

AQUARIUS DREAMING

A MOSAIC

L. FOX

H. AL KOWSI

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

ROBIN WALSER - Ex-TV Host, current Bagel Artist, future Prophet.

CARMINE SEELING - Marches to their own drummer. Robin's BFF.

LOREN MERMET - Robin's coworker and crush. Radical in every way.

EA - Assyrian river god. Flooded the world once, will do again.

AHAB - Charismatic ecoterrorist and leader of the Aquapunks.

STARBUCK, STUBB, and FLASK - Aquapunks; idiots.

NAT, BO, and BEE - The Chesapeake; singers and expositers.

ENSEMBLE - Cast of thousands.

REPORTER - Exactly that, off their shits, nonsense news.

JUDGE - Exactly that, one line.

DICK WEED - Head of the Navel Crime Investigation Squad.

WOOD CHUCK - Carpenter on the news.

ADOZEN PLAIN - Bagel maker on the news.

NARRATOR - Exactly that, for a children's show, Levar Budget.

BELA and BARTOK - Lovers on an avant garde soap opera.

RILEY - Gold Night protagonist.

SUZY and CHARLIE - ACTL protagonist.

LAURA - American Vamp protagonist.

LEMPIRA and YURITZI - Lempira protagonists.

GABE SHATKIN - Geb

PATRICK STASO - Pdraig

ARTISTIC COUNCIL 1 and 2 - Two more

SLEAZEBAG - Like Dirtbag, but sleazy

DIRTBAG - Like Sleazebag, but dirty

MUPPET - A person, but made of felt

MUPPET 2 - A puppet, but made of flesh

SMARM - Idiot with a phone

CHESSIE - Legendary Aquatic Cryptid

SINGER - Person who sings "Billy Reuben"

MC - Person who MCs

ARCHEOLOGIST - Professional messer-around-in-dirt

ACT 1

SCENE 1: OVERTURES

(Curtain opens on TV going nuts, childlike images seemingly focused on fish and the Chesapeake flashing in quick succession, all around ROBIN clearly sleeping past their alarm, then sleepily getting up and getting ready for work. Specifically, the opening to Under-Walser with Robin Walser should play, being 1.1.1.)

THE RIVER CHANGELESS

CHORUS

THOSE RESTLESS YEARS
 AND ENDLESS DAYS
 OF OPEN DOORS
 AND TIDES AT PLAY
 I HAVE NOT FOUND THAT RIVER CHANGELESS
 WHERE I'LL WASH THESE PAINS AWAY
 AND I
 MAY NEVER

(BAND mellowly pops into some opening, bass focused noodling as the images on the TV come into more central focus. The first is the news, 1.1.2.)

REPORTER

...notorious ecoterrorist, Arthur Habitat, dramatically escaped custody this afternoon during a routine facility transfer. Habitat, alias "Ahab" is under trial for a series of bombing-related arson cases in [APPROPRIATE TARGET OF MARINE ECOTERRORISM], which, in total, resulted in four dead, seven injured. He had *this* to say in court-

(AHAB stands facing an offscreen judge. WBAL news logo.)

JUDGE

...ON CHARGES OF ECOTERRORISM, DESTRUCTION OF PROPERTY, MANSLAUGHTER, THIS COURT FINDS THE DEFENDANT, ARTHUR

HABITAT, GUILTY.

(AHAB looks at the camera, resisting the efforts of the bailiff to remove him. He knows where his audience is.)

AHAB

Esteemed guests, ask yourselves. Where does spectacle live, after all? *(Pointing to head:)* In here? Or—

(Another clip, hardly any time to breathe, but here we are. A procession of watercolors illustrating a story for children, narrated, 1.1.3. ROBIN has now finished getting ready for work, and the crew/cast start transitioning to the Equal Bites set around them.)

NARRATOR

—AND THOSE SEVEN DOORS REMAINED CLOSED, BECAUSE HE HAD BEEN TOLD NOT TO OPEN THEM, AND HE WAS AN OBEDIENT SON. AND SO HE LIVED IN THE LITTLE SPACES OF THE CASTLE THAT WERE HIS, AND IN THE GREAT SEA, WHERE HIS FRIENDS, THE TEEMING FISH AND ENDLESS SHELLED THINGS, PLAYED. IT WASN'T ENOUGH, BUT IT WAS ALL HE HAD. THEN ONE DAY—

(Quick cutoff once more, a fragment more than a whole story. A TMZ style show, BROS, everyone is sitting around drinking beer with straws, 1.1.4)

SLEAZEBAG

What do we got, gang?

DIRTBAG

Remember that [person] Robin Walser, with the kids show? They were arrested for ecoterrorism.

(Brief flash of Robin's mugshot)

Said [their] name was Halyard? What's up with that?

SLEAZEBAG

More like holla-yard! God I love 2008, when nothing bad could ever happen. Let's make some really mean spirited jokes about fat women. Here's one—

(Cut off. Now, a volunteering reel, in the middle of talking about what the org does. 1.1.5.)

VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

-cipate in river cleanups with Carmine!

(Smash cut to CARMINE, in waders with a bag of trash)

CARMINE

It's because I've got a smile like hot cocoa on a cold day, alright? My mother popped me out with broad-shoulders custom-built by God Almighty for hauling trash out of rivers and it would be a shame to waste them. We're not glory-hounds, no sir! We're a public good, like rainbows and fire hydrants and three-legged puppies, me and my best bud here, Robin, we're all about-

(The Equal Bites set is fully setup and ready to go. ROBIN appears mostly asleep. LOREN is doing something useful. A procession of samples saying "Robin" plays, 1.1.5.)

SAMPLES

Robin? Rooooobin. Robin. Robin, Robin, Robin. ROOOOBIN.

LOREN

ROBIN!

ROBIN

Ah!

LOREN

Wakey wakey, flood, fire, earthquakey. Apocalypse right the hell now. It's only seven AM.

ROBIN

Urghj.

LOREN

You've always been my most verbose coworker.

ROBIN

Sorry. I've been having these weird dreams.

LOREN

Ooh, what flavor of weird? Like, your former Executive Producer is speaking to you in Danish? Or pervert dreams?

ROBIN

Ha ha. Nah. It's like. Just, lots of doors. All closed.

LOREN

It IS almost June-

ROBIN

No, you can't go from calling me a pervert to implying I'm coming out of the closet. I think that's against the Equal Bites code of conduct.

LOREN

Well, if you're going to be SENSITIVE about it-

ROBIN

I am. I choose to be sensitive about it. It is seven in the morning and I have to listen to Ani DiFranco. We have been working here for three years together and it's always Ani DiFranco.

LOREN

Be strong for me. I'm going to put on my band's new album after this order.

ROBIN

Album?

LOREN

EP.

ROBIN

EP?

LOREN

Single with a B-side.

ROBIN

There we go: the storied work ethic of Baltimore hustlers-

(ROBIN holds out a pretend mic.)

LOREN *(into the "mic")*

Introducing the latest from "Thistle Lemonade," formerly "Hot Tub Fax Machine," formerly "Death to the New Government," formerly, "Beard Grit," with (mostly) the same members as "Secretary with Maggie Gyllenhaal" back when we were playing scum-core kinkmetal, all of the above featuring the inimitable vocal stylings, bass groovings, saxophone...somethings, and lyrical poetics of Loren Ipsun. We are currently rocking out with a little alt folk-jam.

ROBIN

That sounds exhausting.

LOREN

I am, notably, very productive.

ROBIN

Let's hear it.

LOREN

Really?

ROBIN

Yes. Yeah. Yeah, of course, man.

LOREN

Oh shit! Yeah, okay, hang on, let me-

(BAND starts tuning up. LOREN pops a CD into the cafe's stereo.)

LOREN

Excuse me if I sing along. I wrote most of the words.

(During the song, ROBIN and LOREN serve customers. They do pretty good. They balance each other easily.)

EVERY SONGLOREN (*sung*)

BACK IN TWO THOUSAND TWO I WAS TEN YEARS OLD
BEFORE CELL PHONES WERE REALLY A THING
WE ALL PLAYED SANDLOT BASEBALL
OVER BY THE CREEK
BECAUSE RUDY GARCIA WAS OBSESSED

SO WE PLAYED BASEBALL TILL OUR KNUCKLES BLED
AND IN THE GRAND COURSE OF SOME FATHER'S FANTASY
WE REENACTED THE GREATEST PLAY EVER KNOWN
I WAS PLAYING FIRST BASE LIKE I ALWAYS DID
LIKE MY DAD'S FAVORITE PLAYER
STEADY EDDIE

TODD YOUNG WAS UP AT BAT
AND SAM COOPER WAS PITCHING WHEN IT HAPPENED

A SEAGULL CAME OUT OF THE BLUE
IN FRONT OF THE SCREWBALL, DESTINED FOR SECOND BASE
AND IN TRIBUTE TO OLD RANDY JOHNSON
SAM COOPER KILLED THAT BIRD LIKE THE VERY HAND OF GOD

EVERY SONG IS A SONG ABOUT LOVE
AND THIS ONE HAS BASEBALL

IN THAT SAME YEAR I KISSED TODD YOUNG IN THE CREEK
HE TASTED MORE LIKE FROG THAN HE DID LIKE PRINCE
BUT THEN I ALWAYS DID LIKE FROGS MORE THAN MONARCHISM
AND I STILL LIKE CREEKS MORE THAN BOYS

EVERY SONG IS A SONG ABOUT LOVE
AND THIS ONE HAS BASEBALL

WE BURIED THAT BIRD UNDER HOMEPLATE
WE SWORE THAT WE WOULD NEVER KILL AGAIN
WE PRETENDED WE WERE OLD AND PUT ELVIS CDS ON
AND SMOKED CLOVES LIKE THE WORLD WOULD END

EVERY SONG IS A SONG ABOUT LOVE

AND THIS ONE HAS BASEBALL

EVERY SONG IS A SONG ABOUT LOVE

(LOREN and ROBIN have ended up in some kind of sweetheart will-they-won't-they thing. They take the breath-ROBIN breaks away first-then turn back to their tasks.)

ROBIN

Wow. It's-that's really cool. Yeah. Very Mountain Goats. Did you actually play sandlot baseball?

LOREN

Oh, no, not even a little bit. I played bass in the orchestra and competed with the robotics team.

ROBIN

Do you have songs about that?

LOREN

One hundred percent. Robotics is actually a super easy thing to write detailed poetic lyrics about. You should come see our show in Canton on Friday. Super secret. I have a stack of flyers. If you want one.

ROBIN

Sure, totally, why not? I bet Carmine's already going.

LOREN

I think Carmine actually just kind of. Materializes at those shows. Love that for them. Let me get you one!

(LOREN exits as the AQUAPUNKS storm into Equal Bites at the same time. STUBB and FLASK have a heavy box between them that they set noisily on a table.)

STARBUCK

Can I get uhhhhhhh mermaid bagel with a pap schmear, chives and garlic, and an order of depo-tots.

ROBIN

(Not taking the order at all.)

Uh huh. You want anything to drink with that, Starbucks? A grande frappuccino with extra whipped cream, maybe?

STARBUCK

(Seething.)

You KNOW it's StarBUCK, Robbie.

ROBIN

What do you want, guys? I'm busy. I'm on the clock.

STUBB

Yikes. Pretty rude 'tude for some people about to present a cash-based business proposition, Walser. You're blowing this deal already. You wanna miss out?

FLASK

I *hate* missing out.

ROBIN

I am not selling Shamu-themed poppers, again, guys, that's not-

STARBUCK

Jesus, nothing like that, you horrible freak-

ROBIN

You- you tried to sell me on the poppers, Frappuccino-

STARBUCK

-this is for The Good Of The Earth.

STUBB / FLASK

The Good Of The Earth.

ROBIN

...this is the first time I've heard you pull this routine and I'd like it to be the last. Goodbye.

STARBUCK

Hm. That's not the sound of someone thinking about the fact that rent is due in ten days. (*ROBIN hesitates*) Or with some credit issues at the aquatic supply store. (*ROBIN turns*) Or who hasn't told their roommate about the water bill-

ROBIN
Seriously, Starbuck-

STARBUCK
Or who used to be *cool*.

ROBIN
(*beat*) Okay. Okay, yeah. I do need some cash.

STUBB
That is a smart decision. And I've always said that, I've always said, "Robbie makes smart decisions."

FLASK
I hate smart decisions.

STARBUCK
You also hate sunny days, children, balloon animals-

ROBIN
-smoking outdoors, vaping indoors-

STUBB
-traffic cops, spaghetti-

FLASK
I hate when you guys list things.

ROBIN
Flask, do you like anything?

FLASK
(*after a beat*) ..."Tank Banger", by Pelagic Deep, off of their *Eel Spawn* album.

STARBUCK

Can you please have something normal to say for once. *(to ROBIN)* The deal is this: we'll give you an advance of two-fifty, cash, to keep this box for us, and two-fifty on Friday for the safe return of said box.

ROBIN

That sounds easy. Why are you paying five hundred dollars for something that sounds so easy?

STARBUCK

(handing over an envelope) That's for us to know and you to find...completely puzzling.

STUBB

It's for The Good Of The Earth.

FLASK / STARBUCK

The Good Of The Earth.

ROBIN

(Taking the envelope) You guys are really lucky I need money more than I need dignity. *(a beat-remembering-then leaning in to STARBUCK:)* Hey-is it true that Ahab is out?

FLASH

Oh yeah. Can't keep him in a cage, man-

(STUBB does some sort of physical comedy thing to FLASK and STARBUCK hauls ROBIN over/around the counter.)

STARBUCK

Right, c'mere, sharkbait, let's load you up with your precious cargo.

ROBIN

WELL NOW HANG ON IF AHAB IS OUT-

STARBUCK

You took the shilling, Robin! On with it!

(As AQUAPUNKS and ROBIN exit, LOREN emerges with the flyer.)

LOREN

Damn, it was buried in my locker— *(looking around)* Robin?
(Stomping, disappointed.)
 You haven't even finished your shift!

(LOREN exits, dejected. BAND starts up BIOPHILIA as THE CHESAPEAKES bomb onto the stage. ENSEMBLE forms a front row.)

BIOPHILIA

THE CHESAPEAKES *(sung)*

I BET YOU THOUGHT THAT WAS THE WHOLE OPENING
 AS IF WE'D START THIS SHOW WITH SOME KIND OF
 SENTIMENTAL NUMBER
 FUCK THAT!

WE'RE THE BARN BURNING
 HELL RAISING
 EDGE OF YOUR SEAT
 (HAIR ON YOUR NECK?)
 CHESEPEAKES!

AND BOY DO WE HAVE A SHOW FOR YOU!

ROBIN WALSER HAD A TV SHOW
 [THEIR] LIFE'S WORK ON BROAD-CAAAAST
 BUT THE SUITS, THEY CANNED IT,
 CAUSE IT WAS FISHY,
 BORING,
 AND...
 ASSSSSSSS!

FELL IN WITH A GANG
 OF SOME ECO-LOGICAL TYPES
 GOT LEFT OUT TO HANG
 AND FIGURE OUT [THEIR] LIFE...

YOU JUST DON'T GET A CHOICE TO GO ON!

IT MOVES!
IT BREATHES!
IT'S GOT A HEARTBEAT JUST LIKE A DRUM
IT GROOVES!
IT SCREAMS!
BIOPHILIA!

NOW THEY'RE WORKING IN A BAGEL STORE
CRUSHING ON THE KID NEXT DOOR
LIVING WITH THEIR OLD BEST FRIEND!
BUT THEIR LUCK IS GOING TO TURN TODAY
AND THINGS WILL CHANGE IN EVERY WAY
AND IF WE CAN WE'LL HAVE A HAPPY
EEEEEEEEEND!

SEE, IT CAN ALL WORK OUT!

IT MOVES!
IT BREATHES!
IT'S GOT A HEARTBEAT JUST LIKE A DRUM
IT GROOVES!
IT SCREAMS!
BIOPHILIA!

(calmly spoken snappy bridge)

I MEAN
THAT'S THE SHOW
WE WON'T SPOIL ANY MORE FOR YOU
FIIIIINE PEOPLE
YOU'LL JUST HAVE TO SEE HOW IT GOES
ARE YOU GOING TO BE
GOOOOOD ABOUT IT FOR US?
YEAH?

(to one audience member:)

CHEER-FOR-THE-GOOD-GUYS-HISS-AT-THE-BAD-GUYS-BUY-A-NICE-ACTOR-A-
DRINK?

YEAH?
I THINK YOU MIGHT HAVE THE PHILIA
HAVE YOU HEARD OF THE PHILIA?

IT'S NOT THE BI-A-E-I OR -U PHILIA
 IT'S NOT EVEN SOMETIMES UY
 IT'S THE BI-O-PHILIA, BABY
 BI
 O
 PHILIA
 BI
 O
 PHILIA

IT MOVES!
 IT BREATHES!
 IT'S GOT A HEARTBEAT JUST LIKE A DRUM
 IT GROOVES!
 IT SCREAMS!

BIOPHILIA!

BIOPHILIA!

SCENE 2: A DREAM

(CARMINE sits on a couch facing the audience, "watching" TV, flipping through channels, bored and playing with a "Chekov's Classic Mk2 ForeshadowingX10 Scope" speargun. 1.2.1)

(Rose petals descend on a stark white stage where two people are having dinner.)

BELA

Can't we stay like this forever, in this moment?

BARTOK

We are already altered by it.

(Rose petals again. Static. 1.2.2, the news:)

REPORTER

-a surprisingly salty heist, the Baltimore Aquarium reports one of their oldest fish, stolen. With us here is Dick Weed

of the Naval Crime Investigation Squad. Thanks for giving us your time, Dick.

DICK

Glad to be here.

REPORTER

Is it the water-bound nature of fish that makes this a "naval" crime?

DICK

No, it had a belly button. Very unusual for a fish, but that does make it a Navel Crime.

REPORTER

(sighing) Do you at least have a lab full of hot goths.

DICK

I am pleased to report that our forensic unit wears nothing but black and listens exclusively to Bauhaus.

REPORTER

Thank god—

(Static. 1.2.3, movie trailer. Onscreen text: YUKON WORM RODEO)

NARRATOR

THIS SUMMER.

RILEY

I came here to mine gold and ride giant worms, and there is NO GOLD WHATSOEVER!

(Another, always another. 1.2.4, something completely different, a Muppet Show type thing. EA is speaking with a middle aged muppet dressed biblically on a psychologist's couch.)

EA

-it's a metaphor, you see.

MUPPET

I don't think I do.

EA

You're building an ark because you fear you might ending the world. Your premature ejaculation is tied to this belief that you will do this too soon. You fear your own potency and it's malfunction.

MUPPET

I don't know. That seems elaborate.

INCREDIBLY ELABORATE PUPPET FROM ANOTHER SHOW THAT HAS BEEN JUST
OFFSCREEN

It's kind of what we do here.

*(Laugh track. ROBIN enters, struggling with the BOX from 1.1.
Screens off.)*

ROBIN

A hand?

CARMINE

Always!

(CARMINE yanks it singlehandedly onto the coffee table.)

CARMINE

What sort of fresh mystery is this, chum? A new specimen for the collection? Exotic life support? One of those body pillows with the cute boys on them?

ROBIN

No clue. Did you feed the fish?

CARMINE

Not a chance, chum, freshly arrived from and wearied by the front myself. Been fighting phragmites on the banks of every creek from here to Annapolis!

ROBIN

(Feeding the fish.)

Mmm. And these totally inanimate reeds gave you what-for, huh?

CARMINE

Hell they did! Invaders to my watershed stand no chance, buddy o' mine. I bring the fight to 'em, root 'em out where they stand! Fuzzy, stalky bastards don't know what hit 'em! Bam! Up out of the muck they go, into my bag. *(eyeing the box)* Nut enough about containers I own and their contents. What yonder mysteries hide within this cardboard box?

ROBIN

Don't touch it—the Aquapunks are paying me to store it.

CARMINE

Those enigmatic, semiaquatic, polyamorous scoundrels! What if there are DRUGS in there, Robin?

ROBIN

Carmine, you do drugs.

CARMINE

And I don't HOLD ONTO them, like some kind of Self Storage for Suckers! We've GOT to crack that puppy open, and suck out the marrow of its secrets!

ROBIN

I don't know...

CARMINE

Now look here, pal of pals, friend to the waters and also Carmine: have I ever led you astray?

ROBIN

Yes. On numerous hikes, in numerous marshes.

CARMINE

Your relentless literalism is distressing! Whereto went your sense of whimsy? Reasonable interpretative license?

Curiosity? Look, when your show got canned because executives called it "boring", who did you trust to help argue on your behalf?

ROBIN

That wasn't—it wasn't that simple—

CARMINE

And when you got arrested because you were running with those nautical no-good-nicks and they tried to pin you with throwing that senator in the harbor, who bailed you out?

ROBIN

You did, I know.

CARMINE

YOU'RE DAMN RIGHT! And now those same barnacle brains burden you with a box you got told not to open and you're just going to leave it there?

ROBIN

I don't want to stick my hands in whatever slimy lunacy they're up to, Carm. My life—that, that era of my life is over. Consider these hands washed.

CARMINE

Comrade-in-arms, listen well: you can always wash your hands again. There is no sin in getting mucky and learning some stuff! C'mon. C'monnnnnn.

ROBIN

Well... *(beat)* Shit. Shit! You're right! We'll open it up *and then we'll close it right back up, get it?*

CARMINE

Got it. Heard and seen.

(CARMINE proceeds to take a massive diving knife, very carefully cutting a single point; the box then completely falls apart. In it is a very unusual FISH, clearly flopping its last.)

ROBIN

WHAT DID YOU DO AND WHAT IS THAT.

CARMINE

I hardly nicked it! Great White, it's some kind of fish. *(He inspects it briefly)* It has a belly button. I don't know what that means.

ROBIN

OUT OF THE WAY!

(ROBIN hauls it onto the floor, clears its gills, listens for a heartbeat, gives compressions briefly, and then, out of ideas, tries giving mouth to mouth before rolling away, choking.)

ROBIN

SOMETHING JUST CRAWLED INTO MY MOUTH!

CARMINE

Serves you right, trying to give CPR to a mutant grouper. *(still thinking, pouring some whiskey)* What kind of fish could it be? Why was it mostly dead? Why give it to you. Truly, riddles for our troubled age.

ROBIN

(still coughing, but inspecting the fish all the same) Might be a new species? It's got an odd body pattern, more like a coelacanth than a cod. This thing probably swam with the dinosaurs. Wow. Wow.

(CARMINE offers the whiskey—Robin takes it.)

ROBIN

(coughing and cursing) FUCK. Fuckkk.

CARMINE

For the bacteria.

ROBIN

Right. Eughh. Urgh. Fuck this. I'm going to put this...creature...in the fridge and take a nap about it. I'm beat. Long shift. Long, stupid day.

CARMINE

Oh, but how Loren made those hours pass, I'm sure.

(ROBIN gives them a look. CARMINE is all smiles.)

CARMINE

Are you going to the super-secret concert Friday?

ROBIN

I have to think about it. *(clutches head)* Fuck me I am getting the weirdest headache. I'm probably infected with an unknown and incurable parasite. Epic. Maybe I'll get some Advil. Hey, if I wake up delirious and sweaty can you take me to Urgent Care?

CARMINE

Always, chum. Sweet dreams.

(ROBIN exits, moaning and generally poorly off. CARMINE shakes their head before sticking the FISH in the mostly empty FRIDGE and exiting, taking the cardboard with them. The set changes vibe-only to a dreamscape. ENSEMBLE as ASSYRIANS tidy the place up and ritually consecrate it, whispering as the band tunes up. ROBIN reenters, in a sleep outfit, in some way suspicious or confused by how things have changed. The whispering appears to be centered on the FRIDGE, which ROBIN stalks over to, opening to find it empty-only to turn around and see EA in full glory.)

EA

CRAWL.

(ROBIN falls backwards and backs up rapidly. ASSYRIANS grab them, anointing ROBIN—others tend to EA.)

ROBIN

Oh god, oh god, I'm dreaming, I must be dreaming.

EA

AS IF YOU WERE SAFE IN YOUR OWN MIND? HA! I'M IN HERE WITH
YOU, APE!

*(Background screen images include A DOOR OPENING. BAND hauls ass
into:)*

LAST OF THE OLD GODS

WHEN TEMPLES WITHERED AND GODS DID GASP
I ALONE REMAINED
WHOLE, UNSPOKEN, THOUGH SCARS BETOKENED
MY UNENDING DOMAIN
BUT THE RIVERS RUN DRY AND HERONS CRY
SONGS OF THE EARTH IN PAIN
AND SO I RETURN SO MEN MAY LEARN
TO FEAR THE ENDLESS RAIN

I AM EA

(chorus: Assyrian chanting)

I AM KING BENEATH THE WAVES

(chorus: Assyrian chanting)

THERE IS NO FOE TO ME BELOW
TO MY WHIMS THE SALT IS SLAVE

I AM EA

(chorus: Assyrian chanting)

I SOAKED THE WORLD IN FLOOD

(chorus: Assyrian chanting)

THE ARK WAS BUILT ON MY COMMAND
AND SAILED UPON MY BLOOD

IN PRESENT FORM TO EARTH RETURNED
MY GILLS HAVE WAVED THEIR LAST
BUT HERE INSIDE YOUR PUNY MIND
I WILL RESURRECT THE PAST
WE'LL FORCE THROUGH CHANGES LONG OVERDUE
TO MAKE YOU SUITABLE
OF A PROPHET'S ROLE IN TALES UNTOLD

OF OCEAN'S CARNIVAL

I AM EA!

(chorus: Assyrian chanting)

YOUR MIND IS FORFEIT TO ME

(chorus: Assyrian chanting)

FOR YOUR LOVE OF FISH, I'LL GRANT ONE WISH

THE LAST YOU'LL LIVE TO SEE

EA! (EA!)

RULER OF ALL THAT'S WET!

MY SUBJECTS SWIM AND FIGHT AND CRAWL

AND HEAVE AGAINST THE NET!

EA! (EA!)

TITAN OF THE PRESSURED DEEP!

I'VE THRONES IN BRACKISH TIDAL BAYS

IN TRENCHES WHERE GIANTS SLEEP!

(to BAND:) GIVE ME SOMETHING RIPPING, BOYS! (villainous laughter as BAND goes into a solo)

(chorus: more Assyrian chanting)

(chorus: EA! (EA!))

(spoken) OH, IT'S GOOD TO BE BACK!

(chorus: EA! (EA!))

(spoken) IT GETS CRAMPED, BEING IN A FISH

(chorus: EA! (EA!))

(spoken) WE'RE GOING TO DO SOME MENTAL RENOVATION

(chorus: EA! (EA!))

(spoken) KNOCK DOWN A FEW WALLS

(chorus: EA! (EA!))

(spoken) YOU MIGHT EVEN LIKE IT!

EA! (EA!) x 3

(EA faces ROBIN. An ASSYRIAN offers EA a towel and a cigar.)

EA

Pretty good number, eh? Worked on that one for half a millennium, thereabouts. Still polishing that choral stuff-

ROBIN

What is haaaaaaaappening.

EA

Oh, man alive. Hey, bud. Look. We're gonna flood the world, you and me, but we have to get you ready. You can't exactly pull off "apocalyptic preacher" as you are. We'll buff up your chutzpah, slick up some charisma, draft a good speech or two, and WHAM! It's all underwater, and you get to live it up on Atlantis. Nice place, you'll like it.

ROBIN

Do I. Do I get any sort of say?

(An ASSYRIAN holds up a clipboard and reading glasses for EA.)

EA

Uh, hmm, yes, yeah. You get a wish before we really get cracking here. So, what do you want? Money, fame, drugs, exotic animals, you name it-

ROBIN

I WANT A DATE WITH MY COWORKER LOREN.

(ROBIN smacks a hand over their mouth. EA pauses.)

EA

You...okay, you want to marry your...coworker?

ROBIN

No! No. No, I just want a date. You know, a shot. I'll ask [them] and I just. I want the answer to be yes. I think it can be. Is that fucked up? Oh man.

EA

Oh. Uh. *(thinking, then gentler:)* Are you sure you don't just want money? I mean, that is typical. You're asking for love here. That's-

ROBIN

Not like, true love or anything. Just a shot.

EA

No, no, I get it. It's just unusual. *(hesitating, then:)* You don't have any desire for, say, dominion over the other? No ruling-type aspirations? Material gain? That's the standard package. Those can be useful things, you know.

ROBIN

Not...not really. *(thinking:)* I mean, a really big fish tank would be cool. Maybe a glass-bottomed boat. But those are secondary. I was already pretty famous once and it wasn't that great.

EA

So right, it IS overrated! It's just that previous candidates have tended to want that style of compensation. *(to an ASSYRIAN:)* Can we re-run the selection points here? Thank you, Ash, you've been doing great. *(to ROBIN, looking them up and down:)* I bet you know how to make an oyster reef.

ROBIN

When I was in elementary school we did a project where we made them, yeah. Chicken wire and concrete. I remember-I remember the concrete smell, and the water in the harbor, and all the kids were so into it. Arts and crafts.

EA

And you were into it, too, eh?

ROBIN

We were saving something. Something without a face, you know, something you can't say, "oh, that's cute" about, right, but oysters have all this, this complex sensitivity. You know they're tuned in to the lunar cycle? With the

tides? They're in the web of things. They're, they're listening and responding.

EA

I know. In the quieter eons I like to lie in the reefs and watch those little shells open and close, so slow you almost can't see it. Very meditative. *(thinking harder:)* Look, alright, we're going to start work here in your mind, get that refining rolling and all that. No time to waste, lots to do. But we'll speak again soon. Okay? How ready are you for a rapid transition?

(CREW has already begun assembling Equal Bites around them.)

ROBIN

A rapid transition?

SCENE 3: NOT QUITE A HERO

(ROBIN is suddenly sitting in Equal Bites. CARMINE is across from them. LOREN is behind the counter, occasionally serving customers.)

ROBIN

Woah.

CARMINE

That is a hell of a dream, chum.

ROBIN

Uh. You don't think I'm going crazy?

CARMINE

Going? Friend, I think not even the UMD Urgent Care can help you now.

ROBIN

At least they cleared me on the "deadly parasitic infection" front. I can't believe they just said "take Advil and drink water." I could've figured that out myself.

CARMINE

Look, the only direction a loco-motive goes is forward! If you're crazy, steer into the skid! They call it a manifesto because you manifest-o it into existence! Seize the wheel! *(straightening)* Did mister prehistoric fish-sticks tell you what you needed to do to make that wish start happening?

ROBIN

I don't really think it's like that—

(The AQUAPUNKS burst in, angry and nervous.)

LOREN

Oh, for fuck's— hey, you guys aren't welcome in here! We are STILL finding sardines from that last stupid stunt—

STARBUCK

Shut the fuck up, Loren. *(to ROBIN:)* Surprise, we're here to get the box early. Here's the other two-fifty. Let's go get it. NOW.

ROBIN

(hesitates) What if—

STUBB

Ohhhh fuck you opened it.

ROBIN

Why was there a dead fish in it??

FLASK

Well it wasn't supposed to be dead.

(STARBUCK starts marching towards ROBIN with a little gutting knife. CARMINE pulls out previous huge diving knife and stands between them.)

CARMINE

Easy, cowboy.

STARBUCK

This doesn't involved you, Carmine. *(hissing at ROBIN:)*
It's in your dreams now, isn't it? In your head?

ROBIN

What did you do to me?!

STARBUCK

Oh, good fucking luck, you spineless little-

(ROBIN lunges forward and gets a good whack to their head with the handle of STARBUCK'S knife. CARMINE, hollering, attacks, dragging all the AQUAPUNKS outside/offstage singlehandedly. LOREN hops over the counter, runs and locks the door, flips the sign to CLOSED, and begins tending to ROBIN as the scene changes behind them.)

LOREN

Jesus, Robin! What the hell were you thinking?

ROBIN

I think...I think maybe I have had enough.

LOREN

Yeah. Alright. I get it. Well, probably one of the braver things I've seen you do. *(beat)* Pretty fucking stupid, too. Try not to make a habit of rushing people with knives, huh? Do not bring fists to a knife fight.

ROBIN

One time thing, promise. *(then, woozily:)* Okay. Think imma pass out now.

LOREN

Oop. Right on. *(Beat, holding [their] head)* This would be so nice if you weren't possibly bleeding into your brain.

(ROBIN passes out, LOREN exiting as EA enters. A DOOR SOUND IS HEARD-ONSCREEN, A DOOR OPENS. The stage is set with rocks with chains on them.)

EA

WAKE, PROPHET!

ROBIN

Don't be mean, I have a concuss-cussiocon—I hurt my head.

EA

Look, we're really working on a tight timeline here.
 Welcome to the "face your fears" part of the personality
 improvement program.

ROBIN

And this will help me get a date with Loren.

EA

Uh. We're, we're working on that. Okay, here comes the
 number, try to keep up, there will be a test.

(THE CHESAPEAKES enter, dressed Grecian. BAND kicks off.)

IN DISTRESSTHE CHESEPEAKES *(sung)*

BY ORDER OF KING CEPHEUS
 WE RESIGN OURSELVES TO SAY
 WE GOTTA TIE UP TO THIS ROCK
 THE FRESH CATCH OF THE DAY
 WE DON'T REALLY WANT TO DO IT
 WE'D PREFER TO RUN AWAY
 BUT WE TRULY NEED A HERO
 THIS MONSTER FOR TO SLAY

ROBIN *(sung)*

OH SHIT

*(THE CHESEPEAKES start securing ROBIN in chains, apologizing and
 looking worried.)*

ROBIN *(sung)*

WHAT A TERRIBLE WAY TO GO
 TO DIE IN MY OWN BRAIN
 AND SO EARLY IN THE SHOW

HOPE PARKING WASN'T A PAIN

(CARMINE enters, dressed all hero-like, with a more upbeat musical turn.)

CARMINE *(sung)*

NO MORE!
 NO MORE!
 NO MORE MOPING
 ENDLESS HOPING
 THAT SHIT ENDS TODAY
 WE'RE GONNA GET YOU FREE
 CAUSE YOU AND ME
 WE GOTTA MONSTER TO SLAY

THEY'LL TELL YOU
 SAVE YOURSELF!
 SOMEHOW BITE THROUGH THE TIES THAT BIND
 SAVE YOURSELF!
 TAKE OUT THE SPECK THAT MAKES YOU BLIND

NO MORE!
 I'M HERE
 THE WORLD IS HARD ENOUGH WITHOUT A SYMPATHETIC EAR
 DON'T NEED TO MAN UP
 JUST TO STAND UP!
 WITH US HERE WE'VE GOT NOTHING TO FEAR

CARMINE / ROBIN *(sung)*

THEY'LL TELL YOU
 SAVE YOURSELF!
 SOMEHOW BITE THROUGH THE TIES THAT BIND
 SAVE YOURSELF!
 TAKE OUT THE SPECK THAT MAKES YOU BLIND

ROBIN *(sung)*

NO MORE
 NO MORE!
 YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN MY FRIEND BEFORE
 I'VE BEEN SO AFRAID
 THAT I WOULDN'T BE SAVED

BUT YOU'VE BEEN HERE THE WHOLE TIME

(Song transitions into an end phase as CARMINE tosses ROBIN a little sword and they get ready to fight.)

CARMINE

Excelsior, chum! We're going to make this myth-take back into fiction!

ROBIN

Oh god, what horrifying things lurk in my subconscious mind??

(A HUGE ROAR shakes the theater, and LOREN enters, operating...a rather smaller KILLER WHALE puppet.)

ROBIN

AHHHH!

CARMINE

Right, I think you're misremembering this myth, Robin.

LOREN

(as WHALE:) REMEMBER ME, ROBIN? I HAVE COME FOR MY VENEGANCE!

ROBIN:

Shamoomoo, please! I got too old for you!

CARMINE

This seems a tad more personal than your unshackled id...

LOREN

YOU FEARED BEING SEEN AS WEAK. YOU FEARED LOVING SOMETHING YOU THOUGHT YOU SHOULDN'T. YOU WERE SCARED TO HOLD ME CLOSE, THOUGH I WAS SOFT AND PROTECTED YOU FROM THE DARK.

ROBIN

When you fell on the floor in the night I always picked you back up and hugged you!

LOREN

AND ONE NIGHT, YOU LEFT ME. AND THE NEXT. BOTH OF US MORE ALONE THAN WE BEGAN.

CARMINE

Ohhh! I get it. *(putting down the sword:)* Pick up that whale, Robin! Give it a big ol' fuckin' hug! Love on that man-eating orca! You're not afraid of monsters, you're afraid of intimacy! Say you're sorry!

ROBIN

Is that it? All is forgiven?

LOREN

IT WOULD BE A START.

(ROBIN hugs the puppet. THE CHESAPEAKES sing out as an angelic chorus. EA stomps back onstage.)

EA

Not bad! I was really expecting you to get at least a little gnawed on by Shamoomoo before you figured it out. We gave the thing teeth and all.

(CARMINE gives ROBIN a side-hug.)

CARMINE

What kind of buddy lets their friend's ego get munched by a stuffed animal, huh?

(Everyone, minus ROBIN and EA, begins exiting and clearing up the set.)

ROBIN

So, that's what these are going to be like?

EA

Not all of them. Opening different doors in your mind takes many a different key, you follow? C'mon, bud, lots to do, time's a-wasting. Lets get you back on your feet.

(Groovy BLACKOUT.)

SCENE 4: A DREAM

(CARMINE sits on a couch facing the audience, "watching" TV again, channel-surfing and smoking a bong. The speargun from earlier has googly eyes and a bow tie. 1.4.1. ROBIN is presenting sea-life facts while holding a horseshoe crab.)

ROBIN

-a miracle of evolution, living here in Baltimore! And we'll take a look at where they call "home" right after this break.

(TITLECARD: "Under Water with Robin Walser," static, then 1.4.2, our lovers from before. Rose petals descend.)

BARTOK

We will be for ourselves alone.

BELA

Your love is incorrigibly banal.

(Rose petals descend again, then static. 1.4.3. More muppets. Dramatic swoosh in, "JUDGE TRASH WHEEL".)

MUPPET

-and then, he harassed my wife on the phone, and made fun of my dog!

(JTW taps their fingers impatiently on the podium. Swedish Chef style puppet means this is menacingly articulated.)

MUPPET 2

Yeah I did all that. I don't-

MUPPET

And he used glyphosate based weedkiller on his lawn!

(Screen flashes VERDICT: RECYCLING.)

MUPPET 2
Hey, wait-

(JTW picks up a revolver, firing on Muppet 2, banging their gavel. They don a pair of glasses to read something, then shoot them again. Thumbs up, zoom in. **1.4.4**. Another trailer.
Onscreen, "THE EVIL ROBOT.")

NARRATOR

THIS SUMMER.

SUZY

(in an inexplicable English accent:) Blimey! My time ladies can't teach this cyber-bummer how to love!

CHARLIE

(a toaster with Mike's voice:) Mother why is the universe so cold.

(Static again, to **1.4.5**, the news. A segment about carpentry, "Wood Chucking with Chuck Wood," silently playing in the background as ROBIN enters, disheveled.)

ROBIN

Hfhsjff.

CARMINE

You always were my most verbose roommate. Pull up a seat, chum, and take a puff on the Chesapeake steamer. You need a break.

ROBIN

Head?

CARMINE

Not today, no. (beat) OH. Yeah, no, your X-rays came back clean, you'll be fine. Just a bit groggy, said the good doctor. Siddown.

ROBIN

Speargun?

CARMINE

Pointdexter. I needed a buddy.

(ROBIN sits and takes a hit as the screen volume goes back up.)

CHUCK

—because you see, the thing about making something is that just as you change it, via making, the making changes you. You become someone different for having chosen what to make and hope to make it, which is why it's important to love what it is you choose to create, and love creating it.

(CHUCK looks directly at the camera.)

CHUCK

So now, we're gonna get weird with it.

(A DOOR OPENS. Things transition to a David Attenborough-esque nature documentary, 1.4.6, that slowly spins out into colors and kaleidoscopic images. The BAND, similarly, starts slowly and flows into SUPERHIGHORGANISM.)

SUPERHIGHORGANISM

NARRATOR *(spoken-sung, sung-spoken)*

THE CHESEPEAKE BAY IS ONE OF MANY
FERTILE NATURAL WETLANDS THAT HUMANITY HAS
OVER THE GREAT CYCLE OF CIVILIZATIONS
CHOSEN TO SETTLE IN AND MAKE THEIR HOME

IT IS NOT A RESIDENCE FOR THEM ALONE
BUT ALSO FOR COUNTLESS SPECIES OF FISH AND FROG, MOLLUSK AND
MAMMAL, GREAT TREES AND TINY INSECTS, AND
BIRDS

THOUGH THEY MAY MORE OFTEN THAN NOT IGNORE IT
 THE HEALTH OF HUMANITY IS DEPENDENT UPON THESE NEIGHBORS
 THEY RELY UPON THEM FOR THE CLEANLINESS OF THE WATER
 THE STRENGTH OF THE SOIL
 THE FOOD ON THEIR PLATES AND
 THE VERY GROWTH OF THEIR SOULS

FOR THOUGH THEY WOULD DENY IT
 AND MANY DO
 THE TURN OF A FIN
 THE WAVING OF THE GRASSES IN THE WIND
 THE ANGLING OF A WING
 THE BUZZ OF CICADAS ON A HOT NIGHT
 ARE THE FOUNDATIONAL SENSORY EXPERIENCES UPON WHICH WE BASE
 JOY
 SERENITY
 AND FELLOW-FEELING
 FOR ALL THINGS

AND NOW FOR A WORD FROM OUR SPONSORS

(The band stops as WILDLIFE ENSEMBLE begins creeping onto the stage. 1.4.7, a cabin. A door opens to find a good ol' boy drinking a Natty Boh with some fishing rods in hand. The camera cuts to EA, mounted on the wall, zooming in. He then turns to the camera.)

EA
 THE FOURTH DOOR IS OPEN!

(ALL THINGS begins as the WILDLIFE ENSEMBLE busts out from the set.)

ALL THINGS

WILDLIFE ENSEMBLE *(sung)*
 ALL THINGS BRIGHT AND BEAUTIFUL
 ALL CREATURES GREAT AND SMALL
 ALL THINGS WILD AND WONDERFUL
 ALL IN ALL, YOU'RE ALL, THAT'S ALL

AND AS I
WALKED ALONG THE RIVER
I STARED UPON THAT DISTANT SHORE
AND AS I
WONDERED AT ITS TURNING
IT SANG TO ME OF SOMETHING MORE

IT SAID
"WHERE IS IT THAT YOU'RE GOING?
AND ARE YOU ALREADY THERE?
HAVE I NOT BUILT A BANK FOR YOU
SO YOU CAN LIVE IN CASTLES IN THE AIR?"

ALL THINGS BRIGHT AND BEAUTIFUL
ALL CREATURES GREAT AND SMALL
ALL THINGS WILD AND WONDERFUL
ALL IN ALL, YOU'RE ALL, THAT'S ALL

IT'S ALL HERE!
IT ALWAYS HAS BEEN
IF YOU'VE EYES ENOUGH TO SEE
IF YOU KEEP 'EM WIDE
THEN YOU MIGHT NOT MISS
THE FOREST FOR THE TREES

WHERE IS IT THAT YOU'RE GOING
(DID YOU EVER REALLY GIVE)
AND ARE YOU ALREADY THERE
(GIVE PEACE A CHANCE)
WHAT IF IF ALL YOUR KNOWING
(DID YOU EVER REALLY GIVE)
DIDN'T MEAN THAT YOU REALLY CARED
(GIVE PEACE A CHANCE)

ALL THINGS, ALL THINGS
ARE YOU NOT
ALL THINGS, ALL THINGS
YOU WERE BORN
ALL THINGS, ALL THINGS
IN DUST RETURNED
ALL THINGS, ALL THINGS

(ENSEMBLE and CARMINE go off into the audience and exit that way, still singing, leaving ROBIN to their own devices.)

ALL THINGS, ALL THINGS... *(until end)*

(ROBIN, slowly, rises. They look at their wall of fish tanks for a while. Feed the fish during the song. Tidy the apartment. This is a moment to demonstrate care—a picking-up of life, of space, and, you know, of self.)

ALL THINGS

ROBIN *(sung)*

I GUESS IT'S JUST ME AGAIN
 BUT THEN, WHO ELSE WOULD IT BE?
 WHEN ALL THAT'S LEFT IS WHAT'S LEFT BEHIND
 IT'S THEN YOU'RE FORCED TO SEE
 THAT FOR ALL YOUR ENDLESS ENERGIES
 YOUR FANTASIES REMAIN FANTASIES
 AND WHAT'S HERE IS WHAT WAS ALWAYS
 AROUND ANYHOW
 JUST THE SMALL THINGS

ON SECOND THOUGHT, AND AGAIN,
 MAYBE EVEN THIRD OR FOURTH
 IS IT REALLY SO UNPLEASANT AS TO TARNISH
 YOUR SELF WORTH
 TO FIND A LITTLE LIFE TO BE FOUNDED
 ON A PLACE SO ORTHODOXLY GROUNDED?
 TO LIVE AND THRIVE IN THE SHADOW OF
 UNMITIGATED REALITY
 WITH THE SMALL THINGS

SO WE'LL CHOOSE TO DO THE DISHES
 BECAUSE TO CONTINUALLY IGNORE THEM
 IS TO REJECT MATERIALITY
 TO MITIGATE SOME BOREDOM
 AND THE WATER'S HOT, THE PLATES ARE CLEAN
 YOUR ROOMMATE DOESN'T SEEM SO MEAN

WHEN YOU TAKE CARE OF
ALL THE SMALL THINGS

CAN WE NOT EXTEND SUCH COURTESY TO
THE CREATURES OF THE EARTH?
AND CHOOSE TO FIND IN THE MANY KINDS
SOME DIGNITY AND WORTH
AS WE FIND OURSELVES AS WE SUSPECT
OUR EGOS ARE FINALLY PUT IN CHECK
AND PLACED WITH LOVING CARE
WITH THE SMALL THINGS

(ROBIN glows with a new light. CARMINE, stumbling back in the door with one of the ENSEMBLE, still in their wildlife outfit, notices.)

CARMINE

Woah there, chum! You've got—hang on. *(to ENSEMBLE:)* It's not you, lover-friend, this just isn't your native range. Go make some birder's day. Night. Whatever.

(CARMINE gives ENSEMBLE a drunken smooch on the forehead. The ENSEMBLE member exits. CARMINE shakes ROBIN down, smiling.)

CARMINE

What light through yonder Robin's-eye breaks! Strange, but welcome. Hello again, you.

ROBIN

Hey. Thanks. I don't know, actually. I can't articulate it. One of those things. I'm just—Carm, I am feeling better. About me. About it all.

CARMINE

One of these days I'd like to meet this brain-fish of yours and shake his salty hand. He's doing a number on you. Many numbers!

ROBIN

It's crazy. I just—I feel more here. I feel like I can make choices, and do them, you know what I mean? Does that—

(A WINDOW BREAK sound-effect. ROBIN action-hero rolls, grabs the SPEAR GUN, and fires it offstage. A yelp and a groan. FLASK stumbles onstage with a harpoon protruding from [their] arm and a ski mask in [their] hand.)

ROBIN

Oh shit. Oh shit. Oh shit.

CARMINE

(grabbing keys) I'LL START THE CAR GET BANDAGES AND DO THAT.

ROBIN

Holy shit holy shit are you okay.

FLASK

I hate it when people ask if I'm okay. *(then, briefly shaking their persona:)* Uh. No. No, this hurts, like, a lot.

ROBIN

Shit. Shit, shit, hold still, fuck.

(ROBIN begins bandaging FLASK. [They] are quick, efficient. Maybe there is a little residual tenderness.)

ROBIN

Why were you trying to break into our apartment? What the fuck is going on?

FLASK

I dunno, man, it's all leagues above my pay grade. Ahab has got us doing freakier shit all the time and [they] said we had to "check the countdown clock on the bomb" and when I said "hey man what the fuck does that mean" [they] said "go see if Robin is making it rain yet."

ROBIN

What does that even...what?

FLASK

No clue. I said we should just shoot you, but—

ROBIN

(softly) Ahab wants me dead?

FLASK

Well, yeah. You helped put [them] away. People don't love that, man. People like Ahab especially.

ROBIN

Yeah. I guess not. *(looking at the bandage:)* That's good enough, let's get you to the car.

FLASK

If you were like this when we were blowing up that oil office, shit, we woulda KICKED ASS. Where did this whole badass action-adventure Robin thing come from.

(ROBIN looks very closely at FLASK.)

ROBIN

There's a fish-shaped god in my head trying to get me a date.

(FLASK looks blankly for a second, then smiles.)

FLASK

I love it when Robin gets weird. Woo! Ow.

(BLACKOUT TO SCREENS. Four videos play in the static after the act ends: 1.5.1, an Underworld-filtered shot of LAURA in some kind of tracksuit with a bunch of wooden stakes in hand.)

LAURA

I've had enough of these blood-sucking vampires in this tax-ducking company!

(Screen slams to title card for "Wall Street Vampire Blood Orgy", then static, transitions to 1.5.2, newsreel footage. AHAB on a blurry security overhead camera, kicking some cop.)

REPORTER

-Habitat, alias Ahab, still at large. The search continues, with state and local law enforcement collaborating-

(Static. 1.5.3. Watercolors.)

NARRATOR

-AND AS THE DOORS OPENED ONE BY ONE HE REMEMBERED WHAT IT HAD BEEN LIKE TO BE A PRINCE, THAT THE WORLD HADN'T ONCE BEEN SO FEARFUL AND STRANGE, THAT HIS FRIENDS THE FISH HAD TAUGHT HIM HOW TO SWIM AGAINST CURRENTS-

(One last bit of static, transition to 1.5.3, a title card labelled "Intermission Announcement")

NARRATOR

And now, a word from our Executive Producer!

(Then, a rather roughly shot internal bit. There is a sign on the door that says "BROS Artistic Council", who are dressed as much as possible like goons and deadbeats, sit around a table playing poker, the table littered with empty beer cans, firearms, sex toys, puppets, and the Grundlehammer.)

GABE SHATKIN

-and then the puppets start doing blow off the counter. Bam! Clown cops come in and shoot their little muppet dicks off. Pow! Bang! Woo!

COUNCIL 1

Is that related to the plot?

COUNCIL 2

Since when have these things had a plot? Let's make it FOUR HOURS LONG AND LOUD AS SHIT!

(Cheering, drinking, a punch or two is thrown.)

(PATRICK STASO realizes the camera is there. He has a large scar that he usually doesn't have.)

PATRICK STASO
HEY, GUYS, SHUT UP A SECOND.

(He grabs the camera it unsteadily.)

PATRICK STASO
Ten-no, fifteen minute intermission. Go buy uh, popcorn and beer and shit.

(He burps, gives the camera a kiss.)

PATRICK STASO
Okay. Thank you. I love you. You wanna hear me play trumpet?

(The camera staggers backwards as PATRICK begins to play Spanish Flea, then cuts to black.)

END OF ACT I

ACT 2

SCENE 1: SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT

(Blue and gentle lights come up. Then, screens. A chorus starts to hum-oohs, ahs-into 2.1.1. "Under Water," last episode.)

ROBIN
-thank you all for watching. I can't tell you how much it means to be able to-to have been so lucky- *(crying)* This was all I ever wanted-

PRODUCER
Robin, this is the last episode, kid, you've got to-

ROBIN

(Sobbing) But what do I do now?

PRODUCER

Après moi, le deluge. Move home and watch some TV. We have to finish-

(Fade out, transitioning into 2.1.2, a chopped-up montage of birds over the ocean as ROBIN and CARMINE hustle FLASK into the car. The choir sings.)

THE EDGE

CHORUS *(sung)*

THIS IS ALL THAT'S COMING	THERE IS, THERE IS, THERE IS
THIS IS ALL THERE IS	THERE IS, THERE IS, THERE IS
I WILL NOT FEEL GUILTY	THERE IS, THERE IS, THERE IS
FOR BEING WHAT I'VE BEEN	
BUT I'M TIRED AND I'M WEARY	THE EDGE, THE EDGE, THE EDGE
OF BEING SO CLOSE TO THE EDGE	THE EDGE, THE EDGE, THE EDGE
SO KISS ME A LITTLE HARDER	THE EDGE, THE EDGE, THE EDGE
EVEN THOUGH IT HURTS	
THE TIME WE'VE GOT FLOWS	IT HURTS, IT HURTS, IT HURTS
FASTER	IT HURTS, IT HURTS, IT HURTS
BUT NEVER IN REVERSE	IT HURTS, IT HURTS, IT HURTS

FLASK

I think I'm dying.

CARMINE

You're not dying, you're bleeding a lot. They feel similar, sure, but being leaky isn't the same as being liquidated. Hang on.

FLASK

Halyard-

ROBIN

Hey, I don't-I'm not Halyard anymore, Flask.

FLASK

But I'm talking to Halyard, you from-from when you were us. I have two last requests.

ROBIN

Okay, Flask. What?

FLASK

Don't tell Stubb and Starbuck but I still have the pictures from when you were hanging out with us in a shoebox under my bed. It's labelled "Hardcore Pornography." I know we were all doing a lot of drugs and the sex wasn't all that great but I still miss you sometimes.

ROBIN

That's—wow. Incredibly sweet for someone with a harpoon sticking out of their shoulder. That I put there.

FLASK

Nah, fuck it. Cool way to die. Since I am, though—dying—can you, uh, hook up the Bluetooth and put on Tank Banger.

ROBIN

For fuck's sake Flask you use one of your dying wishes to bum the aux cord??

CARMINE

Do it! Just do it!

FLASK

NOT THE REMASTERED ONE, EITHER, I CAN TELL.

(They fall back as heavy metal starts playing. THE CHESAPEAKES enter, made up in all black.)

TANK BANGER

THE CHESAPEAKES *(sung)*

DELTA P KILLS!

UNHOLY DIVER!

DRUNK ON YOUR NITROGEN BACCHANALIA

CAN YOU FEEL THE PULL OF THE DEEP?

BYFORD DOLPHINS DANCE AS YOUR FAILURE

DRAGS YOU WHERE LIQUID CRUDE SEEPS!

TANK BANGER, ARC WILDER
 ENDLESS BLUE FOR FILTHY GREEN
 TANK BANGER, MASKED LIAR
 BABES ON PIPELINE OIL WEAN

UNHOLY DIVER!
 YOUR FINS CHURN TRASHY POLLUTED WATERS
 WHAT WILL CLEAN YOUR BLACKENED SOUL?
 SUNKEN BELLS ARE TOLLING FOR THEE
 THE OCEAN CALLS HER CHILDREN HOME

TANK BANGER, ARC WILDER
 ENDLESS BLUE FOR FILTHY GREEN
 TANK BANGER, MASKED LIAR
 BABES ON PIPELINE OIL WEAN

CHESEPEAKES / CARMINE / FLASK (*sung*)

TANK BANGER, TANK BANGER
 TANK BANGER, TANK BANGER

(In the middle of this chaos, FLASK has worked themselves up into such a fit that they rip the harpoon out of their own shoulder, screaming. ROBIN passes out. CARMINE totes [them] offstage. All exit. Jellyfish enter in big LIT hats.)

[ROMANCE OF THE JELLYFISH]

A little ballet of everything that has happened in the show up to this point, and with a little bit beyond it. But jellyfish.

SCENE 2: PRACTICE, PRACTICE

(ROBIN wanders back out onto the stage around the same time as EA, who is gladly chomping down on one of the jellyfish.)

EA

Robin! Good to see you again. We're really cookin' now, eh?
Excuse my snacking, I missed lunch.

ROBIN

Is this another dream?

EA

Yep. You passed out with the whole harpoon-shoulder
business. You've been passing out a lot lately—we've been
leaning on the blood supply to your brain.

ROBIN

HEY.

EA

Relax, has it not been working?

ROBIN

I haven't managed to ask Loren out yet, so. No.

EA

Hm. How's about we practice, then? I've had this door up my
sleeve for a second now, hang on. You were really on the
money there, shooting Flask, but I'd say you dropped the
ball a little not pulling it right on out. Ramsin, number
five, please!

ROBIN

You're not *supposed* to pull them out!

EA

Of course not! But your failure to act didn't come from
your careful consideration of proper first aid, it came
from fear, and fear cut off your better judgement! Fear cut
you off from yourself. The version of you that would've
known what to do.

ROBIN

That's not fair. That's really not fair.

EA

Not choosing isn't an option, bud. If you don't seize life, it'll happily let you slide. And there it all goes, down the drain!

ROBIN

Well that's...fucking scary.

EA

Oh yeah. Pretty bad. So! We won't do that! One Loren special, coming up!

(THE CHESEPEAKES roll out a giant styrofoam clamshell container as the Jellyfish dancers sing out in angelic chorus. It opens, and there's LOREN, dressed fully as a bagel with cream cheese and lox in imitation of the Birth of Venus. A table with two chairs is hustled out. CONSIDER THIS tunes up and in, a silly number with serious bits.)

CONSIDER THIS

ROBIN *(sung)*

I SUPPOSE SINCE IT'S A PRACTICE RUN
I'LL TRY AND HAVE A LITTLE FUN AND
MAYBE TRY A LINE OR TWO
IT'S JUST THAT I'M A LITTLE SHY
AND THOUGH I THINK I'LL CATCH
[THEIR] EYE
THE TRICK IS IN THE COMING THROUGH

LOREN *(sung)*

GIVE IT A SHOT
COME IN HOT!
I'M JUST A DREAM YOUR TALKING TO
I'LL LEND AN EAR
I'M JUST A SCHMEAR
OF YOUR LIBIDO'S MIXED UP BREW

WELL

DO YOU WANNA GET COFFEE SOMETIME?

TELL ME IS THAT ALL YOU'VE GOT?

WE WORK IN A COFFEE SHOP

SAVE ME PLEASE
THOUGH I'M CREAM CHEESE
SOME SALMON AND SOME CHIVES
YOU'VE TURNED A QUESTION OF FUN
INTO A DEEPER, DULLER ONE

THIS IS GOING TO BE HARDER THAN
I THOUGHT

CONSIDER THIS!
I'M OFF THE APPS HAVING A FIT
I LIKE YOU AND I GIVE A SHIT
BUT THE WORDS FILL ME WITH DOUBT
WE CAN JOKE AND LAUGH AND DANCE
AND SING
BUT ROMANCE IS A WHOLE DIFFERENT
THING
CONSIDER THIS, CONSIDER THIS,
CONSIDER THIS!

NOT BAD!

A LITTLE WEIRD

NOW THAT'S DERIVATIVE

MHMM

BIG TALK

ALRIGHT FINE

I'VE BEEN ATTRACTED TO YOU FOR A
BIT
AND I'D LIKE TO SEE IF WE CAN FIT
SOME OF OURSELVES INTO EACH OTHER'S
LIVES

THIS IS GOING TO BE HARDER THAN
I THOUGHT

CONSIDER THIS!
I'M OFF THE APPS HAVING A FIT
I LIKE YOU AND I GIVE A SHIT
BUT THE WORDS JUST WON'T COME OUT
WE CAN JOKE AND LAUGH AND DANCE AND
SING
BUT ROMANCE IS A WHOLE DIFFERENT
THING
CONSIDER THIS, CONSIDER THIS,
CONSIDER THIS!

LET ME TRY AGAIN
YOU LIGHT MY SOUL ON FIRE!

I'M ENFLAMED BY MY DESIRE

I'M JUST A HUNK A HUNK OF BURNING
LOVE!

I ADORE YOU

I IMPLORE YOU

WON'T YOU JUST GIVE ME A SHOT?

BEGGAR'S CAN'T BE CHOOSERS
 AND THOUGH I'M ALL FOR DATING
 LOSERS
 PLEADING IS SOMETHING OF A...TURN
 OFF

WHAT COULD THE RIGHT WORDS BE!

CONSIDER THIS!
 I'M OFF THE APPS HAVING A FIT
 I LIKE YOU AND I GIVE A SHIT
 BUT THE WORDS FILL ME WITH DOUBT
 WE CAN JOKE AND LAUGH AND DANCE
 AND SING
 BUT ROMANCE IS A WHOLE DIFFERENT
 THING
 CONSIDER THIS, CONSIDER THIS,
 CONSIDER THIS!

OH

YEAH?

KEEP TALKING

RRRRR

A SHAME

HOW COY
 I'M SURE IN MY BREAST MY HEART
 IS STIRRED
 BUT THOSE AREN'T WORDS I HAVEN'T

WHAT COULD THE RIGHT WORDS BE!

CONSIDER THIS!
 I'M OFF THE APPS HAVING A FIT
 I LIKE YOU AND I GIVE A SHIT
 BUT THE WORDS JUST WON'T COME OUT
 WE CAN JOKE AND LAUGH AND DANCE AND
 SING
 BUT ROMANCE IS A WHOLE DIFFERENT
 THING
 CONSIDER THIS, CONSIDER THIS,
 CONSIDER THIS!

I WANNA HUG YOU
 HOLD YOU
 KNEAD YOU
 SQUEEZE YOU
 BEND YOU OVER
 KISS AND PLEASE YOU
 BUY YOU THINGS
 GET OLD WITH YOU
 FLY TO GREECE
 AND KATHMANDU

I'VE A CURSE THAT MAKES MY TONGUE
 TWIST IN REVERSE
 MANGLE THOUGHTS AND PAINTED VERSE
 ABOUT
 THE WAY I'D LIKE TREAT YOU RIGHT
 AND SLEEP WITH YOU LIKE EVERY NIGHT

HEARD
 DIG A LITTLE DEEPER, ROBIN, FLY
 LIKE A BIRD!

CONSIDER THIS!
 I'M OFF THE APPS HAVING A FIT
 I LIKE YOU AND I GIVE A SHIT
 BUT THE WORDS FILL ME WITH DOUBT
 WE CAN JOKE AND LAUGH AND DANCE
 AND SING
 BUT ROMANCE IS A WHOLE DIFFERENT
 THING

GO FOR IT, KID.

UH HUH
 OOO!

TEXT YOU BACK
 THRIFT WITH YOU
 MAKE YOU SMILE WHEN YOU'RE BLUE!

CONSIDER THIS, CONSIDER THIS,
 CONSIDER THIS!

CONSIDER THIS!
 I'M OFF THE APPS HAVING A FIT
 I LIKE YOU AND I GIVE A SHIT
 BUT THE WORDS JUST WON'T COME OUT
 WE CAN JOKE AND LAUGH AND DANCE AND
 SING
 BUT ROMANCE IS A WHOLE DIFFERENT
 THING

ONE MORE SHOT

OKAY
 I HAVE HAD A STANDING INVITE
 WHERE CARMINE'S TENDING BAR TONIGHT
 [THEY] SAID [THEY'VE] GOT A TWO TOP
 THERE
 WITH THE BEST BURRATTA ANYWHERE
 I'VE ALWAYS LOVED ITALIAN FOOD
 BUT NEVER WANTED TO INTRUDE
 BY GOING SOLO FRIDAY NIGHT

SO IT WOULD BE TO MY DELIGHT
 IF YOU COULD JOIN ME THERE AT NINE
 WE'LL EAT AND LAUGH AND HAVE SOME
 WINE

I'LL WALK YOU HOME
 KISS YOUR HEAD
 MAYBE STAY WITH YOU INSTEAD?
 TEXT YOU BACK
 THRIFT WITH YOU
 MAKE YOU SMILE WHEN YOU'RE BLUE!

CONSIDER THIS, CONSIDER THIS,
 CONSIDER THIS!

(ROBIN and LOREN begin viciously making out in the middle of the stage as THE CHESAPEAKES drag them apart with various improvisations about there being no time for fantasizing. Various crew and everyone else begins clearing up the stage for another transition. ROBIN stands there huffing as EA comes over.)

EA

Damn. I think you might be ready soon. That wasn't too shabby, bud!

ROBIN

I feel—okay, I feel really good about that. Hell yeah. Hell yeah! I'll just—wait, where am I now?

EA

Oh, you're passed out on the couch.

ROBIN

(suddenly woozy) Oh. I am?

SCENE 3: ON ANTAGONISM

(CARMINE sits center stage in the apartment, drinking something. ROBIN's head is in [their] lap. CARMINE strokes ROBIN's air. TV is on, 2.3.1, the REPORTER interviewing ADOZEN PLAIN, Equal Bites' bagel-maker. ADOZEN pulls a bagel up from a boiling pot.)

ADOZEN

—out of the water. Look at that! See, people talk about centering, how important the middle is. I don't buy that. A good bagel has a hole, and everything important about it is on the edges. But if it didn't have a hole, it wouldn't be a bagel. Everything that matters happens outside, but the inside is what defines it.

(Channel change. 2.3.2, a black screen with "Rostro De La Nacion" in serious font, cutting to LEMPIRA in full face paint and no shirt, with reading glasses, interviewing YURITZI in Spanish.)

LEMPIRA

[What opinions for peace are available to the Lenca people?]

YURITZI

[Well, there are several peaceful paths-]

(LEMPIRA slams a macauhuitl on the table.)

LEMPIRA

[None, just as I thought. War it is.]

(Channel change. 2.3.3, prank call show, sort of. Smarmy looking host plugs a handset directly into a tree in a swamp.)

CHESSIE

Oldest Bay there is, how can I help you?

SMARM

Yeah, this is the Chesapeake Bay?

CHESSIE

Says so on the sign, what do you need?

SMARM

I'm looking for a friend of mine, a fish, do you have a Crappie there?

CHESSIE

We got lots of Crappies, can you be more specific?

SMARM

Sure, ah, first name Myassis.

CHESSIE

Like Molasses? What is that, greek?

SMARM

Sure, lots of Greeks around the Chesapeake.

CHESSIE

Sure.

(Hollering.)

MYASSIS CRAPPIE! WE GOT A MYASSIS CRAPPIE IN THIS POND? MYASSIS-
HEY!

(Static. 2.3.4. Rose petals descend. A stark white stage where two people share a cigarette and quote Mary Oliver.)

BELA

I can't imagine loving who you are.

BARTOK

Keep some room in your heart for the unimaginable.

(ROBIN wakes up as the channel changes, silently, to 2.3.5, a wildlife documentary montage.)

ROBIN

Mmmm. Fed the fish?

CARMINE

I fed them. I promise.

ROBIN

Flask okay?

CARMINE

Better. A badass scar and a tall tale to tell. Relax, chum. I gotchu. (Beat.) Halyard, huh?

ROBIN

Urgh. Ahab was really all-in on oceanic monikers, so we all picked. I picked out Halyard. You know, rope that moves the sails. Ahab was good at making me feel...like I was part of something. That everything I'd lost—was somebody's fault, and I could do something about it, and I had a, a purpose

in that way. [They have] that thing. When I was with [them] I was integral. I thought so, anyway. But also, urgh. You know?

CARMINE

I know. Some people have that shitty magic. I don't think...well, hm. I think he didn't make you integral. I think he just...was good at putting a spotlight on the fact that you already are. And then taking credit. What an ass.

ROBIN

Emphasis on "urgh." Fuck. I'm concussed! What's today?

CARMINE

Friday. Weekend ho!

(ROBIN is up fast.)

ROBIN

Is it Friday already? I have to go to the show. I have to tell Loren—

CARMINE

Wait a minute now, hang on—!

(ROBIN is getting [their] coat on, fixing [their] hair.)

ROBIN

No, no it's okay, I want this. I need to do this. I'm. I'm going to ask Loren out. I have a plan. Do you trust me?

CARMINE

Of course, Robin. I always have.

ROBIN

Good. Yeah. You have. I love you, Carmine.

CARMINE

Love you too.

(They hug. CARMINE regains their bearings some.)

CARMINE

Well! No sense in dilly-dalling, then! A lion does not concern itself with head injuries or hallucinations of fish! Go get 'em, first-mate-of-my-heart! Who knows what Loren could be doing now?

(A brief flash on the screens again, 2.3.6. LOREN in their apartment kitchen from the waist up and behind.)

LOREN

(Singing, frying an egg, playing with a mirror.)

No pants eggs,

No pants eggs!

Standing at the counter makin' no pants eggs.

Stage makeup,

Fun makeup!

Standing at the counter doin'

(Oil sizzles.)

Fuck!

Eggs with lashes,

Eggs with lashes-

(ROBIN takes a deep breath and exits the apartment, whereupon they are immediately set upon and a black bag thrown over [their] head. There is a very brief blackout as almost the entire cast, in various serious guises and dress, assemble on the stage. When the lights come back up, the apartment set has been partially cleared, the crew is out on the stage, and ROBIN sits in a small school chair, shocked. Everyone immediately begins applauding, laughing and patting ROBIN on the back. In order of credits, the cast begins saying "Congratulations!", including a suspiciously shit-looking version of EA operated by AHAB and another.)

ROBIN

What's happening? What's going on?

AHAB

(As EA:) Congratulations, Robin! You did a great job and served as my prophet! All the doors are open! It's time to flood the world now!

(A crew member starts to tie ROBIN's hands up.)

ROBIN

But...no, hold on, that's not supposed to be it. I was supposed to ask out Loren. You promised me a date.
(becoming cognizant of bound hands:) YOU CAN'T JUST DROWN EVERYONE. I WON'T DO THAT. WHAT IS THAT SUPPOSE TO SOLVE?

AHAB

(As EA:) Lots of things! A beautiful clean slate is just the way to—

(AHAB pauses, then takes off the disguise. [They are] wearing some kind of psychic helmet.)

AHAB

Wait, did you seriously ask the great god of the oceans for a date with Loren? You cannot be serious.

(The rest of the cast begins to disperse as the set is disassembled into a dingy warehouse. AHAB takes off the helmet and the AQUAPUNKS turns back into snarling, restless dicks.)

AHAB

Christ. Goes to show what trying to get into people's heads will do for you.

FLASK

I hate people's heads.

(AHAB gracefully pets FLAG as [they] pass. FLASK follows in [their] wake like a happy puppy.)

AHAB

Yes, I know you do, darling. *(to ROBIN:)* Long time no see, Robin. How is Ea doing your noggin, the good ol' boy? I had

this helmet made special to control him but you seem to be doing—an admirable job.

ROBIN

Huh.

AHAB

You always were my most verbose flunky.

ROBIN

Why did you put me with him? What was the plan? What was the point? Where am I?

AHAB

So many questions.

STARBUCK

Exes don't deserve answers.

AHAB

Mmm. But victims do.

(AHAB gets uncomfortably close to ROBIN.)

AHAB

I've always wanted to do the Bond thing. Don't you remember dreaming with us? About eco-friendly, geo-thermal-powered volcano lairs? Monologues about recycling?

ROBIN

I was lonely. I was lost, Ahab. The only thing I ever wanted to do didn't work out. And you took advantage of that. Of me.

AHAB

Sure. Maybe. Or maybe I saw you, Robin. I saw the better version of you. *(turning away)* It begins with a fish. A fish with a belly button that, legend says, has a god living inside it. MRIs reveal some strange, strange things in its fishy head; who knows how to get them out? Why, our good friend Stubb, the neurophysicist.

ROBIN

Wait, really?

STUBB

I have a doctorate.

AHAB

You were the only one without one, Robin, do keep up. There really is something about academia that drives people to—
(pulling STUBB's hair) —leather and ecoterrorism.

STARBUCK

I have my PhD in Ancient Theologies. I knew what would happen to you. What was happening, in fact.

AHAB

It was, of course, supposed to be me. Alas. I'm so suited for the gig: a helmet to corral a fishy deity, a fundamental desire to see the world drowned, a little discipline, and hey presto! The apocalypse and its champion. (leaning into ROBIN:) All we had to do was hide the fish somewhere for two seconds while we waited for the heat to die down. And you just couldn't help but fuck it all up.

ROBIN

So what now, huh? I have all the cards. In my skull.

AHAB

Well, so be it. We'll just open up your skull. Usher in the deluge a bit early. It'll happen either way. Preferably after our set at the secret pier show tonight.

ROBIN

Great. Great, yeah. So why bring me here? Just KILL ME AND GET IT OVER WITH!

AHAB

Why? Because, Robin, this is something you wanted once too.
 Don't you remember? And I wanted to ask, for-old time's
 sake—if you'd be so kind as to volunteer.

ROBIN

Volunteer?

AHAB

Of course, Halyard.

*(Band starts IT'LL ALL END IN TEARS. Slow, sad. The AQUAPUNKS
 should square off with their opposite number in the
 CHESEPEAKES.)*

IT'LL ALL END IN TEARS

AHAB (*sung*)

EVER SINCE THERE'S BEEN A DAWN
 THERE'S BEEN A TWILIGHT TO MATCH
 THERE WAITS A HEATED OVEN
 FOR EVERY CHICKEN EVER HATCHED
 TRAGEDY IS BUILT IN
 THE FOUNDATION ALWAYS FAILS
 NO DISCIPLES WITHOUT JUDAS
 AND NO MIRACLES WITHOUT NAILS

EVER SINCE MAN CORDONED OFF HIMSELF
 FROM NATURE AS IT STANDS
 HE DOOMED HIMSELF TO WRACK AND RUIN
 UPON TAR-BLACKENED SANDS
 EVERYTHING THAT BURNS AND SMOKES
 WILL CHOKE US IN THE END
 WHAT'S MORE IT WILL BE WELL DESERVED
 FOR OUR FOCUS ON DIVIDENDS

IT'LL ALL END IN TEARS
 THAT'S HOW IT ALWAYS GOES
 IT'S ALWAYS THE SAME STORY
 WITH THE SAME OLD BRINY WOES

POLLUTION IS A SIN

IT IS THE FIRST AND LAST
SINCE EVE THREW AWAY THAT APPLE CORE
WE'VE ALL BEEN NAUGHT BUT TRASH
WE TAKE AND TAKE FROM OCEAN'S DEEP
BUT ALL WE HAVE TO SHOW
IS ALIENATION FROM EACH OTHER
A VICIOUS STATUS QUO
PERHAPS WE COULD STILL BE FORGIVEN
IF FOR LOVE OUR WORLD HAD EVER STRIVEN
FOR UNITY AND KINDNESS TOWARDS
OUR NEIGHBORS THAT WE FAIN ADORE
ALAS

IT'LL ALL END IN TEARS
NOTHING'S BUILT TO LAST
IT'S NOT AS IF WE HAVE A FUTURE
WE BARELY HAVE A PAST

LET ME KILL YOU
YOU WHO I HAVE LOVED
YOU WILL BE A SACRIFICE
THAT I HAVE CHERISHED MY WHOLE LIFE
YOUR SMALLNESS AND YOUR FAILURES TOO
ERASED BY BLADE AND SALTY BLUE
LIKE BLESSED NOAH IN REVERSE
CLEANING SLATE OF MANKIND'S CURSE
WHAT BETTER OFFER COULD YOU ASK FOR?

IT'LL ALL END IN TEARS
YOU NEVER MATTERED ANYWAY
YOU HAD A MOMENT IN THE SUN
BEFORE IT ALL FADED AWAY

RELEASE A GOD THROUGH YOUR SLIT THROAT
CHANNEL THE DIVINE IN BLOOD THAT COATS
A HEAVING MASS OF WRETCHED SOULS
PURIFIED BY DROWNINGS FORETOLD
BY-

(A graphic of a door opening behind ROBIN.)

ROBIN

Holy shit, no! No! Oh my god, cut the music! What the fuck, Ahab?

(The band cuts off.)

AHAB

I have at least two more verses here, and they're fairly—

ROBIN

No! No more! Fuck no! I'm not going to be voluntarily party to global genocide because "humans mess things up." Oh my god!

AHAB

Don't pretend it's not a common sentiment.

ROBIN

YEAH AND IT IS FUCKING CRAZY! I'VE FUCKING HAD IT! I LOVE MY FRIENDS! I LOVE MY COWORKERS AND MY FISH AND THE DISHES IN THE SINK AND MY BEAT UP COUCH AND MY APARTMENT AND MY OLD TV SHOW, AND ALL THE MUSIC THAT I HAVEN'T LISTENED TO AND THE PLACE THAT I HAVEN'T BEEN AND EVEN THE PEOPLE THAT ARE KIND OF MEAN AT EQUAL BITES AND I DON'T WANT THEM TO GO AWAY! WANTING IT ALL TO GO AWAY IS A SICKNESS! IT'S INSANE! WHEN DID EVERYONE GET OKAY WITH THAT? I DON'T EVEN WANT TO DROWN ANY OF YOU! I'M NOT THAT PERSON ANYMORE, BUT WHEN I WAS I, I, I LOVE YOU FLASK I LOVE YOU STUBB I LOVE YOU STAR—

AHAB

Belt, please. And the bag back over [their] head? Yeah, great. Thank you. Thanks.

(STARBUCK gags ROBIN, and then places the bag back over their head. FLASK and STUBB look deeply disturbed. AHAB puts a hand on ROBIN's head. Echo of tenderness.)

AHAB

Would've been nice, you know? If you remembered yourself. So be it. Goodnight, Halyard.

(AHAB and STARBUCK haul ROBIN away.)

FLASK

I hate ethical complexity.

STUBB

For The Good Of The Earth.

(FLASK doesn't say it back.)

SCENE 4: UNDER THE BOARDWALK

(Scene transitions to the secret under-pier show. The crowd is bopping to a band called "Young Meryl Streep" playing BILLY REUBEN, which is almost entirely spoken except for a steady bassline and some occasional lead guitar noodling. Lines will be spoken between the lyrics. CARMINE should just have entered; LOREN is not present yet but will enter the opposite.)

BILLY REUBEN

SINGER

I was, hanging out with my girl the other night
 And I saw up there on her wall a ten gallon hat
 And I said to her, "Who's hat is that?
 I've never worn a ten gallon hat, or any other gallonage."

She said "Oh don't worry about it baby.
 It's my friends', the jewish cowboy."
 And I said what?
 And she said "Yeah, the jewish cowboy,

Billy Reuben
 Yeah, yeah, Billy Reuben
 Billy Reuben
 Yeah, yeah, Billy Reuben

(LOREN enters and approaches CARMINE.)

LOREN

Hey! You're here, as ever.

CARMINE

Mine is the presence that anchors the inimitable aura of the surprise show! I am holding up The Vibe.

LOREN

Fuck yeah, brother. Thank you for your service. Psyched for tonight—put new strings on my mandolin two weeks ago and now they are perfectly warmed up. You seen Robin yet, by the way? I thought [they] were coming.

SINGER

And I started thinkin' about that fellow
And boy I was turning mighty green
But my eyes, funny enough, were turning yellow
Which is a mighty strange thing when feeling envy

CARMINE

No. [They] were supposed to be with you. [They] said [they] had something [they] wanted to talk to you about.

LOREN

You know, I've had a little crush on [them] for a while. And I've been hoping [they'd] ask me out.

CARMINE

You don't want to do the asking?

LOREN

I know what I want. Not very afraid of it. But I think...

CARMINE

[They're] afraid.

LOREN

Yeah. And I need to know [they're], you know. Gonna be able to get through that kind of fear.

SINGER

So I went over to the doctor,
 And he said "Oh I know what that's about."
 And I said what?
 And he said "You sir have in excess,
 Billy Reuben
 Yeah, yeah, Billy Reuben
 Billy Reuben
 Yeah, yeah, Billy Reuben

LOREN

I don't know, it feels crazy, that [they're] so afraid, right? Because I watched [them] on TV while they were still on, and I thought, "Wow, it must take a lot of guts to do what you love and turn it into something you can share with everyone." That's so scary! Every time we put on a live show I want to barf a little. But Robin was always just—so excited, it looked like. And even now, it'll be like, [they] have something smart to say, or something funny, but [they] always just...stop short.

CARMINE

Well, I think [they're] working it out.

LOREN

How do you figure?

CARMINE

[They've] had. A lot going on. In [their] head.

MC

Al-riiiiight! That was "Young Meryl Streep", big hand for a song that's literally just an extended medical pun! Like seriously, what the hell guys. Anyway. Up next is everyone's favorite convicted ecoterrorists, the "Aquapunks"! After them, don't go marching out to join Greenpeace; we've got "Thistle Lemonade" to hippie up the joint! Big hand for the Aquapunks!

(Band gears up for the AQUAPUNKS' hit single, DROWN THE RATS. ROBIN is put onstage in the hood, struggling.)

DROWN THE RATS

STUBB

WE ARE THE AQUAPUNKS 1 2 3 4!

STARBUCK (*sung*)

KILL EVERY BILLIONAIRE
 BURN EVERY FACTORY
 IT ALL MUST GO

WATCH THEM AS THEY FLEE THE SHIP
 CATCH THEM IN YOUR HANDS
 SEE THEIR DIRTY MINDS
 DROWN THEM IN THE SEA

AQUAPUNKS (*sung*)

DROWN THE RATS DROWN THE RATS
 DROWN THE RATS DROWN THE RATS
 DROWN THE RATS DROWN THE RATS

STUBB (*sung*)

HERE THEY STAND
 THEY'VE MADE THE EARTH A HOLE
 A BILLION HANDS
 BUT THE SAME SHIT SOUL

AQUAPUNKS (*sung*)

DROWN THE RATS DROWN THE RATS
 DROWN THE RATS DROWN THE RATS

(AHAB begins a crazy guitar solo. At the very end of it, STUBB whips off ROBIN's mask and STARBUCK goes for [their] throat with a knife. ROBIN looks like [they're] screaming in defiance. LOREN and CARMINE in the audience begin lunging toward the stage, CARMINE with their knife out, LOREN clobbering AHAB. Everything over the next few lines happens in slow motion. As it does, a kazoo version of THE RIVER CHANGELESS is playing in the

background, and the video screens have a watercolor/childish version of what is happening right now playing.)

NARATOR

IT WAS MIDNIGHT BEFORE HE CAME TO THE FINAL DOOR, AND WHEN HE OPENED IT, HE DIDN'T FIND ANYTHING PRINCELY AS HE HAD IN THE OTHER ROOMS. RATHER, HE FOUND EXACTLY WHAT HE HAD HAD WHEN HE BEGAN; THE OCEAN. AND SO HE CAST AWAY THE CHAINS OF OFFICE, THE SWORD OF KINGS, THE JEWELS AND GOLD, THE SCEPTRE OF PLENTY, THE ORB OF DOMINION, THE CROWN OF TEARS, AND, LAUGHING, HE CHARGED INTO THE STARRY SEA AND SWAM WITH HIS OLDEST FRIENDS, THE FISH AND THE BIRDS AND THE WILD THINGS WHO HAD MISSED HIM.

(EA, in a horrifically rapid movement, comes out from behind and eats a screaming STARBUCK, then exits. Time resumes as normal. CARMINE cuts ROBIN free as LOREN clocks AHAB and the crowd generally angrily buzzes. FLASK and STUBB flee.)

CARMINE

Chum. Buddy. Pal. Did I just watch the fish from your subconscious eat an Aquapunk for dinner, clean plate, no scraps, not even so much as a napkin?

ROBIN

Yes. I think. That is what has happened.

CARMINE

...was he supposed to do that?

ROBIN

I could not tell you. Actually. I mean. Maybe it was a good thing. Good for me, anyway. Man—

LOREN

ROBIN!

(They hug, briefly and violently. Maybe LOREN is a little teary, or ROBIN. Stakes are high, lads.)

LOREN

Holy shit, dumbass! You know when I said "come to the show" I didn't mean as part of a live snuff act! What even was that? Are you—?

(ROBIN seizes LOREN by the arms.)

ROBIN

Please go out with me. Whenever. Tomorrow. Or the next day. No, actually, tonight, after this show. We'll go get drinks until the bars close at two AM and then we'll talk about our lives and pet a street cat on somebody's stoop until the sun comes up. I think you're beyond gorgeous and funny and I want to clean up the harbor and the bay and the whole ocean just so we'd have something gorgeous to sit on a bench in front of wherever we went. I was scared but this is more important than being scared. You are. And I am. And everything. I don't mean to beg, I just-Loren—

(LOREN leans in and kisses ROBIN, deeply and with no small amount of affection. ROBIN kisses back, accepting and doting already, proud.)

LOREN

Yes, I will go out with you. After this show. I will get drinks with you until the bars close and—

(ROBIN passes clean out.)

SCENE 5: THINGS LEFT

(The EA puppet lays to one side on a mostly empty stage. EA the actor, and whoever else was helping them, are sitting and eating popcorn. They're watching what appears to be a medley of documentary ocean/bay life, a home video of a trip to the National Aquarium with a small child that is initially shown with a keychain customized to say "Robin" on it, and B-roll footage from Under Water with Robin Walser where Robin appears to be enjoying themselves. The only sound is waves, crashing on a beach. 2.5.1. The video continues as the waves get turned down on ROBIN's entrance. EA offers a raised hand—chummy.)

EA

Hey, bud! Fella of the hour! Siddown, c'mon, kick back, we're taking a load off. Nice mindscape you got here.

ROBIN

What is this, your final form? Why aren't you a fish anymore?

EA

What, aren't I allowed to change? Everybody else got to. Not to mention, it was killing [other person in the puppet]'s back. I figured I could give it a rest. C'mon, sit.

(ROBIN sits.)

ROBIN

What are we watching?

EA

You. Everything. Everything, as seen by you. Perspective, maybe that's the word. It's old news to you, being yours and all, but I've been away for a long time. I'm playing catch-up.

ROBIN

Before you drown it all at the bottom of the sea?

EA *(surprised)*

Well, yeah. Look, bud, it's not that I've ever universally disliked what people got up to, it's more that—hey, it's hard to justify keeping them around in the face of their selfishness, you know? I have a responsibility to the things of rivers and ponds and pools. People are bad for them. End of story. The story of people ends. There you go.

ROBIN

What am I to you, then?

EA

One of the good ones, I guess. You tell them what's coming, inform them of why, what they've done, and then, whoosh. All over. Maybe whoever is left will learn, then. I'm not merciless, you know. I don't want people to suffer. But you have to be responsible for your choices. You have to accept responsibility.

ROBIN

So that's it? The choices that people have made in ignorance and a few people have made in malice are enough to condemn all of us forever?

EA

Well now I didn't say—

ROBIN

No, you didn't. You didn't have to. I'm tired. I'm really tired of that. No one gets it. Not you, not Ahab, not—

EA

Woah now, prophet mine, hang on—

ROBIN

Shut up. You don't get it. You don't see it. It's in our hands. In mine and Carmine's and Loren's and everybody's.

(ROBIN begins pacing.)

ROBIN

You know what rye is? It's a cover crop. It gets planted in a field over winter, restores nitrogen to the soil, gets harvested, and the remains of the whole mess returned to the soil. It also makes some of the best whiskey on earth, incidentally, not that you care. People stopped doing that because of chemical fertilizers, and the runoff from that killed the Chesapeake Bay dead. The most productive oyster reefs on earth, gone. Thousands of acres of eelgrass, gone. But then, in the 70s, we said, no more. Enough. We learned how to get it right. We planted the rye again, and cut back

on the fertilizers, and we planted the seagrass, and we raised the oysters *by hand* until there were enough.

EA

That's just—

ROBIN

NO! I can't stand another excuse. It's working! It all works! Do you get it? We can fix it! Maybe not all of it, but enough! We found the old ways again, and we made new ways, and things changed but they're always changing, and you, you can't lose hope! It's here! It's now! And someday, we'll sit with our grandchildren next to some of the cleanest, saltiest water on earth, and eat oysters for cents on the dollar and drink rye whiskey by the pitcher, and wonder that it ever was any other way.

(The ocean background noise is roaring now.)

EA

So I'm not supposed to end the world just because you think you can fix it? I AM A GOD.

ROBIN

NO YOU FUCKING ASSHOLE YOU CAN'T END IT BECAUSE IT WAS ALREADY SUPPOSED TO END AND IT DIDN'T! BECAUSE ENOUGH PEOPLE, CHRIST ALIVE, NOT ALL OF THEM, NOT EVEN THAT MANY OF THEM, BUT ENOUGH OF THEM WORKED AND LOVED AND SCREAMED AND PLANTED AND CARED AND CARED AND CARED AND I WON'T LET YOU SPIT ON THEIR DREAMS! I WON'T LET YOU FLOOD A WORLD WHERE PEOPLE BEGGED, PLEADED TO SAVE THE WHALES BEFORE WE HAD EVER HEARD THEM SING!

(The roar is deafening.)

EA

TRY AND STOP ME.

(ROBIN squares up in the worst fighting stance of all time. Either EA or EA's partner starts laughing and can't stop. It

really is a sad little fighting stance. The roar goes back down to little waves.)

EA

Ohhhhh boy. Oh wow. You really were gonna try. Floppy little fists out. Hoo! Goll-ly. Good thing we were just trying to get you a date instead of making you the heavyweight champion of the world. Boy howdy.

ROBIN

Uh?

EA

You really have been my most verbose prophet. Not everyone has the chutzpah to stand up to a god. Woof!

(He smiles.)

Nice pushback. It is...frankly, bud, it is pretty darn refreshing. It is hard to get perspective, being, oh, old and immortal and godly and all that jazz. There are things a god forgets. Or stops learning. Never stop learning, eh?

ROBIN

I was—am—pretty big on learning.

EA

Liked your show, by the way. Watched it through your memories. It WAS boring, but it was hard not to like it, bud. It's the enthusiasm, I think.

ROBIN

...thanks.

EA

Hey, I'm just joshing. You had that magic, though. Good at making people love things.

(He considers something. Doesn't say what. Then, after a beat, pulls out a cigar, reading glasses, and a clipboard.)

EA

Alrighty. If flooding the world is out, we'll have to find another Q3 major project. I have an allotment of miracles to get through and they're not going to use themselves. Are you ready?

ROBIN

For what?

EA

You just gave a whole monologue about the fixing of things and how it's possible and maybe even inevitable. Do you not intend to participate in that process?

ROBIN

Oh. Oh! Uh. Yes.

(ROBIN looks at the clipboard.)

ROBIN

The zebra mussel thing could really stand a miracle, though a mass die-off in any case would—

(EA hugs ROBIN. ROBIN slowly returns the affection. [They] break, EA clearly proud.)

EA

You know what—get outta here. There'll be plenty of time for work later. I've taken care of your Ahab problem, so you should be good to go. Enjoy yourself a little. Wake up, Robin!

(The samples from the beginning of the show play as the set shifts back to under the pier; they are still at the concert, though now most of the attendees are in their various wildlife costumes. CARMINE is standing next to ROBIN.)

SAMPLES

Robin? Rooooobin. Robin. Robin, Robin, Robin. ROOOOBIN.

ROBIN

Ahh!

CARMINE

"Thistle Lemonade" is about to go on! I thought you might not want to miss it, seeing as you've got a red hot date with the lead singer. Also, I think you might be iron deficient, what with the repetitive fainting, comrade.

ROBIN

We should get one of those little fish. The iron fish. To put in food. When you cook it. For the iron. Sorry. I'm—it's been a long day. Thank you, Carmine. I couldn't have done it without you.

CARMINE

Bet your ass you couldn't have. You were out of your depth like a scuba diver in the Mojave. Have you seen Ahab? No one seems to know where [they] scuttled off to.

ROBIN

I don't know that I care to find out.

CARMINE (*winking*)

No, no, that's fair. Incidentally, Flask and Stubb have some words for you after the show. Ooh, shit, there they go!

(LOREN ends up onstage with the actual band, playing acoustic/mandolin (if possible) for BALTIMORE 2027.)

BALTIMORE 2007

LOREN (*sung*)

WHERE IS IT THAT YOU'RE GOING?
AND ARE YOU ALREADY THERE?

I'VE LIVED THROUGH THREE REVIVALS OF THE INNER HARBOR
EACH ONE WORSE THAN THE LAST
I WATCHED THE WHOLE DAMN CITY MOVE TO TOWSON AND FREDRICK
AND DAMN NEAR HALF MOVE BACK
I'VE SEEN THE HARBOR BLUE GREEN AND GRAY AND SLICKED WITH
OIL THAT SHONE LIKE THE SUN

I'VE SEEN EVERY ANIMAL THAT LIVES IN THE BAY ON THE STREET
EVEN ONES SUPPOSEDLY GONE

SO WE'LL RAISE OUR FLASKING SAGAMORE SPIRITS
AND HAVE A LITTLE BIT OF SHOT TOWER GIN
WE'LL HAVE EKIBEN TAKEOUT AND PARTY AND MAKEOUT
FROM BROOKLYN UP TO HAMILTON!
WE'LL SING-

LOREN / CHORUS (*sung*)

ALL THINGS BRIGHT AND BEAUTIFUL
ALL CREATURES GREAT AND SMALL
ALL THINGS WILD AND WONDERFUL
ALL IN ALL, YOU'RE ALL, THAT'S ALL

LOREN (*sung*)

IT'S ALL HERE!
IT ALWAYS HAS BEEN
IF YOU'VE EYES ENOUGH TO SEE
NOTHING TO FEAR
IF YOU'RE OUT WALKIN
IN ROLAND HILL OR GREENMOUNT STREET

I'LL SHOUT IT FROM THE ROOFTOPS IF NO ONE ELSE WILL
I'LL HOLLER TILL MY LUNGS ARE SORE
IN EVERY SINGLE ONE OF US IS A WILD AND PRECIOUS THING
IT CRAVES THE SEA AND SOIL AND MORE
IT ACHES FOR ENDLESS LOVING HANDS, TENDER SENTIMENTAL HEARTS
SO WEAR THEM ON YOUR SLEEVES
GRAB A SHOVEL GRAB A FRIEND, FORGET YOUR BRUNCHY WEEKEND PLANS
GO AND PLANT SOME GODDAMN TREES!

WE'LL SING-

LOREN (*sung*)

WHERE IS IT THAT YOU'RE GOING?
AND ARE YOU ALREADY THERE?

WHAT IF IF ALL YOUR KNOWING

CHORUS (*sung*)

ALL WE ARE SAYING
IS GIVE PEACE A CHANCE

DID YOU EVER REALLY GIVE

DIDN'T MEAN THAT YOU REALLY CARED

WE'RE GOING TO MAKE LIKE TOP GUN
AND HAVE SIGN UPS IN THE LOBBY

DON'T FORGET WHAT WE'VE TRIED TO
MAKE YOU FEEL HERE
THIS WAS A LOT OF WORK BY SOME
BEAUTIFUL PEOPLE

ALL WE ARE SAYING
IS GIVE PEACE A CHANCE

DID YOU EVER REALLY GIVE
GIVE PEACE A CHANCE

ALL THINGS
BRIGHT AND BEAUTIFUL
ALL CREATURES
GREAT AND SMALL

ALL THINGS
WILD AND WONDERFUL
ALL IN ALL, YOU'RE ALL,
THAT'S ALL

GIVE PEACE A CHANCE

ALL WE ARE SAYING
IS GIVE PEACE A CHANCE

DID YOU EVER REALLY GIVE
GIVE PEACE A CHANCE

SING WITH US!

WHERE IS IT THAT YOU'RE GOING?
AND ARE YOU ALREADY THERE?

WHAT IF IF ALL YOUR KNOWING
DIDN'T MEAN THAT YOU REALLY CARED

ALL THINGS BRIGHT AND BEAUTIFUL
ALL CREATURES GREAT AND SMALL
ALL THINGS WILD AND WONDERFUL
ALL IN ALL, YOU'RE ALL, THAT'S ALL

ALL THINGS BRIGHT AND BEAUTIFUL
ALL CREATURES GREAT AND SMALL
ALL THINGS WILD AND WONDERFUL
ALL IN ALL, YOU'RE ALL, THAT'S ALL

(Show pretty much ends, everybody going nuts. The screens come on a final time as the band keeps playing the song but the cast for the most part are doing bows. 2.5.1, the news.)

REPORTER

For the curious public, we have the following updates on the characters people truly loved and cared about in Aquarius Dreaming. Black Sea Bass had a successful spawning season and ate several tasty ghost crabs before ultimately being hooked during a boyscout jamboree.

[Other similar, very silly epilogues for the wildlife ensemble with NO mentions whatsoever of the leads]

*(Eventually, another channel flip. The traditional ending of
"Under Water." 2.5.2)*

ROBIN

Until next time, kids! And don't forget: wherever you are,
there you go.

CAMERAMAN (O.S.)

Cut! That's not-

*(Laughing. [They] weren't supposed to say that. A faster channel
flip. An archeologist talking at the camera, bottom roll reads
"Ancient Mysteries".)*

ARCHEOLOGIST

-but the odd thing about this clay tablet, see, that's Assyrian
cuneiform, and it was found on the ruins of a fish farm near the
Tigris. The text, though, the text says, transliterated into
english, "Arthur Habitat of Baltimore washed ashore and has been
helping father with the ponds. [They] say that the stars are not
like ours where [they] are from and speak often of [their]
'punks' and how they miss them, much admiring one called
Halyard." I mean, what do you even make of that? I think aliens-

(Watercolors, the end. 2.5.4)

NARRATOR

And they all lived happily, ever, af-

*(As the cast leaves stage, 2.5.5. ROBIN and LOREN on their date,
trolling around Baltimore.)*

THE RIVER CHANGELESS REPRISE

CHORUS *(sung)*

THOSE RESTLESS YEARS
AND ENDLESS DAYS
OF OPEN DOORS
AND TIDES AT PLAY
I HAVE NOT FOUND THAT RIVER CHANGELESS

WHERE I'LL WASH THESE PAINS AWAY
AND I
MAY NEVER

(Onscreen, simultaneously: getting oysters, which LOREN makes a face at while ROBIN laughs; roller skating at Shake and Bake Family Fun Center, ROBIN falls, LOREN laughs; an alt show at the Ottobar, sharing a cig outside; drinks at Fraiser's; getting ROFO after Fraiser's closes; petting a cat on someone's stoop, the sun coming up. Eventually, both of them end up at a table center stage, looking hungover. Table waaaaaay too fancy.)

LOREN

Can you afford any of this?

ROBIN

No. We're going to have to run. I don't even know what "en papillote" IS-

(EA appears, human form, now in a tie.)

EA

Good morning! Here are our drink specials, I'll leave you to peruse. In the meantime, for an appetizer, would you care for the chicken or the fish en papillote?

FIN.