

**DESERT WOLF**

by

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DESERT WOLF takes place in EPPIE FALCO'S DESERT WOLF CAFE at the edge of Death Valley, California. USR is a countertop with four stools, behind which is the kitchen area. A door USC leads to Eppie's private quarters as well as the other guest rooms. DSR is another exit that also leads to the rooms. DSC and DSL are two tables with chairs and benches. DSL is the entrance to the cafe. There are two windows. One lines the SL wall, the other can be played out front towards the audience. Eppie's cafe is clean, seviceable and eclectic, as if she has handcollected each piece that graces the room from a different source, as indeed she has. The piece de resistance is Eppie's vintage 1955 neon glowing juke box. The walls are hung with various pieces of Eppie's artwork. These are large sculptures and montages made of rock and bone, shell and twig and any other substance gathered from Eppie's beloved desert.

#### PROLOGUE

(Lights fade up on Eppie Falco's Desert Wolf Cafe. Eppie sits at a table, center, working on a desert montage art piece. Sun streams into the cafe. Leo Monroe crouches behind the juke box, an array of tools spread out around him. The juke's lights flicker for a moment, then go out)

LEO

Ah shoot! Thought I had it that time for sure!

EPPIE

The lights flickered.

LEO

Yeah. The lights flickered on then flickered right off again. Dang! I am a lousy mechanic.

(Lights flicker again, EARTH ANGEL blares loudly for a moment, then cuts abruptly)

EPPIE

Wow. Still lots of power in that little box.

LEO

There's power in there all right. Somewhere.

EPPIE

Earth Angel. I love that song.

LEO

Come on you blasted thing! Ow! Shoot!

EPPIE

You okay, Leo?

LEO

Oh, yeah. Just a surface wound. We got a short here, Eppie, if I could only figure out where.

EPPIE

But it still plays, yah? Listen how good it sounds, even with that short.

LEO

Can't depend on it though.

EPPIE

Aaach, leave it alone. We'll get one of those guys in Trona to come over and take a look.

(she picks up a bone)

Ha. Look at that one. Such a pretty bone, and I forgot I even had it.

LEO

If we're going to get somebody to come out, we'd better do it before the rains come.

EPPIE

Yah. The rains.

LEO

Gonna be bad this year, I think.

EPPIE

Yah. I think so, too.

(she places the bone in her montage)

Aha. That was the one I needed. Now, Mr Darkman is done.

LEO

He's done, huh? That's good. You've been working on that one a long time.

EPPIE

The picture wouldn't come clear. But last night, I was laying in bed and -- boom! like that, the rest of the image jumped into my head.

(Goes over to Eppie, looking at her canvas)

LEO

Well, I'm glad it's done. I don't want to hurt your feelings, but there's something creepy about Mr. Darkman.

EPPIE

Creepy, huh? Yah. Maybe a little creepy.

LEO

It's a battle, isn't it?

EPPIE

Yah. A battle.

LEO

Wow. You never made one like that before.

EPPIE

(holds up the finished piece)

No.

(Leo goes back to the juke. The lights in the cafe begin to change, dimming down as a spotlight fades up center.)

EPPIE

Look here, Leo. This part's not so creepy. This part here is filled with light.

(In the distance a faint howling of wolves begins to rise. Eppie looks up, seeing the glow of the spotlight. She stops, her body immediately going to attention. Behind the juke, Leo notices nothing)

LEO

I can't figure this juke out for beans! Hmmm. Look at there. I wonder where that little doodad goes. Ahhhh! Eppie, I am sorry. It's gonna cost a fortune to bring someone out from Trona, but I do not believe there's anyway around it.

(he slides out from under the juke)

This juke box goes way beyond my meager capabilities to amend it.

(he stops frozen)

Eppie?

(She sits motionless, gazing rapturously into the light, her hands stretched out before her. Outside the howling of the wolves grows stronger)

LEO

Eppie?

(She rises, turning to face DSR. Another spot fades up. In the spot a man, his clothes worn and covered with desert dust, crouches frozen, his arms covering his head)

EPPIE

(softly)

Luke.

(Leo follows her gaze, but sees nothing. The howls continue to rise, and with the sound of the wolves comes another sound -- a pounding noise, a whirring, that swells to fill the stage with the sound of devastation, or of the apocalypse.)

The man in the spot, Luke, tenses, his body bending forward, hunching downward as if the force of the rising cacophony were crushing him.)

(In the cafe, Eppie's body bends and tenses with Luke's, her arms stretching as if reaching desperately to grab him. The lights pulsate and glow. Suddenly Eppie cries out:)

EPPIE

Luke!

(On the cry, Luke breaks from his frozen horror, his head snapping up, eyes gazing outward. The spotlight blacks out. Sounds cut off. Silence. In the cafe the spot goes out, lights return to normal.)

LEO

(approaching cautiously, carefully)  
Eppie?

(She turns to him)

LEO

That was a mighty powerful vision.  
(beat)  
Eppie? You okay?

EPPIE

He's coming, Leo. Luke's coming.

(Lights fade)

ACT ONE

(A black stage. Thunder rumbles, and lightning flashes, illuminating for a brief moment the interior of Eppie Falco's Desert Wolf Cafe.)

(A peal of thunder ripples, and over the top we hear loud, incessant knocking, and the voice of Mack Starr calls from off-stage:)

MACK

(off stage)  
Hey! Anybody home!

(Eppie Falco enters USC, calling over the storm)

EPPIE

Wait a moment! Hang on there!

(Leo enters DSR)

LEO

What's all the racket!

(Mack bangs again loudly )

MACK

(off stage)  
Hey!! Open up, already!

EPPIE

Leo! Get the door!

(On top of these lines, we hear  
Consuelo Arroyo off-stage)

CONSUELO

Mackie! Take it easy!

MACK

(off stage)  
We're drowning out here!

LEO

Take it easy! I'm coming!

(Leo opens the door. Mack Starr and  
Consuelo Arroyo Vasquez tumble into the  
cafe)

LEO

You don't have to bang the door down.

MACK

We must've been hollering out there for fifteen  
minutes!

CONSUELO

Mackie. Sssshhh.

LEO

Two minutes is more like it. Maybe, three.

MACK

Look. This is an Inn, is it not? They got a sign,  
Desert Inn...

EPPIE

Eppie Falco's Desert Inn and Cafe.

MACK

We saw the light from the highway. A haven in the storm ...

EPPIE

I don't have a light.

MACK

You have a light-- right over your sign.

EPPIE

There's no light over my sign.

(Another crash of thunder, bolt of lightning that illuminates the cafe)

CONSUELO

Mackie. That was the light we saw.

MACK

It is?

CONSUELO

Yes. Now take it easy, will you?

(to others)

I'm sorry. She's very exciteable.

(Another bolt flashes.)

CONSUELO

(looking around the room)

Wow!

EPPIE

Here.

(she snaps on the lights)

Take a good look!

CONSUELO

Look at this place!

MACK

Ah, .. excuse me, ma'am...?

CONSUELO

Are you Eppie?

EPPIE

Eppie Falco. And this gentleman here is Leo Monroe.

CONSUELO

I'm Consuelo Vasquez.

(correcting herself)

I mean Arroyo. Consuelo Arroyo. The jumpy one over there is Mack Starr.

EPPIE

Welcome to the Desert Wolfe.

(Consuelo crosses to a piece of art )

CONSUELO

Are all these pieces yours?

EPPIE

All mine. Rocks and bones. Shells and creosote. Everything from the desert.

CONSUELO

Can I touch it?

EPPIE

Of course you can touch it. Why else would it be there?

MACK

Ah ... excuse me, ma'am. Do you think we could get a room?

EPPIE

You want a room?

MACK

If at all possible.

LEO

Where do you come from?

MACK

Excuse me?

LEO

How did you wind up here?

CONSUELO

We were crossing the desert and ...

MACK

My buddy over there got us lost.

CONSUELO

I'm on a great ...

CONSUELO  
adventure.

MACK adventure.

EPPIE

An adventure! How wonderful!

MACK

You know what would really be wonderful? A room.

LEO

You must be from New York.

MACK

By way of Vegas.

LEO

Mmm-hmmm.

MACK

On my way to L.A.

LEO

Yup.

CONSUELO

I've never been to the desert. I'm from Massachusetts. I've never even been West of the Berkshire Mountains. But here I am driving along and all of a sudden, like a mirage or something, I see this beautiful ribbon of silver rising up through the rocks and the sand...

MACK

And the rain...

CONSUELO

Yeah, there was a lot of rain.

MACK

Tons! A monsoon!

CONSUELO

My car's only this little Chevette. 150,000 miles ...

MACK

And it dropped dead right outside your front door.  
I told her, you can't trust the desert.

CONSUELO

It was so cold! I never knew the desert could be so cold. We were huddled together in the car, thunder exploding, lightning flashing. It was beautiful!

And then this huge purple bolt -- like the finger of God-- spit out of a cloud and flashed right over your sign.

MACK

And so now, if it wouldn't inconvenience anyone too terribly much, if it wouldn't put anybody too terribly out, I would really like a room.

(Eppie moves around to the counter, pulling out a couple of keys)

EPPIE

One-oh-one and one-oh-two.

MACK

Bliss!

LEO

Hey, Miss New York. I can take a look at that car of yours.

MACK

That car of hers.

(Consuelo's spied the juke box)

CONSUELO

Mackie, look! A juke box!

(Consuelo pops some coins in. EARTH ANGEL plays)

EPPIE

Here it comes again, Leo! Earth Angel!

(Eppie sings along with the music. Consuelo joins her.)

LEO

I'll take a look at that car of hers.

(Eppie and Consuelo's duet turns into an impromptu dance. Leo crosses to the DSL exit. The door opens and Luke, the man we saw in Eppie's vision, enters.)

Luke is rugged and bearded, his clothes worn and covered with desert dust. Under the full beard he appears pale, exhausted and weakened)

(They all stop frozen at his entrance)

EPPIE

Well. Hello.

(She walks toward him. Luke raises his hand, steps away)

LUKE

No. Stay away.

EPPIE

It's all right.

(Luke takes in the room, uncertain, off balance)

LUKE

Just stay back.

EPPIE

Okay. All right.

CONSUELO

I think he's hurt.

(He tries to take a few more steps, but stumbles, crumpling to one knee on the ground)

CONSUELO

Oh!

(she goes to him)

Are you hurt?

LUKE

No... no... I ...

CONSUELO

Would you like some water?

EPPIE

Leo. Get a glass of water, please.

(Leo draws a glass of water, takes it

to Consuelo)

CONSUELO

Here.

(Luke looks at her)

It's all right. Please. Take it.

(Luke takes the water. He bows his head  
and moves his lips silently as if in  
prayer.)

MACK

I told you, you can not trust ...

CONSUELO

Ssshhh!!!

(Luke drinks)

EPPIE

That's good. That's better. Yah?

(Eppie pulls a bandana from her pocket,  
handing it to Consuelo)

EPPIE

(to Consuelo)

Take this to him.

CONSUELO

(taking the bandana, to Luke)

Here. Let me wipe your brow.

LUKE

(still weak)

It's all right. I can do it.

(He takes the bandana, and wipes his  
brow. Slowly, he rises)

CONSUELO

Do you need help?

LUKE

No. Thank-you. I'm all right now.

CONSUELO

What happened to you?

LUKE

I .. don't know. In the desert ... I think ... something I ate.

EPPIE

Something you ate?

LUKE

Poison.

EPPIE

Something you gathered up yourself?

LUKE

Yes.

EPPIE

But how could you gather up something that would make you sick?

(Luke looks at her sharply, but says nothing)

EPPIE

Leo, take the girls. Look at that car.

MACK

The girls?

(she raises her hand like a schoolgirl)

Ah, ma'am? Do you think it would be all right if I were allowed to go to my room instead?

CONSUELO

I can show him where the car's parked.

EPPIE

The rooms are in the back. You can go that way, or around behind the counter.

MACK

Thank you.

CONSUELO

Come on, Leo.

MACK

Hey, look! The rain's stopped.

(Consuelo and Leo exit DSL. Mack exits)

USC)

(Luke carries the water glass to the counter and sets it down, his eyes searching the cafe. Eppie watches him closely)

EPPIE

You think you can eat something now?

LUKE

I can eat.

EPPIE

That's good. Eggs, okay? Coffee?

LUKE

I don't have any money.

EPPIE

I didn't think you did.

LUKE

I can work.

EPPIE

Let's worry about getting your strength back first.

(He spies Eppie's Darkman montage. Luke moves toward it)

LUKE

That's how I do it.

EPPIE

I just finished that one a few days ago.

(He reaches out to touch it)

EPPIE

Luke ...

(He spins to face her at the mention of his name.)

LUKE

How do you know my name?

EPPIE

Why are you so surprised?

LUKE

How do you know my name!

EPPIE

The same way you knew to come here. Luke. It's all right. Look around you. It looks the same, yah? Everything looks exactly the same as the dream I sent you in the desert.

LUKE

I had a lot of dreams in the desert.

EPPIE

I know you did, Luke. But this is the one Grandfather asked me to send you. The one that brought you safely here.

(She goes to him, taking his hand. This time he lets her)

EPPIE

It's all right. You've come to the right place. Come on. Sit down. I'll get you coffee.

(Leo and Consuelo re-enter)

LEO

Well that little thing sure is all messed up. Dead're than dust.

CONSUELO

Mackie's gonna be mad as a hornet. She said we should've rented new in Las Vegas.

LEO

I can try and get some parts. I don't know what they have over there in Mojave. Could try Trona, too, I suppose.

CONSUELO

How long will that take?

LEO

I don't rightly know. What with this rain and all, could be maybe a couple of weeks.

CONSUELO

A couple of weeks?

LEO

Course once I get 'em, you understand, if I get 'em, there's no guarantee I can even get that little thing to run.

CONSUELO

Oh, boy.

EPPIE

I'm going to get some food started. Everything always looks better on a full stomach.

(She moves behind the counter)

LEO

I'll give you a hand, Eppie.

EPPIE

Good. You chop the onions. This time you do the crying.

CONSUELO

Is there something I can do?

EPPIE

Yah. Something very important. Sit, relax, and contemplate your great adventure.

(Eppie and Leo go behind the counter to prepare the food. Luke sits at a table.)

Consuelo stands center looking over at Luke. She'd like to join him, but isn't sure he'd welcome the company)

CONSUELO

Wow. Contemplate my great adventure. I like that.  
(to Luke)

I've never contemplated an adventure before. I've never even had an adventure before. Unless you count the kids. Kids are an adventure. So you, um .... you're feeling better?

LUKE

Yes. Thank-you.

CONSUELO

That's good. You look better. When you came in before, you looked like hell.

(beat)

Oh, God, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to say you looked like hell.

LUKE

Yeah, I think you probably did.

CONSUELO

Yeah. I guess I did. I mean, you know, you really did. You know, look ...

LUKE

Like hell.

CONSUELO

That's it. You look a lot better now.

LUKE

Would you like to sit down?

(He pulls out a chair)

CONSUELO

I'm hovering, right? That's what my kids always say. Stop hovering, ma!

(she sits)

So what happened? You said you think you ate something that poisoned you?

LUKE

I believe so. Yes.

CONSUELO

What was it?

LUKE

If I knew that, I wouldn't have eaten it.

CONSUELO

Oh, yeah. I guess not.

(they smile at each other)

Mack's been telling me you can't trust the desert.

LUKE

It's not the desert you can't trust.

(Mack, striking a pose, enters USC, showered and transformed)

MACK

The Mack is back!

EPPIE

Aha! Look at that! Pretty as a California poppy.

MACK

(curtsies)  
Thank-you, madam. I am re-born.  
(noticing Luke)  
And speaking of re-birth, look who's decided to  
return from the brink of hell.

CONSUELO

Mackie!

(Mack joins Consuelo and Luke. She  
peers intently at Luke)

MACK

Amazing. You've got some really amazing restorative  
powers.

CONSUELO

Would you stop it.

MACK

What?

CONSUELO

(to Luke)  
She's got no sense of decorum. She's been in the  
circus.

MACK

The circus has nothing to do with this. I mean, look  
at him. It's like a minor miracle or something. So what happened?  
You're tooling along the highway in the middle of the desert, you  
stop your car ...

LUKE

I don't have a car.

MACK

You're riding a bike? Cool! So you stop your bike to sample a  
tasty-looking thistle struggling for life by the side of the road  
...

EPPIE

Soups' on! Get it while it's hot!

LUKE

No bike either. I'm on foot.

(Luke rises from the table and crosses  
to the countertop where Eppie has laid

out a banquet. She piles a plate high  
for him.)

CONSUELO

You crossed the desert on foot!

(Consuelo and Mack go to get their  
food)

CONSUELO

He crossed the desert on foot! And I thought I was  
on a great adventure.

LEO

Don't be too disappointed. You may be joining him  
yet.

MACK

What are you talking about? The car? You can't fix  
the car.

LEO

Maybe I can't.

MACK

Oh, man.

LEO

Or maybe I can. Either way, you won't be going  
anywhere anytime soon.

MACK

Why not?

LUKE

Rain. More rain coming.

MACK

But it's beautiful out there now.

LEO

How long you say you been living in the desert?

MACK

Ten years.

LEO

In Vegas.

MACK

Yes.

LEO

That's not the desert.

MACK

Close enough for jazz, bub. I've just got to get to L.A.!

LEO

Well, I don't think you'll be getting there today.

(Lightning flashes, thunder rumbles)

MACK

Where can I stand on my head?

EPPIE

What? The head?

CONSUELO

She stands on her head whenever she feels she's about to lose her grip.

(Mack looks around the room. She finds a suitable place and stands on her

head)

MACK

It calms me. I learned it in the circus. That's what I did in Vegas. Circus-circus. Man, I had a boffo act. Stood on my head everywhere. Table-tops, highwire, elephant's backs.

CONSUELO

That's where I met her. Believe me, they don't have anything like Las Vegas in Holyoke, Massachusetts.

(Thunder cracks, lightning flashes and the rain pours down)

(The DSL door swings open and ARMAND JACOBI, bursts into the cafe, shaking his umbrella, kicking the door closed behind him with a flourish)

ARMAND

Lord love a duck! Snuck in by a cat's whiskers!

(Luke rises. Eppie and Leo exchange a look)

ARMAND

"Blow winds! Crack your cheeks!" What a howling!

(Mack dismounts from her headstand.)

ARMAND

Oh, dear. I've burst in and startled you. Please forgive me.

(he clicks his heels together and bows)

Armand Jacobi, fellow wanderer of the desert.

(With great fanfare, Armand swooshes a bouquet of feather flowers from beneath his suit jacket and presents them to Consuelo)

CONSUELO

Oh!

ARMAND

For you.

(Charmed, Consuelo takes the flowers.)

(Eppie crosses down to Armand, her hand extended)

EPPIE

Armand Jacobi. Eppie Falco.

(They stand eyes locked)

EPPIE

This is my place you've come to.

ARMAND

Utterly charming.

(He takes her hand, kissing it grandly. Eppie responds stiffly)

ARMAND

(re Mack and Consuelo)

Complete with desert roses. Ladies. I don't believe I've had the pleasure.

CONSUELO

(charmed, curtsies)

Consuelo Arroyo.

ARMAND

(rolling the r's)  
Consuelo Arroyo. Trippingly off the tongue. And the acrobat?

MACK

Acrobat? Oh. The head stand.  
(sticks out her hand)  
Mack Starr.

ARMAND

Mack Starr! Ka-pow! The name packs a wallop!

EPPIE

That gentleman behind the counter, Mr. Jacobi is Leo  
Monroe.

(Leo nods curtly)

ARMAND

A pleasure, Mr. Leo.

(Eppie crosses to Luke)

EPPIE

And this gentleman here is Luke....

(Armand speaks on top of Eppie's line)

ARMAND

Luke Stone.

MACK

You guys know each other?

ARMAND

(softly to Luke)  
I was hoping I'd find you here.

MACK

I don't think I was on my head long enough.

ARMAND

(to Luke)  
May I?

(Armand sits at Luke's table. Luke  
remains standing.)

MACK

Maybe I need to dance.

(Mack slips coins into the juke. Bob Seegar's "Old Time Rock n Roll" plays. She dances. Consuelo watches Luke and Armand.)

(A crash of thunder, bolt of lightning. The lights flicker and go out)

MACK

Oh! What's that!

ARMAND

The wrath of God.

(The juke box whines to a halt)

LEO

Oh, boy. This is going to be a bad one.

EPPIE

(to Leo)

You'd better get the generator, Leo.

(Another loud peal of thunder. Mack covers her ears, hollers)

LEO

Going to be worse than '94, Eppie. I do believe.

EPPIE

Better grab hold of some sand bags, too.

(Another crash, the lights flicker back on, but the juke remains silent.)

ARMAND

Let there be light.

MACK

Is that going to happen again?

ARMAND

Who knows? In a blow like this anything could happen.

(Armand snaps his fingers. The juke whines then roars back to life.)

MACK

Hey! We've got music! Who wants to dance?

ARMAND

I'll dance with you, Miss Mack!

(Armand sweeps Mack up, leading her in some intricate fifties dance steps. They dance very well together. Armand whirls her USC, where they stop, posed)

MACK

Whee!

ARMAND

Tada!

(He wipes his brow with his handkerchief, winded)

You know, you're not bad, little lady.

MACK

You're not so bad yourself, little man. Con! Throw some more money in the juke.

ARMAND

Ah.

MACK

What's the matter? You're not done already, are you?

ARMAND

Only momentarily, my dear. Reserve another spot for me on your dance card.

(He takes in Eppie's montage)

ARMAND

Oh, my. What have we here?

EPPIE

Do you like it, Mr. Jacobi?

ARMAND

(moves in closer)

Armand, please.

EPPIE

Do you see the story it tells?

ARMAND

It tells a story?

EPPIE

All my pieces tell a story. This one here, tells the story of the Darkman.

ARMAND

Ah, yes. I see. There he is, there -- his cape billowing out behind as he rides on the wings of fate.

EPPIE

To his destiny.

ARMAND

To his battle.

EPPIE

Which is his destiny. The battle plummets him irrevocably into the abyss.

ARMAND

Oh, no dear lady. Not the abyss. Once the battle is fought, once the battle is won...

LUKE

It will never be won.

(Mack glances out the window)

MACK

There's a break in the clouds over there.

ARMAND

Once the battle is won, the Darkman will rise.

LUKE

He will never win.

(Armand waves his hands. A ray of sunshine, like a tiny beacon breaks through the storm, shining into the cafe)

MACK

Look! The sun is shining again!

ARMAND

(laughs)

Oh, I think he will and he'll rise up on the wings  
of an eagle, to fly through all eternity.

(Lights fade to black)

(Lights fade up. Several hours later,  
and the rain has once again returned, a  
steady drumbeat on the roof and against  
the windows. Inside the cafe, Eppie and  
Consuelo sit together on the floor in  
front of the tables.

Stretched in front of them is a large  
board, and surrounding them, Eppie's  
desert collection. Consuelo sorts  
through the various item. She picks up  
a small stone, and glues it onto the  
board.)

(Mack roams USL, performing a series of  
physical routines -- her own personal  
ritual)

EPPIE

(referring to the stone Consuelo has just glued)  
Excellent! That's just where he belongs.

CONSUELO

He jumped out of my head, into my hand and onto the  
board right where he belongs.

EPPIE

When it's working right, that's the way it works.

(The DSL door opens and Luke and Leo  
enter. They've been working on the car.  
Mack stops her routine and looks at  
them)

MACK

Well?

LEO

Dead'r 'n dust.

MACK

What about the parts? You said you could get parts.

LEO

I said probably I could get parts. I also said I don't know how much good it'd do.

(Luke crosses behind counter, washes his hands)

MACK

What am I going to do?

CONSUELO

Just take it easy, Mackie. We couldn't go anywhere in this pouring rain anyway.

EPPIE

Yah. Besides, I got soup on.

MACK

That'll solve everything.

EPPIE

You'd be surprised.

CONSUELO

It's all part of the great adventure.

MACK

Not my adventure. I don't have the slightest interest in ribbons of silver rising up through rocks and sand.

LUKE

Look, if you want to go, go.

MACK

How? No vehiculo, Capitan, capice?

LUKE

You've got two legs, haven't you?

MACK

Oh, yeah, right, Mr. Travelin' Man. Mr. Poison Thistle Eater Who Walks Across the Sand. I'm supposed to just hoof it on out of here, right?

LUKE

Either that, or stand on your head.

(Armand enters USC during this last exchange)

ARMAND

Oh dear, our rain has returned.

MACK

With a vengeance.

(Spies Consuelo's work)

ARMAND

My goodness, Miss Consuelo, what have you been up to?

CONSUELO

My great adventure.

ARMAND

That's lovely.

CONSUELO

You think so? Really?

ARMAND

Fabulous.

CONSUELO

Eppie's showing me how to create a story from bones. See? These are the hills of Massachusetts. That's where my adventure begins. And here -- the towering mountains of the West, my destination ...

MACK

Eventual ...

CONSUELO

And in between, the great wash of desert, where we are now.

ARMAND

It appears we have duo artists in our midst.

CONSUELO

Duo?

ARMAND

Our delightful hostess, of course, Miss Eppie, and now, suddenly Consuelo.

CONSUELO

Suddenly me.

ARMAND

Have you worked in this medium before?

CONSUELO

(laughs)  
Worked in this medium before! Ha! I never worked in any medium before.

ARMAND

Oh, but that's not possible!

CONSUELO

I used to love to go to the museum. Whenever I could I'd go. Just to sit, just to stare at the paintings for hours.

ARMAND

My dear, you possess the soul of the artist.

LEO

Whoa, look at that rain coming down. Definitely worse than '94.

MACK

Oh for God's sake, all right, I'll bite. What happened in '94?

EPPIE

Storm almost wiped us out.

MACK

I had to ask.

LEO

Rained for seven days and seven nights.

EPPIE

A howler. Just like this one.

LEO

I'd never been to the desert. Lived all my life less than a couple hundred miles away, but never been to the desert. There I am driving along, don't really know where I'm headed, when all of a sudden, outta nowhere, bam!, the rain came pouring down! My truck skidded -- like skates on ice, and the next thing I know, I'm going end over tea cup, plowing through the sage and the mesquite, until my truck stopped dead right out front there -- right in front of Eppie's cafe.

EPPIE

Good thing for me, too.

LEO

I guess it was a good thing for you. Before I knew what was happening, Eppie's got me outta the truck and packing sand bags.

EPPIE

I'm losing my roof. What am I supposed to do?

LEO

Tacking up plastic and tar paper over the windows, and hammering down the roof.

EPPIE

(laughs)

You should've seen him working up there in the pouring rain.

LEO

Ripped chairs apart with my bare hands to get the wood.

ARMAND

The vengeance of God!

LEO

No vengeance here, man. We saved it. We saved it all.

EPPIE

We did.

ARMAND

Good man.

LEO

And we'll save it again, if we have to.

ARMAND

Well, let's hope it doesn't come to that. And here's, Lucas, pushing Miss Starr out the door, beguiling her to hoof it on out of here in a howling blow worse than the one that almost destroyed Eppie's cafe in 1994.

MACK

(to Luke)

Yeah, you heartless bum.

ARMAND

(laughs)

I like that. Heartless bum.

(to Luke)

You know what would happen to her if she were to be so foolish as to venture forth. She'd be swept away upon the tide. She'd never get out alive!

MACK

I don't know if you have to go that far.

ARMAND

This is worse than the broadside of '94, Miss Mack. Ask Leo. It's the end of the world! Armageddon is upon us!

MACK

Look, I know the rain's going to stop, okay?

ARMAND

Do you really? Maybe we should ask Lucas.

LUKE

Stop it.

ARMAND

I think he may know. He had a vision in the desert.

LUKE

Shut-up.

ARMAND

Shut-up?

LUKE

Don't push me!

(Consuelo suddenly cries out)

CONSUELO

Ow!

(She drops the knife she'd been working with, holding her finger. Luke turns toward her)

LUKE

What happened?

CONSUELO

My finger! I cut my finger!

(Luke moves quickly to her, taking her hand)

CONSUELO

The knife slipped! Oh!

(she looks away)

There's blood, isn't there? I can feel it dripping.

(Luke holds her hand, examining her finger)

LUKE

Sshhhh. It's not so bad.

CONSUELO

I can't stand the sight of blood! Oh, God. Oh, God.  
I think I'm going to faint.

LUKE

You're not going to faint. Sit down. It's not that bad.

(Eppie brings Luke a clean towel)

EPPIE

Here. Take this.

(Luke wraps Consuelo's finger.)

CONSUELO

(her head turned away from the injury)  
Oh! I hate knives!

LUKE

Do you feel lightheaded?

CONSUELO

No. Yes. I don't know.

LUKE

Consuelo. Take breaths. Deep breaths.  
(she does)  
That's good. Better?

CONSUELO

Mmm-hmmm.

LUKE

You hardly nicked it.

CONSUELO

It felt like I cut it to the bone.

LUKE

Sshhh. It's all right.

(As he did with the water before, Luke closes his eyes and prays, holding tightly to Consuelo's finger.)

LUKE

There. It's okay now.  
(he removes the cloth)  
You can look now.

CONSUELO

There's no blood.

LUKE

I told you it wasn't that deep.

EPPIE

(approaches carrying a bandaid)  
Here. A bandaid.

CONSUELO

But I saw blood.

EPPIE

Put the bandaid on.

LUKE

(wraps it around Consuelo's finger)  
I didn't say you didn't cut yourself at all.  
(she makes a face)  
Too tight?

CONSUELO

No. No. It's just that ...

LUKE

What?

ARMAND

High drama. And imagine, all I came in for was a cup of tea.

EPPIE

I'll get your tea.

ARMAND

You are so kind. Earl Grey? Yes? Spot of honey.

(Mack rises)

ARMAND

Mackie -- are you leaving us?

MACK

If only I could.

(Mack exits.)

LEO

I better haul out the sand bags. Set up that generator.

(Leo exits)

CONSUELO

(flexing her injured finger)

I thought I cut it to the bone.

LUKE

How does it feel?

CONSUELO

(works it again)

Fine. I guess it wasn't that bad after all. I hate the sight of blood. I really hate the sight of my own blood.

(Luke takes her hand and gently pulls the bandage away, examining the injury closely)

LUKE

You're going to be fine.

CONSUELO

I know, I know, what a baby.

LUKE

I think we even managed to save the finger.

CONSUELO

Thank-you. I never even thanked you.

LUKE

(gently teasing her)

How could you with all that blood dripping all over the place.

CONSUELO

Well, so this is good. I didn't chop my hand off. Maybe now, I can go back to work.

(She picks up a stone and scrutinizes the mosaic.)

CONSUELO

What do you think? There?

LUKE

(moving in closer)  
There.

(Luke and Consuelo become engrossed in  
the piece.)

(Eppie crosses down, hands Armand his  
tea)

EPPIE

Your tea.

ARMAND

Ah. Not many things a cup of Earl Grey with honey  
can't smooth over.

EPPIE

That's Lipton. With sugar.

ARMAND

(laughs)  
Ah Eppie, you really are such a delightful hostess.  
Hoarding your Earl Grey and your honey. Observe.  
(he leans back, closing his eyes)  
Aromatic Earl Grey. Steaming through soft clouds of mellow honey.  
Lingering for moment on the lips. Gliding down the throat, warming  
all the way to the belly.  
(sips)  
Mmmm. Divine. Just like magic.

EPPIE

More like wishful thinking.

(Armand throws his head back and roars  
a belly laugh. He snaps his fingers.  
The juke whines to life, playing EARTH  
ANGEL. Luke's head snaps up. Consuelo  
doesn't notice)

CONSUELO

I love that song.

(She begins singing softly)

ARMAND

So does Eppie. It's her favorite, I believe.

EPPIE

You are so very clever.

ARMAND

Scintillating?

(Eppie begins moving past him. Armand reaches for her)

ARMAND

Dance with me.

EPPIE

Mr. Jacobi ...

ARMAND

When are you going to learn to call me Armand?

EPPIE

If you'd excuse me.

ARMAND

Eppie Falco, when was the last time you danced? How long has it been since you let yourself go, and really danced?

(The lights begin to dim, a spot softly illuminating Armand and Eppie)

ARMAND

You are such a beautiful woman. Look how vibrant and glowing you are. Why do you keep yourself locked away in this barren landscape? You're a prisoner here, bound by the rocks and the dust. Don't you feel your spirit crying out as its crushed beneath the unyielding stone.

Ahh, Eppie, remember when your soul was allowed to roam free? Your eyes sparked with fire then, your hair streaking out behind you, and you danced. Come into my arms. Let me make you shimmer again.

(Suddenly, Eppie pulls away. The lights change. Eppie marches to the juke and viciously pulls the plug. The juke screeches to silence. Startled, Consuelo jumps, cries out:)

CONSUELO

Oh!

(Eppie stands a moment in silence, then turns to face Armand, exquisitely

composed.)

EPPIE

Mr. Jacobi, it appears you're not nearly as  
scintillating as you'd like to believe you are.

(to Consuelo and Luke)

Excuse me.

(calls out:)

Leo!

(Eppie exits)

CONSUELO

What was that all about?

ARMAND

I beleive she's just warned me not to piss in her  
territory.

(Armand bows graciously and exits)

CONSUELO

What? Did I miss something?

(beat)

Luke?

(Luke crosses to the juke, running his  
hands over it, examining it)

CONSUELO

What are you doing?

LUKE

There's a loose wire here.

CONSUELO

On the juke?

LUKE

Yes.

CONSUELO

It probably jarred loose when Eppie yanked the plug out of the  
wall. She probably knocked the whole thing out of whack, the way  
she yanked that plug.

(beat)

So, what's the story?

LUKE

Hmmm?

CONSUELO

With Armand. When he sasshayed in here this morning, I thought you were going to keel over, all over again.

(Luke looks at her a moment, then walks away from the juke)

CONSUELO

I never know how to take that guy. You knew him before, right?

LUKE

Yes.

CONSUELO

Pretty wierd, huh? Just running into him out here in the middle of the desert like that?

LUKE

(beat)

Yeah.

CONSUELO

You know, he reminds me of my ex. Well, not really my ex. I mean, he's not my ex. Yet. But he has this thing, you know? ... this way of getting to you, like, I don't know, he casts this spell and before him you grow helpless.

LUKE

Armand?

CONSUELO

Hmm? Oh, yeah. Armand. Him, too. But I was talking about Rodrigo.

LUKE

Rodrigo?

CONSUELO

The almost ex.

LUKE

Ah.

CONSUELO

You know, even my kids told me enough is enough. They're all grown-up now, my kids, but he's still their dad, and even they're telling me, "enough, ma, dump him already."

LUKE

What did he do?

CONSUELO

Rodrigo? I don't know. Stole my soul.

LUKE

What?

CONSUELO

I think he did. Yeah. Piece by piece. And the whole time he's doing it, he's charming the pants right off of me. You know Van Gogh?

LUKE

You mean the artist?

CONSUELO

Yeah, yeah. Vincent Van Gogh. He's my favorite. I love the Sunflowers. Well, I haven't been able to visit Mr. Van Gogh in a long time. Like forever. But last week, I was finally able to steal some time and I snuck away to see the Sunflowers. There I was, sitting in front of that beautiful painting, and all of a sudden, I feel someone staring at me. I look up, and there's this lady standing in front of me, holding out a kleenex. I reached up, touched my face, and when I brought my hand away, it was wet with tears. I didn't even know I'd been crying, but my face was soaked with tears. I got up from that bench, went home, packed my bags, wrote a letter to my kids and one to Rodrigo, got into my Chevette, and drove.

LUKE

In search of your great adventure.

CONSUELO

Yeah. That's right. And you know what? When I was on the road, I did whatever I wanted to whenever I wanted to.

And if I'd wanted to, I could've pulled over and barked at the moon for as long as I wanted to.

(They laugh together)

CONSUELO

Oh, wow. Look how late it's getting. I better pick up. Eppie's going to be serving up her soup soon.

(She begins clearing up her materials)

LUKE

I'll give you a hand.

(They gather her things up)

CONSUELO

What a mess I've made, huh? Look at this. I'm spread out all over the place.

(She grabs up the piece she's been working on)

LUKE

Be careful with that.

CONSUELO

Hmmm?

LUKE

You have to treat your work very gently. You have to care for it like a newborn soul.

(Consuelo smiles, and starts to exit. She stops, kisses Luke on the cheek, and exits)

(Alone now, Luke crosses to the juke, running his hands over it, examining it again. He eyes Eppie's montage, and moves to the art piece. He runs his fingers lightly over the work. A small circle of light begins to glow USC. Luke turns toward it.)

(The light grows bigger, brighter. Luke walks toward it)

LUKE

(softly)  
Grandfather?

(A flash explodes, a wisp of smoke rises, and Armand appears)

ARMAND

Armand!

LUKE

You son of a bitch!

(Luke flies at Armand. Armand reels back, punching Luke viciously in the stomach. Luke doubles over sinking to his knees.)

ARMAND

Do you think you're ready to fight me, Lucas?

(Armand grabs him)

ARMAND

I wouldn't recommend it. All the while you were hiding away deep within your beloved woods, I was out roaming the world. Budapest. India. Egypt. For twenty-five years, gathering the secrets of the ages.

(He lays his other hand on Luke. Luke cries out)

ARMAND

You thought I had power before? Try me now, Lucas. Try me now.

(He presses harder. Luke cries out again)

ARMAND

Now, I am invincible.

(Armand lets Luke go. Luke crouches on the floor, reeling)

ARMAND

I wouldn't forget that again.

(Armand watches Luke struggle valiantly to overcome the pain)

ARMAND

Lucas?

(beat)

Lucas?

(Armand approaches Luke who still lies huddled on the floor)

Oh. You're so pale.

(he kneels beside him)

Lucas? I didn't mean to hurt you so badly. You've got to believe me.

LUKE

Get away from me.

ARMAND

Let me help you.

LUKE

Get away.

ARMAND

All right. All right, if that's what you want.

(Armand moves away from him. Luke struggles to rise)

ARMAND

You should let me take care of you. I always did take such good care of you. Do you remember? You were such a skinny little kid when I first found you. Ragged. Nothing but jagged bones piercing your skin. It hurt to look at you. But I took you in. I gave you a home. I nursed you back to health.

(Luke, on his feet, now, moves away)

ARMAND

I still can take good care of you.

(Luke continues to move away)

ARMAND

I took care of you in the desert.

(Luke stops)

ARMAND

Were you going to pretend it never happened?

LUKE

It never did.

ARMAND

Ah. I see. I was never there. It wasn't me, then, standing beside you as the fires of hell raged all around you.

LUKE

You weren't real.

ARMAND

An illusion.

LUKE

A nightmare, a delusion that wasn't real.

ARMAND

Oh, for God's sake, Lucas! I heard your cries, begging for your Cherokee saint, the great Indian guide Grandfather to appear ...

LUKE

NO!

ARMAND

But it was Armand who answered the call.

LUKE

I'm done with you, do you hear me!

ARMAND

Really?

LUKE

I left you!

ARMAND

And here you are again. A perfect circle.

(beat)

Lucas, Haven't you wondered how it was possible for me to stand beside you in the burning sand?

(Luke turns to look at him)

ARMAND

I lifted the veil.

(beat)

I passed through to the other side.

(Pause)

LUKE

That's not possible.

ARMAND

You know it is. You saw me. I did it.

(Armand approaches Luke.)

ARMAND

It took me years to master the secret. I can't tell you how many times I fell into deep despair, sure I'd never be able to find the key. But one day, while I was still

in Europe, the magic suddenly unfolded itself to me. You remember how that would happen? We'd be working and working away at one of our little witcheries, sure we'd never be able to break through, when suddenly, we'd have magic. When I unlocked this secret, I knew there was only one person on earth I wanted to share that sorcery with.

(Armand reaches out, touching him. Luke stands transfixed)

ARMAND

Parting the veil, Lucas, reaches far beyond anything you and I ever dared to attempt. You can't begin to imagine the sensation. Your soul set free, sailing at will, limitless. Can you imagine what we could do with that power.

(beat)

And if I was able to lift the veil, just think what you would be capable of doing.

LUKE

Get your hands off me.

ARMAND

(laughs, holds his hands up and backs away)  
I can see your soul. I always could. I lay before you all the dominion. It's your choice.

(Lights fade to black)

(Several hours later, early evening after dinner. The cafe is dark, illuminated only by soft lights. The sound of the rain hammers against the roof and windows.)

(Luke enters USC, carrying a backpack. He stands a moment uncertain, then crosses to the kitchen counter area. He begins loading supplies into the backpack.)

(A moment, then Eppie enters USC. Luke turns to her. An awkward pause.)

LUKE

I need supplies.

(beat, Eppie doesn't respond)

I don't have any money.

EPPIE

I know that.

LUKE

I'll pay you as soon as I can.

EPPIE

I know that, too.

LUKE

I can't trust anything I gather myself.

EPPIE

If you run now, you never will.

LUKE

Look. If you can't lend me supplies, that's okay. I understand.

EPPIE

Whatever I have is yours. Take whatever you need.

LUKE

I can't fight him!

EPPIE

Why not?

LUKE

I just can't. I'm leaving.

EPPIE

Where are you going to go that he can't follow? He found you in the desert. He trailed you here. There's no place to run, Luke.

(Luke throws the backpack across the room)

LUKE

I don't want this!

EPPIE

Yah, well, you don't want it. That makes all the difference.

LUKE

You don't understand!

EPPIE

What is it? What is it, that I don't understand?

LUKE

No.

EPPIE

I grew up in Poland. When I was still very small, maybe five years old, I had a vision of the Holocaust. What a thing for a little girl. How is a little one supposed to make sense out of something like that? Then, a year later, I'm on a train, and my vision is real.

LUKE

Eppie...

EPPIE

Quiet. I'm not finished yet. In the camps I saw things no human being should ever have to see, I witnessed deeds no child should ever have to witness. The evil I saw was so profound, I was struck dumb from the sight of it. When the camps were finally liberated, and I was brought here to this country, I couldn't speak. Not a word. For seven years not a word passed through my lips. But then one day, Luke, one day a vision came to me. And the vision was a light that broke through my darkness. I followed that light. Eventually, it led me here.

LUKE

What if there is no light.

EPPIE

There's always light.

LUKE

Not always.

EPPIE

Luke. Tell me what happened.

LUKE

No.

EPPIE

Tell me what you're so afraid of.

LUKE

I can't.

EPPIE

Tell me what power he holds over you!

LUKE

NO! No more questions! Don't ask me anymore!!!

(Consuelo, wearing an exquisite red dress, appears USC, striking a dramatic pose, a vision of loveliness)

(Luke turns to see her, struck by her beauty.)

CONSUELO

Ladies and gentlemen ...

(she stops, very self-conscious)

Oh-oh. Did I interrupt something?

(to Luke, meaning the dress)

Do you like it? Mackie pulled it out of her trunk.

(Leo enters hurriedly DSR)

LEO

Hang on there, Miss Consuelo. Don't start without me. I told you I'd be here as soon as I finished tacking up those windows. Where should I go? Over there?

CONSUELO

Next to Luke and Eppie.

(Leo crosses to Luke and Eppie)

LEO

The girls got something cooked up. Don't ask me. I was working on the windows in the back, and they told me to get ready for the show.

EPPIE

The show?

CONSUELO

Sit down, everybody. We're ready to begin.

(Eppie, Luke and Leo sit at a table)

CONSUELO

Ladies and gentleman. We are proud to present for your entertainment -- the Traveling Desert Wolf Cafe Circus and Magic Show!

(Consuelo bows. Leo applauds and whistles.)

CONSUELO

And to begin our presentation ... MISS MACK STARR!!!

(Consuelo moves aside, and Mack, dressed in one of her circus costumes enters. Consuelo crosses hurriedly to the juke.)

(Mack strikes a pose. Music begins. Her act is a lovely and skillful series of acrobatic moves. Mack finishes with a flourish, and bows.)

(Leo applauds loudly, whistling)  
(Consuelo dims the lights, takes CS again)

LEO

Hey. No encore? She didn't even stand on her head.

MACK

I'm breaking out in a whole new direction.

CONSUELO

Sshhhh!! He's waiting.

LUKE

Who's waiting?

CONSUELO

Ladies and gentlemen. And now, we are proud to present, newly arrived from his famous world tour, the one, the only, Armand!

(Luke shoots Eppie a look.)

LEO

Armand? You said it was just going to be ...

MACK

Leo! Sshhh!!!

(Armand sweeps into the room in traditional Magician's garb complete with a flowing cape and carrying a cane. He bows majestically)

(He performs a quick succession of magic tricks. Simple illusions and card tricks. After each feat, Consuelo and Mack applaud enthusiastically)

(Eppie and Luke watch stonily.)

(Armand completes his final trick.  
Stands back for applause.)

Mack and Consuelo are still the only  
ones who applaud)

ARMAND

Oh, for heaven's sake! Give a fellow a break, can't you? Bunch of  
stiffs!

(he bows to the ladies)

Thank-you, dear souls. At least there are some present who  
appreciate the fine art of illusion. And now, for my next trick, I  
will need a volunteer.

(Consuelo raises her hand)

ARMAND

Ah yes! The lovely lady in red. Step right up, my dear.

(Luke sits tensely forward. Consuelo  
joins Armand on the "stage")

ARMAND

Tell me, have you ever been hypnotized?

(Luke rises)

LUKE

All right, Armand.

ARMAND

You know, Lucas, you're like a bug. A little gnat  
constantly buzzing round my ear.

CONSUELO

I've never been hypnotized. Except for once this  
afternoon.

ARMAND

You weren't supposed to mention that. Ooops.

LUKE

That's enough.

CONSUELO

Luke, it's all right. We worked this all out this  
afternoon.

ARMAND

You see, it's all right. Everything's been worked out. Now, Miss Starr, if you would be so kind...

(Mack puts money in the juke. A waltz plays)

(Armand holds his arms out to Consuelo)

ARMAND

Shall we dance?

(Consuelo goes into Armand's arms. They begin to dance, graceful sweeping motions around the room)

CONSUELO

I love to dance.

ARMAND

Remember. Watch only my eyes.

(As they dance, Consuelo slips more deeply into a hypnotic state)

CONSUELO

Mmmm. Such lovely music.

ARMAND

Such a lovely dancer.

(Armand releases Consuelo, who spins away from him with elegant grace, and just as beautifully, returns)

(Luke watches with rising tension)

ARMAND

Like a doll. A pretty ballerina doll all dressed in pink.

(At the mention of ballerina, Consuelo lifts her arms up over her head, and turns like a ballerina)

ARMAND

Up, up, up. Tippy-toes.

(Consuelo lifts high on the balls of her feet)

(Armand suddenly snaps his fingers. The music changes from a lilting waltz, to a bluesy downbeat.)

(Consuelo throws her head back, and slowly begins to pulse to the music.)

ARMAND

That's it.

(As the music intensifies, so does Consuelo's dance. She gyrates with heightening sensuality)

ARMAND

Perfect. Isn't she sumptuous, Lucas.

LUKE

Armand...

ARMAND

Look at that tribal fire!

(He runs his hands over her body)

ARMAND

Imagine her volcanic soul exploding into yours.

LUKE

NO!

ARMAND

Go to him, Consuelo!

CONSUELO

Ah, Luke!

EPPIE

(rising, commanding)  
Consuelo!

(Consuelo stops, her head turning to the direction of Eppie's voice)

ARMAND

(with great command)  
CONSUELO!

EPPIE

CONSUELO!

ARMAND

CONSUELO!!

(Conseulo's head, like a marionette on a string jerks back to Armand.)

ARMAND

I'm going to clap my hands three times, and you'll awaken.

(Armand claps his hands three times. Consuelo snaps out of her hypnotic daze)

CONSUELO

Oh ...

ARMAND

(to Eppie)  
You of all people should know better than to interfere ...

(Luke in a cold fury, strides toward Armand)

LUKE

You bastard!

(Luke grabs Armand. Armand spins and in one fluid motion, pulls his knife. Slashing viciously Armand slices Luke's wrist deeply.)  
(Luke cries out, holding his wrist, he drops to his knees.)  
(Consuelo screams.)

EPPIE

Luke!

ARMAND

Leave him alone!

(Armand spins toward Eppie, still holding the knife. Eppie stands her ground, but doesn't move. Leo sits frozen at the table)

(The room freezes. Lights begin to change, an ethereal glowing white coming

up all around Luke, while the others  
fade into darkness)

(Armand sheaths the knife, and moves in  
close to Luke.)

ARMAND

Heal thyself.

(Luke holds on to his wrist, the blood  
still flowing)

ARMAND

Do it, Lucas. Close the wound!

(Luke bends forward, beads of sweat  
breaking out on his brow.

Around him, the lights glow more  
brightly)

ARMAND

Make the bleeding stop.

(Armand kneels down beside Luke. )

ARMAND

You can do it, Lucas. All the power of the gods  
there for your taking. Heal thyself!

(Luke crouches as still as death,  
holding his wrist, beads of  
perspiration running freely down his  
face.)

(Long silent moments pass. Luke removes  
his hand. The bleeding's stopped.)

ARMAND

Bravo, Lucas. Bravo.

(Armand rises, stumbling awkwardly. He  
leans against a table, breathing  
deeply, wiping his brow with his  
handkerchief. He looks momentarily as  
if he is on the brink of collapse)

(The lights change)

(Suddenly, Armand spins to face the  
room, throwing his arms out wide)

(Armand bows expansively)

(The room is still frozen in shocked  
silence)

ARMAND

What is the matter with everybody? Applaud!

(He applauds wildly, catcalling.  
Stops.)

ARMAND

Oh come on! What is wrong with you? Did you think  
that was real? It was a trick! We have bewitched you with  
illusion.

CONSUELO

That was no trick.

(Outside, wolves begin to howl)  
MACK

What's that?

EPPIE

Wolves.

ARMAND

Wolves?

EPPIE

They're gathering out there in the desert.

ARMAND

There's no such thing.

(The howling grows closer, louder. The  
wind gusts violently, sending a sheet  
of hail slamming against the windows)

EPPIE

Listen to them, circling their prey.

ARMAND

I've had enough of all of this! Goodnight!

(Armand exits)

(Another violent gust, drumming of  
hail, a shutter bangs loose. Wolves

howl)

LEO

The storm's rising. Eppie, I gotta check that roof.

EPPIE

Consuelo, Mack - help Leo.

CONSUELO

(to Eppie)

Is Luke all right?

EPPIE

Go with Leo, Consuelo.

CONSUELO

I want to know if Luke's all right!

EPPIE

He's all right. Go.

(Leo, Mack and Consuelo exit)

(Luke remains crouched where he was  
when he healed his wrist.)

LUKE

I was just a kid when I first met him. Fifteen. A  
runaway. He found me on the streets. He took me in. He took care  
of me.

(beat)

He was a magician. A conjurer. But he had power. And he showed  
that power to me. And then he showed me the power I had.

(beat)

I was with him for years. Oh, I loved playing with the forces he  
taught me to control. Bending the universe to my will. But there  
was another side to those forces. The side Armand loved. The side  
that terrified me.

EPPIE

The dark side.

LUKE

Armand was never frightened by the dark. That's the power he  
craved. He always wanted to go deeper. Further.

(beat)

One day, I must've been with him about seven years, he told me he  
wanted to teach me the power of the hunt. The power of the kill.

The power that lay in stealing a soul through dying eyes.

(beat)

I told him he was crazy. I wanted no part of anything like that. I was done. I packed my bags, and I walked out the door. Just like that. It was so easy. He just let me go. No fight. No struggle to make me stay.

(beat)

I left. I thought I got away from him. I should have known. Armand would never let that happen. He followed me, and then that night ... that night...

EPPIE

What happened, Luke?

LUKE

He found me that night. He pulled up beside me on the street. He said he just wanted to talk. He begged me to come with him. He said he'd never make me do anything I didn't want to. He just didn't want me to leave. Not like that. I got in the car. He drove to this beach on the other side of the bridge. An isolated beach. When we got there, there was this boy. A young kid. Stupid. Trusting. Enamored of Armand. A kid who trusted Armand with his whole heart. With his life.

(Again, a howling wind followed by splattering rain.)

LUKE

We talked. Armand talked. The boy was drinking something Armand had given him. And then I realized what he had set up .... what he meant for me to do ... I stood up ... I tried to run ... but he grabbed me, he grabbed me... The boy was immobile. Drugged. Armand was good at that ... I fought him, I tried to fight, to push him away, but he was so strong ... he twisted my hand like a vice, and he forced ... he forced the knife ...his hand covering mine ... slashing ....

(growing increasingly agitated)

He held my head. I watched that boy's eyes as he died. I felt his soul lift out of his body, and pass through mine, and I shuddered with such ... exhilaration! Oh, God! Pure rapture! Higher than I'd ever flown before. No drug, no ritual, no magic trick had ever done that! Nothing! Nothing had ever

felt like that!

(Black-Out)

(END ACT ONE)

ACT TWO

(Lights up. Luke and Eppie stand exactly as they did at the end of Act One. Suddenly, Luke breaks from her, moving away, his fists clenching and unclenching)

(The wind rises, scattering a sudden splatter of rain and hail against the window. On the rise of the wind, the wolves howl. Eppie crosses to the window)

EPPIE

Ah! Listen to that.

(A lone wolf's cry rises above the others)

EPPIE

That's the one they follow.

(the cries cease)

Now, they'll stand silent, as still and fixed as death.

(Luke doesn't respond)

But inside, their life forces teem. Can you see them out there? Luke?

LUKE

I can't see anything.

EPPIE

Their eyes light the way, glowing like fire.

LUKE

Nothing but night.

EPPIE

Luke. The wolf stands as still as death, so that his inner senses may see what lies before him in its purest form. From the utter stillness, the adversary is revealed in his barest essence. Luke?

(he doesn't respond)

Have you forgotten so much of Shadow Wolf's teaching already?

(He turns toward her)

LUKE

You know his name.

EPPIE

Yes, Luke, I know his name. When he came to me, this powerful being, his name radiated all around him like a burning lamp.

LUKE

He came to you in a vision?

EPPIE

Yes.

LUKE

When?

EPPIE

Right before you came here.

LUKE

He told you about me?

EPPIE

Yes.

LUKE

What did he tell you?

EPPIE

He told me was sending someone who needed my help.

LUKE

That's all?

EPPIE

In its barest essence, that's all.

(Pause. Luke moves away from him)

LUKE

I never told him.

(beat)

About Armand.

(beat)

How could I?

EPPIE

Luke. Don't you think he knew.

(Luke looks at Eppie, the full weight  
of this hitting him)

LUKE

After I left Armand, I ran to the only place I've  
ever found any peace -- the woods of Northern Michigan. I hid  
then, deep inside. Alone. For years. And then one day, I was  
standing on the banks of a stream and I saw him -- Grandfather --  
standing like a gnome, his head cocked to one side, long grey  
braids running down his vest. I jumped at the sight of him, and he  
laughed. Such a rich, deep sound that echoed through the forest.

(beat)

I was with him for seven years. He was the one who had real power.  
He was the one who taught me real magic.

(beat)

I was just beginning to feel that I could finally heal. Just  
beginning to believe I had conquered ...

EPPIE

Conquered what?

LUKE

The lure of the dark is so powerful. I don't have  
the power to fight the temptation alone.

EPPIE

Are you alone? Who sent you across the desert to me?

LUKE

A voice. Only the shadow of a voice as dim and distant as a dream.

EPPIE

His voice.

LUKE

Was it?

(beat)

I thought out there, in the desert, the meaning of the visions  
would become clear. I thought out there, he would come to me,  
Grandfather. But instead ... instead ...

EPPIE

What?

LUKE

It was Armand who appeared.

(Outside the howl of the lone wolf

rises on the wind, as if carried from a great distance.)

EPPIE

Ah! Listen to that! That's the call of the wolf!

LUKE

Armand. No one else.

EPPIE

Luke. The visions, these terrible images of death and devastation that are haunting you, these visions represent only one possibility, one course of action. You understand? The triumph of evil, the destruction of the hallowed, these things can come to pass, they will come to pass -- if you allow them to. You decide which path to follow.

(Eppie crosses to him, taking his hand in hers, touching his healed wrist)

EPPIE

Listen to the call of the Wolf. Trust in that spirit.

LUKE

I can't trust in anything anymore.

EPPIE

You can trust in the spirit of the Wolf.

(She turns from him and exits)

(Luke stands alone, as still as death.)

(Armand enters DSR, carrying a bottle of cognac and two snifters. Luke, immediately aware of his presence, breaks his stillness, turning toward him.)

(The two men face each other a long moment)

ARMAND

Cognac?

(Armand crosses in, setting the brandy and glasses down on a table.)

ARMAND

I assure you it's of the very finest vintage.

(Armand pours out two glasses, setting one down on the table. Armand swirls his glass, coating the sides with the brandy. He sniffs the liquid deeply)

ARMAND

To release the bouquet. Without the savoring of the bouquet, the elixir is hardly worth tasting.

(extending out the other glass) Lucas?

(beat)

Are you waiting for me?

(he sips deeply)

Ah. See? Nothing to it. (beat)

Nothing in it. I promise.

(Armand laughs, and crosses to a table. He sits languorously, like a cat stretching in the sun)

ARMAND

Come on, Lucas. Sit down here. Next to me.

(Luke doesn't move. He watches Armand closely)

ARMAND

What's the matter? Are you mad at me? I had to show you what you are capable of achieving.

LUKE

Did I do it myself?

ARMAND

What do you mean?

LUKE

Did I heal myself, Armand?

ARMAND

What do you think?

(Armand sips)

You didn't think you could, did you?

LUKE

No.

ARMAND

No. Not a gash like that, slashed clean to the bone. That you thought that was beyond you.

LUKE

Yes.

ARMAND

Because that's the way you were conditioned to think. I've warned you since you were a boy, once they found you they would try to steal your power. They'd force you to prostrate yourself before the Almighty. Give all your glory to the Lord.

(Armand approaches Luke.)

ARMAND

Look at you. Look at how perfect you are.

(Armand takes Luke's hand. Turning it over, he examines his wrist.)

ARMAND

No scar. No seam. Not even a scratch.

(Armand runs his fingers lightly across Luke's wrist.)

ARMAND

Did it hurt much?

LUKE

No.

ARMAND

That's good. I don't want to hurt you, no matter what you think.

(beat)

Tell me what it felt like to unleash your magic and suture the wound closed. What did that power surging through you feel like?

(Luke releases his wrist, moves away)

ARMAND

Are you still so afraid of your power?

(Luke stops, turns to him)

You haven't even begun to tap the fount that lies there. I can lead you. I'm the best that ever was. Unlike the sainted Grandfather, there isn't anything I will refuse to teach you.

LUKE

He refused me nothing.

ARMAND

Really. He never taught you the knowledge of the veil.

LUKE

I never learned.

ARMAND

Because he couldn't teach you. But I can. Armand can. (beat)  
Would you like to learn?

(beat)

Once I mastered the secret in Europe, I returned to the States and went straight to the forests of Michigan. I knew that's where you'd gone after you left me. I knew that's where I'd find you. Do you remember showing me that land you loved so much? Once upon a time when things were still good between us.

(beat)

When I arrived in the woods, you were no longer there. But your essence remained behind, the power of your lingering spirit still filling the air. I stood in the forest, your spirit surrounding me like a prayer, when all of a sudden, this vision of you, alone and crying out in the desert, seared into me like a burning branch.

(beat)

I pierced the veil, and flew to stand beside you.

LUKE

How?

ARMAND

Hmmm?

LUKE

How did you pierce the veil?

ARMAND

Have I got your interest, Lucas?

LUKE

How did you do it?

ARMAND

Would you like me to show you?

LUKE

Yes.

ARMAND

Aha. Yes. Well. And what will you give me in return?

LUKE

What do you want, Armand?

ARMAND

You know what I want.

(Outside a howling of wolves begins to rise)

ARMAND

(moves in close to Luke)

When the veil is pierced, when the barrier between the material world and the world of the spirit is crossed, the flesh remains behind, like a cast-off cocoon, while the soul is freed from its prison to journey at will. But that, Lucas, that is only the beginning. That any amateur can achieve. But what about the flesh itself? Is it possible to dissolve the solid flesh into nothing but ethereal spirit, and journey back again? Two thousand years ago in Jerusalem, Christ himself was the master of that cabala.

(Suddenly a long lone howl wails sounding as close as if it were inside the room. Armand jumps at the sound.)

ARMAND

What was that!

(The lone howl is followed by a chorus of others cries -- all very close)

LUKE

Wolves.

ARMAND

There are no wolves in the desert.

LUKE

They're very close.

ARMAND

There are no wolves this far South.

LUKE

Desert wolves.

ARMAND

There's no such thing!

LUKE

I can see them out there in the dark.

ARMAND

There's nothing out there!

LUKE

What's wrong?

(Wolves howl again, dangerously close  
and fierce)

ARMAND

They're not real. Nothing but a mirage, a  
suggestion, a drug, for Christ's sake. They don't  
exist. Not in the desert. Not here.

(Luke watches Armand intently, then  
crosses to the window, gazing out.)

ARMAND

What are you doing?

(Luke throws his head back, lifting his  
arms. The howling increases)

ARMAND

Damn you, Lucas, stop it! I'm warning you, do you  
hear me!

(howling rises)

That's enough! Make them stop! Make them stop! Make  
him stop!

(Luke turns back to the window. He  
stands fixed, as still as death, his  
gaze intense. The howling rises to a  
crushing crescendo. Armand cringes.  
After an interminable moment, the  
wolves quiet.)

(Luke turns toward Armand)

LUKE

They're quiet now. Is that better Armand?

(Armand rises, shoving the chair

angrily away from. He strides across the room.)

LUKE

You're so pale. Are you all right?

(Armand stops. With visible effort, he attempts to gather himself together. Luke moves toward him)

LUKE

I had no idea the howling of the wolves bothered you so much. Look at you. You're trembling. Maybe you'd better sit down. Would you like me to help you? Come, Armand. Sit down next to me. And you can tell me why the howling of the wolves plagues you so much.

(Consuelo enters USC, pale and trembling. A shawl thrown about her shoulders covers a white nightgown. She doesn't see Armand at first)

CONSUELO

Oh, Luke. Oh, thank God you're here.

(Luke turns to face her. Armand laughs, quietly triumphant)

CONSUELO

(not noticing Armand)  
I heard voices ... I was hoping ...

ARMAND

Good evening, Consuelo.

CONSUELO

Oh! It's you.

LUKE

Consuelo. What's the matter?

CONSUELO

Oh, Luke ... I had a dream ... A nightmare...

ARMAND

Poor Consuelo. You look deathly. Perhaps some brandy?

CONSUELO

No!

ARMAND

Oh, but my dear, it worked so well for you this afternoon? Remember? Calmed those stage fright jitters right down.

LUKE

(to Armand)

You bastard.

ARMAND

(to Luke)

Ne plus ultra. You are no match.

(beat)

Consuelo, poor dear. So pale and trembling. Sit down, darling and tell us all about your nightmare.

CONSUELO

No ... I ...

ARMAND

Ah. You'd like to speak with Lucas privately, yes? Hurl yourself into his arms, and sob your heart out. Well, then, I'd best take myself out of your way.

(Armand moves US, stops, turns back to Luke)

ARMAND

Lucas, remember. When you closed the wound, the power you felt surging through you was the power of God.

(Armand exits)

(Consuelo turns to Luke)

CONSUELO

Luke? Oh, God, Luke...

(She breaks into tears. Luke puts his arms around her)

LUKE

Consuelo...

CONSUELO

Who is he? What does he want?

(she pulls back to look at him)

I saw him, Luke. In my room. It was him, standing there, in my room.

LUKE

Tell me what happened.

CONSUELO

It was so dark. Outside I could hear the rain falling against my window, and the wolves, howling. I don't know if I was asleep or awake, but suddenly I felt ... this... thing ... oh, God, a presence... standing there, in the dark, waiting... I could hear it breathing ... Luke, it was him! It was Armand, waiting there to steal my soul.

LUKE

NO!

CONSUELO

What does he want!

LUKE

Me.

(beat)

He wants me, Consuelo.

(Pause)

(Consuelo takes Luke's hand, turning it over and exposing his wrist.)

CONSUELO

That was no trick, was it?

LUKE

No.

CONSUELO

There's no wound. You're skin is smooth. Only God could do that.

LUKE

Don't say that.

CONSUELO

Only the power of God.

LUKE

NO!

CONSUELO

That's what he's after!

(Mack enters USC. She looks unrested,  
disoriented)

MACK

Thank God! Humans! What a night!

(beat)

Wolves and rain and nightmares!

(she shudders)

Ugh! I feel like hell. Do I look like hell? Never  
mind. I look like hell.

(She crosses to the counter)

MACK

Maybe some tea. I'd knock back another brandy, but  
that crap Armand gave us left such a raunchy taste in my mouth. I  
don't know how he manages to drink it, but he swills it like  
nothing I've ever seen. Anybody else for a spot of tea?

(Mack puts the tea pot into the sink,  
and opens the faucet)

(Suddenly, Mack screams.)

MACK

Ahhhhh!!!

(She hurls the tea pot into the sink.)

CONSUELO

Mackie!

MACK

Get them away from me!

(Luke strides over her)

LUKE

Mack!

(Mack screams again)

MACK

Get them away!

(Leo enters)

LEO

What's going on! I heard screaming!

(Eppie enters USC)

EPPIE

Luke!

(Luke grabs Mack by the shoulders)

LUKE

Mack! Listen to me!

MACK

They're all over! They're crawling all over me!

(Luke pulls her DS)

LUKE

Mack! Come here! Over here!

MACK

Get them away from me!

LUKE

There's nothing there!

MACK

Help me!

(He grabs her head, holding her firmly)

LUKE

Look at me! Mack! Look at me!

MACK

Oh, God!!!

LUKE

Look at me!

(He holds her head tightly in his hands, forcing her to focus on him)

LUKE

There is nothing there.

MACK

Oh, God! Oh, God!

LUKE

Mack! Listen to me. What you're seeing is not real.

MACK

Luke!

LUKE

It's not real!

MACK

(as if coming out of a daze)

Oh. Luke. Oh. (beat)

They were everywhere. Didn't anybody see them? I turned on the faucet, and there were snakes crawling everywhere.

LUKE

Mack...

MACK

What the hell's going on here!

CONSUELO

It's Armand.

MACK

Armand?

CONSUELO

He did the same thing to me.

MACK

What are you talking about?

CONSUELO

He made me see a nightmare.

LUKE

Mack, you said he gave you something to drink.

MACK

Before the show. Brandy. Me and Con.

LUKE

He hypnotized Consuelo. Did he hypnotize you, too?

MACK

He said it was just a game.

(off Consuelo and Luke's expression)

Look. I don't know what the Christ is going on here. (to Luke)

Okay? What's going on? Are you saying you think Armand drugged us?

LUKE

Yes.

MACK

But he was drinking the same thing!

LUKE

He didn't drug what he was drinking.

MACK

Oh, man. Oh, man. But why? Why would he do that!

CONSUELO

He wants to get to Luke. He'll do anything, won't he, Luke. Anything to get to you.

(Luke rises, moves away from her)

LUKE

Anything. Yeah, anything. He'll stop at nothing.

(he paces)

Eppie?

EPPIE

Yah.

LUKE

I have to fight him.

EPPIE

Yah.

LUKE

I have to fight him alone.

CONSUELO

Luke! No!

LEO

No way, man!

LUKE

Listen to me...

LEO

No! When Eppie first told me about you, when she told me you were coming and she told me what was coming after you, she asked me if I was afraid. I told her, hell yes, I'm afraid, but I ain't going anywhere. I didn't go then, and I'm sure as hell not going now!

LUKE

You have no idea of the evil Armand is capable of.

LEO

So we're supposed to walk out of here and leave you alone with him?

LUKE

It's my battle. Leo, he'll use his power, he'll use everything, everyone of you -- until he gets to me.

I've got to finish it. But the only chance I've got -- the only chance -- is to fight him alone.

(Pause)

EPPIE

He's sleeping now. Can you sense him, Luke?

LUKE

Yeah. Sleeping. Gathering his forces.

EPPIE

So are you.

LUKE

I don't know how much time we've got.

EPPIE

Leo, get my jeep.

LEO

All right.

(Leo exits DSL)

EPPIE

Consuelo, help me gather supplies.

(Eppie and Consuelo gather supplies behind the counter)

MACK

Luke? If he drugged us, if that crazy son of a bitch planted some kind of wierd hypnotic suggestion in my head, that means those things, those snakes, they can come back, right?

LUKE

They're not real, Mack. That's what you've got to remember.

MACK

I can't handle it. I can't handle seeing those things slithering all over me again.

LUKE

Yes you can.

MACK

You have no idea how terrifying that vision is.

LUKE

(he takes her hand)

Mackie. It happens to me all the time.

MACK

Yeah. But you can walk across deserts.

(Leo re-enters)

LEO

The jeep's dead.

EPPIE

What!

LEO

Won't turn over. No matter what I do.

LUKE

Damn it! What about your truck? Did you try your truck?

LEO

Can't get any juice on my truck either.

MACK

Is he doing this?

LUKE

Consuelo, lets get the supplies outside.

MACK

Is he doing this!

LUKE

Mack! Help, Consuelo. We're going to get one of those cars running.

(Mack heads behind the counter for the supplies. Luke heads for the exit DSL with Leo.)

(Armand enters DSR.)

(Mack screams. They all stop frozen.)

ARMAND

Whatever is the matter, Mackie. Did you see another snake?

(Armand crosses into the room. He carries a black leather satchel)

ARMAND

Going somewhere, Lucas? And I wasn't invited. How rude. And how very rude of you, Miss Eppie Falco. No breakfast? Not even a hot cup of joe. I'm going to have to remove you from my list of the desert's great hostesses.

LUKE

Armand ...

ARMAND

Look at you! Plotting evilly away against Armand. Scurrying off to abandon him all alone in the desert. It breaks my heart.

LUKE

This is just between us.

ARMAND

Is it?

(Armand snaps his fingers. The juke roars to life, blasting EARTH ANGEL. Mack screams, covering her ears.)

LUKE

NO!

(Luke throws his arm out toward the juke. The record screeches to a halt, the glass of the juke shatters)

LUKE

No more tricks!

ARMAND

(laughs)  
Bravo, Lucas.

(Luke strides toward Armand)

ARMAND

Use your magic. Just the way I always taught you.

(Luke and Armand lock eyes)

LUKE

You want me. You leave them out of it, and come on.

ARMAND

(pulls his knife)

I don't think so.

(Leo springs for Armand)

LEO

You son of a bitch! I'll kill you!

LUKE

Leo! No!

(Armand whirls toward Leo, slashing viscerously with the knife. The knife slices Leo's arm. Leo cries out, falling to the floor)

(Eppie moves to Leo, calling out:)

EPPIE

Leo!

ARMAND

Stay back! All of you!

(grabs Leo)

You think you're going to stop me!

(Leo cries out in pain)

LUKE

Let him go!

ARMAND

I can snap him like a twig!

LUKE

All right! Just let him go!

(Armand pushes Leo away from him)

ARMAND

All right! All right! For God's sake. He's inconsequential to me. A bug. Jesus! Is that better, Lucas? I let him go. Does that fit your sensibilities better?

(Leo moans)

LUKE

He needs help.

ARMAND

Would you like to heal him, Lucas?

(The two men lock eyes again.)

ARMAND

Go ahead. He's right there. Writhing away on the floor behind me.

(Luke doesn't move, not daring to turn his back on Armand)

ARMAND

Perhaps I should lay my hands on him.

LUKE

Eppie. Help Leo.

(Eppie moves in to Leo, kneeling beside him)

EPPIE

It's okay. It's all right, my friend. I'm here.

LEO

Eppie?

EPPIE

Yah.

LEO

I can't breathe...

EPPIE

Easy, my friend. Easy.

(She places her hands on Leo's chest)

LEO

My heart...

EPPIE

Just breathe with me. Breathe with Eppie.

ARMAND

Such a touching display.

LEO

(grabbing her hand)  
Don't let him hurt anybody else.

EPPIE

Sshh...

LEO

Don't worry about me. Just don't let him hurt anybody else.

ARMAND

Shut-up! That's enough! The both of you shut-up!  
(to Eppie)  
Get that son of a bitch out of my way!

EPPIE

I can't move him myself.

ARMAND

Mack! Get over here!

MACK

Luke...!

(Armand whirls to face Mack, the knife extended)

ARMAND

Do you see who's holding the knife?

(Luke lunges at Armand. Armand spins, evading Luke, and in one swift motion grabs Consuelo)

CONSUELO

Nnnnnooooo!!!!

LUKE

Armand!!!

(Armand spins Consuelo in front of him, pressing the knife against her throat)

ARMAND

Get back or I'll slit her throat!

(Armand drags Consuelo to a chair, pushing her into it. Consuelo cries out)

LUKE

Armand ...!

ARMAND

Try anything, and I'll kill her.

(Armand presses the knife tighter against Consuelo's throat. She cries out)

ARMAND

Shut-up!

LUKE

Armand don't!

ARMAND

Beg me pretty.

LUKE

Please don't hurt her.

ARMAND

Move away. Stay away. Behave yourself.

(Luke steps back. Armand places the knife between his teeth, and grabs Consuelo's wrists, jerking them violently behind her back. He pulls a scarf from his pocket, and binds her wrists. He removes the knife, from his mouth)

ARMAND

Good. That's good. That's better.

(beat)

Now, Miss Mack. Miss Mack Starr. If you wouldn't mind moving your tight little ass over here and getting that son of a bitch out of my way.

(Frightened, Mack crosses to Eppie and Leo. As gently as possible, they help Leo to the side)

(Armand takes out his handkerchief and

wipes his face. He is sweating  
profusely, breathing heavily)

ARMAND

There's no need for all this nastiness. Really,  
there isn't. Why don't we all just relax. Have a drink. Act  
civilized for Christ's sake.

(to Luke)

This could have all been so simple! But you had to  
insist on fighting me. Send round the fiery cross!  
And for what? For what, Lucas?

(Armand rises, taking up his satchel)

ARMAND

You can't win. Winning was never an option for you.  
Not against me. Never. You should have known that.

(Armand opens the satchel. He takes out  
an object, carefully wrapped in red  
silk)

ARMAND

I taught you the power of the kill. I revealed to  
you the power of the soul. But I was never able to show you the  
power of the bones. You left before I could do that.

(Armand unwraps the article. A human  
skull.)

ARMAND

Eppie understands the power well, don't you, Eppie?  
But not as well as I do.

LUKE

(turning from the sight)

You disgust me.

ARMAND

Ne plus ultra, Lucas. Nulli secundus.

(Armand places the knife in his jacket  
pocket. He picks up the skull and  
crosses down to Luke)

ARMAND

So beautiful still. Even more so now than he was in  
life. Look how perfectly preserved the bones are.

Dazzling in their perfection. Pure.

(Armand stands next to Luke)

ARMAND

Go ahead, Lucas. Touch it.

EPPIE

Luke...

(Lights begin to change, dimming on stage to a ghostly hue, a spot shimmering, fading up on Luke and Armand)

ARMAND

Go ahead. Feel the power. Feel the thrill of exhilaration! Nothing ever felt like that before!

EPPIE

Luke!

(Armand thrusts the skull into Luke)

ARMAND

Nothing ever will!

(At the touch of the skull, Luke cries out dropping to his knees. Lights change, thrusting the stage into darkness except for the pulsating, strobe-light spot shimmering around Armand and Luke.

A cacophony of sound rises -- pounding, throbbing, the sound of devastation, or apocalypse, the sound we heard at the top of the play. Luke hunches over, his body bending as if the force of the rising sound, and the power of the thing he holds in his hands would crush him)

(Armand's words reverberate, echoing throughout the room)

(Outside, the storm rises, and breaking through the howling wind and pummeling

rain, the sound of a lone wolf howls)

EPPIE

Luke ...!

(Eppie's call reverberates, mixing with the sound of the wind and the rain and the wolf, and the others who also desperately call out Luke's name)

CONSUELO

Luke ....!

ARMAND

No one knows you like I do! No one knows the wild beast raging inside of you, howling for release.

EPPIE

Luke ...!

ARMAND

Your wild soul will never be tamed! It belongs to me! Come home. Lucas!

EPPIE

(her voice breaking clear)

Luke! Trust in the spirit of the wolf!

(Armand throws his arms wide open)

ARMAND

Come home to me!

(Luke cries out. The lights change. Spot blacks out. Stage lights jump up. Sound goes out. Even the howl of the wolf, and the wail of the storm fade)

(No one moves.)

(Luke, kneeling, cradling the skull looks up at Armand. Armand smiles down at him.)

(Slowly, Luke rises.)

(As if he were cradling a child, Luke gently places the skull down on the table)

(Then, turning back to Armand, Luke walks into his arms, embracing him.)

(Armand, sighing with relief and exquisite pleasure, closes his eyes, holding Luke tightly to him)

(Luke whirls, pulling Armand back in a chokehold)

ARMAND

Son of a bitch! NO!

(Armand rips free of Luke's grasp, and turns on him, brandishing the knife)

CONSUELO

(screams)  
LUKE!

ARMAND

Okay, boy. Okay.

(Armand circles Luke, slashing the air with the knife)

ARMAND

This is how you want it? Okay!

(He moves in. Luke springs grabbing ahold of the hand that grips the knife. They fight for control of the weapon)

ARMAND

You can't fight me, boy.

(Armand twists the knife, pointing the weapon at Luke's chest)

ARMAND

I'll force this knife right through your heart.

(Luke wrenches free, tearing the knife from Armand. Armand cries out. Luke advances on him)

ARMAND

What are you going to do? Kill me?

(Luke continues to advance)

Come on! Come on! You can't! You don't have the power!

(With a wild cry, Luke slashes the knife across Armand's face. Armand cries out, grasping his face and dropping to the his knees)

LUKE

Get up.

(Armand crouches on the floor, his hand still to his face)

LUKE

Let's go!

(Armand doesn't move)

LUKE

Move!

ARMAND

Lucas...

LUKE

MOVE!

ARMAND

I'm bleeding.

(Luke snaps the knife shut, firing it behind the counter. He crouches beside Armand)

LUKE

Close the wound. Stop the bleeding.

ARMAND

Lucas...

LUKE

What are you waiting for?

(he grabs him)

Close the wound! Let's finish this once and for all!!

ARMAND

You're hurting me.

LUKE

What the hell's the matter with you?

(beat)

Oh, Jesus.  
    (beat)  
You can't, can you.  
    (beat)  
You can't!

(Luke rises. The storm outside gathers intensity. Sheets of rain hammer at the windows. The wind rises, and in the distance the lone wolf calls)

Conjurer!  
LUKE

No!  
ARMAND

Imposter!  
LUKE

No!  
ARMAND

Fake!  
LUKE

(Luke strides to the table where Armand's satchel sits and savagely turns it over, sending the table crashing to the floor)

That's all you ever were!  
LUKE

NO! NO! NO!  
ARMAND  
    (Armand rises, pounding his fist)  
I had real power! I have power still!

(Outside, above the wind and the rain, the lone wolf howls mightily.)

ARMAND  
I passed through the veil. You know I did. You saw me. I did it. You can't. But I can. Armand can!

(Luke turns back toward Armand)

LUKE

You passed through the veil.

ARMAND

I did it. Yes. I did.

LUKE

One day, the secret revealed itself to you.

ARMAND

Yes.

LUKE

When was that?

ARMAND

What do you mean?

LUKE

When did you pass through the veil?

ARMAND

I don't know what you mean!

LUKE

It's a simple question.

ARMAND

I don't know what you're asking me!

(Luke springs, grabs Armand. Lightning flashes)

LUKE

Damn you!

(Luke shoves Armand up against the window. Lightning flashes again, and thunder rolls. On top, the wolves howl. Armand cringes)

LUKE

ANSWER ME!!! You lifted the veil and passed through to the other side! Where were you when that happened!

ARMAND

In the woods! In Michigan! Deep in the woods in Michigan, looking for you!

(Luke releases him)

ARMAND

That's the only time I could ever make it work.  
After all those years. Only once. In the woods, when  
I felt your essence pressing all around me.

LUKE

That's why you came looking for me after all these  
years.

ARMAND

Lucas...

LUKE

I have the power.

ARMAND

It's not just the power.

LUKE

You need me!

ARMAND

I love you!

(Pause)

(Armand takes out his handkerchief and  
wipes at the blood on his face, wincing  
at the pain of the wound.)

ARMAND

After you left I traveled. Roamed all over the  
world, searching for someone like you. But there never has been  
anyone like you.

(Luke moves away from him)

ARMAND

After I pierced the veil, the labor left me so weak, I collapsed.  
Then, in the distance, I heard the wolves. Such a fierce howling.  
Surrounding me. Eyes on fire, teeth gnashing. I got up... I don't  
know how, and I ran, knowing only that I had to get to you. Lucas.

(beat)

Luke. When I was young, there were so many dreams.  
We used to dream together as we played with our  
power.

(beat)

I have power still. I can feel it, thrumming within.

Lucas, together we would be invincible.

LUKE

Armand. It's over.

(Outside, the lone wolf howls. Armand turns toward the window. Pause.)

ARMAND Over. It's over.

(beat)

They're gathering again.

LUKE

Circling.

ARMAND

Waiting.

(He runs his hand over the gash on his face) Lucas.

(beat)

I'm bleeding.

(beat)

Lucas?

(Luke turns toward him. A plea)

Heal me.

LUKE

(never taking his eyes from him)

No.

ARMAND

They'll follow me.

LUKE

I know they will.

ARMAND

You'd send me out there like this?

LUKE

You don't have to go out there.

ARMAND

What would you have me do?

LUKE

I can teach you to heal yourself.

ARMAND

At what price?

(beat)

Ah. I see. Give all my glory to the Lord! Prostrate myself before the Almighty! No! Never! I am my own Lord!

(Outside, the lone wolf howls)

LUKE

It's your choice.

(As if in defiance of the wolves,  
Armand walks to the window)

ARMAND

No. No. There's somebody else out there. You're not the only one. There's somebody waiting with as much power as you.

(The howling rises)

ARMAND

I'll find him. I found you.

LUKE

Armand. You're marked.

(Armand traces the gash)

ARMAND

Beware, Lucas. Someday, in another place, the Darkman, will enter, with a scar across his face, and an eager young assistant at his side.

LUKE

And the Desert Wolf snapping at his heel.

(beat)

I know how to find you.

(Armand and Luke stare at each other a long moment)

ARMAND

Until then, Lucas. Until then.

(Armand exits)

(Outside, the lone wolf's howl rises, followed by the cries of the others. The howls reach a crescendo, then slowly begin to trail off, fading quietly into the distance, as if the

wolves were retreating -- or following  
their prey into the night)

(Against the windowpane, the rain  
splatters gently, and stops)

(Silence)

(Luke crosses to Consuelo.)

LUKE

Are you all right?

CONSUELO

Yes.

(Luke unties her. He takes her wrists,  
running his hands over them lightly)

LUKE

I have to check on Leo.

(Consuelo nods. Luke crosses to Leo,  
crouching beside him)

LUKE

How are you doing?

LEO

I'm okay, man. I'm okay.

(Luke lays his hand on Leo's arm)

LUKE

Are you still bleeding?

LEO

I don't think so. No.

(Luke presses his hand against Leo's  
arm, closing his eyes, his lips  
moving.)

LUKE

Any pain?

LEO

No, Luke. I'm all right.

LUKE

Good.

(He rises, crossing back to Consuelo.)

LUKE

May I use your shawl, please?

(Consuelo removes the shawl, handing it to Luke)

CONSUELO

Of course.

(Luke carries the shawl to the skull resting on the table.

He wraps the skull reverently within the shawl. Cradling the skull like a child, Luke crosses DSL, and exits)

(The others remain in silence.)

(Lights slowly fade to black)

(Lights fade up on bright midmorning. Sun streams through the cafe window. Eppie Falco's Desert Wolf looks right with the world again. All signs of last night's struggle have been picked up and cleaned away.)

(Consuelo sits at a table, her artwork spread out before her)

(Mack works behind the counter. Eppie sweeps the floor of the cafe. As she sweeps past the juke, she stops, hammers her fist on top of the machine. The juke whines and EARTH ANGEL roars into life. Eppie laughs.)

EPPIE

It still works!

(She sings, dancing with her broom. From behind the counter, Mack joins in the song.)

EPPIE

Mackie! Come dance with me!

(Mack crosses down. Eppie and Mack sing and dance together.)

MACK

Come on, Con!

CONSUELO

Oh, no. I don't think so.

(She crosses to the window)

(Mack and Eppie continue their number. the record suddenly slides to a scratch and screeches to silence)

EPPIE

Ach. Maybe it doesn't work so good at that.

MACK

I think you're record's ruined.

EPPIE

Nah. You can't kill Earth Angel, Miss Mack.

CONSUELO

Where is he?

EPPIE

Consuelo...

CONSUELO

He should've been back hours ago.

EPPIE

Luke is in the desert. When he's finished with what has to be done, he'll be back.

(The DSR door opens. Consuelo starts. Leo enters, wiping his hands on a rag, his arm bandaged.)

LEO

Well, Miss Consuelo, it seems your little Chevette is not dead yet.

MACK

You fixed the car?

LEO

Yes, ma'am. I surely did.

MACK

Did you hear that, Con? Leo fixed the car.

LEO

I don't know how I rightly did it. Not only did I get Consuelo's little Chevette up and humming, I got my truck running, and Eppie's jeep going, too. We could have desert drag races out there if we wanted to. I swear I don't know how I did it. I am a lousy mechanic.

EPPIE

Maybe not so lousy anymore.

LEO

Must've been the rain. All that rain just soaked through everything. Sun came out, dried everything up, got everything running again.

MACK

So. The car's fixed.

LEO

Yes, ma'am.

MACK

We can go.

EPPIE

Fly away, Miss Mack, free as a bird.

MACK

You know I came up with a whole new number? I mean not just a number -- a full show. It came to me this morning. I was lying there in bed -- and the whole thing just popped into my head.

(DSR door opens. Luke enters. They all turn. Consuelo moves toward him)

CONSUELO

Luke.

LUKE

Consuelo.

LEO

Hey, Luke.

LUKE

Hey.

CONSUELO

(she crosses down to him)

Are you all right?

LUKE

I'm all right.

CONSUELO

You were out there in the desert so long.

(Luke crosses to her.)

LUKE

Let's sit down.

EPPIE

You want some coffee, Luke?

LUKE

Yes. Thank-you. I could use some.

(Eppie goes for Luke's coffee.)

LUKE

(to Consuelo)

I had to lay his bones to rest. Do you understand?  
He was just a boy. I had to stay with him, until I knew he was at  
peace.

CONSUELO

Is he at peace, Luke?

LUKE

He's at peace.

(Mack takes them in)

MACK

Hey, Luke, did you know Leo got Connie's car running? (beat)  
Fixed it up all by himself as good as new. Isn't  
that right, Con. Only, I don't think Connie's going  
to be driving it anywhere any time soon.

CONSUELO

Mackie.

(Mack crosses to them. She runs her

fingers across Consuelo's art work.)

MACK

You see this part here, Luke? The part that comes right after the great wash of desert -- the towering mountains of the West. That's the part she doesn't need anymore.

CONSUELO

Oh, Mackie. I'm sorry.

MACK

I knew I should've never let you drive. As soon as you started seeing ribbons of silver, I knew I was in trouble.

CONSUELO

I can still drive you to Los Angeles.

MACK

No.

CONSUELO

But I promised you I would.

MACK

Con. It's five hours there and five hours back.

CONSUELO

But how are you going to get there?

MACK

I don't know. Walk?

LUKE

I don't know if I'd recommend that, Mack.

LEO

My truck is running.

MACK

What?

LEO

I know it ain't much better than that little Chevette, but it'll get you there.

MACK

Leo, no! I can't let you drive me all that way anymore than I can let Connie.

LEO

Miss Mack, I was driving through the desert and I came to Eppie Falco's. I stopped for the night, and stayed for two years. I think it's time I go back home.

(beat)

Eppie?

EPPIE

Yah, my friend. Leo.

(Leo crosses to her. They embrace)

LEO

Thank-you, Eppie.

EPPIE

Thank me? You fixed my roof. Remember? Twice.

LEO

Yes, I did, didn't I? Indeed, I surely did.

(to Mack)

Okay, Miss New York, as soon as you finish up you're packing, we are on our way.

MACK

Okay! Let's rock n roll.

(she starts to exit USC, turns back)

Ah, Eppie ... I know I wasn't always the easiest guest ...

EPPIE

Ach! Forget it, Mackie. I've had worse believe me.

MACK

Yeah. I guess you have.

(to Luke)

Mr. Travelling Man. Don't eat any poison thistles.

LUKE

No. I don't think so. Not anymore.

(This is a lot harder than she ever  
imagined it would be.)

MACK

Well, here I go. This time, I'm really going...

EPPIE

Mackie.

(She tosses Mack one of her stones)

EPPIE

For your dreams.

(Mack snags the stone in mid-air)

EPPIE

Keep on dancing!

MACK

Yeah!

(She executes a quick dance step, and exits.)

(Leo crosses to Luke)

LEO

Luke.

(Leo holds out his hand. The two men look at each other. Luke rises. They embrace.)

LEO

I got to go put some things together.

(Leo exits USC)

(Eppie crosses back to the counter.)

EPPIE

When I was in the camp, there was this woman. She'd been there much longer than I had. Her face was ravaged with hunger. Her body so thin -- like a skeleton. And all around her cot where she slept, were the most beautiful drawings of butterflies I'd ever seen. She gathered up what she could, anything that could mark or write. She mashed flower petals together, seeds, vegetables from the officer's garden, to make colors. And she drew her butterflies. When the Americans came and liberated the camp, do you know what she did? She stayed. In that little German town where she had been kept locked away, a prisoner, she stayed. She told me, "Now they are the ones who need my butterflies."

(Eppie crosses to Luke, takes his hands)

EPPIE

I saw the Holocaust, Luke. I saw the same fiery vision of Armageddon that plagued you in the desert. And I saw the butterflies. I believe in the butterflies.

(Eppie squeezes his hands)

EPPIE

I've got to go gather bones.

(Eppie exits DSR)

(A faint pool of light begins to glow center. Luke turns toward the light, rising.)

CONSUELO

Luke?

(The light glows brighter. Luke crosses down toward it until he stands in its center, the pure, white ethereal glow washing over him)

LUKE

(quietly)  
Grandfather?

(Luke bows his head. The light expands, shimmering all around him, as if filling him up completely.)

LUKE

Grandfather.

(Consuelo rises. A lone wolf howls. The lights glow to a dazzling peak.)

(Black Out)

END OF PLAY