Isn't that what they pay management for?

CAL

No, they pay management to tell me
To get everythin' up and in runnin' order.

PENNY

That's some bullshit right there.

ROSIE

Yeah, it is.

PENNY

(over does it)

Been gone eight weeks on an oil rig,
Only get two days off.
That's some ridiculousness right there.
That's some spiteful, hurtful, unnecessary,
I mean, it is. It is just-

ROSIE

I ain't gonna let you stay just 'cause
You agree
With me about it.

Penny shrugs. Didn't hurt to try.

RUTH

I'm sure she didn't mean it like th-

Penny and Rosie look to Ruth:

RUTH

Oh, never mind.

ROSIE

(to Penny)

You need to shut that girl up.
Ever'time she opens her mouth-

ROSIE/PENNY

Flies come out.

ROSIE

(slowly, like Ruth's stupid)

That – means – that – nothin' – good – comes – out.

Okay.

Get it, girl.

RUTH

Hey! I have a PhD!

PENNY

Just ignore her, sweet-

ROSIE

What good's a Ph-

RUTH

That means that I have been through many years of education. I have written papers and a Master's dissertation. I have defended a doctoral thesis.

PENNY

Hon, it's okay. Just ignore-

RUTH

I have sat on panels and reviewed grant applications and been awarded scholarships and residencies and fellowships. I have citations. On paper. With with with gold seals. I have a bio longer than my arm, longer than your arm, longer than both our arms. I have awards. Awards given by people that matter to people that matter. I have publications. And I lecture and and and and and I know things! I do. I am a biochemical all-star. And you! You can't treat me like-

ROSIE

That don't mean you're better than me.

RUTH

Maybe it does!

Maybe!

It...just...does.

CAL moves away from Ruth.

K moves to get the crystal door knob out of her pocket but her hand comes up empty.

PENNY

...
...

ROSIE

...
...

CAL

...
...

K
(looks at barren hands in sorrow)

...
...

RUTH

...
...

ROSIE

...
...

That's not what I meant.
I just mean, I mean...

RUTH

ROSIE

I know what you mean.

RUTH

I just,
Everything I do here is wrong.
But everything I did out there was right.

ROSIE

Then why are you here?

Ruth holds out her hand to Penny.

Penny takes it.

RUTH

Because, she could see me.
I am seen.
In my old life, I was, they could,
Touch, the outside,
They could, acknowledge the work,
But never pierce the shell. But she sees me.
...
...

PENNY

[I do see you.]
...
...

RUTH
(to Cal)

It was the most shocking thing.
Literally.
When she turned and looked at me that first time,
I dropped,
I was putting gas in my damn car,
And I dropped the hose. Right there.
Cost me \$2.00 in gas,
All over the concrete.
Puddles. Seeping through cracks. Draining my old life away with it.
And I was empty. I was just, me.

Not the many things I'd put inside myself all those years –
The bits I'd stocked on the shelves of my rib cage –
Polite Smiles, Straight A report cards, Genteel Nodding, Diplomas –
I was emptied out. I was purified. I longed to be filled, by her.

PENNY

I was so angry.

RUTH

I didn't know that then.

PENNY

I was so, bursting.
The first time I saw you, I shot you a look-

RUTH

Electric.

ROSIE

I don't want to hear-

CAL

Hush for a minute.

PENNY

That look could have shot you down dead.
I wanted to shoot everyone down dead.

(to Cal)

I had raised six hives. Six. By myself. Got my own first crop.
Then he comes out and he says,
"Your mother and I have decided."
And I say, "Six hives. Six full harvests. Best honey you ever tasted."
He turns back to the house, motions Momma to stay inside.
I say, "Try some, Daddy."
And I reach out to him with a full spoonful, golden threads drip
Off the sides,
Reaching out to him,
So happy. He should be satisfied.
Gold I mined myself, over a year, no help.

“Go ahead,” I say, “Taste it. See if it’s not just as good as yours. See if it’s not better. Come on. You say I have to raise my own, prove I can do it, I done it. It’s here. You too ‘fraid to taste it, ‘cause you know, you know, it just as good as yours. Almost time to retire old man. Retire and hand it over. I told you, I could do it.”

Then Momma comes back to the porch, a full up garbage bag in her hand, knotted at the top.

She holds onto that top knot and swings it once, twice, three times. It sails over the grass, lands without a sound. The knot has come lose. My clothes spill out.

Daddy opens his hand, tosses the truck keys at me.

The golden threads slide coyly off the side of the spoon, dribble down onto the keys, until they are covered in slickness. Later, when I go to start the truck, I have to suck the honey off them so they’ll fit right in the ignition.

When I pulled into that gas station, I was so angry, I thought I could ignite the fuel you spilled, just by looking at it.

RUTH

You did. You burned up everything I was.

And I am grateful.

...

(to Rosie)

I’m sorry.

I am not better than you.

I am not, at all,

I, there’s still some dust on my shelves,

Inside, some residue from my old life,

From when I was a What, rather than a Who.

And sometimes that old dust-

ROSIE

Sucks.

RUTH

Yes. Monumentally sucks.

Cal moves towards bedroom door.

Baby...

CAL
(softly to Rosie)

...

ROSIE

Rosie pops a beer. Gives it to Ruth.

ROSIE

On the house.

RUTH

Thank you.

Rosie goes over to K.

K settles on a surplus army cot in the corner. Rosie wraps her in a blanket.

ROSIE

Good night, my girl.

K burrows down into the blanket.

K

[I love you.]
Ggghhh.

ROSIE

I love you, too.

Rosie goes to Cal, takes his hand, they exit to the bedroom.

Ruth and Penny finish their beers.

RUTH

...

PENNY

...

RUTH

I'd forgotten-

PENNY

What?

RUTH

I'd forgotten that you were so angry when we met.
That we,
That that look, wasn't really meant for me.
It was, about you.

PENNY

Sure, it was meant for you.
Sure it was.
I just didn't know it at the time.

RUTH

...

PENNY

Come on, Ruth.

Ruth drains her beer.

RUTH

"For whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God."

PENNY

Let's go to bed.

RUTH

But that's not the end of the story.

The end of the story is, Ruth doesn't get to stay with Naomi.
Ruth is forced to marry Boaz,
Leave her one true love,
So that her son Obed can inherit so that David can inherit and become King.

PENNY

It's still a beautiful story.

RUTH

But that is how Ruth ends.
Alone.

PENNY

You are not Ruth.
You are not, that Ruth.
You are this Ruth, our Ruth.
Come up to bed.

Ruth does not move.

PENNY

You are the Ruth that I picked up in a gas station parking lot,
And we are not ashamed of that.
You are the Ruth that laughed so hard the first time we kissed that you spit
Slushee into my mouth.
You are the Ruth that memorized every book at the library on bees and then
forgot to put on gloves when you opened the hive.
You are not lost.
You are not wrong.
You do not have to go back.
...
Come to bed with me.

Penny reaches out her hand to Ruth.

K begins to hum.

Ruth takes Penny's hand.

K

(sings *Honeysuckle Rose*)

*Every honeybee fills with jealousy when they see you out with me:
I don't blame them goodness knows, Honeysuckle Rose.*

Ruth and Penny dance.

K

*When you're passin' by flowers droop and sigh,
And I know the reason why;
You're much sweeter goodness knows, Honeysuckle Rose.
Don't buy sugar, you just have to touch my cup.
You're my sugar; much sweeter when you stir it up.*

Ruth and Penny swing; intimate laughter.

They are closer to the ladder to the loft.

K

*When I'm takin' sips from your tasty lips,
Seems the honey fairly drips;
You're confection goodness knows, Honeysuckle Rose.
Honeysuckle Rose.*

Ruth and Penny kiss and climb the ladder,
exit to the loft.

K is left alone.

Warm light streams through the cream
and white paper which cover the back wall
of the barn; the transcendent connection
between K's seen and unseen worlds.

K

(looks at her empty hands)

My doorknob.
A reminder of another world.
An escape hatch,

To Grandma's bedroom,
When they came to get me,
After she died. Her sunset glory.
When they came, I couldn't stuff my pockets with her records,
Or her lace tablecloth or the picture of her son long dead in Iraq.
I ran to her bedroom, slamming against each corner,
Something somewhere,
A rabbit hole.
A black hole.
Nothing.
Fuck you, Lewis Carroll and Dr. Who.
So when they dragged me out by my feet,
Screaming,
Like when I was born, to a new life,
A failed Apgar score,
When they dragged me out,
I grabbed the bedroom doorknob and they pulled me so hard,
Popping my shoulder, leaving stretch marks on my waist,
That the crystal knob came off in my hand.
I shoved it into my pocket before they saw and asked and wanted to sell it to
pay the hospital bills.
...
Today,
When I fell out the boat.
Water breaking over me,
Heralding.
I reached for the doorknob in my pocket
To conjure her, her place, her smell, her time,
The safety of her,
And it was gone.
I reached further into the water, down beneath the sand and the soil.
I forced my fingers down through roots of the cypress trees and scared away
the egrets.
I reached beneath the beneath,
Fit between grains of sand so small, they sang to one another,
But it was gone.
That's when I tripped, in the seeking of it.

End of Act I

ACT TWO

1. Early the Next Morning

Daybreak light rolls in lazy.

K on her cot, sleeps.

Cal enters. No shirt. Shaking off sleep.
Checks on K, father-like, tucks in safe.

Reaches behind bar. Cracks a beer.

ROSIE
(off-stage, sleepily)

[Come] Back to bed, baby.

CAL

Shhh. K's 'sleep.

Off-stage, in the distance, set back deep in Cal's memory, the sound of waves. Water kisses land, the echoing clang of buoy bells, the soft grind of gears through water. The waves.

Cal looks longingly out at the sea in his mind. Finishes his beer. Looks to his room with Rosie. And then back out at the sea.

K stirs awake, she slides out of the blanket, goes to Cal, leans against him.

Cal strokes her face. This is not sexual at all.

CAL

You hear 'em too?

K sleepily shakes head “no.”

CAL

No.
‘Course not.
It follows me.

A sharp clang.

CAL
(to K)

Early in the morning, the water shifts with the new dawn,
For a few minutes, the sun’s rays hit just right, and light reflect off the pipes
below the rig like a sea of stars.
A night sky under your feet.
And between the night sky below and the morning sky above,
It’s like you’re sat at the first moment of creation with the Maker Himself
when there’s only light. No land. No water. None of us. Just peace.

(pointed to K)

The sea isn’t haunted little one. Not like the land. Not like this place.

K

Ghhspppt...

(struggles to speak)

I I I I I...

(gives us, sings)

Nearer my God to Thee, Nearer to Thee.

CAL

Yeah, that’s you, little K.
Nearer than Rosie and I, anyways.
You take good care of our Rosie when I’m gone.

K

Dddddghhht...
[Don’t go.]

Shhh, shhh, now.

CAL

Rosie enters, dressed for the day, carries a coffee mug.

CAL
(looks to Rosie)

We just all pulled through life like an invisible pipe to the sea, tryin' to avoid a blow out.

The sounds of the oil rig recedes.

CAL
(to Rosie)

Hey baby.

Rosie kisses him.

ROSIE
(to K)

Morning bathroom, love.

CAL
(to K)

Come on, Miss K, up an' at 'em.

Cal helps K to the bathroom on her injured ankle.

Ruth climbs down from the loft. She looks like hell warmed over.

ROSIE
(re: Ruth)

...
Shit.

RUTH

Don't say anything.
Please, just don't-

Rosie hands Ruth her coffee cup.

RUTH

Thank you.

ROSIE

Got to give somebody His due,
Never thought I'd see you up before Penny.

RUTH

I haven't slept yet, not really.

ROSIE

Well, join the club.
Though, mine's pro'lly for better reasons than yours,
By the look of ya'.

RUTH

It's good to have him home?

ROSIE

Always.

RUTH

I'm sorry to hear that he has to return so soon.
It doesn't seem fair that-

ROSIE

He volunteered for it.
He don't think I know, but...
The things we know are usually standing right next to the things we don't. All
we got to do is reach over and tap 'em on the shoulder.

RUTH

Oh,

I'm... sorry?

ROSIE

It is what it is.

RUTH

Have you ever gone to therapy about it or-

ROSIE

Listen, I'm not sick in the head! We're not-

RUTH

Sorry, forget I asked.

Rosie takes Ruth's coffee mug away, exits.

RUTH

(calls to her off-stage)

I really,
I've just got a talent for putting my foot in things here.
I never used to take a wrong step but now,
I feel like I'm dancing with two left feet to music I've never heard.

Rosie returns with two mugs of coffee.
Gives her one.

ROSIE

Don't talk. Just drink.

RUTH

...

ROSIE

...

RUTH

...

...

...

I was just thinking-

ROSIE
(as in “why are you talking”)

Oh my god, seriously.

RUTH

It’s me you don’t like, really-

ROSIE

I really don’t like either of you.
I don’t hate you particularly but-

RUTH

For the most part, I’ve been the one making trouble,
Out of step, with-

ROSIE

Seems like you always felt that way,
That’s how you ended up here.

PENNY
(from off-stage loft)

Hon?

ROSIE
(as in, “I am never gonna be allowed to
finish my coffee.”)

Oh, crackers.

RUTH
(calls up)

Down here.

Penny comes down the ladder.

Rosie swipes Ruth’s coffee cup again and
takes the mugs into the kitchen.

PENNY
(to Ruth)

I came up with a slogan.

RUTH

For your honey?

PENNY

For our honey.
I went to bed with you on my mind,
And this in the works

(holds up small glass jar of glistening
honey)

I got up, tasted it, and just knew, it just came to me...
(envision this:)

New Sweet Potato Honey.
Two Southern favorites in one jar.
Get twice the Honeys for your honey today.

RUTH

...

PENNY

Get it?

(points to self)

Honey.

(points to Ruth)

Honey.
Twice the Honeys for your honey.

RUTH

Yes, wow, that's-

PENNY

You hate it.

RUTH

No! No. I just. I was thinking. Last night made me-

PENNY

You haven't slept. Let's talk after you sleep.

Rosie re-enters.

PENNY

Hey, Rosie!

(envison)

New Sweet Potato Honey.

Two Southern favorites in one jar.

Get twice the Honeys for your honey today.

Available online! Ships all over the country!

(to Ruth)

We'll make more money than Daddy ever did.

Drive right up to the door of his Church in a big BMW one Sunday.

Roll down the window.

Look out at folks as they walk in, turnin' their heads, whisper behind hands,
"Who's that, who that be? Don't she look like she's doin' good for herself?"

And when Momma and Daddy come through, I'll make sure they see, what I got. A big car, beautiful woman on my arm, smilin' so wide, my happiness a sword and them without a shield and I will wait 'til they get close and I will lean out the window, and I will spit on them. I will spit right on them. In front of everyone. In front of the church. I will show them how good I am and how happy I can be and how wrong they all were, because I'm sitting there in that car, with this woman, smilin', in front of their own Church, and even God don't dare strike me down.

Cal and K enter, sit. They're both dressed in new day clothes.

ROSIE

Well, I don't have an internet connection and I don't know about-

PENNY

The library does.

And we can sell it, here, too.

Come on out to the Palmetto Bar, come meet-

/Wait wait wait wait wait wait./

ROSIE

/The Sweet Potato Honey ladies!/
Penny holds out the jar to Cal and K.

PENNY

PENNY
(to Cal and K)

Go head and try it.

No no no no no no-

ROSIE

Cal and K taste it. It's good!

It can't hurt.

CAL

Oh, wow, was that a bad idea-

ROSIE
(to Cal)

I like the idea of someone, someones, being here.
Just in case, when I'm gone.
If something were to happen-

CAL

Then stay.
Don't be gone.

ROSIE

I can't.

CAL

...

ROSIE

CAL

...

PENNY

We could.

We could stay. Harvest in the summer. Make jars. Market. Send them out. Just think, we could pay you double, triple what you're asking for the loft. And folks'll come here for the honey, stay for a drink or two or six.

ROSIE

-or two or six-

PENNY

-and leave with some honey.

ROSIE

I don't like having you here.
You're not good for K.

RUTH

Opening the hives too far, that was my fault.

PENNY
(to Ruth)

Stop apologizing.

RUTH

And the boat thing was an accident.
It coulda' happened to anyone.

ROSIE

Her apology don't balance out the pain.

RUTH

Maybe I should go-

PENNY

Quit!

RUTH

Maybe this was, a fool's errand-

PENNY

Stop it now!

RUTH

(to Penny)

Maybe you should think about coming up to live with me in Tallahassee.

ROSIE

(to Penny)

You should listen to your woman.

PENNY

(to Rosie)

You need us here.

ROSIE

It's not need. It's what havin' you here means.
It means that we're alright with what you do.
It means that we're throwing dirt in the face of your family,
Whose been here as long as us, and never did us wrong.
It means puttin' ourselves out for you, in the community.
It means...

Rosie looks to Cal.

ROSIE

It means,
When he's ready, he's still not gonna come back,
'Cause he thinks we don't need him.
'Cause there won't be any room.

CAL

[Not again. Not now.]

...

Rosie exits.

Cal gets another beer.

RUTH
(to Penny)

Hon, maybe we should just go-

PENNY

This is my home! Mine, you get it,
You fuckin',
You run away every chance you get because you're weak.
Always apologizing an' I gotta stand up for you 'cause you can't do it yourself.

RUTH

I'm sorry that you feel-

PENNY

There you go again!
Stop apologizing. Stop being sorry for your damn existence.
I am not ashamed. I am who I am and this is my home and they can all go
fuck themselves if they think I'm ever leaving. You are worthless to me. You
run on back up north. You run on back and put on your Halloween costume
of a life and publish your papers and write your books and be nothing outside
your picture on the cover. You go on. I've had enough of you.

Penny charges the ladder and races up into
the loft. Disappears.

RUTH

...

CAL

...

RUTH

...

CAL

...

K finishes the honey.

2. Later that Day

Cal's work gear and an oversized army surplus duffle bag are on the bar.

Rosie sits at K's table. K is not there.

ROSIE

(calls off-stage to bedroom)

Your socks are still damp.

They won't dry bunched up in your bag.

...

You need more talcum powder.

I have it on the grocery list for tomorrow morning.

If you could just wait-

(it sticks in her throat)

Get the truck looked at. The brakes sound close to dead.

An' K's out learnin' more 'bout those bees. She's gonna wanna show you, when she gets back.

An' you still need to look to-

Cal enters with clothes, packs steadily.

ROSIE

You don't have to be back 'til tomorrow night.

CAL

Someone should stop in the office. Before. And Tommy's not going to remember to do it. We'll be in the water, half way out [to] the rig, and he'll realize he left the paperwork on dry ground. If we have to turn back, it'll eat up half a day.

ROSIE

Where'll you sleep?

You gotta sleep. You can't bed down in the office.

CAL

In the truck.

ROSIE

That's silly.

You got a clean bed here.

A bed with me in it.

And you got, I can make you, I gotta run out, but that stew you like to take with you.

...

CAL

...

...

ROSIE

...

...

She loves you.

CAL

...

I don't know I deserve-

ROSIE

I love you.

She would like to have you home.

I would.

Rosie reaches out for him.

CAL

Rosie!

It's your choice.

You pushed me out.

ROSIE

I never-

CAL

Once you took in... K.

And once you-

ROSIE

What I supposed to do?
That foster family woulda' let her rot after the grandmother died.
Woulda' let her, lettin' her spend all day in the field, lookin' up at the sun,
burnt to a crisp, not eatin' right-

CAL

It wadn't as bad as-

ROSIE

You didn't see her!
An' what she ever asked of you anyways?

CAL

...

ROSIE

Huh?

Cal throws gear into the bag with a clatter.

ROSIE

Nothin'. Almost nothin'.
A little tuck in now an' 'gain.
To listen to a song.
To show you she ain't 'fraid of the bees no more, that she can work 'em a li'l
bit.
She just wants to love you, Cal, just let her. Let us.

CAL

...

It's not enough.

ROSIE

Not enough for-

CAL

Everyday I walk through that door,

I see failure. (looks to bedroom door)

(looks to K's table)

ROSIE
(this is news to Rosie)

Calvin.
You are not a failure.
No one would ever call you that.

CAL

I don't see that table.
I see Kate laughing, too hard like always, so hard, her mouth open and inviting, that I have to kiss her.

ROSIE

She's gone, Cal.
I hear up North somewhere.

CAL

I don't see that chair.
I see a picnic spread out on the beach. Kate sneaking a smoke and a soak in the sun with her bikini top flung off.
Over there, I see mother's disapproval.
There.
Your and Kate's father, shaking his head, sayin' it's a good thing my father is dead because who'd wanna see this and this is what happens when a boy ain't raised right and what's wrong with me and he knows what's wrong and you can't let the big head tell the little head what to do and Jesus H. Fucking Christ, what the hell boy, I thought you'd be a better man than this.

ROSIE
(low)

Please stop.

CAL

And there.
Right there-

(K's cot)

I see a little ball of flesh, tucked down in the NICU.
And the nurses shaking their heads and looking to the side,
Can't even look me in the eye,
Looking like, maybe it's best, may it's God's work,
This unimagined thing.
Unwanted children have it hardest of all.
Maybe God gonna take her home. Give her the good life she'd never have
down here.
And you're there, the only one not afraid to go right up to her,
To gently stroke, whatever this thing is,
No matter where you stand – inside this place or out, in this time or another -
I always see you there.
Too young to be an Auntie.
Great big moon eyes.
Begging your sister and I to do somethin' different.
And you, closing those eyes,
Not speaking as we signed the papers to give her up.
As we said to the adoption lady, "no, just leave her name K, leave it an initial,
so her real family can give her the name they want to call her."
Silent as you help your sister pack, and watched her away from here.
Nothin' from you 'cept those big eyes for the baby who weren't never
supposed to be.
And she lived.
K lived.

ROSIE

She's tough. She got that from her Daddy.

CAL

Some days I wish she didn't.

ROSIE

You don't mean that.

CAL

(re: around him)

It's all failure to me.
But out in the water.
Rig it, pull, water down the deck.

Tie up the big bear.
Keep an eye, don't let it blow out.
The CSG is too high, bring it round.
Tighten the drill string before you go on.
Out there, I'm free and righteous and strong. I am a man that knows things,
that does right, and has even saved a few lives.
But here,
I did that to her.
Kate and I. Being stupid and too young and unprotected and,
She's paying, been paying, gonna keep paying.
There's nothing I can do about that.
It's a failure already found its' end point.

ROSIE

You match the water, you rip open the ocean floor, you bring up the blood of
the earth. If you're strong enough for all that, then you're strong enough to
face your child every day.
We can make her, as happy as she can be.
You're strong enough to sit still in one place for her, give up the waves to the
ocean, and be happy sitting on the beach. Looking over creation and holding
her little hand in yours.
That's what makes a man.

Cal finishes packing.

ROSIE

...
...

CAL

Not in the eyes of the world, Rosie.

ROSIE

Aren't mine the only ones that count?

CAL
(kisses her)

No.

(deep sorrow, no meanness, just his own truth)

They don't count at all.

Cal exits with bag.

ROSIE

...
...
...

Rosie notices he's left a shirt. She almost takes it to him, but then keeps it, breathes in his scent.

Rosie refuses to cry. She cleans instead.

ROSIE

...
...
...

K and Ruth enter in basic bee keeper gear.

K walks over to Rosie, she's so proud.

K hands Rosie a jar of honey, motions for her to taste it.

Rosie does. It's good.

ROSIE

It's so good, K.

RUTH

She is turning into a great bee keeper.

ROSIE

All the hives make it in the move back?

RUTH

Yes.

Penny should be able to keep them outside as long as it's warm out.

ROSIE

Just Penny?

RUTH

(to K)

How about you go upstairs and show Penny what you made? I'm sure she'll want to see it.

K exits to the loft.

RUTH

I think I should go.

ROSIE

She'll simmer down.

RUTH

Maybe but I, I don't, maybe this isn't who I am.

ROSIE

Oh, it's who you are.

RUTH

But maybe, I mean, let's look at this rationally.
I was tenured. I was researching and teaching.
But I was bored. I was feeling stifled,
Doing the same things,
Talking to the same people,
Mired in the same academic red tape,
Then I turned 50 and I start having panic attacks.
First at home, then in the lab, and then in class –
Which is the worst because the others, no one knows about –
I'm encouraged to take time off. And then forced to.

Because I can't, walk into a classroom,
Talk about future evolutionary theory and how they're going to pioneer the
new world,
After I'm dead.
Dead. And alone. Alone until I am dead.
Because we live in a youth culture
And who wants a 50 year old bag of bones
Who isn't even brave enough to admit to herself that...
So I treat myself to a trip down the coast.
And I rent a car and I drive out to the beach.
And then to the casinos.
And then to a spa.
And then to another beach.
And then I buy the car because I've rented it so long, I almost own it anyway.
And nothing feels right. No matter where I go...
I'm going broke trying to find me.
How fuckin' ridiculous is...
But then. Then.
On a dirt road off the interstate.
In a gas station parking lot,
I see her.
I see her angry and covered in sweat and righteous indignation and kicking the
absolute shit out of whatever is in her way.
And a spike of heat shoots up my spine and I'm wetter than I ever have been
before.
And I finally admit to myself that I am,
That dreaded thing,
That mother always said not to be,
Because it will mean you will always be alone.
But I'm alone anyway.
And I'm 50 years old!
And I'm in a gas station parking lot.
And these things do not happen.

ROSIE

How much do you like fucking men?
And all that comes with it.

RUTH

...It's better than being hit by a truck.

ROSIE

A swarm of flies come straight outta your mouth sometime.

RUTH

I know, I know.
Things come out of my mouth and it's meaningless.
It's just flies.

ROSIE

Yeah, it is.
And they say,
You take those flies,
Put 'em in a bottle,
Name 'em,
Throw 'em out into the Gulf.
They float away. All the lies and bullshit,
Float out into the ocean.
Get swept up, dispersed by the waves, 'til there's nothin'.
You're clean and good.
You can start again.

RUTH

Well, let's say I did.
Let's say, at 50, after years of repression...this is me.
I still don't think that I love her.
Not in an Ever After way.

K climbs down from loft.

ROSIE

There you are, my girl.

Rosie tries to be cheery.

ROSIE

How's Penny like that honey? She said you did good, right? You did so good.

K

...

ROSIE

You wanna sing, baby.
Go ahead.
We could use a lift.

Rosie returns to cleaning.

K

(sings *Mood Indigo*)

*You ain't been blue,
No no, no, no.
You ain't been blue,
'Til you've had that mood indigo.*

Penny appears on the top of the loft.

K

*That feeling goes stealin',
Down to my shoes,
While I sit and sigh;
"Go 'long blues."
Always get that mood indigo, since my baby said goodbye.
In the evenin' when lights are low,
I'm so lonesome I could cry.
'Cause there's nobody who cares about me,
I'm just a soul who's bluer than blue can be,*

Penny's on the ladder.

K and Penny finish the song together.

K / PENNY

*When I get that mood indigo,
I could lay me down and die.*

PENNY

...
...

RUTH

...
...

ROSIE

That's beautiful, K.

K embraces Rosie as hard as she can.

As Penny and Ruth continue their silent exchange, who is going to talk first, and just what the hell do you say? Rosie separates slightly from K:

ROSIE
(to K)

What's wrong, girl?

K

...

ROSIE

Come on, now.
It can't be as bad as all that.

K picks up Cal's shirt that he's accidentally left behind. The same one Rosie held earlier.

K
(sings low and rough)

Always get that mood indigo, since my baby said goodbye.

*In the evenin' when lights are low,
I'm so lonesome I could cry.*

ROSIE

Oh, honey, it's not your fault.
He just, can't, is all.
Come on, let's get you some lunch.

Rosie and K exit.

Penny and Ruth are left alone.

PENNY

/I probably should/

RUTH

/I probably should/

They gesture to one another, no you go
first, no you can go first.

PENNY

/Apologize./

RUTH

/Apologize./

PENNY

This isn't what I thought it would be.

RUTH

I tried to not think about what I thought it would be.
So you're ahead of me, is the point.

PENNY

I'm sorry that I said,
I'm not really sick of you.

RUTH

But you are. I'm sick of me.

PENNY

Baby, we'll just,
Just let's get through this season.
We'll set up the website and harvest the-

RUTH

I cannot thank you enough for,
Being that mirror,
That fearless,
That truth that,
For all intents and purposes-

PENNY

For all intents and purposes, what?
Just stay the night.

RUTH

No, this isn't my life. This isn't my-

PENNY

But it is your life. You are-

RUTH

This is myself.
And I will always thank you for giving it to me.
But it's not my life.
I've got to go put myself back in my life and make it work.
I would never work here.

PENNY

...
Are you sure?

RUTH

No, but...

Penny embraces Ruth.

PENNY

You are the best middle age pussy I ever had.

Ruth laughs.

The light fades on the women.

They rest in stillness.

Warm light streams through the cream
and white paper which cover the back
wall of the barn; the transcendent
connection between K's seen and unseen
worlds.

K

After they drank, Ruth left.
Penny and Rosie went to bed.
I picked up Rosie's bottle and walked all night.
Down the gravel road,
Along the field where Rosie found me,
To the interstate,
Around to exit 4 to the beach,
Alone the edge of the sand to the oil office.
Cal's truck parked outside.
The field of new poured asphalt seemed to shift under me
As I made my way to the truck and knocked on the window.
He jumped when he saw me.
Got out.

Cal appears.

K

Says,

CAL

What you doin' here girl?

K

And,

CAL

You should be home in bed.

K

He took me into the office to call Rosie but I cut off the phone before he could dial.

I handed him the bottle.

I caught a fly.

I took a piece of paper and I wrote "K" on it.

But when I tried to put it in the bottle with the fly,

He stopped me.

CAL

No, not K. I'm not throwin' you out.

K

He told me to wait there,

And he turned away.

And he wrote a list of things, that I couldn't see but,

It was a really long list.

When he was done, he looked it over, rolled it up, and put his sins in the bottle with the fly.

Then we walked down to the beach, it was almost dawn.

And he told me how my mother walked here,

Sun bathed here

Laughed here.

Cried here after I was born.

Then when the story was done,

He took the bottle, and threw it into the ocean, past the break,

So the waves carried it away.

And we walked home hand-in-hand.

Cal and K take each other's hand.

K

(sings *Come Rain or Come Shine*)

*I'm gonna love you like nobody's loved you, come rain or come shine.
High as a mountain and deep as a river, come rain or come shine.
I guess when you met me it was just one of those things,
But don't ever bet me 'cause I'm gonna be true if you let me love you.
You're gonna love me like nobody's loved me, come rain or come shine.
Happy together, unhappy together, and won't it be fine.
Days may be cloudy or sunny. We're in or we're out of the money,
But I'm with you always, I'm with you rain or shine.*

Lights fade.

END OF PLAY

Music

The song rights for public (live, acapella, no recording) performance is held by Warner/Chappell Music Inc. as of March 2017 for these four songs:

-*Honeysuckle Rose* (1929) by Razaf and Waller

<https://www.ascap.com/repertory#ace/search/workID/380068275>

-*Dream a Little Dream of Me* (1931) by Kahn, Schwandt, and Andree

<https://www.ascap.com/repertory#ace/search/workID/340075832>

-*In the Still of the Night* (1937) by Porter

<https://www.ascap.com/repertory#ace/search/workID/390130339>

-*Come Rain or Come Shine* (1946) by Mercer and Arlen

<https://www.ascap.com/repertory#ace/search/workID/330077840>

Contact: (310)441-8600, Jeremy.blietz@warnerchappell.com
c/o WB Music Corp, Warner Chappell Music, 10585 Santa Monica Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90025

The song rights for public (live, acapella, no recording) performance is held by Sony ATV as of March 2017 for this song:

-*Mood Indigo* (1931) by Ellington, Mills and Bigard

<https://www.ascap.com/repertory#ace/search/workID/430083804>

Contact: (615)726-8300, livestageinquiries@sonyatv.com
424 Church Street, Suite 1200, Nashville, TN 37209

A list of replacement public domain songs is available from the playwright.