

The Cabinet-Maker's Weddin

-a play in two parts-

by
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The Cabinet-Maker's Wedding

Part One - "Blake"

(A not so old man who behaves like a man older than he is. He's wearing an anachronistic suit that looks neat and new. He's blind. Perhaps he has served as an usher at the entrance to the theatre. There are two simple but well-crafted wooden chairs at the foot of the stage and to one side. He stands by them and addresses the audience.)

Blake: I'm going to tell you a story. You may ask once you've heard it when did this story take place and I will do my best to satisfy you in this regard. I'll do my best, though I must confess it's not my specialty. There is a watch in my pocket, finely crafted, and I wind it every day, but it has a smooth glass face, I cannot touch the hands that move underneath. There is a calendar on my wall that changes every month, but each page is exactly the same to touch, and when I listen, it makes no sound.

The story begins with two old men in a shop. Do you see it?

(We do. One is working on sanding a chair. The other is merely sitting.)

Blake: It's evening. They've been sitting in silence for a long while.
(He sits in one of his two chairs.)
This has it's pleasures, but I'm not going to force you to-

Alms: I'm going home now Alfr-

Alfred: How is your wife.

Alms: She's fine. She's fine. We have strong boys, but at night she clings to me and worries they all have skinny ankles that'll twist stepping off a sidewalk. But she's fine. I'm going now Alfred; Sing me one of your songs.

Alfred: My friend, I'm tired.

Alms: Sing me one song. Then we can all *go* to bed.

(Alfred sings a Franciscan Hymn.)

Alms: *(as Alfred finishes)*
It would have been a far better life for you I think.

Alfred: *Oh- (curses mildly in Dutch)*

Alms: It would.

Alfred: For you maybe, not for me.

Alms: The Franciscan Order of Monks. Cloistered. Some distant place. The air heavy with moisture, the lands crowned with green, a stable over there full of hay.

Alfred: Your head is full of hay. That is not a distant place my friend, I have been there, and I can tell you this was the distant place.

Alms: Still it must be better than the life of a carpenter.

Alfred: Speak for yourself stonecutter. What could be better than the life of a carpenter!
Anyway, I'm not a carpenter.

Alms: You're a carpenter.

Alfred: Man I am a cabinet-maker.

Alms: Oh. What are you saying a carpenter can't make a cabinet out of wood?

Alfred: How many years have you been on this earth?

Alms: Ah.

Alfred: A carpenter can make a cabinet from whatever he may find with his hands, if he has the skill, and many other things besides.

Alms: Then what's the difference.

Alfred: You want to know the difference?

Alms: Yes I want to know the difference.

Alfred: You really don't already know the difference?

Alms: No I don't.

Alfred: Madcap.

Alms: Teach me.

Alfred: oh now you're the young student.

Alms: Teach me wise old man the difference.

Alfred: Don't raise your voice here.

Alms: I'm not raising my-

Alfred: Look you're upsetting my rabbits. Once it was a quiet evening one thought to spend here.

Alms: As you please.

(Alfred picks up a bag of wonderbread.)

Alfred: Once this was like cake to us.

Alms: I know.

Alfred: Now we feed it to rabbits.

Once I knew a cabinet-maker constructed a box for stowaway on a ship: Only could open it from the inside and room enough for one man to lie down, it was made to be hooked to the side of an ocean-going vessel and look as if it was meant to be there. He did all this for a fellow he knew who wanted to go to Canada. Now a carpenter could have done that, but not necessarily could he have done this: Above where the head was to rest, the cabinet-maker carved a picture in bas-relief - the picture of a woman - the fellow's wife who was here already - the woman who was to Become his wife, I mean. That was the work of a cabinet-maker; but it was never used. Fellow never did come to Canada until years later...
And perhaps she had never come at all, either...

Alms: Goodnight Alfred.

Alfred: Goodnight Alms.

Alms: I never heard that story before.

Alfred: Tell me, why would I wish to tell you a story more than one time?

(Alms shrugs and then leaves. Alfred lights a candle and moves across to his bed - a plain wooden bed with no mattress. He pulls back the single blanket, exposing a collection of silk women's underwear and bras. He lifts one and then another, and looks at the silk in the light, then caresses his cheek lightly slowly with one, then drops them back on the bed.)

Alfred: Morning.

(Scene. The light of the morning floods in. He hoists the bed roughly up onto it's side, and the blankets and underwear disappear. The bed has become a counter, and the exposed area of floor is strewn with carpenter's tools and such. There is the tinkle of a small bell - the kind that indicate the opening of a shop's door - and a small woman appears, midfifties or so, with perhaps the slightest Franco-Ontarian accent. She has a bunch of rolled-up papers under her arm, different sizes, and also carries a

package of brown paper, wrapped in twine.)

Alfred: Yes?

Marie: Hello.

Alfred: What can I do for you.

Marie: You're a carpenter, right?

Alfred: Yes, yes, sure.

Marie: I would like you to make something for me.

Alfred: Yes.

Marie: It's here. I have diagrams.

Alfred: Show me.

(As he spreads the several large sheets of different sizes on his countertop, Alms enters.)

Alms: Morning.

Alfred: Ah- Now wait now, I have customers.

(Alms sits in one of the chairs.)

Alfred: Now this: what is it for.

Marie: I made it up.

Alfred: It's a musical instrument, correct?

Marie: Yes.

Alfred: Have you drawn it in its proper proportions?

Marie: Yes.

Alfred: But look here, do you see what I mean? The rim and the head are very small compared to the neck.

Marie: Because I only have this much skin to stretch over it.

(She hands him the package of brown paper.)

Alfred: Oh I see. But for this you want a luthier, not a carpenter.

Alms: Luthier?

Alfred: Shut up. My good woman, you want a luthier, an instrument-maker.

Marie: A carpenter will be fine.

Alfred: Sure.

Alms: But Alfred, aren't you going to tell her you're not a -

Alfred: Shut up!

Alms: You see he's not really a carpenter, he's a -

Alfred: Pay no attention to him, he's a stone-cutter, he's got a stone-cutter's mind.

Marie: Can you name a price?

Alfred: Well let me just look here.
But you haven't indicated the kind of wood you wish for me to use.

Marie: I don't know.

Alfred: You see there are more ways to the wood than one.

Marie: I don't know anything about it.

Alfred: Well I will make some inquiries, and then I will call you with my price, which will be reasonable.

Marie: Thank you.

Alfred: Now do you wish to sit down to some tea?

Marie: No thank you.

Alfred: All right.
(She's taking her leave. He speaks his customary farewell to a customer.)
I hope you will think I am no unlikely piece of wood to shape you a true servant of.

(She leaves. Alfred studies several of the drawings closely, shuffling them about)

Alfred: I have No Idea.

Alms: You mean the great cabinet maker can't teach a block of wood to sing?

Alfred: Dammitt man, it's a whole different skill.

Alms: Then why didn't *you* say no?

Alfred: *(distracted, he's looking at the drawings again)*
What?

Alms: Why didn't you say no to the woman?

Alfred: Man, I build things. Tell me, why are you here bothering me so early in the day?

Alms: My house is full of stones I don't want it anymore. I put a sign on the door: "Come back tomorrow."

Alfred: My friend, maybe the dead can't wait till tomorrow.

Alms: Ah, the dead don't mind, it's the Living want everything just So; I'd rather be a monk.

Alfred: *(he's been examining the drawings)*
I can't make heads or tails of these,, I don't know if they'll play, I don't know what wood to use, but dammitt, they're beautiful.

Blake: *(who has not moved)* Describe the instrument to me.

Alfred: Blake? Man how long have you been sitting there?
(to Alms)
Did you bring him in?

Blake: *(as Alms shakes his head)*
You should lock your door at night Alfred

Alfred: Pot fot damme.

Blake: Now it's a stringed instrument, yes?

Alfred: Yes.

Blake: All right, go on.

Alfred: There is the large hollow part that does the work of a neck.

Blake: A resonant box.

Alfred: As you please. And it curves.

Blake: Is it symmetrical?

Alfred: No. Well yes but no. Dammitt man, must you be blind?

Blake: I'm afraid I must my friend.

Alfred: You see, there's more to it. Dammitt, I must talk the thing instead of making it with my hands; Ah I would I could fashion it and sand it down so you might touch the thing with your own hands and know what it is from that, but in order to do that I must first consult the expert on the make of wood to use for each part - dammitt - and the expert for this is you. And in order to consult the expert I must make the thing with words instead of my hands. And all so you might touch it later and say "Ah, it was like this!"

Blake: All right then. Describe the woman instead.

Alfred: The woman!

Blake: Yes.

Alfred: Why the devil do you need to know the - (!)

Alms: She's very small.

Alfred: That's true, but why -

Alms: Colourful clothing. And a little gold brooch on her collar

Alfred: She had no such thing!

Alms: She did!

Alfred: Liar.

Alms: Nice shoes. A lacey shawl. Black eyes. Like coals.

Alfred: Alms is clearly a poet; I work with my Hands-

Blake: So then, for your hands I suggest a curly maple resonant box. The instrument is small, no?

Alfred: Yes.

Blake: The Maple will give it some Weight in your hands. Up the middle you might lay down a fingerboard of ebony, it's nice for the-

Alfred: Ebony?

Blake: Well we can make it from a ham can if you'd rather!

Alfred: No, no.

Blake: Fine. And I will try and get you some ivory tuning pegs.

Alfred: And what of the pot?

Blake: What's that you say? The pot? What pot?

Alfred: There is a small pot attached, like a tamborine.

Blake: Where?

Alfred: To the box-part, the box is only partly there, and for the rest there's a pot with a skin head.

Blake: Well why didn't you say so!

Alfred: Dammitt man!

Blake: All right.
For the alleged pot you must fashion it from maple, strips soaked and glued into one piece. For that you'll have to make a mould with bracing,

It's the hardest part.

Alfred: (*curses mildly*)

Blake: And we must also decide about the skin.

Alfred: What about it.

Blake: Well what will we use? You're not planning on killing one *of* your prize-winning rabbits are you?

Alfred: *(Curses.)*

Alms: We already have a skin. She brought it.

Blake: Let me see.

(Alfred goes and gets the brown package. It hasn't been opened before now. He unties the twine and opens the package, without removing the contents. Then he brings it over to Blake.)

Alfred: Seems a meagre bit of skin to bother about.

(He hands the package to Blake, who reaches in and touches it with his hand.)

Blake: Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

Alfred: What is it.

Blake: Look at this, what you've got.

(Alfred and Alms do. Then they look at each other.)

Blake: Now, Alfred: Describe the woman to me Again.

(Scene. Alms disappears. Blake still has not moved, and Alfred returns to his counter where Marie is now waiting. He pulls out the instrument and presents it to her, complete but for the head.)

Marie: It isn't finished.

Alfred: Yes; the skin for the head.

(He pulls out the reclosed package, places it on the counter.)

Alfred: This-

It's a breast, no? What you call it - a graft; it's flesh for a woman's breast!

(She says nothing. He insists.)

Here look: There is the colour of a nipple.

(She still says nothing.)

Look dammitt! Right there!

Marie: Of course it's there. *(an embarrassed cuss)*
Honestly

Alfred: Yes but my dear! You cannot expect me to All right. I say it's yours. It's yours, yes?

Marie: Yes.

Alfred: Where did you get it?

Marie: The doctor gave it to me.

Alfred: But whatever for?

Marie: I asked him for it.

Alfred: But why?

Marie: So I could bring it to a carpenter.

Alfred: All right.

(He sighs)

All right, you do what you please with it.

But you cannot expect me to -

...

This is what you wish for me to - to -

(indicating the pot.)

Marie: Yes.

Alfred: *(cursing under his breath)*

You know: There are other means:

That are - that are better for the weather:
For instance: when the air is dry: a manufactured piece can
be very -
Durable.
[Dammitt.]
All right. I do what you ask. Fine; I finish the job.
(*mumbled curses*)

(*There is a pause. She turns to go.*)

Marie: I'll come back tomorrow.

Alfred: No; Stay. Better you are here while I -
I begin the - Please. I will make you some tea. I have many
different kinds of tea.

(*She considers, then nods her assent.*)

Marie: Okay.

Alfred: Better this way. yes?
(*He gestures*)
Come. Come in. First I feed the five thousand. Then I show
you what we do with the bit of a-
the bit of a-
Come. Come.
It's been many years since I have seen
But of course it's different, this...
Or not so different: A nipple is a nipple.
A breast is a breast. But you mustn't - I am a very
respectful man.

(*Lights go out on Alfred and Marie, and Blake addresses the audience
from his place.*)

Blake: Can you see Alfred at his work?

(*We can't*)

Blake: The woman is watching his hands. The man and woman do not speak, only the hands: Alfred's hands as she watches: his fingers, the lines of his palms, folds of flesh over iron. She looks away, the work is done, she takes her leave and almost smiles - and Alfred is left again alone. The night for Alfred resembles my pocket watch, only the smooth glass cover has been removed, and the hands of the watch have been sharpened into knives that cut into the joints of his fingers and shoot jabs of pain up his arm. Night after Night after Night, Seven Nights running, the knives cut in, but still he dreams of the woman; but before he falls too far into his dreams, his friends will visit him again.

(Alfred is sitting on his bed in his nightshirt the, women's underwear nowhere to be seen. Blake turns into the scene and Alms joins him as the walk side by side up to Alfred, who looks up at them.)

Alfred: Ah! Why are you always now bothering me so early in the day.

Blake: Alms put a sign up on his door: "Go and check one last time to see that they're dead, then come back tomorrow. Good luck. Alms the stonecutter."

Alfred: Gentlemen! Turn your backs, Please!

Blake: *(As they turn)*
Alfred doesn't want us to see him in a state of undress. He doesn't want us to see his bachelor's bed. He doesn't want to see it himself in the daytime so he gets rid of it: hoists it up into a counter, with some effort. Then he takes the sheets and stashes them on a shelf inside. Oh he's looking for his pants; he's found them -

Alfred: *(He's been doing all these things as Blake speaks them)*
Dammitt man!

Blake: He's pulling them on - the left leg, now the right. The bed has disappeared. He's ready for the day.

Alms: Yes why do you do that Alfred?

Alfred: Shut up.

Blake: He will only build a bed to be *only* a bed when he's found the woman who will share it. Isn't that right Alfred?

Alfred: [Madcap.]

Blake: Just out of curiosity Alfred, did that woman with the - alleged little gold brooch ever come back to-

Alfred: That's none of your business.

Blake: I see she hasn't.

Alms: You know I had a dream about her the other-

Alfred: You had a dream about that woman.

Alms: Yes I did. She was-

Alfred: There you were beside your dear wife in your bed, dreaming perversely about some innocent-

Alms: Alfred! It was Nothing Unt6w- (1)

Alfred: Tell it to me then.

Alms: I was just going to, My oh My. All I dreamt was she came to me and asked me to build another instrument.

Alfred: Pot fot damme.

Alms: I was With her out on the street in front of her house, and she told me -

Alfred: So how is it you knew the location of her house?

Alms: From the dream; if you please.
She told me to put my ear to the ground. She asked me if I could hear the train coming through the cement, and I said no. She couldn't either and then she told me to cut an instrument out of cement so that she could play and not hear the train coming. Isn't that strange? I told her I wouldn't use cement. I told her marble would be better.

Alfred: That it would, I'm sure.

Alms: I think so.

Blake: That, I tell you gravely, is not a young man's dream.

Alfred: No it's not.

Alms: No it's not, is it.

Blake: Gentlemen! We must dream more of the young man's dreams!

(He plays an instrumental jig of some kind - say "The Irish Washerwoman" - and Alms and Alfred enter into the spirit of it and begin to dance and then to sing. They do not hear the tinkle of the bell and suddenly Marie is there again leaning on her cone, this time without a wig. Her hair is wispy white and thin. She looks much older and trailer, though not a lot of time has gone by. Again she has several rolls of drawings tucked under one arm. Again another carefully wrapped package.)

Blake: Alms.

Alms: Yes, yes. We'll see you later Alfred.

Alfred: See you.

Alms: Come.

(He starts to guide Blake out, but they diverge and Blake sits down in his chair at the front of the stage. N.B. Make it as close as possible

to the entrance of the shop. Alfred goes silently behind his counter. Marie hands him the rolls of paper. Silently he looks through them, occasionally looking gravely up at her.)

Alfred: The same thing?

Marie: Yes.

Alfred: All right.

Marie: Two days.

Alfred: You will return in two days?

Marie: Yes.

Alfred: All right.

(They turn their backs to us and Blake speaks.)

Blake: Two days. Over the two days, is Alfred working or is he dreaming? He works, sleeps, works again, works still more, falls into his bed and dreams. You may ask, what does he dream?

(Marie and Alfred turn to each other and dance.)

Blake: Can you see it?

(They turn their backs again.)

Blake: Then he wakes, and she is there again.

(Alfred turns to Marie, holding a narrow cardboard box with no lid. Exclaims proudly.)

Alfred: This one is better!

Marie: oh?

Alfred: It has a better sound! I have learned something!

Marie: I don't know how to play.

(She's pulling out her wallet to pay.)

Alfred: But you must learn! I have
(curses, embarrassed, and then yells)
They are unique, no? Of course!

(She's paying. He tries to calm down.)

Alfred: Do you sing?

Marie: No.

Alfred: No?

Marie: I sing in church.

Alfred: Ah.
For each one you must learn at least one song. At least one song.

Marie: I don't know how to play.

(He nods, grumbling)

Alfred: Uh-huh.

(She turns to go.)

Alfred: I see there is someone waiting for you.

Marie: Pardon?

Alfred: In the back seat of your - your taxi-cab.

Marie: My son.

Alfred: Ah. Your son. You have many children?

Marie: I have nine.

Alfred: That's many. Nine is many. And a husband?

Marie: Goodbye.

Alfred: Goodbye.

(She leaves. Alfred goes and sits down in one of the chairs, sighs and stores straight ahead. Alms enters. Goes up to Alfred and looks at him. Alfred doesn't acknowledge him.)

Blake: Now I am approaching the end of my story.

(Blake turns from his place into the scene.)

Alms: *(to Blake)*
He's been sitting like this for days.

(Alms waves his hand in front of Alfred's face.)

Alfred: Leave me alone.

Blake: Alms, you must understand that he has become a lover.

Alms: Well maybe I'm a lover too! Did you ever think of that?

Blake: I thought you wanted to be a monk.

Alms: I do want to be a monk, I could be a lover first, as a young man, and then a monk.

Blake: Alms the Lover.

Alms: Yes and why not. It could be true. I could - sing songs too damn it. And I could even Dream the Young Man's Dream. That should stir him from his chair for a minute.
(He rises)

All right: I can see it; I'm going to tell it too: I can see a young man, and a young woman too, they're painting a house-

Blake: What the devil is this?

Alms: This is the young man's dream! You said we should dream more the young man's dream!

Blake: A young man and woman painting a house? This is the young man's dream?

Alms: Well I'm not Finished yet, if you give me a moment I could -

Blake: Do you see anywhere around here a young man and woman painting a house?

Alms: No but-

Blake: Well then Alms, I suggest you wait your turn.

alms: Wait my turn? I'm merely trying to

(Alfred suddenly looks up.)

Alfred: What day is it today?

Blake: It's Saturday.

(Alfred jumps to his feet.)

Alfred: I must go. Where's my bicycle. Will someone please feed my rabbits for me.

Blake: Yes I will.

Alms: Where are you going?

(Alfred exits.)

Alms: He never goes anywhere. Where is he going?

Blake: Ah he's a lover. Leave him be.
Look out rabbits! Tonight you're feasting with the bread man!

(He swoops up the wonderbread. Then stops and turns, concentrating very hard on something. Alms can't figure out what it is and finally decides to ignore it.)

Alms: You know, if I only just went away, became a monk, took a vow of silence, then I'd never have to worry about being Ignored, I'd never have to endure the Hear)s of mockery that are Thrust upon me each and every time I open my -

Blake: Shush,shush.

Alms: oh now he doesn't even pretend to be interested, not even for a second -

Blake: Quiet. I'm trying to listen.

Alms: It seems to me you're trying Not to listen.

Blake: Alms, I will give *you my* full attention later.

Alms: I want to talk now.

(Blake has his hand up and his ear cocked.)

Alms: What are you listening to?

Blake: Alfred.

Alms: Alfred's Not Here! I'm here! Alfred's not here!

Blake: No. He's on the street. on his bicycle. Going up the hill. He keeps it well oiled. Not one single squeak.

Alms: You can hear him?

Blake: Shush now: He's at the end of the street. Turning. West. What's west?

Alms: What's west?

Blake: What's west.

Alms: Uh... The Grocery?

Blake: Not the grocery.

Alms: Why not the grocery?

Blake: There. He just passed the grocery.

Alms: Oh.

Blake: He's turned onto King George Road. Cars zipping past him, it's hard to - Oh: He's turning.

Alms: Which way.

(It gets ever harder for Blake, who strains. Alms strains with him.)

Blake: North.

Alms: North.

Blake: I know where he's going.

Both men: Church.

Blake: He's going to the church.
There he is. He's there. It's already started.

Alms: There's a service now?

Blake: A French service. He's opened the door. It squeaks. Very rusty hinges, once it closes I'm sure I won't be able to -

Oh!

Alms: What!

Blake: The Door to the Church has been Left Ajar.

Alms: We are the lucky men today.

Blake: Now. There's our woman. Oh. She's whispering to someone. It is her husband, sitting and sighing under some kind of book that he reads through the mass - By the heaviness and protracted nature of the sigh I would wager it's some vast tome of philosophical speculation with regards to the Existence of Our Lord God, but we're not going to confirm this theory today, no, not unless he's about to mumble aloud some of the words. She's telling him to put it aside. Now she rises. Her cane is going tap. tap. tap on the pinewood floor, as she walks up to join the choir. Oh. The song is - closing. A closing hymn. Alfred is near the choir, he is standing - right behind her. He draws his breath to speak:

Alms: And what does he say?

...

What does he say?

...

What does he say?

...

What does he say?

(Pause.)

Blake: Nothing. He said nothing. All that came out of him was a sigh.

Alms: Oh.

Blake: Yes. But. Next week - If a week went by, I'm sure it would be a different story. He would think of something to say if he had another week to work it out. Now that he knows how hard it is to speak.

Alms: Ah she might be dead by then. We might all be dead by then.

Blake: I say we take a peek. What do you say Alms? You're a poet:
Shall we leap over a week?

Alms: What?

Blake: It can be done.

Alms: Do you think so?

Blake: Sure! All he's going to do anyway is sit in that chair and say
nothing and touch nothing and do nothing. Do you want to see
that?

Alms: No.

Blake: Neither do I. So.

Alms: A week.

Blake: A week.

(Blake stands, startling Alms, who stands as well.)

Alms: What.

Blake: She's back in the church.

*(They're facing out. Marie enters and stands beside Alms. Alfred
appears too.)*

Alms: And Alfred?

Blake: He's there. Behind her. Trying to stop his teeth from chattering.
She stands with the choir to sing. Can you see it?

Alms: Sure, yeah, I can see it, sure.

(Marie begins to sing a hymn.)

Blake: He draws his breath to speak.

Alms: Does he say anything?

Blake: He'd better.

Alms: Say something Alfred.

Blake: He exhales and draws his breath ag-

(Alfred speaks up, interrupting Blake and addressing her in a way that seems as though no one else would hear.)

Alfred: I tell you, I know the touch of your breast as well as your husband on the night you were wed; it is your body I hold in my hand as tenderly as your mother held you whole on the *day* you were born. I know your skin, I know the flesh of your body: Your nipples are the colour of plums, I would bet you never thought you would here a man tell you that again. And this for added measure: your eyes are the colour of black coffee, your hair the colour of the freshest tobacco in my pouch; your skin is olive, your hands are darker, and your nipples are the colour of plums, though before God you never thought you would hear more than one single man alone say those words to you, before God. the music of your breasts when my hands pass over them is the sound of your sigh from the touch of the man that loves you who is not your husband, who will never touch you any other way.

(Abruptly she stops singing as he stops speaking. Then, just as abruptly, Alfred departs. Marie turns to where the voice come from, but there is nobody there. Then she walks off, leaning on her cone. Blake and Alms incidentally have ended up in the two chairs at the foot of the stage.)

Blake: Now. Alms. Stay with me here and listen carefully. You're going to have to take over this story once I've done with it.

Alms: Me?

Blake: And you can be a part of it wherever or however you like.

Alms: However I like?

Blake: So follow me closely. I haven't got time to go into the details of the craft, but I'm sure you'll do just fine, if you follow along the story of instrument #3.

Alms: Instrument #3.

Blake: Two days have gone again by.

Alms: Two days?

Blake: Maybe three.

Alms: Three days.

Blake: Alfred's back in his shop.

(He is.)

Alms: Back in his shop? We're in his shop. Aren't we?

Blake: Alms, please, just follow along: He's back in his shop trying to finish the chairs we've been sitting in.

Alfred: Dammit the things already are showing signs of wear.

Blake: Then our woman is there.

(She is.)

Blake: She bears one single drawing, and nothing more.

Alms: No little box?

Blake: No little box.

Marie: *(giving Alfred the drawing)*
Thank you for - your - help.

Blake: Then she turns and walks out to the taxi. He is speechless, barely has enough to say goodbye -

Alfred: [Goodbye.]

Blake: -And from the taxi as it pulls away she looks through the screen door at him, behind his counter.

What Ever has she been thinking? Not even I can answer that. All right now: See him with the drawing. He works with a kind of exuberance, and the object is forming under his hands, rising from the wood shavings, almost in one piece, free of curves, posed of one sweeping curve. Then he falls asleep standing up. Our Alfred is getting awfully stiff in the joints. When he wakes, you and I will be there, and we'll all hear the sound of a taxi pulling away in the morning, carrying the same young boy as before. Ready?

(Alms nods, stirred. They turn into the Scene. Alfred wakes, still holding the instrument, and Alms goes to the door, pulls in a box.)

Alms: It's the other two.

Alfred: But why would she return them to me?

Alms: Not her.

Alfred: Her young son.

(Alms gives Alfred his cap.)

Blake: Have you oiled your bicycle lately Alfred?

Alfred: Yes I have.

(He's leaving.)

Alms: Do you know where you're going?

Alfred: Dammitt I don't.

Alms: She lives in the last house over on Wood Street, near the church there.

(Alfred looks at him.)

Alms: I know from my dream.

Alfred: Dorré!

(And he goes. They wait Blake is listening.)

Blake: That's a Large family she's got.

(After a few moments of silence, Alfred returns.)

Blake: Say what happened Alfred.

Alfred: Well, she's dead.

Blake: Yes.

(Alms makes the sign of the cross.)

Alfred: I went.
I knocked.
There was not a sound.
Again I knocked.
Still nothing, so I removed my cap, and as I come in through the door there is a great cry, for the house is full of people, and they are making embraces with one another and sobbing. Was I to come into this house? But it was as if I were invisible, no one who was there saw me, so -
(He shrugs)
I came up the short bit of stairs, past those people, and I go down a little hallway, and there is a room with a nurse

standing and a young girl sitting by the bed. And she is in the bed, and the nurse is just going to -

(He ' makes a gesture to close the dead woman's eyes. For the first time we see that Marie is here in his bed, and he reaches out and puts his hand over her already closed eyes. Then he takes a canvas bag out from under his bed, removes the instrument and slips it cradled into the dead woman's arms. It fits perfectly against her slight body. Then Alfred stands up.)

I go out the front door and climb onto my bicycle. Now everyone is watching me. Many people.

(He laughs)

I have puzzled them from their tears, I have surprised them out of their grief.

And off I go.

This one: it was not meant for sound. Why should she dream up an instrument she cannot play? It was not meant for it, but instead to touch like it is itself a body with an arm and a hand, made to rest against her body just so as she lies in her bed. It was My hand that fashioned it, and it's my arm, yes, resting against her body after a hard day at my work, there in her bed.

Blake: So you married her.

Alfred: My friend, I am not her husband.

(Now the house changes to allow for fifteen years or so passage of time. Blake approaches the audience.)

Blake: And then of course a bit of Time passes, and passes again.
We could stuff it full of fingers to get a good grip, but it's not made of stone or wood,
And with the time,
And with Marie,
Go I..

The Cabinet-Maker's Wedding

Part Two - "Alms"

(We see Alfred sitting in a chair in his empty shop. Both bed and counter are gone. perhaps there is the suggestion of a standard bed somewhere in the back, instead of his doubling counter. Alfred's fingers are twisted now from arthritis. He is sitting and attempting to play Marie's instrument #1. The other is in a stand right in front of him. For all his seeming effort however, he hardly ever even touches the strings, and only barely audible sounds come out We also see the exterior of house, with a ladder up against it and pointer's tools strewn about The stage has a church-style podium down front to one side, replacing the two chairs that were there before. Alms approaches the podium dressed in the black garb and collar of a Catholic brother.)

Alms: And the Lord God said, It is not good that Alfred should be alone; I will make him a help-meet for him. And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air, and brought them unto Alfred to see what he would call them: And Alfred gave names to all the rabbits, and to the fowl in their cages, but for Alfred there was not found a help-meet for him.

And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Alfred, and he slept, and as he slept he thought it was a dream that came to him, but in fact it was his life. And God took one of his ribs, and he closed up the flesh inside thereof;
And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from Alfred made he a woman - or not exactly: he made the image thereon in bas-relief, but from the rib itself he made an instrument with strings, and the flesh of a woman who had dwelled in the world with Alfred, though not in close proximity, a woman named Marie, who had died. And the Lord God brought this thing he had made unto the man. All this has been told.

And Alfred said, This is now bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh; this shall be called Marie's Rememberance - I shall

hold it in my hands, and she shall speak to me of desire all the days of my life.
All the days of my life.

Scene One.

(A man played by the actor who played Blake, though much younger than Blake, is taking off his work gloves at the foot of the ladder. He's been stripping old paint. Beside him sits Kip, a younger woman, who is sitting and staring morosely off into space. He tries to ignore her for a minute or two, and then speaks up.)

Paul: You're working, you got a job, I gave you a job, life is good, be happy.

Kip: I can't be happy.

Paul: Be happy Kip.

Kip: I can't be happy.

Paul: just think about it Kip: There are good, generous people in the world that want to help you out. I'm one of them. Hey there goes another one, I'll be damned there's a lotta rabbits runnin around this place.

Kip: I can't be happy. I feel like I'm going to die.

Paul: Kip, it's been two months.

Kip: I know.

Paul: He's gone, he's not gonna come back.

Kip: The bastard.

Paul: It's time to pick up and move on.

Kip: That's the whole thing, it's - Time - it's so. I'll tell you what it is Paul. I'll tell you what it is. Time - I feel like I'm gonna die soon.

Paul: You're not gonna die-

Kip: Shut up and let me finish. I might live until I'm very old. Eighty years let's say. Ninety. So. I'm thirty years old, I get my heart broken. For the first time Paul! I don't know how I've managed to avoid it all these years, but I have, and now it's happened, and now I feel like I'm supposed to be one of those little animals that goes running off the edge of a

Paul: A lemming.

Kip: Yeah, a lemming. I feel like a lemming.

Paul: Lemmings are a different thing though Kip: They go over cliffs cause they follow other lemmings: You don't strike me as the kind of person who

Kip: Yeah well I feel like the lemming at the head of the pack.

Paul: It's a different thing. The lemming at the head of the pack probably imagines that there's another le-

Kip: Would you shut up? who cares? The point is I feel all my life has been reduced to this deep fucking shit I'm in now, in which yesterday I was born and today I'm in the shit, and tomorrow I die, and it's tomorrow whether or not I'm eighty or ninety or it's really tomorrow.

Paul: Oh man, you are too intense.

Kip: And it's like some trawler with a very Very deep net has come along and stirred up all the shit from yesterday, and I'm swimming in all that now too.

Paul: Yeah well I'm telling you Kip for a fact - as your brother who knows you - it's been two months. Two months. That's about how long you've been feeling this.

Kip: It feels like forever.

Paul: Exactly.

Kip: I feel like I'm never gonna get over it.

Paul: Which means that it wasn't yesterday and tomorrow: Life is longer than that.

Kip: Life is short.

Paul: It's long.

Kip: No it's short.

Paul: It's long: You just said the last two months felt like forever.

Kip: All right then it's long: It's an eternity of misery.

Paul: I'm getting tired of this conversation. I wanna tell you a story. You see that rabbit just went by? You didn't, did ya.

Kip: No.

Paul: When you were a kid you used to set cardboard boxes up with carrots and sticks for rabbit traps, but you always forgot to weigh them down, so the rabbit would just hop away with the box over his head, and then I'd be out and I'd see boxes moving discreetly everywhere through the woods.

Kip: I remember that. It seems like just yesterday.

Paul: Whatever. My point is you used to be a sweet uncomplicated little girl, you liked rabbits and flowers and the colours pink and blue. All's I'm saying is you should think about that and

remember what that was like. Cause otherwise you're gonna end up like that man in there.

Kip: What do you mean.

Paul: Well take a look at him.

Kip: I'm looking at him.

Paul: Well there you go.

Kip: I don't know what you're talking about.

Paul: Well forget it - it's just an example.

Kip: Well I wanna know what you mean.

Paul: Well look at him: He just sits all day long and pretends to play that nutty looking thing of his.

Kip: What nutty looking thing.

Paul: That thing. That nutty looking music thing.

Kip: There are two of them Paul, and he's not pretending.

Paul: What's he doing then, I'd like to know, if he's not pretending. I don't hear any music.

Kip: He's trying to play them, he's not pretending.

Paul: What's the difference.

Kip: Whatcha talking about. There's a huge difference.

Paul: It doesn't matter. I was just using him as an example.

Kip: Paul! Jesus Christ, when you say he's pretending you're saying that he Really Doesn't Know what he's doing, When I

say he's trying I'm saying he actually knows how to play but something's stopping him,
Dumb jerk.

Paul: So what's stopping him.

Kip: W'll take a look at him.

(Paul looks in through a window.)

Paul: [I haven't the slightest idea.]

Kip: Don't know much about music, do ya?

Paul: I tried the guitar once. It hurt my fingers.

Kip: So look at his fingers.

Paul: What about - (?) oh.

Kip: Y' don't think they always looked like that, do you.

Paul: Kip, how should I know? I don't know the guy.

Kip: W'll you're the one told me he was a Carpenter. So he would've had strong fingers.

Paul: When did you become such an expert on everything.

Kip: Paul all's I'm saying is leave the guy alone. He's just trying to play.

Paul: Kip, I don't even know the guy, I was just using him as an example. I didn't realize you were so attached to the guy.

Kip: Oh brother.

Paul: Since you love him so much maybe you could bring that shit in there for him.

Kip: What shit.

Paul: That shit there. I got him some shit from the store this morning.

Kip: Fine.

(A bag of tea and tobacco by Paul's stuff. Kip, sidles over to it, picks it up and walks into the house. Paul starts to work again, occasionally checking the window.)

Kip: Hello? Hello? Sir?

(Alfred looks up, uncomprehending for a moment.)

Kip: Here's your groceries sir.
Uh.. We're the painters: I - I guess you asked my brother to pick up some -

Alfred: Yes yes dammitt, put it down. Why *do you* call me sir.

Kip: I - uh - I don't know, it just came out, but uh -

(She puts them all down by him. Tries to get a closer look at the instrument in his lap.)

Alfred: What?

Kip: Ah - *(noise and gestures "forget it.")*

Alfred: *(sighs heavily, the duty bothers him)*
You wish for me to offer you some tea.

Kip: No sir, not at all.

Alfred: Then what do you want girl?

Kip: Uh - I was just gonna say that that's - quite a thing you've got there.

Alfred: The instrument.

Kip: Yeah.

(He looks down at it Ignores her. She starts to leave.)

Alfred: What is your name?

Kip: Kip.

Alfred: Kip?

Kip: Kip.

Alfred: What kind of name **is** that for a girl?

Kip: It's the name I was given.

Alfred: Ne!
Well Kip, come here, I would like to touch your hair.

Kip: Pardon me?

Alfred: Give me your hair for me to touch.

Kip: **No!**

Alfred: Then lend it to me. I will return it to you with interest.

Kip: Uh - Excuse me I have to go back to work.

(She starts to go.)

Alfred: Ach! You are too delicate.
[Ach yunga] You are afraid of these my hands?

Kip: No sir. Uh - it's just that -

Alfred: The young are too delicate. They think the old are full of perversion.

I can no longer play. My fingers will not - press down the frets. I can no longer make it speak; I can no longer build. These hands are useless. if I could, I would lop them off.

Kip: Uh - Lop them off.?

Alfred: Yes, cut them off) They are garbage.

Kip: Well sir I don't know how you could build anything if you did.

Alfred: Who says I have anything left to build?

Kip: Well

Alfred: All right then, you convince me: I have anything to build, I tell you and you will build it for me.

Kip: I

Alfred: I will make you my apprentice.

Kip: I don't want to be a carpenter.

Alfred: Woman, I am a Cabinet Maker!

Kip: Well excuse me sir, I don't know the difference.

Alfred: Take this.

(He thrusts the instrument into her hands.)

Alfred: You like this.

Kip: *(nods)*

Alfred: That, younga house-painter is the work of a Cabinet-Maker.

Kip: You built this?

Alfred: Ya.

Kip: W'll it doesn't look like a cabinet to me. What do you keep in it?

Alfred: You think you are being very funny. Do you play?

Kip: No.
Well, I played a bit of guitar, but this is -

Alfred: This I will teach you.

Kip: You -

Paul: (*outside*)
Kip!

Kip: Yeah!
Hey listen: We're almost finished stripping the front. We should be able to start painting tomorrow.

Alfred: So it will be like new.

Kip: Yessir, it'll be like brand-smacking new.

Alfred: (*re the instrument*)
And the voice of this will also be again like new.

(*Beat. Kip nods. She goes. Paul is outside, cleaning up.*)

Kip: Sorry I took so long.

Paul: So is he gonna give you lessons?

Kip: ... (?) Yeah.

Paul: Thought so.

Kip: Why?

Paul: I just thought so. It struck me as your type of thing.

Kip: What do you mean.

Paul: Nothin Kip, it's nothing personal: I just figured that some tired old guy would appeal to you, considering the state you're in.

Kip: Oh really.

Paul: Better be careful though, He might not be good company for you.

Kip: What do you mean.

Paul: Well what if he turns out to have somewhat of a sunny disposition say, or an optimistic view of life God forbid.

(She's gathering up her stuff)

Kip: Would you shut up.

Paul: I'm serious. You never know with these old guys. I mean what if he wants to teach you polkas or something - or Irish jigs or something.

Kip: I'm done right?

Paul: Yeah. I mean what if he invites his five accordian-player friends to play along?

Kip: I like the accordion.

Paul: Yeah but I'm saying what if it's upbeat? What if he doesn't feel like teaching you the funeral music you've been playing at home - like the Gregorian Chants and whatever.

Kip: Are you getting tired of me staying with you Paul?

Paul: No, Kip, I just wanna make sure you're prepared for the guy to have a sunny

Kip: Well I can move out by the end of the week..

(She goes. He calls after her.)

Paul: Jesus Christ Kip, lighten up, all's I'm saying is What if he tries to teach you the Rhumba or Flamenco or something? What if he tries to teach you Turkish dance or Klesmer Music? What if it's some kind of Morris dancing music or something? I hope you're prepared for the fact that it might be Morris Dancing he's gonna teach you!

(He stands there and watches her go.)

Scene Two.

(Kip and Alfred are sitting. Kip has instrument #1 in her lap.)

Alfred: All right now: Play slowly the three patterns I have shown you, moving from one to the next to the next - the entire thing ten times.

Kip: All right.

Alfred: No, a hundred times.

Kip: A hundred?

Alfred: Dammitt, it does not matter. But Many; it must be Many.

(She starts to play. We see the form of Marie appear in the shadows at the back. Alfred leans back. Marie speaks. Kip doesn't hear her. Alfred, of course, does. In the event that they speak, Marie doesn't hear them.)

Marie: Bless me Father for I have sinned, I flirted once with the doctor, can you believe it, honestly, the doctor. He was Italian.

(Alfred grumbles.)

Marie: It's a small thing, but I thought I should mention it.

Kip: It's okay?

Alfred: Yes yes.

Marie: One down and one to stay. One to stay. One breast alone to do the work of two. What work? What work for one tired breast? Well what work for two? Each baby's only got one mouth, honestly. But if I'd had one tired breast alone to give to all those babies it would've got far more tired than it did, fifteen years of babies represents my complete work, my oeuvre. Can't say I've got another one in me. That was the full expression, the total output. Quiet ones, smart ones, stupid ones, cruel ones, and just one grandchild called Sarah, who brought me a drawing yesterday. Gramma plays Guitar. "Look what I drew" she said. "A guitar?" I said? Gravely answered yes. "And that's me with the guitar?" Gravely again yes. All I could think of was That's darn good advice. That's a very serious kid too. Too serious maybe, but what do I know: I'm just an' old woman with one tired breast who wants suddenly to flirt with every man she meets even though she's got a loving husband, even if he is a little - What have I been doing all my life: I could've been playing guitar!

Kip: Ow!

(Marie has stopped abruptly, with Kip. She disappears.)

Alfred: Don't stop! You have strong hands! Don't stop!

Kip: It hurts my fingers.

Alfred: Ach! But you See my Dear, you Must not Mind it! That is the only way to strengthen them!

(Kip sighs. Resumes her playing.)

Alfred: Good... Good.

(Marie returns.)

Marie: Then I could just play my guitar and I wouldn't need anything else would I.

(Alfred laughs. Kip pauses briefly)

Alfred: Play. Play.

Marie: I wouldn't go around worrying that he was going to leave me for - some other woman with more - symmetry about her, I

Alfred: Forget him!

Marie: Ugh, Lord, some confession. Don't say a word all your life, and then when you finally decide to speak you open your mouth and all that comes out is silly. You know he has nightmares, he cries in my arms.

Alfred: Ach! Yunga!

Marie: Funny though when he's afraid it makes me less afraid, makes me stronger. I'd like to tell him that, I'd like to tell Sarah what the drawing means, what it inspired, but I might frighten them with my words coming out wrong. They would sound so different, with authority and urgency, they'd think they were - final. Ugh. So I speak even less than I used to. Ugh. Why did I never learn to speak? All my life, what did I think I would win? Bless me father for I have sinned; I have not spoken my

Kip: Oh sorry sir, I gotta stop.

Alfred: Dammitt you! Girl! You have only just begun!

Kip: Sir I've done it as long as I can. I gotta stop.

Alfred: Yungai baby! The world is full of babies!
All right, do what you please! Go do your work! Leave me! I
will play it myself

Kip: Sir I -

Alfred: Leave me!

(Kip moves to the door.)

Kip: I'll - I'll come and play again tomorrow, after I've finished my
work - if I - if that's -

(Alfred ignores her. Tries to play.)

Kip: All right already. Jesus.)

(She goes. Alfred is barely playing. Marie is barely speaking.)

Marie: ... Show ... drawings ... granddaughter ... carpenter ... make ...
me ... Here... I.. diagrams...

(Kip comes outside. Paul is there.)

Paul: Done?

Kip: Yeah.

Paul: So is it Morris dancing?

Kip: No. I dunno. It's just chords... I didn't have the stamina.

Paul: For what.

Kip: The frets.

Paul: Hurt your fingers?

Kip: Yeah.

Paul: Oh.
How's the new place?

Kip: It's fine.

Paul: You're okay by yourself?

Kip: Yup.

Paul: Kay.

Kip: Hey Paul.

Paul: What.

Kip: What do you remember most about mum dying.

Paul: Uh - okay -just hold on and gimme a minute, I - uh-

Kip: If you don't wanna talk about it that's

Paul: No no Kip, I'm game - I mean, it was a long time ago, for me at least, but, like Did that guy in there ask you something about it or something?

Kip: No Paul, why would he do that.

Paul: No reason Kip. I'm just trying to figure it out.

Kip: I was just asking.

Paul: Okay.
I mean I remember lots of things. Nothing in particular, lots of different things.
Why, what do you remember.

Kip: Me?

Paul: Yeah.

Kip: I was just a kid.

Paul: You were fifteen Kip.

Kip: I remember that she didn't wanna talk about it.

Paul: Uh huh.
Do you remember the man?

Kip: The man.

Paul: The man on the bicycle. Do you remember him?

Kip: No I don't. Why. Should I?

Paul: No Kip.

Kip: Well I don't.

Paul: Okay.

Kip: I remember she was in a lot of pain at the end,

Paul: No she wasn't.

Kip: Yes she was.

Paul: No she wasn't Kip.

Kip: How do you know.

Paul: Cause I asked her. I mean yeah she lost control of her muscles, and they shook and did whatever they pleased, but for chrissake she was under no obligation to go gracefully into the damn sunset.

Kip: I know That Paul.

Paul: Well

Kip: I never thought she was under any obligation to *go* gracefully into the

Paul: Okay Kip. But anyway I only know cause I asked her. And even if she was in pain, we only had to sit in there with her.

Kip: Well I guess you would know that better than I would.

Paul: What do you mean.

Kip: Well you sat there.

Paul: So did you Kip.

Kip: You sat there more than I did.

Paul: Kip I didn't realize we were timing.

Kip: I thought you were pretty strong about it. I was too scared.

Paul: Well you were just a kid Kip.

Kip: I was fifteen Paul.

Paul: You were still a kid.

Kip: Well I wish I'd sat more with her. I didn't have the stamina.

Paul: Nobody was timing Kip. We were all there and nobody was timing.

Kip: Do you think I'm starting to look like her?

Paul: Who?

Kip: Mum.

Paul: What do you mean?

Kip: I mean do you think I'm starting to look like her.

Paul: Kip, we all look a little bit like both of them.

Kip: I should start - working out or something. Maybe I should become a vegetarian.

Paul: Oh man.

Kip: Well don't you ever think about it?

Paul: What.

Kip: Don't you ever get scared that you're gonna

Paul: What. Get sick? Get sick like mum?

Kip: Yeah.

Paul: Yeah I do Kip.

Kip: You do?

Paul: Yeah I do.

Kip: You do.

Paul: Of course I do.

Kip: Oh great.

Paul: Whaddy mean oh great.

Kip: "Oh." "Great." I never said anything else.

Paul: I know you never said anything else, I'm just trying to figure out

Kip: I don't wanna talk about it anymore.

Paul: W'll what are you saying? What did I let you down or something? Oh man you are too fucking intense. I wish you'd just tell me what it is you want,

Kip: For chrissake Paul! It's not a question of what I want! It's what I'm thinking It's what I think! My mind is popping up questions like some demented toaster and I want to answer them. I want to answer them! I mean you could give me pills and the questions could be ironed away like wrinkles from a shirt, but I don't want to be a shirt!

Paul: I don't want you to be a shirt either, or a toaster for that mat-

Kip: All's I'm saying is I feel old when I should feel young, when I Am young, and I'm afraid I'm gonna keep feeling old until I Get old, and when I get old one day I'll slap my forehead with my hand and say Stupid Stupid Stupid Stupid Stupid! I can see it all before me now, and there's nothing I can do about it except maybe go through the tunnel and see if there's another side!

Paul: Okay Kip.

Kip: Okay.

Paul: Man oh man.

(Beat Transition. Paul approaches the podium)

Paul: Ahem.
Am I supposed to - read this part here? Where it says where it's from? Uh - It's from Corinthians. [Sorry.] A reading from Corinthians: "Now I say brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God; neither doth corruption

inherit incorruption. Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. Best be careful though that you don't change into an old demented toaster that pops up hair and blood and shit and pills and wrinkled shirts instead of something you might want to butter on one side or the oops have I been - Have - Have I got to the end of the reading and I still been standing here? Have I been too been speaking out loud? Oh Jesus, I'm very sorry, pardon me my language, 1, I don't know what to - it's just that that reading there got me started thinking, and my brain's all worked up lately trying to figure out my sister, my little sister, she's - I mean she's just got so fucking intense lately, I end up - But she used to be so sweet though, such a sweet kid; she'd look at things, I dunno. When I was a kid I learned to look at things from watching her lookin at things - you know, rabbits and that, and - I dunno I thought it might help if I hooked her up with this guy I remembered that helped out my mother once with something, I dunno - I dunno what, cause mum never talked much about heavy stuff and not about anything at all really. I do, I can talk, I mean I s'pose you know that, I been standing here, but I don't talk much about the heavy stuff either, I'm not well-equipped for it. All's I know is this guy helped my mother out, so I thought he might be some kind of wise old man or something. I mean old people are wise right? Like some of those guys in the Bible. They lose some of their faculties and become wise.

Scene Three.

(Kip standing in the doorway. Alfred, who has not moved, looks up from his effort to play.)

Alfred: You have come back to me.

Kip: I told you I would.

Alfred: My old sock. Come, sit down, play.

(She comes. he hands her the second instrument)

Kip: The other one.

Alfred: Yes.

(She tries it)

Kip: It's better.

Alfred: Yes.

(He shows her three fingering patterns.)

Alfred: This, this, and this.

(She tries them.)

Kip: This, This, and This.
(She starts to play, slowly)

[This, this and -]

Marie: Two down and none to stay.

Kip: [This.]

Marie: Two down, a Body to stay.

Kip: [This this and this.)

(Kip continues to play.)

Marie: -and the two down can stay too dammitt. God, is it a sin when you take something away from me for me to take it back?

Kip: *(continuing to play)*
My fingers don't hurt as much today.

Alfred: Mmmmm.

Marie: I will not have buried any part of me until I die, then you can bury the whole lot; you can have it.

Kip: You're right though -

Marie: If that's the sin of pride, well then I'm proud, but I want to live while I'm alive, even if I can't speak, even if I have to set all my limbs down in wood and stone and -

Kip: You are right though sir. It's gotta hurt if you're gonna do the things that are important in your -

Alfred: Shut up!

Kip: Jesus!

Alfred: Play!

Kip: [Jesus.]

(She continues to play.)

Marie: When I went back I caught them dancing, those men, three old men dancing.

Alfred: Pot fora damma, we were not so old! I was a single man! A bachelor!

(Kip stops, looks slightly alarmed at Alfred's outburst)

Alfred: Sorry. sorry; it was - it was a memory.

(Kip resumes.)

Marie: Yes I'll get him to build a whole new bod for me.

Alfred: Ah Moy!

Marie: My skin will be made from ebony wood, then I'll be as black as that summer on Lake Huron when I saw that man running up the beach without any clothes on and-

Alfred: Pot fora dorre.

Marie: -had to cover the eyes of five children. I don't include the baby in that, you'd be wasting your time. It's only a body, honestly. Ebony wood -

Alfred: Something softer.

Marie: And I have imagined those carpenter's hands, don't think I haven't. You see God? I've sinned. I'm sinning now. Those rough hands could even now perhaps bring my nipples out.

Alfred: *(to Kip, leaping to his feet)*
Oh! Girl! You are Learning! I was never - My hands, they are bad now, yes, but they were Never Very Good. You are young! Strong! From your hands I will hear things I have never heard before!

(He guides her to her feet and waltzes with her for a moment)

Alfred: Ha ha! My Old Sock!

Kip: So you think I'm getting better?

Alfred: Oh yes!

Kip: Cause you know I - I wrote a song last night, and I thought I might - try - I mean these chords might -

Alfred: Play! Play!

(He sits her down. hands her the instrument)

Kip: I have to figure it out first.

Alfred: Play.

(He sits. She starts to play again.)

Marie: Time goes quickly;
I have nothing now to bring to that shop except my feet; It's ridiculous'. he wants to take me out to the church without my shoes; honestly, my feet are too Big for my shoes all of a sudden. Well I want new shoes! Get me new shoes, that fit my feet! I could make that carpenter make them, so I could dance with him and those men. He could make them and cover them with patterns of men and women from a long time ago when everyone went naked and died young and their skin was smooth and their breasts were firm and their peckers stood up at length - I could dance with them and raise my arms and sing out my heart!

(Kip starts to sing. Marie disappears. Alfred is shocked for a few moments before he interrupts.)

Kip: I've made my lids and lashes dark To bright the white and the light in my eyes.

When my clothes fall in tatters from my breast When I step like a girl from my dress And pull you to my shattered -

Alfred: Stop!Stop!

Kip: Sir?

Alfred: What are you doing?

Kip: I'm singing.

Alfred: Do not sing. Why are you singing?

Kip: I told you, I wrote a song.

Alfred: You wrote a song.

Kip: Yeah, I wrote a song and I thought I'd sing it.

Alfred: But I do not wish for you to sing.

Kip: Well suffer! I wrote a song and I'm going to sing it!

Alfred: Pah fot damma, you are trying to murder an old man!

Kip: I thought you'd be pleased.

Alfred: The song is lousy. Give it to me; give it to –
(*takes it*)
Young girt. This instrument - it is Mine. This thing is Mine!

Kip: Well I've done nothing to -

Alfred: Shut up Girl! Madcap!

Kip: You shut up, you stupid old fart.

(*Paul enters.*)

Alfred: Oh I am a stupid old fart.

Paul: Lunch is over Kip.

Kip: You know old man, I thought you had a beautiful face, with your lines and your - voice, I thought you were wise and good and your hands had history, but you're just an outta control skinny old fart with mangled hands that Can't Do Anything. You are perverse, I'd rather be dead than get as old as you.

Alfred: I am not so old.

Paul: Hey hey Kip, Take it easy, you're gonna hurt the guy's feelings

Kip: I wanna hurt his feelings.

Alfred: You know nothing; you have nothing to learn from me. Get out of my house.

Kip: I'm ' going.
(*As she goes*)
(Stupid skinny old [fucker.]

(*Alfred follows her to the door, yelling after her. Paul doesn't know what to do.*)

Alfred: You have not learned You have not Learned; and what's more you Will not learn, you will not learn because I will not teach you, and I will not teach you because you are a Stupid Young Tit of a Girl!

(*She's gone. Alfred turns. Paul still doesn't know what to do.*)

Alfred: [Stupid young tit of a girl.]

Scene Four

(*Alms is visiting, sitting in the other chair as Alfred sits in his. Alms is wearing a monk's block garb and collar.*)

Alfred: How is your wife.

Alms: She's fine Alfred. She's fine.

Alfred: What does she think of that collar of yours.

Alms: She's the one sewed it up for me.

...

Alms: You have that boy working for you now I see.

Alfred: What boy.

Alms: That boy. Outside there.

Alfred: That is not a boy my friend, he is a grown up man. He and his stupid young tit of a sister. Both grown up full.

Alms: Well he used to be a boy, I can vouch for that.

Alfred: Oh there's a tale: A man that used to be a boy: did your life as a monk in your basement bring to you this insight? Or is it because you are still a poet that you speak of change and growth: the world becomes older, the leaves fall from the trees - but sometimes my friend, a man can Steal the Time that's Past!

Alms: You are all stirred up.

Alfred: The blood of another time stirs in my veins.

Alms: All I meant was he's the boy from the taxi. That's all I meant.

Alfred: The taxi. What taxi.

Alms: The taxi-cab. You remember the taxi-cab.

Alfi-ed: What are you saying? What are you saying.

Alms: This is what I'm saying. I've said what I'm saying.

Alfred: *(calling to outside)*
Young man!
(to Alms)
What are you saying.
Young man!

(Alfred is having trouble breathing. Alms tries to help him.)

Alfred: Get away Dammitt!

(Paul enters from outside.)

Alfred: You are the boy from the taxi-cab.

Paul: Pardon me?

Alfred: The boy from the taxi-cab. That is you.

Paul: Uh. Yeah, sir. That's me.

Alfred: Do not call me sir. Where is your sister.

Paul: She uh - She stayed home today, she was pretty upset about your

Alfred: Send her to me. Do me this favour.

Paul: Okay.

Alfred: I have done her a great wrong; Send her to me.

Paul: Yeah okay sir, I will.

(Alfred steps up to the podium.)

Alfred: A reading from the - Now Dammitti
They forgot to leave the book here for me!
There is not one to spare? What kind of -
All right. [Dammitt.]
Once when I was a young carpenter I -
stowed away on a ship, there was a special box it was made for
me to Hide in, slung over the railing and hanging off the side; I
had help from some of the sailors, but not all so I only came out
at night. We were at sea for weeks - there were storms I tell *you*;
my stomach turned upside down more than once before I came
used to it. I thought in there I would go crazy, one had to look
for every opportunity one could find to fill up the time, to make
a world from that place and be content: I examined the glow of
the light through the cracks in the slats of the lid, and the grain
of the wood against the light. Little canals of grain, the pattern
they traced is the signature left by the life that used to be there in
the wood - telling how it had grown and added

layers and stretched in the sunlight, and I in the darkness there grew my first beard. Sometimes the light would be enough that I would see above me there the picture in bas relief of the woman who was to be my wife. We were patient all together - the light, the grain of the wood, the picture, my beard, myself. My eyes became adjusted to the finest shavings of beauty, my senses were sharp I was prepared to catch any new scent any new cry of a bird, snatches of song and jokes told by the sailors; I thought I would win, but I did not.

I became delirious, as though the cramp and the lurch and the sun had got right inside my head; I forgot all parts of the world but these, all directions on the compass, the difference between salt water and dry land, familiar only with the sky and the sun's place in it everywhere - I don't know how I ever came to be back home, if I ever even saw the face of my mother, my father, though I am certain I did, all I remember is the brown cowl that finally shut out the light, and I was turning and turning with the seasons, chanting prayers and otherwise silent, following the movement forward through the day only through my prayers, allowing only God into my head again after an age of delirium; but with God - for he is perhaps generous came flooding everything back, though it took years - and everything had the face of one woman - and all that I had once constructed to be everything and given the face of one woman, was gone, and the woman gone too; all this because I could not live a little bit against adversity, within the limits that were granted me - on that ship. I swore I would not do that a second time - lose a woman to my limits - and I have not; not to Death, not to Age, not to nothing. There was another woman, and I have held on to her.

But now there is another woman - a young woman - a girl. Or not so much a girl - but she is a girl to me. And she cannot be within these limitations. She would smash my house to smithereens simply by standing up; but stand up she must, for she is young.

Scene Five.

(Kip is standing in the doorway.)

Alfred: I have been a pestilence on you. I have not allowed you to speak.

Kip: Sir?

Alfred: Don't call me sir.
I would like to give these - *(the instruments)* to you, they are rightfully yours.

Kip: But sir.

Alfred: No. They are yours;
I have only one single desire.

Kip: Um -

Alfred: Play me your song. With your young voice.

Kip: You - you want to Are you sure you want to -

Alfred: Come. Sit; Sing me your song.

(She comes. She sits. She sings her song. Marie is in the shadows.)

Kip: **I've made my lids and lashes dark
To bright the white and the light in my eyes**

Marie: For a moment I felt them again, like I had them.

Kip: **When my clothes fall in tatters from my breast,
When I step like a girl from my dress**

Marie: For one blessed moment I thought I was young.

Kip: **And pull you to my shattered breast
Hold then - Look into my eyes.**

Marie: In church too, before God, I knew the touch of that man's hand.

Kip: **Hold then, hold, these arms are strong enough
To crush your bones to clay
We must lie down and hold and spring from us
All the rain, all the flowers of May.**

Marie: I knew the touch of that man's hand, and knew it was no sin.

Kip: **I lose my patience against the wall**

Marie: It is enough.

Kip: **And my innocence on the earth**

Marie: Before me my family.

Kip: **I lose my pride against the wall**

Marie: There is my husband.

Kip' **And my flesh falls through your arms, through the earth.**

Marie: In front of him nine children, and in front of the nine my granddaughter Sarah, and Sarah is holding a guitar.

Kip: **I've made my lids and lashes dark
To bright the white and the light in my eyes
For now you lose it all and I lose it; hold
Hold here; we'll find what it was ever worth.**

Marie: I'll leave it at that.

Alfred: Where did this come from, this song.

Kip: I dunno, I - I - made it up.

Alfred: You made it up.

Kip: Yeah. Do you - Do you like it?

(Alfred shakes his head in disbelief)

Kip: You know sir – ah, oops. You know, I - uh
I feel old anyway, you might as well

Alfred: Yes?

Kip: You might as well touch my hair.

(Pause. He does.)

Alfred: *(after a time)*
Perhaps I should stop now.
Before the heart attack.
Oh - Too late.

Kip: Oh my - Sir - I'll -

Alfred: No. Stay. Stay here. Stay here with me.

(She comes to him. Holds him.)

Alfred: I tell you; I knew your Mother.

Kip: ... You did?

Alfred: These things I built for her. According to her - design. Not well
I knew her, in fact she was a stranger, I know her better now.

Kip: My mother.

Alfred: And I was there once too. In her house.

Kip: When.

Alfred: In a moment when her soul had not yet even journeyed as far as the end of the street; I must have passed it on my bicycle, going the other way.

And I saw you; you were a very young girl, sitting by her bed.

Kip: Oh no, it wasn't me, I could never have

Alfred: Yes it was you.

Kip: Why wouldn't I have seen you?

Alfred: Your mind was on other matters. I saw you and thought Here is a young child who loves her mother.

I loved her, your mother. I dreamt once even of her dancing.

(He dies.)

Kip: Sir?
Sir?
Oh sir.

(She looks at the instruments, and then back to him.)

Oh sir, you know, if I was your young woman lover I would assume that if you wanted me clean you would wash me yourself, with a cloth and your hands. If I were old with you I would lie beside you and press the top of my head into the ache of your back; if I was young and strong I would pick you up, I will

(she picks him up)

Pick you old man up and carry you out the door so you could rest from living.

(She carries him out the door.)

Scene Six.

(Paul and Kip, dressed up in black, outside.)

Paul: So was he wise?

Kip: Wise enough.

Paul: But not so old.

Kip: Not so old.

Paul: Old enough though.

Kip: For what?

Paul: I dunno. To be wise I guess.

Kip: I guess.

Paul: Hey, did you notice the problem with the stone?

Kip: ... No.

Paul: It's like Ten ears outta date with the year of death. It's written like he died ten years ago.

Kip: Uh yeah you're right.

Paul: Somebody's not thinking on the job.

(Alms appears behind them, dressed in black and with tools. He rushes past them and exits.)

Kip: Hey Paul, you know what I remember? I remember once I came down to get some water or something; and mum was listening to some opera on the radio - it was really quiet, like the sound was low, and dad was asleep on the couch with a book over his face; and just as I got to the bottom of the stairs I just caught her with her arms in the air, she was humming and dancing around, and her arms were just coming up into the air when she saw me. And she uh - she stopped, of course. She brought her - brought her arms

down. And then she - she giggled and she winked at me; And that wasn't the first time she winked at me

Paul: Yeah she was funny.

Kip: Yeah she was. But you know, it was the first time I remembered what she looked like before she was sick.

Paul: Can you tell where she is?

Kip: Yeah, she's over there.

Paul: You know there's something that old guy made for her that was buried with her.

Kip: Oh yeah?

Paul: Yeah. Some black wooden thing. She was holding it and she wouldn't let go. Thing is though he didn't give it to her until after she was already dead. But still she was holding onto it and she wouldn't let go. So they buried her with it.

Kip: Good for them.

Paul: That's what I say: Good for them.

(End.)