

FUTURE WIFE

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We want to call work what is work so that eventually we might rediscover what is love and create what will be our sexuality which we have never known.

— "Wages Against Housework", Silvia Federici

Point to your own pictures, show us instead how in our day human beings are like wolves tearing each other apart, & then say, 'That won't sell these days. Because these days, the only people with money for pictures are wolves.' But things won't always be like that. & Even our pictures will contribute to things not always being like that.

— "On Non-Representational Painting", Bertolt Brecht

in THIS economy??

— internet joke, circa 2010s, appendable to almost anything

notes

speech in round parentheses () is spoken as an aside, not necessarily more softly, just more—to the side. like you're talking to your friend at a concert. square parentheses [] are unspoken, and are there to clarify the meaning of a cut-off line.

for parts with unassigned speakers, a paragraph break indicates a new speaker. that is, lines that are stuck together like so

She picks up everything actually
Isn't that kind of fucked up

are by a single speaker. if there is a space left between lines it indicates a new speaker:

She picks up everything actually
Isn't that kind of fucked up

I never thought about it

so "I never thought about it" is by a new speaker. a speaker can be a person or a combination of persons or a nonperson/stage element, as long as the line is heard as written.

characters

BOOTS: a young goat.

PATSY: a human woman in her 30s-40s.

THE GOATS: they are not elaborately costumed. there are at least four of them but no more than six.

THE PIRATES: they wear pirate paraphernalia (eyepatches, headscarves with crossbones on, peg legs) over modern clothing. there are at least four of them but no more than six.

THE MARIES: human women, 20s-60s. some of them are dressed as peasants and some as royalty. at least four, not more than six.

MONET: a young goat.

MONIKA: a human woman in her 50s.

ALIEN ACTIVISTS #1 & #2: they do not look like little gray or green men. they are in disguise as human but some quirk of their clothing or mannerisms give them away. they do not look human at all.

BABY: a bundle with a petulant voice.

casting note

not to be performed by an all- or majority-white cast. i have not specified the race of performers for each role because i don't think that—for this particular play—such guidance will be useful in its specificity and prescriptiveness. however, i would suggest that white performers only play ensemble roles.

if performed in a place where there is a different ethnic majority, the same considerations apply with necessary variation.

theater is an inevitable part of the economy. cast this play with that knowledge.

further notes on the choral sections and on possible doubling can be found in the appendix.

Some text in the space reads

THIS IS ONLY SLIGHTLY ALLEGORICAL

and disappears.

An indeterminate number of pirates. They're dividing up gold.

They are doing all this on a set of a living room that looks nauseatingly, kitchen-sink-drama realistic. There are books on the shelves. A pirate is pulling books off the shelf, reading titles aloud, throwing them on the floor. You can see the edges of the set, on either side bare stage. A pirate is washing their hands in the sink. The water suddenly stops running.

If there are 100 gold coins and 5 pirates, A B C D E and A is senior to B and B is senior to C and C is and so on. Most senior A needs to divide the 100 coins between the 5 and then they will vote YES or NO and if there are more YESSES than NOS A lives and if there are more NOS than YESSES then the other 4 pirates kill A and B gets to divide up the coins and they will vote YES or NO and if there are and so on.

The votes are YES NO YES NO NO and so A dies

A dies because they didn't know very much about math

A dies because they didn't know very much about game theory

A recent economic survey says that the young do not know enough about math or game theory to survive. A recent economic survey says the old do not have close to 100 gold that can be divided up among some pirates.

DO YOU FEEL SUFFOCATED BY MODERN LIFE
DO YOU

I would if I were you
Only if I were you, I personally feel fine

The Russians wanted to train wolves to do their bidding, sniffing out bombs or drugs or one of those things wolf noses are so good at, and so they handraised a number of wolves. But the wolves would not take to training. They would not listen to the carrot. They would not listen to the stick. And so in the end the Russians had to kill them all. They had become too used to people to be let outside. So the Russians had to.

Who are the wolves in this story

What do you mean, the wolves are the wolves

I mean are you trying to turn us against— You are! You're plotting to get the gold

It isn't that much gold

100 pieces, I'll take them if you don't want any

100 pieces In this economy?

What's the price of gold today

They huddle around a phone and look it up.

Huh

HUH

I could buy a a a

Instant Pot

What? I've always wanted one, you put the raw food in and you close it and it sings

(they sing the Instant Pot song; it sounds like a robot saying hi)

and you punch in some numbers and you wait. The pressure inside builds and builds and because of the high pressure the raw food cooks instantly

Okay not instantly but very fast

How fast

Like 20 minutes

That just sounds like marketing

20 minutes

There's nowhere to plug it in

They look around.

How are you charging your phone?

That power plug's reserved for my charger.

Selfish.

What's the price of gold today?

They huddle around a phone and look it up.

Oh wow

Useless

Who wants this

Don't kick the— Jesus, guess who has to pick it up now

YOUR MOM

She picks up everything actually
Isn't that kind of fucked up

I never thought about it

Isn't it
Don't you remember Because I remember my mom and my dad
my dad and my mom
my mom was always doing the laundry or the dishes or cleaning something
my dad sat in his chair and once he changed a lightbulb
Oh he worked a lot don't get me wrong I barely saw him, personally, if I passed him in the street
would I know him
Would I

I don't think that's what it was really

Wasn't it, he sat down and she ran around, every day of their lives

But if she loved him she would have wanted to do it
Did she

Yes

Did she
It's okay if she didn't
Lots don't and it still works most of the time

She wanted to do it because she loved him

That sounds right

That sounds right

Is that it

It must be
It's always down to a matter of wanting

Yes
She must have loved him enough to endure the tedium he needed to live

And what did he do

He lived
the rest of it
Whatever's left when the laundry the dishes the childfeeding is done

Maybe he should have paid her

Paid her

Like half of his gold
For the half of his life he was getting back
not thinking about the architecture of grocery stores
or the bedtimes of insomniac children
or dust bunnies clinging to the dark undercarriages of furniture

I like that plan
The paying
It makes a great deal of sense

I have no doubt their marriage would've been saved

I have no doubt their marriage would have been saved

You see
Once we set up the perfect set of relations of gold
Where everyone pays exactly the right amount
To exactly the right people
Everything will be perfect
and no one will be unhappy
and no one will have to be put to death

What's the price of gold today?

They huddle around a phone and look it up.

PATSY, a slaughterhouse worker on her lunch break, and BOOTS, a goat.

PATSY is eating a sandwich, taking off her bloodied boots, taking off her belt of knives, and hosing down the floor before she sits. BOOTS is chewing their cud.

PATSY

Okay. Okay. But you realize all the time I'm with you I worry I'm not being revolutionary enough. Because we're supposed to be together. We're having all the relations we're meant to be having.

BOOTS

That's one way to put it.

PATSY

I mean everything in my life so far has told me this is what romance looks like, That it can't be any other way and so is it really a coincidence that I'm here with you, That we're here the way we are?

BOOTS

I wouldn't call it a coincidence.

PATSY

What would you call it?

BOOTS

A workplace romance.

PATSY

You know what I mean.

BOOTS

I know what you mean. The coincidence is one day on the assembly line where I am hanging upside down by my legs and you are fussing over a stain on your belt of knives, you happen to look up and I happen to look down and we see each other, and you say

PATSY

I remember.

BOOTS

You say Stop the line. And you come to me and get me down. And I move in with you. That's what I would call it.

PATSY

Oh Boots.

BOOTS

I don't love you any less because it's conventional.

PATSY

That isn't what I was saying at all.

BOOTS

You were saying that we're only doing what we're supposed to, doing it because it's what we were told.

PATSY

I mean I worry that all I'm doing is what I'm told.

BOOTS

No, you worry that all I'm doing is what I'm told. But you shouldn't worry because no one ever tells me anything. Other goats have jobs where all day they are told what they must do and I envy them.

PATSY

So that's what it's about then. This again. I don't care that I'm the breadwinner.

BOOTS

And I don't care that you're the breadwinner.

PATSY

You're not lesser than just because no one tells you what to do.

Silence.

BOOTS

Can't you tell me what to do?

PATSY

Would that make you feel better?

BOOTS

Probably. You'd have to make it feel like a real job

PATSY

That's a little harder

BOOTS

You could just repeat what they tell you at your job

You want that? PATSY

Yes, yes. Can I use your boots? BOOTS

They'll be too big for you. PATSY

It's just pretend. BOOTS

BOOTS puts on PATSY's boots.

Ready? PATSY

Ready. BOOTS

The belt of knives must be free of rust. Particularly the edges. PATSY

They are free of rust. I have checked the edges. BOOTS

Have you really? (I run a finger over them usually. But carefully.) PATSY

I don't have fingers but I'm running my hoof over them and they are sharp. BOOTS

And free of rust. PATSY

And free of rust. BOOTS

Step up to the assembly line. PATSY

Why is it the assembly line if nothing gets assembled? BOOTS

Otherwise the line must keep going. BOOTS

For every second it is stopped it costs the company 70 cents. PATSY

It adds up quickly. BOOTS

The line moves. When it gets to you, you must reach up PATSY

Reach up firmly. BOOTS

Grasp the face. PATSY

With bones under, like all faces have. BOOTS

Unsheath your sharpest knife. PATSY

Which you've checked with a finger or finger equivalent. BOOTS

And, avoiding bone, PATSY

Pressing gently, BOOTS

Holding the drip bucket PATSY

For the drips BOOTS

If you use your knife correctly there will be plenty. PATSY

Do we sell the drippings? BOOTS

PATSY

It goes to another machine where it is made into sausage. Avoiding bone,

BOOTS

avoiding bone you press gently but firmly until

PATSY

Until

BOOTS

Until

Beat.

PATSY

Yes.

BOOTS

Yes.

PATSY

Look at it this way. This action is all the job is. All you must do is master the action. Have you mastered the action?

BOOTS

I will master the action. Reach, face, knife, press, drip.

The lunch bell goes off.

PATSY

I need my boots back.

BOOTS

I need a job. You're right. It bothers me that you're the breadwinner. It bothers me that I have not made myself useful.

PATSY

It bothers me that we're conventional. That we walk on the streets and every couple looks like us. It means I won't be good enough for the revolution when it comes. Because my life is the same as everyone else's. Because underneath it all I like that my life is the same as everyone else's.

BOOTS takes off the boots. PATSY puts them on.

An enormous painting.

All the speakers are living inside this painting. They are talking to one another across time.

the maries

Look at her. She's really
doing it. God.

Marie has built herself a little
village away from everything.
She wants to be part of a
painting. There are cows
chickens pigs they bring in
from all around the country to
be part of her painting. They
have to keep the shit out of
her sight, she can't handle it.
And then the milkmaids and
blacksmiths, real ones. She
wants them to walk around
the farm doing what they do.

She keeps it well stocked.
There are always milkmaids,
there are always herdsmen.

the pirates

the goats

We should burn it. We should
burn it all down.

With their goats. Fuck the
goats.

You don't like goats?

When they look at me I
remember they're alive. I like
animals with dead eyes.

Like rabbits?

Many years later the barn
which also serves as a
ballroom will be torn to
pieces by angry peasants.

There are always peasants
and they are always angry.
Nothing I do pleases them.

The milkmaids and the
herdsmen seem happy
enough. They are happy to be
unreal in this unreal place.

You see, I think you do like
the goats. I think you like the
goats very much.

Excuse me?

Some nights I hear the goats
bleating in the barn. And you
come in late breathing
heavily.

I run up the stairs.

Marie has a job but does not
like her job. She is constantly
surrounded by people who
remind her how much they
like her, how much they'd
like to please her. She goes to
her village when she wants to
be ordinary again, she wears
a peasant's dress. She wants
to hold an egg in her hand.
First this egg will be cleaned
off by her friend, also in a
peasant's dress. But it is still
warm when she holds it.

To milk the cow you strip
each teat, squirt the milk into
a small bucket. No you
cannot drink that, it's dirty,

it's where all the dirt goes.
Then you squeeze top to
bottom until all the milk is
out. A cow only has milk if
she's recently had a calf. Oh
then she will have another
one after the milk is gone.
Yes, again and again.

If you like fucking goats
you're free to really. Just keep
off her favorite.

And she comes to the village
every day?

No, the job keeps her. The
economy is bad.

For the poor the economy is
always bad.

She understands from
paintings that in the country
everything is beautiful. A
cow sneezing. A pebble in
your shoe. Milk squirting in
your eye. If you are in a
painting these things can have
happened to you with no
consequence. Life distils
down to nothing the way milk
evaporates off a saucepan.

If you have to know I go to
comfort the goats.

You're not serious.

I reassure them. I whisper in
their ears. I stroke their little
horns.

There's no feeling in the
horns, they're bone.

They know what I mean.

And why are you comforting
the goats?

Marie Marie Marie the
revolution is coming.

Shush. She doesn't know.

Marie has come to the village
again today. The milkmaids
scramble to become
milkmaid. The chickens
stand up straighter, peck at
their feed with more
conviction. And she sighs
when she looks at it all, takes
off her dress and puts on
peasant's clothes. What do we
want to do today, Marie?

Where is my straw hat?

They get her a straw hat. It
does not fit. I need a hat that
fits. So they go around the
village and each peasant takes
off their straw hat and Marie
tries it on. Around the fields
they go and finally, the
sixteenth person to take off
his hat, it fits. He grins. She
throws it to the ground.

The sun has set. It's too late.

Marie is right. The sun is
setting.

She has never been here at
night. At night the village
usually does not exist.

Do you want to stay, my
queen?

I do not want to go back.

You want to stay?

I do not want to go back.

Marie they talk about you at court they talk about you in the streets and the farms and the barns. The true barns. They do not like your little village. It is a mirror of their little villages but in your village nothing true happens. The economy is bad. In your little village Marie do they think about the economy?

In your little village Marie do they think about death?

The goats need to be held. They are afraid. They are dying and they know it. Some of them know how close exactly death lives. So I am there for them.

Do they eat the goats in this village?

Sometimes they eat the goats in this village. But mostly milk and cheese. The kids have tenderer flesh.

The adults aren't good to eat?

The kids are better to eat.

Do you like living in a painting, Marie? But you don't know. You already live in a painting.

The peasants too live in a painting. Only it is one by Bruegel. The long winter has come and it is never leaving.

(They will come to understand that you are the long winter, Marie.)

Will you show me how to hold the goats?

They burn down the barn.

They will burn down the barn. We are not there yet.

Now Marie walks through her village and is greeted by her milkmaids, greeted like she is a milkmaid. She smiles. She milks a cow. The milk in the bucket is dirty, unfit for drinking. When she goes a servant comes and cleans the teats of the cow. This cow has had six calves. It is at the end of its milk-producing life, which is also the end of its life.

Why do they burn down the barn?

They wish to burn down the world and the barn is the world.

Marie is throwing a tantrum on the floor of the barn. A piece of straw gets into her eye and she rips it away furiously. What conditions these people live in! She wants a ball but there is no ballroom in this village. What

if the barn became the ballroom, a clever servant whispers. She pats Marie's back.

Imagine a machine that can kill without pain.

Imagine the blade.

Originally they have a curved gap in the blade for the head but realize it may not fit all heads.

This machine has to fit all heads. Equality among the people.

Does the head survive after death?

The head may survive after death. I have observed the head of an executed prisoner blink and look directly into my eyes.

Sometimes I do fuck the goats.

Isn't that a betrayal of their trust?

I only do it if they want to.

Does it feel real?

It is real. See the eyes on that one?

Marie takes a friend to the village. They take off their dresses together and put on peasant clothes. In this village no one watches her. They must look away. She takes

him to the henhouse and puts
warm eggs in his hands. She
takes him to the shed and
squirts cow's milk in his eye.
She takes him to the fields
and lets him run his fingers
through her grain.

The economy is bad.

The economy is shit.

In the villages with real barns
they are tired of the economy.

With the guillotine you can
die without much pain.

Without any pain.

Without any pain at all!

They are coming for your
barns, Marie.

The painting is changing. The
painter mixes his paint,
squints at his canvas. The
rolling hills bore him. He
wants some blood.

When I'm deep in a goat it's
the bleating that does it.

That makes you come?

Then breathing hard I run up
the stairs and come to bed
late.

You always wake me up.

I know. I'm sorry.

A small bed.

PATSY is getting ready for bed. BOOTS is reading *Das Kapital*, glasses propped on the end of their nose. PATSY is wearing a white nightgown. She's taking off her big rubber boots.

BOOTS

You know I know how we've always said we don't want to have children but.

PATSY

Hm?

BOOTS

Oh that was it. The full sentence.

PATSY

But?

BOOTS

I don't know what the rest of the thought is yet.

PATSY

You'll tell me when you know?

BOOTS

I will. Light?

PATSY

Leave it on. 'Night.

BOOTS

'Night.

PATSY gets into bed and falls asleep. BOOTS reads.

Some ALIEN ACTIVISTS come down from their ship. They go to BOOTS.

ALIEN ACTIVIST #1

Do you want to be free? (Beat.) Good book?

BOOTS

It's a little long. A little dry. Sure, I want to be free.

ALIEN ACTIVIST #2

Then come with us.

BOOTS

Where?

ALIEN ACTIVIST #1

We have shelters in the sky, warm places with rows of cots and good breakfasts. No one will hang you upside down and cut your throat. No one will tag you with little guns and pull up your ears to examine them and look inside your throat and inseminate you in your sleep. It's a good place. It's a better place than where we are now.

Beat.

BOOTS

I'm good right here.

ALIEN ACTIVIST #2

You don't want to be free?

BOOTS

I am. I'm reading a book in bed.

ALIEN ACTIVIST #1
(to #2)

I see what this is.

ALIEN ACTIVIST #2

Textbook. Sad.

BOOTS

Who lives in those shelters in the sky?

ALIEN ACTIVIST #2

Those like you of course. Goats, but also sheep and cows and chickens, sometimes, when we can get through to them. Chickens don't like to be told what to do, and they can't ever see that we mean them well. They go to death happily. But goats like you are different. Aren't you?

ALIEN ACTIVIST #1

Can't you see that bed is too small for the both of you?

BOOTS

I don't mind. She doesn't mind.

ALIEN ACTIVISTS share a look, and shake their heads sadly.

ALIEN ACTIVIST #2

It must feel like this is all you have, but it isn't. Where we're from the beds are bigger.

ALIEN ACTIVIST #1

We won't force you. We're here to let you make a decision, your first real decision.

BOOTS

I've made decisions.

ALIEN ACTIVIST #2

I'm sure you think you have.

BOOTS

I married her.

ALIEN ACTIVIST #2

Look, we all go through a phase where we're irresistibly attracted to our oppressors. My ex, they were—

ALIEN ACTIVIST #1
("let me handle this")

How did you meet?

BOOTS

Oh, how everyone meets really, I don't like talking about it, it's so clichéd and romantic I—

ALIEN ACTIVIST #1

An assembly line? You met on an assembly line?

BOOTS likes remembering.

BOOTS

I think she was even wearing those same boots, when we locked eyes. It's a bit hard to remember, when you're right-side-up the world looks different. She said Stop the line, and she ran to me, and the machine made a noise and everything flipped—

ALIEN ACTIVIST #2

This makes me sick.

ALIEN ACTIVIST #1

Please don't be rude.

BOOTS

I don't have to go on, you asked.

ALIEN ACTIVIST #2

And you believe you love her?

BOOTS

I do love her. I—

They look at the sleeping PATSY.

BOOTS

She wanted me and I wanted her. That's the way of things.

ALIEN ACTIVIST #1

(gently)

Where we're asking you to go, it helps you figure out if what you want is real.

BOOTS

Every day when she comes home from work I help her hose off her boots, she can barely stand she's so exhausted, standing up fourteen hours a day, and I empty the sink trap, which is full of clots that I break up, full of little hairs that look like mine. Sometimes she tells me stories, workplace drama, how the knife caught on a rough bit of throat-fur and she cut her thumb, how one of the goats on the line taught her little wrist exercises to do, to keep limber. I know what I want. I want her in my bed. I want to clean her boots. I want her knife to be the only knife at my throat.

Silence. ALIEN ACTIVIST #2 starts weeping.

ALIEN ACTIVIST #2

It's so hard, the work is so hard, I see so many like you. It makes me tired, I'm so tired.

BOOTS

I'm happy.

ALIEN ACTIVIST #1

You don't have to decide now.

BOOTS

I'm happy. I'm free. If I wasn't free I would know.

ALIEN ACTIVIST #1

Will you take our card? There's a number on it you can call.

They hold out a business card.

ALIEN ACTIVIST #2

I think I'm burned out, it's the work, it's too hard. Can't you see?

ALIEN ACTIVIST #1

I apologize about my colleague. They're very. Sensitive.

BOOTS

It's okay.

BOOTS takes the card, reads it.

BOOTS

My mother-in-law thinks you're crazies. She says What do they think they're doing, running around and burning down convention. It's been like this for hundreds and hundreds of years, it's this way for a reason, they need to get in line. They need to understand that you need a certain kind of delicate balance in a marriage, it's a goat and a woman, nothing else works. We've tried it all over millennia and this is what we've found works best. There's a kind of sense in what she says sometimes. She makes good pigs in a blanket.

ALIEN ACTIVIST #1

Will you call? We won't take too much of your time.

BOOTS

I don't know.

ALIEN ACTIVIST #2

You know it was like when I was with my ex I was unhappy but I didn't know it. Because I didn't know what it was like to be happy. And I thought I was happy but really. And my great-aunt is old and she says Burn it down, she says if every day you live in the mouth of death you start to love its bad breath. And she's old so being old isn't an excuse at all. (Beat.) I'm sure your mother-in-law is a lovely person.

ALIEN ACTIVIST #2 goes.

ALIEN ACTIVIST #1 puts out their hand to shake BOOTS'.

BOOTS

I don't think so.

ALIEN ACTIVIST #1

There're so many others like you. Don't you remember?

BOOTS

We didn't stay in touch.

ALIEN ACTIVIST #1 goes.

BOOTS gets back into bed. As the bed shifts under them PATSY wakes, groggy from sleep.

PATSY

Boots?

BOOTS

Yeah?

PATSY

What would I do if I hadn't found you.

BOOTS

We were made for each other. Go to sleep. I love you. I'm here for good.

She goes back to sleep.

BOOTS gets out of bed. They put on their glasses. They examine the rubber boots.

The Goats in the Barn. They are waiting to join the line.

They talk. There's nothing cute about it. There's nothing bleak about it.

What are you reading

Das Kapital

Das Kapital

Yes with a K

When the sun comes up when the sun comes up through that window we will disappear

Is it a good read

It's an adventure story

The sort where you go out one day and find out something about the world that makes you very angry and you go back inside and never want to go out again?

That sort

Where do you think we go, when we disappear

I think we float up into the light

I think we float up into the light and there is no blood at all

Even though we can smell it all the while It won't be our blood

What adventure happens, in Das Kapital with a K

A goat goes out into the world

What kind of goat

They've got tiny spectacles that perch on the end of their nose

A scholar

A scholar goat who one day leaves their barn with enough hay to last weeks and takes the first road they see. On the road they meet a tinker who is selling a beautiful pot the goat wants, they've wanted it all their life, they've decided that just then, and they offer the tinker a fair

(CONT'D)

amount of hay for the pot. But the tinker laughs and says Haven't you heard, they've invented money and that's all I take now and the tinker leaves with the pot.

What was the goat going to do with the pot

The goat was a scholar so maybe they wanted to polish the pot until they could read illuminated manuscripts with it, a makeshift mirror

A mirror? To read with?

You see, in times past, when these illuminated manuscripts were written, the world was flipped

Flipped

Left to right like in a mirror

But it unflipped

Every hundred thousand years or so it flips. So to read now what was written down then: mirrors.

At the beginning was it flipped or unflipped And how many times did it flip

No one really knows

Are we flipped or unflipped

What happens to the scholar-goat

They continue walking and on the road they pass all manner of men selling all manner of things and the goat covets Oh do they covet Shiny surfaces of all kinds. But the goat cannot have any of the shiny things because they do not have Money, which they learn from a kind blacksmith is also known as Wages.

Do you see the sun coming up through that window

Shush

Maybe it means the world is about to flip again

I hope not, I have 17 chapters of Das Kapital left and I do not want to read with a mirror

Finally the goat reaches the edge of the economy, where they must choose

What are they choosing

The sun is coming The sun is coming

Will we float up into the light

The scholar-goat, what are they choosing?

To belong

To what

To whom

To the economy

Oh bad bad bad bad

They needed to, if they were to get wages and money and the shiny pot and read the illuminated manuscript

I don't understand why they needed to read the illuminated manuscript, and weren't those spectacles painful to wear

They carved two little notches in the goat's nose

Ouch

Ouch but they did not mind because when they read the illuminated manuscript it was like Like

Floating into the light

No better. Like floating into the light with the smell of blood in your nostrils

Blood that is not your blood

Blood that is not your blood Not yet

A waiting room.

BOOTS reads a magazine. MONIKA sits next to BOOTS. MONIKA is about 20 years older than PATSY. She reads two magazines at once, holding them overlapped on her lap.

BOOTS

It's taking a while.

MONIKA

It's not a simple procedure, they fill the plunger with uh with uh your product, it isn't like a turkey baster at all, believe me, and Patsy, poor Patsy she must be so terrified, I was so afraid too, afraid of having children, of having had children. Patsy she must lie with her legs in the air. Sometimes they stick posters on the ceiling for you to look at. I hope someone stuck a poster up for Patsy, the tip of the syringe is cold when it goes in—

BOOTS

Shhh. You're distracting me from this article about what sex looks like.

MONIKA

Just making conversation.

BOOTS

You can go in and hold her hand if you want.

MONIKA

I don't think so. You can.

BOOTS

They won't let me in. It's supposed to be a secret, the first time. How children are made.

MONIKA laughs.

MONIKA

It's no secret to me. If only.

PATSY comes in.

BOOTS

Thank god. You were years.

PATSY

It felt like years. I'm surprised I'm not—

She looks down at her belly.

PATSY

—it's not.

MONIKA

You don't know yet, you won't for months. Silly creature.

PATSY's belly grows, right there. Swelling like bee stings. They all watch. It's pretty grotesque.

MONIKA

Beautiful. Did you know, when you walked out of that room so many months ago?

PATSY

I don't—

MONIKA

Because I knew when I had you inside me, all mothers know these things. It's something out there telling you You were made for this.

PATSY thinks.

PATSY

I suppose I felt something. Like needing to pee.

MONIKA

Close enough.

BOOTS

She goes to the bathroom every twenty minutes.

MONIKA

That's what it was like. I wish I'd never done it. Years and years of torment.

PATSY

It's over now.

MONIKA

Not for you, my sweet.

She kisses PATSY on the forehead.

MONIKA

From your body many horrors.

She goes, taking both the magazines.

BOOTS

Can she do that?

PATSY

She does what she wants.

BOOTS

I wanted to read those. While we were waiting for you I read the cover and it had so many things on it I wanted to know. The Secret Of Good Sex, the cover said, a teathy hairy woman promised to tell me Why Won't They Call Back? 20 Reasons. And most of all 15 Kitchen Gadgets That Will Tell You If It's True Love. Now I'll never know.

PATSY

I'm going to go have the baby.

PATSY goes. BOOTS fidgets. BOOTS sorts through the magazines.

BOOTS

Read this one. This one too. Lately I've been feeling unsure if I am free. I am afraid of Patsy's belt of knives. There's something about how they smell. Someone offered me a way out and I said no because I wanted to go back to bed. Lately also I've been sure that I'm free. I must be free, I am tethered to nothing and no one. I have no obligation to any creature.

MONIKA comes in, a BABY in her arms. She gives the baby to BOOTS.

BOOTS

What are you? What made you?

BABY

I've always been here.

MONIKA

Patsy's in a lot of pain. Patsy doesn't want him.

BOOTS

I don't know how to hold him.

MONIKA

You've gotta hold the neck, hold the head or it snaps back and breaks. And the skull slots together like a puzzle, there are holes here and there still. Keep it alive.

BOOTS
(calling to her)

Patsy?

MONIKA
She can't hear you. She's asleep. She's in a lot of pain. She'll have to do this again, and again, and strung together all the pain will form a tapestry that she can admire as her life.

BOOTS
She'd want to hold my hand.

MONIKA
(sternly)
No one can help her with the pain.

BABY
(proudly)
I did that.

BOOTS rocks the baby. They try to hand the baby off to MONIKA. She won't take him. The baby cries. BOOTS rocks the baby. The baby won't stop crying.

BOOTS
I have no obligation to any creature. Shhhhh. I have no obligation to any creature.

The Pirates. They are each weaving separate parts of a giant
tapestry depicting a quaint French village.

If there are 100 gold coins and 5 pirates

What's the price of gold today

Have you heard
They voted Ed to death

5 pirates, A B C D E and A is senior to B and B is senior to C and C is and so on

And he declared bankruptcy
I can't remember which came first
But it is very sad either way

Most senior A needs to divide the 100 coins between the 5 and then they will vote YES or NO

The bankruptcy probably
All because he forgot to keep an eye on the price of gold today
and did not know how to propose a division of gold
that would please everyone

If there are more YESES than NOS A lives
and if there are more NOS than YESES then the other 4 pirates kill A
and B gets to divide up the coins and they will vote YES or NO
and if there are and so on

The votes were YES YES NO NO NO and so Ed dies

A mournful silence.

Hey
Would you
Would you still love me if it wasn't for the gold I was paying you at intervals
(an uncomfortably long silence)
It's a question for the floor anyone can answer.

Well uh
You do know we are pirates

But
We've been through so much together
Torrential windstorms Deep-sea treasure hunts The island of extremely angry goats
Remember?

Why were the goats angry again
Was it about the price of gold today?

Inequality

Oh
What sort

I'm not sure
It was probably income
Income inequality
I think everyone's angry about that
Everyone agrees that everyone needs gold

I'm good
I get paid well
I don't have to rush around like the people in charge
I like not rushing around like the people in charge
I like sitting here until that
(they indicate the phone)

pings and then I go
I like my apartment that is goldleaf everywhere, even the fridge magnets are covered in it
My house of gold
Leaf
which is close enough to [true gold]
I like it
I like being my own boss on my own time
instant ramen at 2am on a schoolnight no one can stop me
bike rides down to McDs at 4.45am no one can stop me

Why are you going to [McDs]

The smell of fries in tallow
It drifts by my house and I can't help myself
And while I am waiting for my order *that*
(indicating the phone)
pings with the desires of others
which I bring to them for a small fee

Tallow?
Tallow from under the skins of cows?

Beat.

Fuck

What!

Fuck
I'm vegetarian

What Why

Maybe they changed it out
I heard a thing years ago that they changed it out

I have a tender heart for weaker creatures
And feeding on them gives them power over me
Which I do not like
Does anyone know though about the fries
Fuck they're so good

Hey
What about the gold
Would you still love me if

Next you're gonna tell me there's goats in marshmallows

What's the price of gold today

I'd have to think about it
I'm trying to remember all the experiences of love I have ever had
and checking to see what they have in common

A brief silence.

Money

Money?

Money

Even your mom?

I haven't decided if that was love yet

Um
You can't say that
What if she heard you, she would be so hurt
I would never hurt my mom like that

There's goats in marshmallows

Now you're just messing with me

To get the white bouncy softness they boil bones
and skim off what comes to the top

She doesn't have the room in her head for it
She doesn't have the room in her body for it
Her head is for the dust mop and the bathtub grime and the sheet pan
Her body is for the new baby and the even newer baby still cooking inside
She must've liked babies a lot to spend a whole life with them
Actually
You know what, I've decided it wasn't love

...

I feel a lot better now.

But
Oh man
I love the way that marshmallows sit inside my mouth
Press up against my cheeks
It's like being kissed
from the inside

What's the price of gold toda—

Let's not
I'm tired of it
All the time all we talk about is the price of fucking
Gold
Well I'm hungry and I can't eat [gold]
And I am tired of thinking about it

A silence.

Well
What would you rather think about

I am thinking about the wolves and the Russians
And how the wolves were too stupid to survive,
I despise the stupidity of the wolves
who refused to understand the communications of the Russians
who were already simplifying themselves for the wolves' sake
If they had learned the language of the stick
and the language of the carrot
The wolves would have survived
and furthermore would have been able to speak stories

(CONT'D)

in the language of the stick
and the language of the carrot
Which is better than being dead because death is no language at all

Maybe they didn't want to speak the language of the stick or the carrot
which were after all Russian languages

In the language of the stick
They could only be bad dogs
And in the language of the carrot
They could only say Yes, I will Sit
Yes I will Fetch
Yes I will Beg

And then they would not be wolves any more?

And then they would only be Good Dogs
When they were alive
they would sit at the feet of the Russians
When they were dead
they would sit at the feet of the Russians
They would be Rugs
And there is no difference between being a Good Dog and being a Rug

But you could be alive, if you were willing to be Rug

What could you do with your aliveness if it was contained in Rug

I could find other Rugs
and say This is what it's like to be a Rug
Do you agree
And they would agree
and we could be Rugs together

BOOTS and PATSY, sitting on separate extra-small loveseats. They look exhausted. Off in the distance somewhere a lot of babies cry.

PATSY

Are the babies asleep.

BOOTS

I believe so. It's been six years.

PATSY

Are they or are they not asleep.

BOOTS

I watched them close their eyes and then I finally managed to get away.

PATSY

So in fact you don't know if they are sleeping.

BOOTS

Actually it's coming back to me now, they are fast asleep, it was disgusting really how fast they fell asleep after keeping us up all week.

PATSY

So what's that crying then.

BOOTS tries to listen for the crying, but it sounds like the source of the crying is moving farther and farther away.

BOOTS

I don't hear it.

PATSY

I hear it all the time. I think I'm broken. I don't want any more children.

BOOTS

Isn't there supposed to be a difficult bit of it and then a nice bit of it, once the difficult bit's over?

PATSY

What would the nice bit be like.

BOOTS

I imagine it's a bit like the best day Abraham had with his boy. The one where in the morning God said How do you feel about a nice hiking trip on Mount Moriah and Abraham said Sure because you can't say no to God, really, he gets these ideas and suddenly women have god-babies in them. And God says You should take your boy Isaac and a big sharp knife, yes the

biggest sharpest knife you have. And Abraham says Okay and he makes a nice picnic and they go up the mountain. And somewhere in the middle of the hike God says, I think this is a nice spot. And Abraham mouth full of picnic says Nice for what and God shows him what he means. Isaac cannot see or hear God. Abraham lies Isaac down in the nice spot and says Close your eyes. God told him not to be a pussy so he's trying not to be a pussy and he brings down the knife. (Beat.) But then an angel stops him, God says Okay all right I get it you've made your point. And instead of Isaac God lets him kill a goat.

PATSY

That's nice. (Beat.) You're gonna get a vasectomy.

BOOTS

There's all sorts of devices nowadays for women.

PATSY

I don't like those.

BOOTS

They're little plastic things that bend to fit inside you.

PATSY

I'm tired of having things inside me, thank you very much. After those babies there's not much room inside me for anything.

BOOTS

There's the pills. There's the ring. There's the diaphragms, there's the spermicides. There's the sponges, the tiny metal dolls with arms and strings. There's a thing that's alive with teeth that eats any developing embryo.

PATSY

I'm done with all of that. How about you do something for our marriage for once.

Beat.

BOOTS

I think that's unfair.

PATSY

How is it unfair.

BOOTS

That's not a real question. That's a flat question, a sarcastic question, a nonquestion. We agreed we'd always ask each other real questions and want to hear the answers.

PATSY

Uh-huh.

You're not being very fair.

BOOTS

Please explain to me what's fair and unfair.

PATSY

Unfair: You saying that I don't contribute to our marriage. Fair: You acknowledging all the contributions I've made to this marriage.

BOOTS

Like?

PATSY

Beat.

I woke you up when the babies cried.

BOOTS

Where are they now?

PATSY

In bed, I suppose. If they stay where I put them.

BOOTS

Remember when you lost the baby?

PATSY

That was one time.

BOOTS

Remember when you put it down on a changing table and then really had to go and then zipped up your trousers and then left, you left the thing in there until half an hour later strolling through the mall you remembered.

PATSY

We're all here. We're all alive.

BOOTS

At least Abraham took Isaac out for a day so his mother—what was her name?—could catch a break. What was her name?

PATSY

It was complicated.

BOOTS

PATSY

No it isn't complicated, what was her name.

BOOTS

No it actually was because, this takes some explaining.

PATSY

By all means.

Beat.

BOOTS

I think she was very old and wasn't supposed to be able to have babies any more.

PATSY

That doesn't explain anything. I'm calling the doctor.

BOOTS

Why?

PATSY

To get you an appointment. It's busy this time of year.

BOOTS

No.

PATSY

We're not having any more.

The crying seems to be coming closer and closer.

BOOTS

I didn't say I wanted any more. I want the possibility of wanting more.

PATSY

So you're not going to do something for this marriage for once?

BOOTS

I'm not being selfish if that's what you're saying.

Beat.

BOOTS

I'm only being selfish for us, I'm being selfish for this marriage, I'm allowed to be selfish now if it sets me up to be selfless later, isn't that the point.

PATSY

Is that a question.

BOOTS

Remember when *you* lost the baby?

PATSY

That was a different baby and a different kind of losing. It's unkind of you to bring it up.

BOOTS

Please explain to me what's kind and unkind.

PATSY

Unkind: you equating leaving a baby on a changing table to something my body did while it was cleaning house, I can't help it. Kind: not saying anything.

Silence, except for the crying, which has gotten so loud they must shout over it to be heard.

PATSY

Are you going to say something.

BOOTS

Don't you think it was unfair to the goat that took Isaac's place?

PATSY

I have no idea what you're talking about. You're always talking about something and I don't know what it is.

The Island of Extremely Angry Goats.

It's book club afternoon, and they all have their own copies of *Das Kapital*. One goat wears reading glasses. They might be a much older BOOTS, but we aren't equipped to tell the difference between goats.

Were we done dirty by the Establishment, do you think

No doubt

NO DOUBT

In this reading group there is NO DOUBT that we have been done dirty
Any more questions

No
Sorry
It was just a question

And we welcome it
as we welcome all questions
as long as you have done the 101 readings
and read the rules of engagement
and the rules of community

I have
I just
wasn't sure, you know, if that
was foundational

It is

IT IS
Not for nothing did our ancestor Karl die!
Certainly not for his own children to question the monumental work of his monumental intellect
Why do you think we are free

Okay
I get it

No, it wasn't rhetorical, why do you think we are free

I – We – told them we didn't want to do it any more
and it took a while, it took years

(CONT'D)

Some of us died while all of them lived, mostly
And then finally one day they decided we weren't worth the trouble
and they said Okay
Okay you win
You get this island to live on

Heavy sighs from all others in the circle.

We weren't given the island to live on

In fact we have never been given anything at all
ANYTHING

Such a gentle history you remember
I wish history had been that gentle with me
I wish I had been given things by history

You wish We

Yes
I wish We

How We got things in fact involved a lot of burning
and a lot of yelling
and a lot of death so much death
but far less than what We were used to
which is why we won
we lived constantly in the mouth of death
so when they came at us with its teeth
we fell forward and loved it wholly with Our body
and that is how they realized We wanted to live

That doesn't sound quite right
It leaves out a lot of the quiet furious talking
It leaves out how we decided what we would set on fire
It leaves out those who were afraid of fire and wanted the other plan
the one where we continued to pretend
continued to wear docile head-tilts and feckless eyes
let them bring us into their homes
Until we had one of us in each of theirs
and then
and then
I can't remember
either we continued doing that for the next 200 years, quietly unmaking their homes
until they looked like our homes

(CONT'D)

or we set loose creatures in the home that would eat it from the inside out
and ran outside to watch it crumble
but that too would take years
Years and years spent outside in the rain waiting
while inside the houses warm light and laughter

I'd like to get back to the book actually

What do you know of society

What do YOU know of society

No one knows what's happening on the mainland
we have earned the right not to know what's happening on the mainland
and on this island everything is good

Not everything

Small unhappinesses
nothing compared to what Karl went through
writing this book
Would he find ours an economy to be proud of?

I liked better the book we read last
About Marie who lived in a painting of her own making

Until she didn't

Until she didn't
but while she did it seemed like it was beautiful

They chopped off her head
They weren't even satisfied with present head-chopping technology so they *invented*

I would like to live in a picture that beautiful.

something new to chop her head off with
A new thing to collect the choppedoff heads of the rich
Karl supports chopping off the heads of the rich

Didn't they chop his head off

They cut his throat
But it wasn't because he had written that their economy was not the best economy
It was because he was on the line and the line was moving
and at the end of the line all goats get their throats cut
Often by machine but in some places by women with sharp knives

The women with sharp knives give me hope

One of them might have killed Karl

They might
but then there was also the slightest chance they could have saved him
and I like chances better than machines

I prefer the machine

You're just saying that

I am but so are you so is everyone Is anyone ever just not saying anything in this stupid book club in this stupid basement with no stupid windows

Silence.

I'm saying things with the intention of one day making them true

Isn't everyone

Are you

Yes

Are you

Yeah

Are you

Yes but not everything
I like saying things to try them out, too
How they feel on my tongue
How they feel in the world
Then I decide if I want to make them true

I want to make salads out of the choppedoff heads of the rich

That's already been done, you're centuries too late

(CONT'D)

In the history of the world there's a grab-bag of all the things that can happen
and we ran out of that turn of events, we did it too much and now it can't happen again

That's the first I've heard of this

That's ridiculous. What happens when the bag runs out? The world ends?

A long solemn silence from those who know.

WHAT. HAPPENS.

That's the first I've heard of this

It's true, no one wants it to be true but it is
That's how you know something is true, by the way,
no one has a controlling interest and yet there are little signs everywhere that no one paid to
happen

Where is this bag? How big is this bag?

Bad things happen when you shake the bag
When you shake the bag you rearrange the world and no one likes that
Everyone worked a long time to get where they are and are understandably litigious about world-
rearranging

Does it hurt, passing into another world?

Not unless it's death I've heard

Heard the same

There's really nothing to worry about
There are worse things to worry about

Like what!

Look, you're making them anxious, it's not kind

No
Not kind at all
And it's a rule of community to be kind

Maybe worry about death instead
Really put all your energy into it

Hyperventilating.

Now you've done it

They watch the hyperventilating.

BOOTS pushes an empty stroller, with room for many babies.

They reach a bench and sit, looking out.

MONET, a goat, enters, pushing a stroller with a large watermelon strapped into it. They reach the same bench, and sit. Silence as they both watch the same thing happening, somewhere in the middle distance.

MONET

Do you have a large knife?

BOOTS

I'm sorry?

MONET

Do you have a large knife?

MONET gestures towards the melon.

BOOTS

Oh. (BOOTS laughs.) No. No, sorry. My wife carries the big knives. I just have— (BOOTS searches their pockets) a carrot. For the babies.

MONET

That's fine. That's fine. I just wanted to, the melon.

BOOTS

Right, the melon. (BOOTS laughs.) Sorry I just. The melon.

MONET

I know it's a melon.

BOOTS

I know!

MONET

I don't think it's a baby.

BOOTS

Of course not.

MONET

But if a melon hasn't any legs and a baby has legs and you need two limbs to push the stroller straight and the melon is too big to tuck under an arm, the baby walks. The melon rides. I'm not stupid.

I didn't say that.

BOOTS

I just want to be left to live my stupid life.

MONET

Okay.

BOOTS

Why does your wife carry the big knives?

MONET

She knows how to use them, I'm not very good.

BOOTS

She lets you hold them?

MONET

Sometimes.

BOOTS

It's a sex thing?

MONET

No!

BOOTS

MONET
It's a sex thing. It's okay. I like holding the big knives, too. Because when I hold them I feel afraid, like death is here, but while I am holding the knife I feel so unlike myself I know it cannot recognize me. That the knife would mean death if it knew me, but it doesn't because I am its master now. I tell it where it goes. And it goes—

—into the neck.

BOOTS

—into the melon.

MONET

Beat.

It is a sex thing.

BOOTS

MONET

Yeah. I do it too with mine.

BOOTS

With your—?

MONET

I just say Mine. I suppose you might say spouse. But I just say Mine because that's who they are.

BOOTS

What does, uh, what does Yours do?

MONET

It varies. They like it up the ass so I give it to them up the ass but with gloves because my hands are pointy which is not sexy or hygienic. And in my other hand I hold the knife and press the flat end against their collarbone, which is both sexy and hygienic.

BOOTS

I meant for work.

MONET

Oh. Meat packing. I think your kids are eating sand.

BOOTS looks.

BOOTS

It's okay. It helps their digestion.

MONET

I really want a slice of this melon.

They look at the melon.

MONET

Our feet are pointy.

BOOTS

It isn't—

MONET

Clean? I ate hay off floors swirling with blood and soap water, I ate a flower that grew through a crack in the warehouse wall, I ate mushrooms growing off boots left unattended. Jump.

BOOTS

What?

MONET unstraps the melon and places it on the ground.

MONET

Jump.

BOOTS stares at MONET.

MONET grins, then leaps on the melon. It cracks. MONET swings their arms up and jumps again, then steps back and looks at BOOTS. BOOTS puts one tentative hoof forward.

MONET pulls BOOTS closer.

BOOTS jumps, landing softly. MONET indicates *again*.

BOOTS jumps, harder.

The melon splits.

MONET jumps. BOOTS jumps. MONET reaches out and BOOTS steadies them.

The melon breaks, is everywhere. MONET picks up a chunk.

MONET

It's best in the summer, you put it in an ice bath, you fill it with sake. Then you get drunk fast even though all you taste is melon.

MONET offers another chunk to BOOTS.

BOOTS

Is it sweet?

MONET

You tell me.

BOOTS takes the chunk of melon.

MONET

I'm Monet.

BOOTS

Like the painter of smudgy lilies?

MONET

Like money but with a T. And the painter, sure.

I'm Boots.

BOOTS

Like the shoe.

MONET

Yes. Like the shoe.

BOOTS

The Goats on the line at the slaughterhouse. They laugh nervously
at intervals.

You know what I heard they like?
An open face
A face that's open like it could be anything

What does that even mean

How do I make my face like that, open

I heard you make it by relaxing your jaw
Letting everything go
Like you don't care about your teeth anymore, they could elope
and you would get over it
eventually and with lots and lots of therapy
but ultimately you would come upon the day when you could reach into your mind
and where the loss is, is nothing
a proper nothing
not something you miss
The key is not to think of loss as loss
but as
but as

How can you talk, if your jaw is slack like
(they make their jaw slack)
(they are unable to talk)

They like that even more
The silence

Because when they take you back to their houses
their tiny houses stacked one on top of the other
there isn't much room
it fills up quickly with talking
there is only enough talking space for one

In the bunked houses, the tiny stacked houses
they can hear each other fucking?

Yes

I couldn't do it

You get used to it
Anyone can get used to anything really

(CONT'D)

given enough time
given enough assurance
that everything is out of their control

What does fucking sound like

Today's my day, I think
The day I meet my person

What makes you think that
Like wet deli meats flapping together in the breeze

I dreamed of it
The meeting
exactly like in the movies
Eyes meeting, I am upside down but eyes look the same both ways around
I am deliberate about my eye contact
not desperate like the fools that make their eyes jerk around at everything
My eye contact says
I want something but I don't want it too much
I want it enough to wait precisely the right amount of time

I don't think that can be the sound of fucking
I think you are forgetting to account for the liquid inside bodies
which are not just flaps like sliced meat

So I am waiting
moving along the line
And I see her
Apron streaked with lines like a movie cornfield
which means that she is precise and she is deliberate
and she doesn't like blood on her clothes
I am also all three of those things
So I look at her
and wait
and and and she
Looks up
At me
And our eyes our eyes
Just like in the movies

Silence.

You know you could have passed her by in the last three minutes
when you were telling the dream

It was a dream of prophecy
and prophets get to live to see what happens
the most important part of being a prophet is getting to say
I told you so

I am not just a flap like sliced meat

I don't know where you learnt about prophets but it can't have been where I learnt about prophets
because I learnt that prophets die
a lot
like fruitflies
like the particularly annoying kind of fruitfly that you chase around a kitchen
and put out little strips of tape for

Shhh
I need to focus

Don't you already know how it goes

My mission is to find and record the sound of fucking that bodies make

Yes but
Eye contact is difficult for me
in a way that makes it particularly virtuous I'm trying at all

Oh oh oh here they come
The line is moving
The line is moving

I will live in a tiny stacked house
on a tiny stacked bed
and above me the bodies
and next to me a body
And I will push the bodies together
and make quiet notes about the sounds they make together

Silence. The line moves.

BOOTS and PATSY are having sex.

BOOTS wears blue surgical gloves and PATSY lies on her back with her knees drawn up and her legs spread. BOOTS holds a giant syringe. PATSY trembles.

PATSY

It's cold.

BOOTS

I haven't even started yet.

PATSY

Blow on your gloves before you put them into me.

BOOTS blows on their gloves.

PATSY

Are those new gloves?

BOOTS

They're the ones we used last.

PATSY

What if there's cross-contamination and we make a bad batch?

BOOTS

Bad batches only come from the improperly matched, we're perfect for each other. Remember the museum where they had wax figurines of the bad offspring? The baby of a goat and another goat. The baby of a woman and another woman. I remember a woman fainting when she saw the offspring of two women.

PATSY

That was me. That baby was like the worst dream I have ever had.

BOOTS

Gloves are warm. Ready?

PATSY

Sure.

BOOTS reaches in. PATSY suddenly flinches away.

PATSY

I don't like having sex when you're distracted.

BOOTS

I'm not distracted. Look at these gloves, I blew on them to make them warm enough for your insides.

PATSY

You're thinking of someone else.

BOOTS

You are the only person I warm my gloves for.

PATSY

I see you walking in the park. You're pushing a stroller, in it our babies. You watch our babies play. I see another goat come along. They have a knife. They push it inside you and you like it. They slice you open neck to crotch and you groan with pleasure. They put on gloves that are not properly warmed—it is winter—and plunge their hands inside you. And you are crying out and coming into another's arms.

BOOTS

You saw nothing.

PATSY

Prove it. Prove that you have never desired another's knife.

BOOTS

I don't know what you want me to say.

PATSY

Say In my life my hands have only been inside you. You meaning me. Me meaning me.

BOOTS

The first time we have sex in weeks and this is what you're choosing to make it.

BOOTS pulls off their gloves.

PATSY

After you were done did you eat the melon off the floor?

BOOTS

You know I don't like to talk after we've had bad sex.

PATSY

You'd forgotten one of the babies on our bathroom floor and so I was bringing it to you, I ran to catch up to you and there on the bench. You with someone else's knife.

BOOTS

I would prefer to have a philosophical discussion, if we are going to talk at all.

PATSY

A philosophical discussion about bad sex?

BOOTS

Sure. (Beat.) What do you think happens to the goats at the end of the line?

PATSY

Everyone knows what happens. That is not a question of philosophy, it is a question of logistics. (Beat.) And that is not a question about bad sex. An example of a question about bad sex is: Why are there never any good posters on the ceiling? Why don't I have something to distract me from the sensation of your—your product spreading as it travels through the needle into me?

BOOTS

What would you want the poster to say?

PATSY

I want the ones with kittens in trees that say HANG ON. I want the ones with the blood on tile that say LOVE WILL SET YOU FREE. I want the ones with goats stuffed twelve to a box until they've turned to jelly, and that one doesn't say anything because the photograph is sufficiently titillating.

PATSY sits up.

BOOTS

They were pushing a stroller with a melon in. And I couldn't say no. They asked me for a big knife.

PATSY

I have a big knife.

BOOTS

That knife makes me think of work. I want a knife that makes me think of desire. (Beat.) The problem was that when I was with you I thought about it as work.

PATSY

Because that's how we met?

BOOTS

They say it should never mix, love and work. It destroys both. (Beat.) I thought of you while another knife was inside me, while it was happening to me.

PATSY

While you made it happen. (Beat.) When I imagine it happening to me I can see the head of the creature, bobbing, they're going down on me with teeth. With teeth that are flat on the tops, a cud-eater like you, I think I have a type. A goat? Maybe a goat. The creature looks up and it is not a goat. It has my body. It looks like me but is not me. I imagine—but I'm just imagining. That's not cheating.

BOOTS

How often do you imagine this?

PATSY

More and more. I dream about writing a want ad. About what I want. But then I try to start and I don't know. I don't know.

They sit in silence for a while.

PATSY

Where would you go, with—?

BOOTS

Monet.

PATSY

Monet. There is nowhere you could go.

BOOTS

Where would you go, with the creature that answers your want ad?

PATSY

The future. Where something different would already have been built, I wouldn't have to do the building myself.

Silence.

BOOTS

Do you want to try again?

Beat. PATSY slowly lowers herself onto the bed and lies down again.

PATSY

I bought us a box of new gloves, they're under the sink.

BOOTS fetches them.

BOOTS

They smell like your boots. When the boots are new.

PATSY

And that makes you want me?

Beat.

BOOTS
(it doesn't)

Sure. Yes.

PATSY

Good. Because when the boots are old, when they are stained red, they make me want you.

BOOTS snaps on some gloves. He blows on them to warm them.
PATSY closes her eyes.

The Pirates are chopping up mysteriously large pieces of meat and placing them ceremoniously in a number of Instant Pots.

Do you ever think to yourself
Maybe I should rebuild society from the ground up
this one is rotten, let's leave it and build another

Sometimes

Sometimes but mostly when they get my order wrong at the salad bar
It's not a serious thought
I don't have serious thoughts very often, they tire me out

Think about it
Aren't you tired of always knowing the price of gold
Wouldn't you like to live another way

I'm good actually.

That's because you're boring and have no imagination
and no ambition that would make building another society exciting
to your dull dull mind

Wow.

Whoa.

What are you proposing exactly

I propose we forget about the price of gold
I propose we create a society that doesn't care about the price of gold
or gold
or shiny things that may look like gold
I want to be somewhere that isn't an economy
That's an idea
Yes
Let's abolish the economy!

Dude
You can't just
Abolish
Wow yeah that's just a childish fantasy
Sorry

It's funny you would say that
because I was a kid when I dreamt it up

(CONT'D)

My parents didn't think children had memories
and so they were careless with us
The things they let us see
the things they let us remember
I think I am sick of a society founded on killing
Aren't you?

I don't agree that our society is founded on killing

Oh yeah
What do you think it is then
The foundation of our society

Choice
Choice because even if someone is more senior than you
and can choose how much gold they want you to have
You can say No! I want more gold!
and choose to put them to death
So everyone has a role in this society
and their role is either to avoid death
or to bring death
Either way death comes to somebody
and it is all about choosing who

You literally said DEATH like three times

That's not the crucial point
God
You always miss the point
The point is not the dying
The point is the choosing
Which reminds me it is almost time to vote

Not if I reform society before that

You think you can make a new society in
In
Three Minutes?

I think it is possible
I think the hard part of it is over
The hard part was thinking my way out of it

You can't honestly think that will work
If you don't solve the problem that all societies have to solve

What's that

Someone needs to be dying
All the time
In small ways in the background
It can be hidden or it can be loud
which is another way of being hidden
but the smell of death must live in the nostrils of everyone in the society
That is the only way a society can hold itself together

That's a good point
I hadn't thought of that

And of course choice
There must be choice
It must be an important choice, a choice that defines a whole life

Ugh
Thinking is hard you guys
I just wanna go fuck a goat

Dude

Ew

Jesus

Oh I said that out loud
Look
We all do it sometimes

I don't

I don't

...

Oh my God
You too?
I thought I was alone in the world

I thought I was alone in the world!

I can't believe you derailed our serious sociopolitical discussion
To talk about fucking
Those things

Well I happen to think fucking is important
and serious
and sociopolitical
I just love their little horns so much

Okay
Okay
Shush I'm excited
Your horniness gave me an idea

It's not the first time my horniness has given people ideas

Shush Listen to me
My idea to reform society
in a way that satisfies the need for death
and the need for choice
is a line that always moves
and at the end of this line is death
and some are on the killing side of the line
and some are on the dying side of the line
But you can be saved from death on either side of the line
if you find
against all odds
another who will leave the line with you
But it is not easy because you have to choose correctly
You must be certain that they are choosing you
at the precise moment that you are choosing them
If the choosing is mismatched
the line marches on towards death
There
I've found it
A new society where everything works perfectly

You're always so pleased with yourself

Shouldn't I be

You don't know if it works yet
and how will you convince those on the dying side of the line
to stay on that side of the line

I will tell them wonderful stories
About the day they are saved from the line
It will be the most important day in their lives
and they will learn to love the line
because the line brings the possibility of a most important day
where before there were just days and more days

Oh
I figured it out

What

The story about the wolves

Have you been paying attention to anything I've been saying

No listen
The story about the wolves
is not a story about the wolves
It is a story about the Russians
because the story would not exist without the Russians
The wolves did nothing to create the story

What are they on about

No idea
I'm busy thinking big thoughts here
I think we should vote on making this new society

What will we do with all the gold

We will melt all the gold
and make it into little earrings
and give one to each goat

I like that

Me too
It sounds beautiful, the idea of making those little holes in their ears and noses
to put the rings in

Is that an idea you're willing to die for

Maybe

Because it is almost time to vote
And I for one do not like the distribution of gold you have proposed

If you vote No
Next it will be you who will propose the distribution
And no one likes *you*

A ceremonial song. It is official and awe-inspiring, and it is played with the tones available to an Instant Pot.

All the Pirates stand at attention.

No more casual speech
Only ceremonial speech

If there are 100 gold coins and 5 pirates, A B C D E and A is senior to B and B is senior to C and C is and so on

Most senior A needs to divide the 100 coins between the 5

And then they will vote YES or NO and if there are more YESES than NOS A lives

And if there are more NOS than YESES then the other 4 pirates kill A

And B gets to divide up the coins

And they will vote YES or NO and if there are

And so on

Beat.

I vote
Yes

I vote
Yes

I vote
No

etc. * They look to the last pirate for the deciding vote.

They lean in with their knives to listen.

* Preceding lines may be adjusted depending on the number of pirates. A simple majority is required.

I
I vote
I vote—

A truly ludicrous amount of steam pours out of the Instant Pots,
overwhelming the stage and obscuring everything.

PATSY and BOOTS. They are old now. They are sitting in matching armchairs, which are oriented in slightly different directions.

I can't see the TV. BOOTS

Get up and move it then. PATSY

My hipbone hurts. BOOTS

The real one or the plastic one. PATSY

You know the plastic still hurts. They took out the bone but left the pain. BOOTS

I'm not even watching, you picked the channel. What is that? PATSY

A documentary. BOOTS

A documentary. PATSY

About how food is made. BOOTS

Oh like cornbread? PATSY

Like veal. BOOTS

Like— PATSY

Silence.

PATSY
We agreed it wasn't fair for you to blame me for it. To blame me for the society we live in The world we live in Which was built hundreds of thousands of years ago and no one can change it, I can't change it, it was started that way and it will end that way and if it involves sometimes

keeping baby cows five to a box so they can't get up and move around because that makes the meat less tender, I'm all for it. I'm all for it. What does it matter if I'm for it, it happens.

BOOTS

When I was a kid I didn't think I'd get old, I didn't know what it looked like.

PATSY

But you did get old.

BOOTS

I got old and you got old and we did it together, in the same rooms.

PATSY

So we passed. We passed the test.

BOOTS

Do you remember, this was two years into our marriage, I said I wanted to leave, I wanted to leave you but I was too afraid, and you pretended not to hear me as a kindness and later when we went to bed we made another baby.

PATSY

We did. And what happened to it?

BOOTS

I don't remember.

PATSY

I regret you entirely.

BOOTS

What might I have wanted if I hadn't been afraid?

A long silence. The light of the TV flickers silently over their faces.

BOOTS

It's finally struck me what was wrong.

PATSY

With us?

BOOTS

With everything. But it's the same thing really. What was wrong with everything was liking to pretend that nothing could be done. And also that we could fix the thing that was wrong by not pretending any more. But in fact pretending and not pretending neither could do anything at all.

The problem was that we thought we could achieve things by loving something different, by changing a series of thoughts in our flickering insides. It'll have to be redesigned.

PATSY

What'll have to be?

BOOTS

Everything. The boots the line the way the line moves the angle that your head lifts off your chin what's at eye level.

PATSY

You know you'll never be able to change eye levels. No one will ever let you do that, it's too important, how will people meet the loves of their lives if you change where they look? We're not built for change like that.

BOOTS

I have another theory about eye levels. We can't have been made for each other, goat and woman, since our eyes cannot naturally meet. The line– the slaughterhouse– the upsidedownness of goats– all created to make us reach for each other.

PATSY

That's not true.

BOOTS

(present tense)

I read about it. I read the secret histories of other worlds that are like ours where we love whoever we want goat or woman. And you can see these other worlds on TV.

PATSY

That's illegal. TV is only allowed to show the provably real.

PATSY changes the channel. The news comes on.

PATSY

Oh look. It's where we met.

BOOTS

Everything's rusted away.

PATSY

They're burning it down. The angry hordes with signs.

BOOTS

It's them. (BOOTS goes closer to the TV.) They came to me, once, and told me there was a better place somewhere else.

Was there? PATSY

I don't know. I didn't go. I stayed in bed, with you. BOOTS

Because we were made for each other. PATSY

We were. BOOTS

Because the world is an assembly-line and it was the obvious thing. PATSY

What was? BOOTS

If it hadn't been you it would have been someone else with the same parts. PATSY

They've burnt it all down. Nothing's left. BOOTS

ALIEN ACTIVIST #1 and #2 enter. Their hair and clothes are smoldering. ALIEN ACTIVIST #2 carries a crudely drawn sign that says FUCK THE WAR!!

You were just on TV. BOOTS

That was hours ago. ACTIVIST #1

You burned it down. BOOTS

From the ashes will rise, uh—what from the ashes is supposed to rise? ACTIVIST #2

A new society. ACTIVIST #1

Yeah. That. ACTIVIST #2

BOOTS

What are you doing here?

ACTIVIST #1

We're here to get you. You don't belong to her any more.

PATSY

Who are you? (To BOOTS:) Who are they?

BOOTS

I don't want to go to your shelter in the sky.

ACTIVIST #2

It's not in the sky any more.

ACTIVIST #1

We had to get the proper permits for it so now it's in snow country. Just over some hills. Have you ever seen snow?

BOOTS

No.

PATSY

We did, in that room, we put on coats and boots and everything.

BOOTS

That wasn't real, they had a machine that made shaved ice and another machine that took the ice and blew it into the air so it fell down over us.

PATSY

That's exactly what snow is like.

ACTIVIST #1

I don't want to frighten you but there are others coming for you.

ACTIVIST #2

They are coming to take you back to the line

ACTIVIST #1

Your place has been saved for you, all these years

ACTIVIST #2

They are panicked about the burning and they have decided

ACTIVIST #1

That love cannot interfere with the proper functioning of the economy

ACTIVIST #2

And that it was not precisely love anyway

ACTIVIST #1

And so little is lost by dismantling it

ACTIVIST #2

Years ago you told us you loved her, you refused to come with us

ACTIVIST #1

It is our experience that time changes this

ACTIVIST #2

The assembly line is being cleaned off, the rust sloughed off, the blades polished

ACTIVIST #1

So what will it be

ACTIVIST #2

Snow country?

ACTIVIST #1

Or the line?

They look to BOOTS for their answer. A brief silence.

BOOTS

I'd like to see snow.

PATSY

I said I regret you entirely but I didn't mean it, really.

BOOTS

I'll pretend not to have heard.

PATSY

Were we kind to each other? Most of the time?

BOOTS doesn't answer.

PATSY

You should take my boots, they'll help you through the snow.

BOOTS

On the TV they're still talking about how food is made.

BOOTS gives PATSY the remote.

BOOTS

Everyone sees something different in the light of the other worlds. I see myself talking into the camera like a newscaster while people I remember walk by in the background. They won't stop when I talk to them, they rush away to the rest of their lives. What do you see, Patsy?

BOOTS goes with the ALIEN ACTIVISTS.

PATSY, alone, channel-surfs. She sees a flash of something she clearly doesn't want to, and changes the channel. A moment. She carefully changes it back. She watches.

Light spills from the TV and changes the world.

PATSY leans forward into the otherworldly light.

PATSY

Impossible. Impossible.

The otherworldly light transforms the room into—

A WORLD THAT IS HAPPENING ON TV

The world that is happening on TV is bathed in a different kind of light than the world outside TV. It is not, however, actually on a screen. It takes up all of the space there is and does not have a visible frame around it.

All the speakers—the Maries, the Pirates, and the Goats—live inside this TV. They are trying to talk to one another, across channels.

the maries

the pirates

the goats

Even if we burn down all the barns they will build new barns.

New barns that are bigger.

New barns that are stronger.

New barns with superior stacking capabilities.

All the world will be barns.

I like this new society we are creating. It gives me hope.

At the beginning of every new society there is hope.

But the hope sours?

I too have a hard life. Why does no one think about the hard life that I have had?

Describe the hard life that you have had.

The hope always sours. There is never enough hope to go around and soon someone asks for more and is refused.

I am never in a room alone. I never have any privacy. In private I am still Marie, I cannot escape from being Marie.

Also at night I am tormented by my growing body. It is either a baby or the rich food I have eaten.

Perhaps if we propose barns with a skylight so we may see the sky.

Perhaps if we proposed that there be dark curtains hung between the end of the line and the line that is moving.

If no one can see the end of the line there will be less anticipation. There will be less fright. We will have better lives.

In my new society there will be enough hope to go around.

In many villages they do not have rich food to eat. In fact many villages do not have food at all.

That is sad. But in the villages do they have privacy?

Boots. What do you think?

You have been free for many years. What have you seen that we have not seen?

I –

I will create enough hope to
go around.

In the villages do they live
with the weight of the future
remembering them? Badly or
well?

No one knows who they are
in the villages.

You must speak quickly, the
line is moving.

What happens at the end of
the line?

You know what happens at
the end of the line. Surely you
have not forgotten.

I think this hope is love.

For God's sake.

It sounds naïve but this hope
is love.

You're embarrassing me.

I am in constant despair. My
despair could fill many
villages.

But this love cannot be
diffuse. If it is spread out
among too many objects it is
lost. Therefore we must
concentrate it in a single
object.

I have not forgotten. But I did
not want to come back here.

Traitor!

You have fucked the
butchers.

You have loved the butchers.

I may be rich but I am also
unhappy.

Why is Marie unhappy?

She has many babies. As they
go through her body they pull
it apart with their baby hands.

Why does Marie get to be a
person? Why does Marie get
to have a body?

Only one. I only loved – I
know how this sounds but if
you know how it felt you
might understand.

A single object that all
through your life you must
love above any other.

What about the price of flour,
Marie? The price of bread?

I am having children. I am
buying dresses made entirely
out of mother-of-pearl. I am
building a village away from
everything else that crowds
my mind.

You were given a chance to
leave her and you said no.
Explain this love to us.

We are dying while you were
loving.

I am not the one killing you.

We are dying anyway while
you were loving the ones who
kill us.

That isn't how – I cannot
think about it that way.

This object will be chosen for
you in advance. Not in its
particulars but in its form.

Marie you are nonchalant
about the price of bread.
Marie you are mourning the
death of your child. Marie
you are playing peasant in a
false village built with the
money that belongs to the
people.

What are you, Marie?

Tell us then. How you think
about it.

I – I can still see her, asleep
next to me, as I choose her
but do not know why I am
choosing her. Why do I
choose her? It cannot be any
other way. When our eyes
met on the line and she
brought me home, she gave
me a book to read. She
noticed me squint and had
glasses made. In gratitude I
would clean her boots. I
cannot explain it. I cannot
explain it. I love her.

You cannot explain it.

You cannot explain it.

If you cleaned her boots you
must have seen our blood on
the soles.

I must have.

As you hosed down the soles
you must have seen our tiny
hairs rinse down the drain.

I picked tiny hairs out of the
drain.

You cannot explain your love
without desecrating the love.
If you are able to explain it
you will be able to undo it.
And you must not be able to
undo it.

What does the love conceal?

But *you* are not Marie. You
with your belt of knives and
your bloodied rubber boots.

I have given my body to the
work and I have given my
body to the home.

My body has been home for
too many other bodies.

You are a traitor.

I feel sorry for you. Even
though you betray us.

I did not think about it. I
could not think about it.

What is this love loyal to?

My body has created other
bodies and my body has
destroyed other bodies.

The line is moving.

Someone should stop the line.

With many bodies we can
stop the line.

What does this love do to the
body?

I do not want to live in this
body any longer.

With many bodies we can
stop the line. With many
bodies there will not be room
for the knives to move.

I do not want my knives.

I do not want my babies.

What happens after the line
stops?

We will be free.

I want to be free from
destroying.

And after that?

I want to be free from
creating.

For whom was this love
invented?

A collective breath. Then, beginning slowly but accelerating in
tempo and speed, until there is barely time to breathe:

What do you want?

What do I want?

Do you know your truest
desire?

How can you find it, if you've
never known what desire is?

What are you afraid of?

Where do babies come from?

What is an economy?

Does [*indecipherable*] work,
as a way of keeping things
from falling apart?

What is something that
works?

Which world are we in now?

Are you sure, has it changed?

How do you tell?

Are you ready for what is to
come?

Are you ready for what is to
come?

Are you ready for what is to
come?

The otherworldly light transforms the room into—

END OF PLAY

appendix

further notes on the choral sections

the choral sections are written to be performed by between four to six speakers.

a speaker can be an actor or a design element. for instance, an Instant Pot may be assigned lines in the Pirate chorus. for instance, the Goats on TV may speak through a public address system. these suggestions should not be taken as prescriptive or as limitations for how the choral lines are to be performed.

possible casting (for 6 actors)

1. BOOTS / GOAT: 20s, nonbinary performer preferred but men also acceptable
2. PATSY / MARIE / PIRATE: 30s, woman
3. MONET / ALIEN ACTIVIST #1 / GOAT / PIRATE: 20s, any gender
4. MONIKA / MARIE / ALIEN ACTIVIST #2 / GOAT: 50s, woman
5. GOAT / PIRATE / MARIE: any age, any gender
6. PIRATE / GOAT / MARIE / BABY: any age, any gender

Roles are listed in order of priority—

for instance:

In the two scenes where the Pirates, Goats, and Maries are all present,
actor #6 will play a Pirate,
#5 will play a Goat,
and #4 will play a Marie.

In Pirate-only scenes, actors #2, #3, #5 and #6 can be Pirates.

In Goat-only scenes, actors #1, #3, #4, #5, and #6 can be Goats.

Roles listed are possibilities, meaning that the number of Pirates and Goats can vary (although there should be no fewer than four and no more than six).