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Deadheading Roses
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More Great Plays Available
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Cockfighters by Johnna Adams

5 Males, 2 Females

Synopsis: COCKFIGHTERS takes place in a lonely West Texas town where vengeance and violence come more naturally to the Fowler family than to the gamecocks they fight.

Deadline by Chris Dickerson

13 Males, 2 Females

Synopsis: Vietnam, late summer 1968. An international crew of war correspondents covers the bloody conflict from their headquarters in Saigon's Hotel Continental. As the death toll mounts and the war grinds on, "Deadline" examines the question of what's the news – and how we, the public, are NOT told what is the true story.

True Genius by David Holstein

3 Males, 2 Females

Synopsis: True Genius tells the unfolding story of a boy genius named Scooter who also happens to be a pathological liar. As Scooter falls in love with another pathological liar named Lila, and an eccentric psychologist pries at his past, Scooter's bizarre family history begins to unravel and he comes to question everything his mother has led him to believe is real. In the end, we're forced to ask, "Is Scooter crazy?" Or is his love for Lila breaking through to his sanity? Is she curing him? Or worse, is she not even there?

Deadheading Roses

By

Chris Cragin

CHARACTERS

- JOHNNY A tall, thin woman ranging from mid forties to early twenties. She has very long blonde hair down to her waist that is unkept and a little wild.
- WILL A large, muscular man ranging from age 17 to late thirties. Johnny's husband.
- JILL A muscular woman in her thirties.
- MOMMA Johnny's mother. Her age ranges between mid-twenties and mid-fifties.

SCENERY

The location on stage shifts quickly and seamlessly between various settings. These shift should be made primarily through lighting and sound effects. For example, the scenes in the desert can be designated with hot, harsh, yellow light both on the actors and on the ground. The shifts into the rose garden can be suggested with colorful lights, both moving and/or stationary. The shifts into the riverside can be suggested through the sound of a river and tree gobos, etc.

Deadheading Roses was originally produced at The Lamb's Theatre in New York City, September 2006. It was directed by Steven Day. Set Design by Andreea Mincic, Light Design by Robert Bradley, Costume Design by Amy Kitzhaber, Sound Design by Mat Bussler. The production was stage managed by Michael Mele.

The cast was as follows:

Heather Massie as JOHNNY
Mike LaVoie as WILL
Kate Ash as JILL
Leigh Carlson as MOMMA

ACT I

(At lights up Johnny, in her early forties and wearing jeans and a lose blouse, sits on a pile of rubble in the middle of an open desert. The rubble consists of large stones and broken pieces of wood, the remnants of an old dried up well. It is blistering hot and Johnny is sunburnt and dehydrated. In Johnny's hands is a jar with a fish inside. She holds it up close to her face, humming a lullaby. After studying the fish for a moment, she slowly begins to lower the jar to the ground. She stops halfway down, frozen, watching the fish, still humming. After another moment she slowly lowers it the rest of the way down. She sets it gently on the ground. She stops humming. Then, holding her breath, she slowly removes her hands. As soon as she does...)

JOHNNY: Damn you Hagar! I cannot do this all day! It don't make any sense that you sleep just fine while I'm holding you but the minute I let go of the jar you go crazy!...Because you *need to sleep* that's why!...well don't. Don't worry about me. I've survived worse. *(Holding the jar up to her face.)* Now look at me. I *know* you're dead tired. What're you 'fraid of? I promise I will not go wandering off and leave you here alone. . . and I won't do that either! My God Hagar! What, do you think I am some sort of lunatic?! I am *not* a lunatic. If anyone's a lunatic *he* is *not* me. . . awe, just forget it then.

(She puts the jar down in an angry gesture and turns away from the fish. She looks back over her shoulder at Hagar.)

JOHNNY: Will you STOP STARING AT ME like that!. . . What do you mean what are we gonna do now? . . . No. I'm not. Go'in. Back. *(Beat.)* Whadaya mean where *are* we goin'then? *(Looking around the vast emptiness.)* Right here. . . Yes, I know there's nothin' here. I'm not blind Hagar. . . Because we're meeting somebody. Who? . . . I'm not telling you who. . . . because if I did you wouldn't believe me anyway. . . When? *(Looking up to the sky)* When we least expect it.

(She takes a deep breath and looks at the desert around her, listening to the sound of the gentle wind.)

JOHNNY: It's so strange, sitting in this place again after. . .how many years? *(realizing)* My God, twenty years exactly! Could it really be?

(She looks back at the well, then, as if drawn, moves slowly toward it, carrying the fish jar. She looks inside, peering over the edge. A gust of wind. She picks up a rock and throws it into the well. The sound of it hitting a dry surface. She waits. Nothing happens. She sits on the ground, her back to the well. A breeze. She closes her eyes for a moment. Then suddenly opens them, looking down at the fish jar.)

JOHNNY: What!? What's wrong!? . . . You're hungry?! How can you even think of eating in this heat! Alright alright alright I'll get your fishy food.

(She stands, a quick dizzy spell, she steadies herself, and exits. The fish is alone on the stage. The lights on the stage begin to narrow until they are focused in a spotlight on the fish jar.)

(WILL enters--seventeen years old, tall, broad shouldered, blonde hair, very masculine, cute and charming. He looks around, crosses to Hagar, picks up the jar, and takes a swig. Johnny re-enters with the fish food. She sees WILL and stops in her tracks. His back is to her. She shakes her head, thinking it is a mirage. He's still there. He goes for another swig of the fish water. Johnny yells out to stop him from across the stage.)

JOHNNY: What the hell do you think you are doing?!

(He jumps, startled.)

WILL: Shit! What are you thinkin creeping/ up on me like—

JOHNNY: Put it down you dirty bastard!

WILL: I'm thirsty!

JOHNNY: I said PUT IT DOWN!

(She crosses to him and grabs the jar.)

WILL: Geez! TAKE IT THEN!

(He pushes her off of him and offers her the jar. Beat. She doesn't take it, she is too stunned at how young he looks.)

WILL: What? You don't want it now? Ain't that just typical!

(He sets the jar down.)

JOHNNY: How. . .how did you get here? What's going on?

WILL: All I know is some girl I barely know just started yelling at me for no reason like I was killing her best friend or something!

JOHNNY: Because you're drinking my—

WILL: I didn't know you were so protective of your booze! Geez! I guarantee it *won't* happen again!

(She stares at him intently.)

WILL: Are you trippin or somethin?!

JOHNNY: Did you just say. . . some girl I barely know. . . ?

(He starts to laugh.)

JOHNNY: What . . . what are you laughing at?

WILL: You! You look like you've seen a ghost!

JOHNNY: I'm. . . kinda feeling like I am.

WILL: Weeelll. . .*(looking for the ghost)* I don't see no ghost no where. *(Yelling off stage)* JIMMY YOU SEEN ANY GHOSTS ANYWHERE? *(No answer)* Either he's too busy with Relda or the ghost got 'im. *(Laughing at his own joke.)*

JOHNNY: What are you doing here Will?

WILL: I know you probably don't remember. . . but see, my buddy Jimmy ran off with your girlfriend Relda. And so I'm stuck here with your crackhead until they get—

JOHNNY: I ain't a crackhead!

WILL: Oh yea? What's that in that fish food can then?

JOHNNY: Fish food!

WILL: Fish food. Right. And what the hell are you carryin' around fish food for?

JOHNNY: For my fish!

WILL: Come on. . .you got weed in there don't cha?

JOHNNY: No!

WILL: Chew then. It's okay. I like a girl that's not afraid to chew with the boys.

JOHNNY: I said it was—

WILL: *(grabbing the fish food jar from her.)* Guess I'll have to find out for myself.

JOHNNY: Hey! What are you. . . Give it back! That's all I've—

(Will pours some of the fish food in his mouth and starts chewing. Gross! He spits it out, disgusted.)

JOHNNY: I told you!

(She bends down to scoop up what he spit out and put it back in the fish food jar.)

WILL: Eh! *(spitting)* Aw man! That is the most disgusting chew I have ever . . . and you. . .you are the weirdest girl I--

JOHNNY: Then why don't you just go away and leave me alone!

WILL: I can't.

JOHNNY: Why not?

WILL: Because Jimmy and Relda took my truck! How the hell many times I gotta. . . aw geez.

(He sits on the ground, resigned. She studies him.)

JOHNNY: How old are you?

(He looks at her like she's lost her mind.)

JOHNNY: Right now. This minute. How old?

WILL: This minute? Well I don't exactly know right down to the—

JOHNNY: Just tell me your age Will!

WILL: I'm ssss. . . twenty-one. You?

JOHNNY: Twenty-one huh? *(She laughs.)*

WILL: What's so funny?

JOHNNY: What's so funny? What's so. . .if you're twenty-one I must be. . .*(a dizzy spell)* seriously dehydrated.

WILL: I am twenty-one. Whether you believe it or not. *(Beat.)* Alright look. I'm sorry for. . . for drinkin' your beer without asking. I got some beer in my cooler cross the street. You want me to. . . *(He looks up at her, she's still staring at him)* Maybe that's not such a good idea. *(Beat.)* Maybe we should go looking for them.

JOHNNY: Who?

WILL: Jimmy and Relda! Aw, forget it.

(Beat.)

JOHNNY: You look good Will.

WILL: *(Smiling, he thinks she's flirting with him)* Well thanks . . . so do you. . .

JOHNNY: . . . Johnny

WILL: . . . Johnny. I knew that. . . hey what do you say you and I get out of this place instead of waiting around for those two to show up?

JOHNNY: I . . .

WILL: Come on, I'm a nice guy. I won't do nothin', I guarantee.

JOHNNY: I don't think I can. . .

WILL: Sure. Nevermind. (*Beat.*) Can you at least give me a ride home?

JOHNNY: Why?

WILL: BECAUSE JIMMY AND RELDA—

JOHNNY: TOOK YOUR TRUCK! I REMEMBER WILL YOU DON'T HAVE TO YELL AT ME ABOUT IT! (*Beat.*) You know that's got to be one of the stupidest things you ever done, giving Jimmy Sanchez the keys to your new Ford—

WILL: I didn't give him the keys. He just took them.

JOHNNY: As high as he gets you're lucky if you get it back in one piece!

WILL: Alright now, you gonna give me a ride or not? Because I'm not gonna sit here and listen to you—

JOHNNY: What are you gonna do? Walk home? Hitch hike?

WILL: Maybe I will! Or maybe I'll just take *your* truck. Shouldn't be too hard in the condition you're in!

JOHNNY: (*Throwing him the keys.*) Go ahead. Take it.

WILL: What? . . . Fine then I will!

(*He stomps off stage, a beat, he returns.*)

WILL: I can't do that.

JOHNNY: Why not?

WILL: Because I can't just leave you stranded out here!

JOHNNY: Since when?

WILL: Look, why don't you let me drive you home?

JOHNNY: I'm not going home.

WILL: *(Sighs.)* Are you in some kinda trouble? Look, you can tell me if you are, I've been in plenty myself. Why don't you just come down to the river with me? I got all the Little Debbie snacks we could want. It's great talkin' food. I guarantee you won't regret it.

JOHNNY: Why should I trust you?

WILL: *(smiling)* You probably shouldn't. But look, it's a beautiful night. Just look at the stars! Have you ever seen so many? Be honest!

(Johnny sighs.)

WILL: I'll take that as a yes! I'll just go grab my cooler. Don't you go running off on me too now ya hear?

(He runs offstage. Johnny watches as the lights begin to change back to the desert.)

JOHNNY: . . .and that's the way it all started . . .

(Suddenly she runs to Hagar's jar and picks it up, holding it close to her face again.)

JOHNNY: Did you see that Hagar? . . . See! I told you I'm not crazy! How do ya think that coulda happened? I mean. . . is there some kinda time portal out here or . . .or. . . *(she gasps, whispering)* Hagar, do you think we're dead?

(She looks around, then wipes the sweat off her neck, she tastes it.)

JOHNNY: We're not dead. . . Because dead people don't sweat. . . What do you mean why did I go with him in the first place? What was I supposed to do? His truck was stolen. He didn't have any way to get home. *(Beat.)* Hey hagar, do ya think we're hallucinating about the same thing? Can that happen? . . . You know, I'd almost forgotten about the part where he lied about his age. *(laughing.)* Twenty-one years old he told me. And I believed him! What an idiot! I wonder if I'd known he was only seventeen. . .

(She coughs, then harder and harder until she is gasping from dehydration. She reaches across to the fish jar and goes to drink, but stops herself.)

JOHNNY: What am I doing?!

(She puts down the jar and slumps to the floor to wait out the coughing fit. It subsides. Exhausted, She looks up at the sky.)

JOHNNY: You ever heard a voice Hagar? Not like your conscience, a real one. Outside you. *(Beat.)* Maybe you will soon.

(She touches the sand, runs her finger through it.)

JOHNNY: This is sacred ground Hagar. It was out of this dry sand that I found my rose garden. And I believe that something wonderful is going to happen for us here again, if we just wait long enough.

(She takes a fistful of the sand in her hand and lets it fall on top of her body. As she does, lights change from dry yellow to bursts of swirling color and a handful of rose petals fall from the sky. She stands and looks at the beauty around her. Jill enters carrying a clipboard.)

JILL: It's pretty great but it's certainly not THAT great. Hi. Jill Walker. I've been waiting for you to arrive. So you like it?

JOHNNY: It's beautiful.

JILL: You have an imaginative eye. That's nice. I used to keep this place up real good but since I've been promoted I just don't have time for it anymore.

(Johnny turns to face Jill, still speechless.)

JILL: Are you ready to start the interview or do you need a minute?

JOHNNY: I'm ready. . .

JILL: Because I've got a whole list of questions here. . .

JOHNNY: I'm ready.

JILL: Alright then. Lets see what we've got here. (*Looking at the papers on the clip board.*) Name, social, address, um hmmm. Um hmm. Yep. Good. Oh. You didn't give a phone number.

JOHNNY: I don't have one.

JILL: Just got to town huh? No problems. Just get it to us as soon as you get your line hooked up. Lets see. Worked in your grandmother's garden as a child then your mother's until you graduated high school. That's cute. Worked in a nursery in Arizona. . .what kind of nursery?

JOHNNY: Just a local one where all the people in the town come to buy plants for their gardens.

JILL: And you were there seven years? How old are you?

JOHNNY: Uh. . .(*thinking back*) Twenty-nine.

JILL: Good Lord! You're as old as I am! I'd have guessed you were nineteen.

JOHNNY: I get that a lot.

JILL: And I'll hate you for that, just warning. You have children?

JOHNNY: No. I've got animals though. And Will.

JILL: What kind of animals?

JOHNNY: Oh you know, the normal ones, dogs, cats, birds, bunnies, fish, ferrets . . .

JILL: Good Lord! I bet you have your own garden too. You're a regular Snow White aren't you? Did this nursery you worked for send you to horticulture school or anything?

JOHNNY: No ma'am. My training is hands on. No college degree or nothin'. But my momma always said I had a green thumb.

JILL: Well damn. I'm sorry, this job requires a college degree.

JOHNNY: But I know a lot about taking care of . . .

JILL: I have not doubt that you do. But the job requirements are very clear and believe me, I get in enough trouble without--

JOHNNY: Ask me a question about the garden and see if I can answer it.

JILL: Sounds fun but--

JOHNNY: You have no idea how much I want this job. How much I *need* this job.

(Beat.)

JILL: Alright, why not? *(Beat)* If you were working today, Johnny, what would be your routine?

JOHNNY: *(She takes a deep breath.)* Well, it's gonna get hot today, *(closing her eyes and remembering)* I felt it in the air when I woke up this morning because we left the windows rolled down when we were sleep *(stopping herself)*. . . So I would have started early in the morning before the sun came up to water the roses while it was still cool. And I would see the sun come up over there *(pointing)* and I would watch the roses lift their heads towards its light. After I'd watered all the beds, I'd check the mulch. I'd put my hands down in it, feel its moisture, help it breathe. See how deep it goes. I like the mulch to be real deep. See the mulch is the roses' best protection against everything, too much rain, not enough rain, heat, cold, snow, it protects the roots and keeps them alive. Then I'd check the blooms. The petals first, for bugs or disease the way a doctor looks in the throat of a sick child. If there are sores on the blooms they need to be sprayed. Kill the things that are attacking them. Then I'd start the deadheading. That has to be done before--

JILL: That's good Johnny. *(She studies Johnny.)* You know, you're awful skinny. This job requires a lot of hauling soil and mulch and. . .

JOHNNY: I'm stronger than I look.

JILL: There aren't any men around who can carry it for you.

JOHNNY: That's fine.

JILL: You say that now but--

JOHNNY: Ms. Walker I promise I will take care of your garden. And I don't go back on my promises to *any* living thing.

(*JILL goes back to reading JOHNNY's application. She laughs.*)

JOHNNY: What?

JILL: Nature. Under "job applying for" you wrote "nature."

JOHNNY: Well, that's the kind of job I wanted.

JILL: It's just that normally people put the *position* they are—

JOHNNY: I didn't know if any were available.

JILL: You didn't?

JOHNNY: No.

JILL: Didn't you tell the woman at the desk you were applying for the job at the rose garden?

JOHNNY: No.

JILL: Well how did this get on my desk then?

JOHNNY: I don't know. Maybe someone figured I was the one for the job.

JILL: Ah shit. I'm gonna get in a hell of a lot of trouble for this. Alright look, we can't offer you much pay. Actually the pay is terrible.

JOHNNY: It's perfect! Thank you!

JILL: It's not even salary. An hourly wage.

JOHNNY: It doesn't matter. I love it!

JILL: Well alright then. Let's get you started six a.m. Monday morning. We'll get your paperwork filled out in the afternoon when the sun is hottest. (*She stands.*) It was nice to meet you Johnny.

JOHNNY: I can't never thank you enough for this.

JILL: Don't thank me yet. You may change your mind when you realize what you've taken on here. But I'm glad to have you on board Johnny.

(JILL exits. As she does, the lights transition back to the desert. Johnny looks around her at the sky, then at the ground where the colored paper fell on the sand. With the light change, the pieces of color now look brown, but they are still there. She reaches down to touch them, scared if she does they will disappear. She touches one, it's still there. She picks it up. She gathers them all and holds them carefully in her hand.)

JOHNNY: *(whispering)* See Hagar? It happened just like the voice said. The rose garden. It was my miracle.

(Suddenly with renewed hope, she begins to take the stones and rebuild the well. As she works, she hums the tune to the hymn "Up From the Grave He Arose." When she gets to the chorus, she sings. . .)

JOHNNY: He arose! He arose! Hallelujah! Christ Arose! That is my favorite Hymn Hagar. You know why? *(going back to work, more stones)* Cuz when I was a little girl, I thought it was a song about a rose. I used to sing it all day long. Until finally, one day, it occurred to me what a silly song it was. And I marched right up to my Momma, and I said to her, "Momma, what is that rose doin' in the gravy?" Momma looked at me like I was talking Chinese. So I asked her again, "In the song, Momma, what is that rose doin' in the gravy?" She looked at me, still nothin. So I started singin. "Up from the gravy a rose!" And she just started laughin. She was laughin so hard she couldn't talk. Until finally she got out, "Johnny, there's ain't no rose in the gravy! That song is about Jesus! Jesus *arose!*" It wasn't till years later I understood what she was saying. For the longest time, I thought she was telling me that Jesus, was a rose.

MOMMA'S VOICE: Johnny!

JOHNNY: *(whisper)* Momma?

(Johnny looks for Momma, but she's not there, she goes back to building. After a beat, Momma appears.)

MOMMA: Johnny where have you...(sees Johnny) You mean to tell me I've been lookin' for you all this time, callin' your name as loud as I can, and you've just been sittin' here playing with rocks!?

JOHNNY: (*confused*) You mean. . . you can see them?

MOMMA: Of course I can see them! I'm not blind am I? Now put down those rocks and come home.

(*Johnny doesn't move.*)

MOMMA: I'm countin' to three. One. . .

JOHNNY: I can't.

MOMMA: two. . .

JOHNNY: I can't come home with you!

MOMMA: Why? You lost your legs? Misplaced them somewhere?

JOHNNY: I'm not leavin this place until--

MOMMA: You have responsibilities Johnny. And I aim to see that--

JOHNNY: He's not my responsibility anymore.

MOMMA: He most certainly is!

JOHNNY: He doesn't want me Momma!

MOMMA: What difference does that make?! This isn't about *you* Johnny. This is about a commitment you made to a living being! (*Pulling her up off the ground.*) Now get your lazy butt up off that ground and go—

JOHNNY: Momma stop!

MOMMA: You just remember how you begged and begged me for this! I said you were too young but you insisted that you were not a little girl anymore! That you could handle it.

JOHNNY: It's not that Momma!

MOMMA: Well then what is it? What is it? Because he is almost *sick* waitin' for you honey. He depends on you. Who's going to take care of him if you don't? (*Beat.*) Johnny don't you love him anymore? (*Beat.*) Good Lord Johnny! It's not like I'm askin' you to sacrifice your soul! But Blacky has to be fed! You know that. He's *your* dog and *you* have to take care of him!

JOHNNY: Blacky?

MOMMA: Who else would I. . .where is your brain child?

(*Johnny stares at Momma, confused.*)

MOMMA: It looks like it's about time you and I have a little talk about something. . . somethin' real important. (*Sitting.*) Alright. Johnny, you remember that pretty picture you painted me for my birthday last year? You remember how special it was to you and me? How proud you were because you came up with it all by yourself? Have you ever seen that place before? In real life?

JOHNNY: No.

MOMMA: That's right. You created it. And that makes it special. Everything that lives on this earth God created just like you made that picture. It came out of His imagination and he's proud of what He done. Now, how would you feel if someone tore up your picture and threw it in the trash? Don't you think it hurts God's feelings when we don't take care of the pretty things He created too?

JOHNNY: What if I die? Who will take care of him then?

MOMMA: I would of course, but until then. . .

JOHNNY: What if you couldn't either?

MOMMA: Then God would take care of him, honey.

JOHNNY: How do you *know*?

MOMMA: Come here, Johnny.

(*Johnny goes close to Momma.*)

MOMMA: Do you see this rose bush here?

(Slowly, a glowing red light comes up in the spot she is pointing.)

JOHNNY: *(whispers)* Yes.

MOMMA: You see the pretty red blooms? If these blooms come out too early they won't get enough sun and if they come out too late it'll be too cold for them to survive. How do you think they know when it's time to come?

JOHNNY: I don't know.

MOMMA: Neither does anyone else. But somehow, they know. *(Seeing a raven flying above them.)* Johnny! Look up! You see that raven?

JOHNNY: No.

MOMMA: Look real hard. Way up there.

(As Johnny looks, the raven appears it can be created with shadow effect, or a sound effect.)

JOHNNY: Yeah!

MOMMA: Did you know that ravens have been known to fly twenty thousand feet into the air? If you or I or any other animals or birds were to go that high we'd die because the air's too thin for us to breathe. How do you think those ravens breathe way up there?

JOHNNY: Special lungs?

MOMMA: Nope. Their lungs are just the same as other birds their size.

JOHNNY: Special blood?

MOMMA: Nope. Same blood too.

JOHNNY: How?

MOMMA: Nobody knows how they fly that high. They just do. Pretty amazing huh?

JOHNNY: Yeah.

MOMMA: Do you see what I'm gettin' at honey? God will always take care of what is his, but sometimes he wants us to participate in the caring. Because He wants us to love it as much as he does. *(Beat.)* I'll tell you what Johnny, I'll make you a deal. I'll feed Blacky for you today, if you wanna sit out here alone and think about this some more. But only today. You understand?

JOHNNY: I understand.

(Momma kisses Johnny on the forehead)

MOMMA: Alright Blacky! Quit your howlin!

(Momma exits.)

JOHNNY: What if you are wrong Momma? What if everything we believed was just somebody's imagination? Make believe? And somewhere along the way. . . we just started believing it too much?

(As WILL—seventeen again—enters dragging a cooler and with a blanket under his arm, the space transforms into a riverbank.)

WILL: Alright. Here. This is a real nice spot.

(He spreads out the blanket and puts the cooler beside it. He opens the cooler and takes out two beers and some nutty bars. He sits on the blanket and opens his beer. He drinks. He looks at JOHNNY who is still sitting where she was.)

WILL: You gonna stay over there or you wanna come over here and have a beer with me?

JOHNNY: I don't really like beer.

WILL: Oh. Wul, you gotta at least like nutty bars.

JOHNNY: Sure. I guess.

WILL: Catch.

(He throws her a nutty bar. She catches it. She examines it closely, it seems so real. She takes a bite.)

WILL: *(watching her examine it)* Been awhile since you had one?

JOHNNY: *(staring at the nutty bar)* Are you ever afraid of making a mistake that will throw your entire life off course?

WILL: No. Not really. I know exactly what I wanna do with my life.

JOHNNY: You do. And what is that?

WILL: I'm gonna work in construction, you know, start at the bottom and work my way up to the top. Someday I'm gonna have my own construction company. My dad had just taken out a loan to buy his own company when he died.

JOHNNY: It never worked out. I'm sorry.

WILL: Yeah. Drunk driving accident.

JOHNNY: I hate drunk drivers.

WILL: My dad was the one who was drunk. *(He smiles at her.)* It's okay. I was only three so I hardly remember it. *(Beat.)* What about you? What do you wanna do with your life?

JOHNNY: I want to work with nature.

WILL: Nature? Cool. I like nature.

JOHNNY: What do you like about it?

WILL: I donno. That it's unpredictable I guess.

JOHNNY: Not plants.

WILL: Sometimes. Like when a freeze hits.

JOHNNY: Then it's the weather that's unpredictable, not the plants. Plants will always do what they're made to do, you give them what they need, they'll grow.

WILL: It's that simple huh?

JOHNNY: It's that simple. That's what I love about it. It's a real pure kinda life plants lead. Without all the complications. Like, creation before the fall.

WILL: The fall?

JOHNNY: You know, Adam and Eve, the apple, sin.

WILL: Huh. You know, I'm glad that Relda and Jimmy took off with my truck.

JOHNNY: Why?

WILL: Because if they hadn't. . . we never woulda. . .

(He kisses her. She lets him. Beat. A car horn honks.)

WILL: And there they are! I can tell the sound of that horn anywhere. Wait here, I'll be right back.

(WILL exits. Transformation back to the desert.)

JOHNNY: I know what you're going to say so don't say it! . . . Maybe I should have sent him away. . . shouldn't have let him kiss me. . . But what's the point? It's already happened! I can't change it now. . . What do you mean what if I can? It's not real Hagar. . . Yes I could taste the nutty bar. . . You actually think that if I hadn't kissed him just now that somehow my life would be different?.. . Then I am not the crazy one here Hagar, you are! . . . What *about* the voice? Yes! I heard one last time I was here but that was twenty years ago. . . I said it was sacred! Not magic! There's a difference!. . . The difference is. . . the difference is. . .that I don't know what's real anymore Hagar. That's the difference. *(Beat.)* Maybe I didn't hear a voice. Maybe I just. . .made a mistake.

(A dizzy spell. Johnny shakes her head, she breathes deeply, she bends over, carefully lowering herself to the ground.)

JOHNNY: No Hagar, I am not drinking your. . . BECAUSE YOU NEED IT! STOP SAYING THAT! I AM NOT KILLING MYSELF! . . . Hagar? Are you crying? . . .Stop crying. . . STOP CRYING! If I drink a sip will you promise to stop crying? . . . Okay.

(She opens the jar, and takes a small drink.)

JOHNNY: Now that's all. *(Beat.)* Phew! I'd forgotten how powerful the sun is out here. The feel of it burnin on your skin and meltin your clothes so that they become part of your flesh almost. *(Beat. She whispers.)* And the sand. . .

(She lays down in the sand. The wind picks up again.)

JOHNNY: You know, if I'm wrong, and we die here, I believe the sand will just blow around us and cover us up. Take us in.

(Johnny drifts off to sleep. She drops the jar, the water begins to leak out the air holes. Johnny jerks awake.)

JOHNNY: Oh my God! Oh my God! Hagar! *(Grabbing for the jar.)* I'm so sorry! How could I be so careless! . . . It's okay. I got you now. . . It's okay.

(Johnny looks at the spot where the water landed, slowly, the wet spot becomes a spot of color, the color grows until the space is transformed back to the rose garden. Jill enters, as she does there is the sound of birds flying away.)

JILL: *(referring to the fish jar in her hand)* First time I actually come by to check on you while you're working and I find you drinkin' on the job. *(She laughs. Johnny does not.)* That was a joke. Pretty hot today, huh?

JOHNNY: Pretty hot.

JILL: The garden looks great.

JOHNNY: Thanks.

JILL: The stories are true.

JOHNNY: Stories?

JILL: All the guys on the crew have been talking about you. About how the birds in the park follow you around while you work. Like that magic boy from the Secret Garden.

JOHNNY: It's just because I feed them is all.

JILL: I fed them, and all they ever did was poop on me. Look at this place. Two weeks in your care and it's more beautiful than I've ever seen it. You have a gift. (*Deliberately.*) How is Will? He found a job yet?

JOHNNY: Not yet.

JILL: He's in construction right? My husband is a foreman for a local construction company. Tell Will to give him a call. Maybe he can help get him on.

JOHNNY: Thank you.

JILL: You're welcome. (*Beat.*) You got family here?

JOHNNY: Not really.

JILL: Where's your kin?

JOHNNY: Arkansas.

JILL: You're along way from home.

JOHNNY: We needed to get away. . . start over.

JILL: The reason I'm askin is just that, if I'm gonna tell my husband to hire Will, I just wanna make sure I'm not makin' a mistake, you know. He's had some problems with guys on his crew, drugs mostly. I don't want to add to his problems *or* yours.

JOHNNY: Don't worry about Will. He's clean now.

JILL: That's good to hear. (*Beat.*) Alright then. I'll see you tomorrow Johnny.

(Jill exits. The room transforms back to the desert. Johnny looks down at Hagar asleep in her jar, which is now only half full.)

JOHNNY: Hagar wake up. (*tapping on the jar.*) Hagar. Wake up! I need you to keep me awake.. . Because if I fall asleep I will drop you again! (*Pause.*) You think the others are okay? (Cont.)

JOHNNY (Cont'd): Elvis and the bunnies and little bit and Blacky jr.? Sure we'll see them again. . . Someday. . . Where's heaven? You see the big yellow ball of fire that's making you cry? It's on the other side of that. But don't worry it's not burnin' hot like it is here. It's just warm all the time. And Blacky will be there waitin' for us. And he'll jump all over us and lick our faces when we get there. And we'll never be sun-burnt, and we'll always have food and water and chocolate roses. I wonder if dogs can eat chocolate in heaven? Maybe fish even! (*Beat. Smiling*) Hagar, did I ever tell you how Will proposed? What a night that was! He came and picked me up about seven I think. I was all dressed up in my pretty red calico sundress my momma made me. And when he showed up at the door. . .

(Will enters. He is dressed wearing jeans and a button down shirt, and is carrying a chocolate rose. The lights change to a beautiful sunset, which fades to night through the scene. This time, completely surrendering to the memory, Johnny puts the fish jar down and walks towards him.)

WILL: Wow. You look beautiful. Here. It's chocolate.

(He hands her the rose.)

JOHNNY: Thanks. I love chocolate.

WILL: I know.

JOHNNY: You look good too, Will.

WILL: Thanks.

JOHNNY: So. . .where're we goin'?

WILL: It's a surprise. (*He smiles.*) Come on!

(He exits running.)

JOHNNY: And we climbed up in his truck and he drove me out to the edge of town. Which didn't take very long. And he turned down this old dirt road that I'd never been down before. And it dead-ended in the middle of a magnificent construction graveyard with miles of gigantic rusting cranes and bulldozers and. . .

(Lighting change. Will re-enters with the cooler. He puts it down, then goes to Johnny and takes her hand.)

WILL: Come on!

JOHNNY: Where are we going?

WILL: See that combine there? I got something to show you in it.

(He leads her running around the space until they circle back to the cooler, which now becomes the front seat of the combine. He helps her climb up onto it, then goes around the other side and climbs onto it himself. They sit, side by side. Both in utter awe of the sight stretched out before them.)

JOHNNY: It's like a war memorial for construction machines!

WILL: Isn't it beautiful? Look at the color of the metal in the sunset. It's exactly what I always picture the golden gate bridge looks like.

JOHNNY: I never even knew this was here!

WILL: That's because it's illegal to come out here.

JOHNNY: Will! We could get arrested!

WILL: Naw, I come out here all the time.

(He pulls two brown bags from behind the cooler: peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, beer, and Little Debbie snack bars. They eat.)

JOHNNY: *(joking)* You are quite the cook.

WILL: Pretty good PB and J huh? Damn! I forgot something! Wait right here.

(He climbs down and exits.)

JOHNNY: It was the most gorgeous. . . The machines shined like gold in the sunlight. It went on as far as we could see. And I knew this was Will's way of giving a piece of himself to me.

(Will re-enters with a bouquet of wildflowers and weeds he has just picked from a patch growing in the junkyard. He climbs back into the machine.)

WILL: Here. These are for you. *(Handing them to her.)*

JOHNNY: They're pretty.

WILL: You're pretty.

(He kisses her passionately, suddenly he stops, and kneels down in front of her. He takes a simple gold band from his pocket.)

WILL: Johnny, I love you. Will you marry me?

JOHNNY: *(Smiling)* Sure, I'll marry ya.

(Laughing, she jumps forward to hug him and he loses his balance and they fall into the floor of the car. They laugh and kiss as the sun finally sets, lights fading to black, except for a spotlight on Johnny.)

JOHNNY: That was the most beautiful sunset I ever saw.

(She shivers, pulling her knees in to her chest. Light change, the moon peaks behind a cloud. Johnny sits center stage facing the audience. Will stands a few feet behind her. He looks disheveled and he stumbles. He's high on crystal-meth. He comes up behind JOHNNY quietly. He wraps his arms around her and begins to kiss her neck. She doesn't respond.)

JOHNNY: *(flatly, not looking at him.)* I made dinner. *(Beat.)* It got cold so I put it away.

WILL: It's not important. I'm not hungry.

JOHNNY: Well, you may not be hungry, but I am hungry and thirsty and tired Will, and I've been waiting for a long time for you to—

WILL: *(Still kissing her)* It's not important. Dinner is not important...food is not important. . . *(unbuttoning her blouse.)* Music. . .

(Soft classic rock music fades on in the background.)

WILL: Music is important.

JOHNNY: You're high.

WILL: What's that got to do with anything?

(She moves away from him.)

JOHNNY: It's got to do with everything. I can't do this.

WILL: What? Sex? Why? You don't think making love to your husband's important?

JOHNNY: Yes. . . I do but. . .

WILL: Sex is important! It's more important than eating and music is more important than eating so. . . we should have sex with music before—

JOHNNY: No we shouldn't.

WILL: We should!

JOHNNY: I'm leaving.

WILL: You wouldn't do that! You promised—

JOHNNY: *You* promised! You *promised* you'd stop the crystal Will!

WILL: I did!

JOHNNY: Don't lie to me!

WILL: You gonna walk out on me when I need sex?

JOHNNY: Yes.

WILL: What kind of woman are you?!

JOHNNY: A very tired woman, Will.

(JOHNNY starts to leave. Will runs and tackles her to the floor playfully, almost knocking over Hagar's jar. He is laughing. She is not.)

JOHNNY: Get off me, Will!

WILL: Come on. Why are you being such a prudish prude? Come on, let's dance.

(He gets up and pulls her to her feet and begins to dance with her.)

JOHNNY: Will, I don't want to dance right now.

WILL: What if I gave you chocolate?

JOHNNY: I don't want any.

WILL: I thought you loved chocolate. Music. . . sex. . . dancing. . . chocolate. . .

(JOHNNY pulls free.)

JOHNNY: Call me when you're sober.

(She picks up the cup and starts to leave.)

WILL: No! *(Screaming and Sobbing.)* Please don't leave me. Please don't leave me! I promise I won't do it again. Please. Honey please don't leave me.

JOHNNY: It's just for the night. Until you can think clearly and we can talk.

WILL: I'll change! I'll stop the crystal! I promise!

JOHNNY: I have to go.

WILL: I'll give you some chocolate. . . I know you love it. Don't say you don't, I know you do.

(JOHNNY stops, her back to him. She looks down at Hagar.)

JOHNNY: Don't worry Hagar, we're leaving now.

WILL: Then just take the damn fish and GO TO HELL!