

Twigs & Bone
by
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Time

August, unrooted

Place

A house that lives way off the beaten track in a gully all its own

People

Bonnie Lane... 62, a storm unto herself*
William Lane... 66, a man who has misplaced his life*
Moirira Lane... 30, their daughter who grew up in this house, a woman who's made great pains to distance herself from the past

** While they've been in the states (and this house) for nigh on thirty years, Bonnie and William are both of Irish origin. This does not mean they should speak with a full Irish dialect, but that Ireland shows up now and then to help color in the spaces.*

Author's Notes

"-" mark interruptions whereas speeches with a "/" indicate an overlap in dialogue.

As to the staging of this play, the author invites creativity in addressing the challenges piles of dirt and a house-shaking storm present.

*Developed at The Hawthornden Writer's Retreat
and with Theatricum Botanicum*

TWIGS AND BONE

SCENE 1

The stage presents a dank, dark, house that rarely sees sunlight except on the rare occasion when a well-intentioned soul cracks a window. A porch overlooks the dusty road out front and may sport a swing. A neglected screen door allows entrance.

Inside, the furniture is well used, especially the sofa which always remembers where its most favored occupants regularly sit. Various coffee cups reside in odd places... near windows, the door and some other dark places. There could be some plants, if they are accustomed to being ignored and allowed to run wild. And books... there should be lots of books. The occasional baby toy, brightly out of place, keeps the dank company.

Moira Lane, a rather regular looking woman of about 30, is currently struggling up the porch-steps of a memory she desperately avoids. Her suitcase, as if sensing her dread, lags behind.

Moira manages a very restrained knock... followed by a second, more decisive, knock.

The quiet suffocates, as does the heat. Moira mops her brow.

Knock, knock, knock.

Someone inside mutters and shuffles.

William Lane, a man who has misplaced his life, opens the door.

WILLIAM

You've made it.

MOIRA

Yes, unhappily so. I don't suppose you've got the air conditioner on in there?

WILLIAM

Of course. Of course. Let me just get my things.

MOIRA

What?

WILLIAM

You've come to take me away, right? You got my letters? My phone calls?

MOIRA

No, dad, I'm here for a visit-

WILLIAM

You can't stay. You can't stay! I sent letters, where are my, surely you got the... you want to come in and visit?

MOIRA

Yes, dad, I've brought a suitcase. A small suitcase-

WILLIAM

No, no, no. Let me get my things. She's upstairs, she won't even know I've gone-

MOIRA

Don't be ridiculous- Mom!

William puts his hand to his ears, shuffles away.

The screen door, unaccustomed to visitors, slaps Moira in the face.

WILLIAM

Pure stubborn, hardheadedness...

MOIRA

Have you gone mad?

Moira wrestles the door open and steps inside. The suitcase does not want to follow.

MOIRA

I could use some help-

William walks to the couch where he sits, hands to ears, and humming.

MOIRA

Jesus Christ. Mom! Hello?

WILLIAM

Well don't go calling her in here. She's going to get all uppity with you hollering like that.

The suitcase finally acquiesces and slides miserably inside.

Moira looks around.

MOIRA

It smells strange in here.

WILLIAM

Earthen.

MOIRA

What? No.

(Sniffs)

Like mold. You should open some windows or something. Isn't that woman cleaning?

WILLIAM

Who?

MOIRA

Fleur.

WILLIAM

Fleur's gone. Fleur di'lis vanishimo.

MOIRA

She's, what? I don't understand- ow.

Moira steps on a squeaky toy.

MOIRA

Did you get a dog?

WILLIAM

I hate dogs, you know that.

Squeak.

William turns to look.

WILLIAM

(chuckles)

Oh. That.

Moira waits for an explanation, but none comes. She clenches down hard on her irritation.

MOIRA

MOM!

*A voice from upstairs floats down with
matched aggravation.*

BONNIE (O.S.)

What in hell you yelling for?

*A rather clumsy collection of
aggravated thumps precede Bonnie's
arrival.*

BONNIE (O.S.)

(Descending the stairs)

Sounds like a pack of animals down here, all that
shouting! What on earth could be so important?

*Bonnie enters, a force of nature
misguided.*

MOIRA

Uh, me?

BONNIE

Twiggy! My God, I should have known. That voice, always
so shrill. You are your father's daughter, right?
Shouting away like that. Didn't you tell her to be
quiet?

WILLIAM

-I told her-

BONNIE

Didn't he tell you to be quiet?

MOIRA

Yes, he told me to be quiet, but I don't really
understand-

BONNIE

Never listen, just like your father.

William snorts.

BONNIE

It's true. Why when I think how much time I've wasted
just talking at the two of you, never sinking in- Stop
yelling, don't run in the house, don't cut your hair...
I've got another life in there somewhere, another life's
worth of living just wasted on handing out advice.

Moira.

William.

Moira.

MOIRA
Why's the phone disconnected?

BONNIE
Is that why you're here?

MOIRA
I haven't heard from Fleur in weeks. I've been trying to call-

BONNIE
I got tired of it ringing.

MOIRA
Well, are you alright?

BONNIE
You can see I'm alright. I'm standing here looking at you, ain't I? Jesus, will you get a load of this one Willy?

William disappears into a book.

MOIRA
I was worried.

BONNIE
Ach.

MOIRA
/Where's Fleur?

BONNIE
/Worried she says.

MOIRA
I'm not- What?

BONNIE
Come out here to fuss. Like we was a couple of babes?

MOIRA
Where is Fleur?

BONNIE
The pollinator? Harbinger of dust, dander, and other things that make your nose itch? The girl was a disaster, dear. Never hire a maid named after vegetation.

MOIRA

I've paid her through September!

BONNIE

Well, then I'm afraid you've been taken. She left out of here around, what would you say William, July? The night of the fireworks. When was that?

MOIRA

The *4th of July*?

BONNIE

Ach, no, what do you think I've gone completely bonkers? There was the 4th, of course, and then there was some sort of local thing after. Right about the 18th or something, a grand opening I think it was. I'll never forget it. She flew out that door, silhouetted with a spray of hot pink and blue behind her. I thought to myself, "That girl can't clean a lick, but God, what an exit!"

MOIRA

You let her go last month?

BONNIE

What "Let go", the poor girl took off running. I didn't like her much, but I'd never send her off in the late of night like that. She quit.

Moira looks for someone, anyone, to share in her disbelief. William is not that someone.

MOIRA

Mom!

BONNIE

What?

MOIRA

That's the *eighth* woman I've hired-

BONNIE

Are you going to be staying for long, because your voice is really starting to needle my nerves-

MOIRA

Why'd she go running?

BONNIE

Oh, who knows, she's French. They've never made a lot of sense to me.

MOIRA

Do you understand how difficult it is to find a good live-in? They're practically impossible these days, and forget French. She was practically a goddamned national treasure! You must have done something-

WILLIAM

Said it wasn't in her job description.

BONNIE

Oh, now that was a/ load of-

MOIRA

/What wasn't in her job description?

WILLIAM

Changing, burping, cleaning up its shit-

BONNIE

I object to that, I object very strongly to that. I have been doing the lion's share, I just ask for a little assistance now and then-

William snorts.

BONNIE (CONT'D)

And what would you know about it, anyway? Down here all day, bibbling the scotch like a right 'aul rummy.

MOIRA

Can you two just, stop, for one goddamn second?

Silence.

Bonnie huffs.

BONNIE

I see no need for that kind of language.

MOIRA

Jesus Christ, five minutes in this house and my head already feels like Hiroshima.

(breath)

Okay, one of you, and I don't care who, please just tell me what is going on.

WILLIAM

Your mother's gone and had herself another baby. And I take an occasional drink in the afternoon to forget what an auld whore she's become.

BONNIE

Occasional my ass-

MOIRA

Wait, a what?

WILLIAM

The girl said looking after little ones wasn't in her job description and she lit off for the train. I think she called a cab first-

BONNIE

Well, really, what sort of maid did you ever hear of that didn't know how to wash nappies? It's not like I was asking her to wet nurse.

MOIRA

I don't think I heard you right-

WILLIAM

If she didn't agree to it, and didn't want to do it, you shouldn't have tried to make her do it. You can't force someone to do something they didn't agree to do, now can you?

BONNIE

Oof, what a lot of rubbish.

WILLIAM

Bah.

MOIRA

What *baby*?

BONNIE

Maeb.

Moira is frozen.

MOIRA

Say that name again?

BONNIE

Ach, no, you heard it the first time, I can tell by the grimace spread cross your cheeks. Course, you won't understand, haven't heard mention of your sister's name out your lips since she passed. And why is that? Hoarding all that grief, are you? Is that it? Think you have license to her all by yourself? Well I was her mother you know! The name don't belong to the child, it belongs to the parent.

Moira.

Moira.

Bonnie adjusts her hair.

BONNIE

Well, say something.

MOIRA

I don't understand... how, you would-

WILLIAM

What's to understand? She went out last Autumn, had herself an affair, and got herself knocked up-

BONNIE

Now William-

WILLIAM

Only way I can see it! I haven't touched you in years, always barking at me about one thing or another, never about that. I gave up. Had I known she had an itch, I could've scratched. As it is now, I won't touch her, she's gone and spoilt the well-

Moira and her hollow stomach.

MOIRA

I need to sit down...

WILLIAM

Don't never drink from a spoilt well Moira. No matter how thirsty you may be.

MOIRA

But you're sixty-five years old...

BONNIE

Sixty-two, you damn ingrate.

(To William)

And don't go insulting my honor. It was a miraculous conception, I told you that!

William makes raspberry sounds.

MOIRA

(no one is listening)

A... baby. And you named her after... but that's not possible-

WILLIAM

You're about as miraculous as 'aul Gurny Smith down there on the corner, liftin' her skirts for a Franklin!

BONNIE

Now, don't you start insultin' me!

WILLIAM

I'll insult you all I want, traipsin' your rotten 'aul snatch around this place like we was supposed to bend down and pray to it. I'll not buy into that propoganda, no matter how far beneath the earth you may have buried my balls!

MOIRA

WILL YOU BOTH PLEASE SHUT UP! /God, my head!

Bonnie's ears prick up.

BONNIE

/Jesus, Mary and Joseph, now look what you've done.

MOIRA

Where are you going?

William throws his hands down in disgust.

BONNIE

Upstairs. You've waken up little Maeb. You with that shrill voice of yours, just like your father, peck, peck, peckin' at me all the time.

Bonnie heads up the stairs.

BONNIE (CONT'D)

Poor thing, crying her eyes out because of you. Nice introduction, wouldn't you say? Encountering you in one of your moods.

MOIRA

I don't hear anything.

BONNIE

Well how could you, yelling like that.

Moira steps after her.

BONNIE

And just where do you think you're going?

MOIRA

To see this baby-

BONNIE

I don't think so! Coming in from God knows where, with God knows what kind of germs on ya'- We're all over used to one another here, you're a - what do they call 'em Willy? - Foreign germs, you've got. You're practically toxic, by comparison.

MOIRA

I'm not *toxic*-

BONNIE

Ha! William, help Twiggy with her suitcase, and fetch her a cab for Godsakes.

MOIRA

You think I'm *leaving*?

BONNIE

Why not? You've just come to make sure we was alright, haven't you? Well we're fine. Go on and get out of here before you stir things up to a boil.

MOIRA

I'm not stirring-

BONNIE

William! Get off your soggy ass and contribute!

Bonnie disappears up the stairs.

William looks up at Moira.

WILLIAM

So you want a yellow cab then, or should I just loan you her broom?

Lights fade.

SCENE 2

Moira scrubs away at the kitchen- the sink, the cupboards, the floor. It could all use a good cleaning.

Her suitcase keeps nervous watch from the corner.

William comes in for a snack. He carries his book. He looks at Moira. It takes him a while to work up the right words.

They don't come.

WILLIAM

Won't make no difference, you know.

MOIRA

What?

WILLIAM

Scrubbing away like that. Comes right back.

Moira and the dirt.

MOIRA

How long has she been like that?

WILLIAM

Like what?

MOIRA

A baby? Really dad? And why would she call it that?

WILLIAM

I dunno, said the woods told her it was your sister reincarnated or something.

MOIRA

Jesus!

WILLIAM

If you ask me, she's just trying to soften me up a bit so I won't be mad about the affair. Can't admit she got caught. Just turns up with a baby one day. "It's a miracle!" She'd been looking a little fat, I thought she'd just been eating too much. That Fleur used a lot of butter. Never ate so much cheese in my entire life. You know I'm supposed to be on a low cholesterol diet-

MOIRA

Did she steal it?

WILLIAM

No, it stayed right there, cloggin' up my arteries.

MOIRA

The baby, dad.

WILLIAM

Oh, no, no looks like her plain enough. And like I said, she'd been getting fat. Had an ass on her, you know. Course, I suppose I couldn't say for sure. She's always dressed. Gets up dressed, goes to sleep dressed, comes out of the shower dressed. Hell, I don't think I've seen that woman without her clothes on since 1983.

MOIRA

Well she's obviously... I mean, you don't just go having babies at her age, affair or- And she has the audacity to claim that it's, it's... she doesn't believe in reincarnation!

WILLIAM

What are you doing down there? Didn't you hear me tell you it don't matter?

MOIRA

Three days. Three days I take off work, to come here, to sort this place out, to sort you both out - I'm going to spend the whole time on my hands and knees. Wasn't Fleur cleaning?

WILLIAM

Hell yes, she was cleaning. Cleaning day and night, woman never stopped cleaning, only time she stopped cleaning was to cook up some butter and cheese. Put it on a plate. Make me eat it. You ever have crepes?

MOIRA

Yes.

WILLIAM

Damn good, those are. Wish your mother hadn't scared her off like that. You want a sandwich?

William rustles in the fridge.

MOIRA

No thanks.

WILLIAM

Suit yourself.

Moira and the floor.

MOIRA

She was supposed to be cleaning. And preparing low-cholesterol meals for you. And keeping an eye on things. She never told me about... any of this.

WILLIAM

I did. I wrote up and down, every day, miles of letters screaming "Help, get me outta' here. I can't sleep"

MOIRA

I never got any.

WILLIAM

Really? Huh. Maybe I just dreamt them then.

*He takes a bite into his sandwich.
It's dry as dust.*

He applies more mayonnaise.

MOIRA

Where do you keep the car keys?

WILLIAM

What, to the Mercedes? Your mother turned it into a flower pot.

MOIRA

She *what*?

WILLIAM

Full of dirt. She planted marigolds or daisi-golds, or some such fool sort of thing in there.

MOIRA

How can a sixty two year old woman flood a car with mud and plants and you don't say anything about it?

WILLIAM

Didn't notice /'till I tried to take it out for a drive-

MOIRA

/Didn't notice?!

WILLIAM

What are you still doing down there? I told you to get up off of that floor already! Not fit to go crawling around on the ground like a peasant, it don't come up!

Moira stops scrubbing.

MOIRA

If she turned the car into a garden, then how are you getting in to town? How are you getting your groceries for Godsakes?

WILLIAM

Delivery service.

MOIRA

Jesus Christ.

WILLIAM

No, just some pimply kid, probably saving up for college.

Moira's frustration bubbles out of her on bed of vowels.

Bonnie joins them.

BONNIE

Oh. You're still here.

MOIRA

Dad says you turned the car into a flower pot.

BONNIE

Ai, and it's a damn sight prettier that way. And more useful. Did your father tell you he wanted to drive it off the bridge? I saved his life, I did. Are you- What are you doing on the ground? You're not cleaning are you? Is she cleaning?

MOIRA

Yes.

Bonnie laughs.

WILLIAM

I told her.

MOIRA

Told me what?

Bonnie takes a bottle from the cupboard, proceeds to fill it and heat it, without missing a beat.

BONNIE

What do you want with the car anyway?

MOIRA

I thought I'd go into town and see if anyone had reported a missing baby.

BONNIE

Oh, look who's feeling clever. Isn't that funny William? Twiggy thinks she's being clever.

MOIRA

Moira.

BONNIE

You have filled out a bit... Hasn't she filled out a bit? Used to be so damn skinny she could slide through walls-

Moira bites her tongue.

BONNIE

-Used to be certain she'd slip down a crack if she came across one in the sidewalk.

MOIRA

I didn't come all the way out here so you could bother me about my weight.

BONNIE

Look, *Moira*, it's not my fault you dragged yourself all the way out here, uninvited, like this. We're perfectly fine /so why don't you just call yourself a cab// and-

MOIRA

/Fine? You are not "Fine"// Because the phone's been disconnected.

BONNIE

So go out and stick your thumb up in the air. I'm sure someone will stop.

MOIRA

Mother-

BONNIE

Uh-oh, the dreaded two-syllable salute. I'm about to get it now-

MOIRA

Can you just stop for one second and listen to me?

BONNIE

Oh, *Moira*, I just hate the way your voice sounds when you get serious-

MOIRA

Oh my God! Look, things have obviously crawled way past "Ordinary" here, and I'm trying to figure out just how far. I mean, is there a "Wanted" poster out with your face on it? Are you claiming "Aliens did it"? / I know you don't have the kind of money it would take for fertility-

BONNIE

/I knew it! I knew you'd come swooping in, reading into things, and just shit all over it. William, you didn't put mayonnaise on that sandwich did you?

MOIRA

That's not what I'm doing!

BONNIE

Oh, no? / William?

MOIRA

/No.

WILLIAM

Of course I used mayonnaise, the bread's as dry as a bone.

BONNIE

You know you're not supposed to have that.

MOIRA

Hello, I'm talking here-

BONNIE

Do you know, Moira, that that flower head you hired was trying to kill your father? Down here everyday, "Would you like more sauce Monsieur Lane?" Just pouring it on! Murderess!

WILLIAM

She was a godsend!

BONNIE

Stop eating that.

MOIRA

Mom!

BONNIE

Moira, your father and I are trying to have a conversation.

WILLIAM

No, you're trying to tell me what to do!

BONNIE

Give me the sandwich.

WILLIAM

No.

BONNIE

Give me the goddamned sandwich Willy. Give it to me, give it to me now!

Bonnie reaches for the sandwich but William shovels it, in its entirety, into his mouth.

MOIRA

Jesus Christ.

BONNIE

Animal!

William growls and grins.

But then he starts to choke.

Moira jumps into action.

Bonnie tests the baby bottle.

MOIRA

Oh my God, Dad! Mom, call the- God damnit, the phone.
Dad? Can you breathe?

*Moira hits her father on the back until
he spits the remains of his sandwich
onto the table.*

William takes in a great breath.

BONNIE

Jesus Christ Moira, haven't you ever learnt the Heimlich
maneuver? You're lucky you didn't kill him.

Bonnie leaves with the bottle.

Moira looks at her father.

MOIRA

Are you okay?

*William looks at the sandwich, he picks
it up.*

WILLIAM

Will you look at that? I had no idea my mouth was so
big.

*Moira storms after her mother into the
living room.*

MOIRA

Don't walk away from me!

BONNIE

I'm not walking away from you dear, I'm walking towards
Maeb.

MOIRA

Stop calling her that! Did you steal that baby?

BONNIE

Now how could you ask me such a thing?

Moira stares. Bonnie rolls her eyes.

BONNIE

Ach, no, I did not steal any baby.

MOIRA

Did you find it then?

BONNIE

I told you-

MOIRA

There's no such thing as miracles!

Bonnie slaps her face. Moira freezes.

BONNIE

Now you listen here Missy, I'll tolerate a lot of things out of you, but don't you come near me blaspheming the unknown.

MOIRA

You're too old.

BONNIE

Maybe, *maybe*, but fortunately for me and Maeb, it's not you who gets to make those kind of decisions.

Moira. Bonnie. Moira.

MOIRA

I want to see her.

BONNIE

You want?

MOIRA

Yes.

BONNIE

You. Want.

MOIRA

Yes. I'm all cleaned up, no "foreign" germs left to speak of. If she really is, if you really had another baby, I should... meet her.

BONNIE

You think hiring some fancy French woman to come into our home and clean up the things you don't want to look at gives you privileges?

MOIRA

I-

BONNIE

I don't even know where you live, you hire someone, some strange *French* girl, and send her to us without even asking if we so much as want her, and I can't send her back because I don't even know your address. And now you show up, at *my* home, and start making demands of *me*?

(MORE)

BONNIE (cont'd)

As if I owe you anything? I don't. So no. You can't see her. You haven't earned it.

Bonnie stomps upstairs, Moira stares.

After a moment William enters, swallowing the last of his sandwich.

WILLIAM

Weather fit for fighting. Turn the goddamn light on, will ya?

MOIRA

She's crazy.

WILLIAM

Your mother's always been... complicated-

MOIRA

Complicated?

WILLIAM

Getting older just isn't the medicine they tell you it's going to be.

MOIRA

This is obviously going to take more time than I thought...

WILLIAM

Always been trouble between the two of you. I hoped you'd come back to some common ground once you'd gotten far enough away. Loop yourself back to the source so to speak. You're a lot alike you know.

MOIRA

What! How can you say that? We are *nothing*/ alike-

WILLIAM

/Then again, maybe that's why you pick at one another so well. Hard to look at yourself without passing judgement. Course, I never had the privilege of meeting my mirror, so I don't know. Imagine that's why your sister was so easy to be around- different from us all. Sweetest damn thing ever walked the planet. Sat in there with your mother, fits an all, never even batting an eye-

MOIRA

A prisoner.

WILLIAM

What?

MOIRA

Mom is an emotional vacuum. She sucked her dry.

(barely)

You just weren't here enough to see it.

And she wasn't- Maeb wasn't perfect. She was fragile.

Too fragile for this family. God made a mistake giving her to us.

*William sucks his teeth, thinking.
Walks to the screen door.*

WILLIAM

Hope you got a strong back. You'll have to sleep on the sofa tonight, not the nicest of nests.

MOIRA

What? I can't sleep on the- What's wrong with our old room?

WILLIAM

Ach, your mother's gone and turned it over to the baby. Threw my newspapers out without even a warning. Whole place is dedicated to little pink booties and lace. It's disgusting.

MOIRA

I don't believe it. I DON'T BELIEVE IT.

WILLIAM

Believing's got nothing to do with it. Will you turn on that light already? The sky's gone and swallowed the sun and I can't see where my body ends and the world begins.

Black.

SCENE 3

It is late, the wind is restless.

Moira can't sleep. She wanders the living room, looking at old photos, knickknacks. She picks up a frame, is disgusted by the dirt beneath, and starts to wipe, only to realize it's a much bigger job than a simple swipe of her finger.

She picks up a coffee cup, looks inside, sniffs and quickly recoils.

William shuffles downstairs.

MOIRA

What is this?

WILLIAM

Ach, you scared the living daylights out of me. What are you doing scurrying around down there?

MOIRA

I can't sleep. What the hell is this?

William squints into the dark.

WILLIAM

Can't see what you're asking about there-

MOIRA

It's a coffee cup full of, what smells like, urine. Please tell me it's not.

WILLIAM

Ach, don't go messing with that now!

MOIRA

Dad?

WILLIAM

You put it back where you found it. Down here nosing around where you don't belong. Put it back!

MOIRA

But-

WILLIAM

I got to have some sort of peace in my own home, don't I? Some sort of place to call my own?

MOIRA

Oh my God... So you're, what? Marking your territory?

WILLIAM

Don't expect you to understand. Put it back now. Interfering with things you can't possibly understand- And don't go messing about with your mother's frames either. One of them portraits goes out of place, your mother descends like an angry hawk.

Moira looks around. How can this mess claim any sort of order?

MOIRA

Jesus.

WILLIAM

(shouts to the ceiling)

Christ Almighty, will you shut her up already?

(to Moira)

Damn that child, she's crying my ear off.

MOIRA

I can't hear anything.

WILLIAM

Have you gone deaf? She's ready to shake the house to its foundations! Your mother fancies she got herself an ear infection or something. I came down for a hot toddy.

MOIRA

For the baby?

WILLIAM

No, for my nerves, ai, you don't give brandy to a baby. Jesus H. Christ, good thing you haven't multiplied yet. You haven't have you?

MOIRA

No.

WILLIAM

Good. You might want to read a book or something before you do.

MOIRA

(muttering)

Yeah, I'll be sure to do that.

WILLIAM

You want a drink?

MOIRA

God, yes.

Moira looks around, the house is silent.

William pours the brandy.

Moira senses a small but permanent tearing in the universe.

MOIRA

Dad, is the baby crying now?

WILLIAM

Look who wants to be funny.

MOIRA

I'm not trying to be-

WILLIAM

Of course she's crying. You think we got a pack of coyotes or something up there. Your mother's illegitimate spawn is RUINING MY BEAUTY SLEEP.

Bonnie's angry footsteps tumble down the stairs.

BONNIE

What in the name of all that's holy are you thinking yelling like that?

Moira closes her eyes in search of sense.

WILLIAM

Me?

BONNIE

Yes, you, with your loudness, you're unbearable LOUDness.

WILLIAM

Oh, I'm sorry. Am I *disturbing* you?

BONNIE

Yes, you are.

WILLIAM

Well, good. You know what else is disturbing? Being woken up at all hours of the night by a shrieking baby when you're sixty six years old! For fuck's sake, didn't we do this already?

Moira looks around. The tear is getting bigger.

MOIRA

You can *both* hear the baby crying?

WILLIAM

Look what she's done to Moira! Our daughter's gone deaf from that squealing. Deaf!

MOIRA

Right *now*?

BONNIE

Oh, Moira, don't be morbid.

WILLIAM

Get's easier to handle after your second.

William pours himself another stiff one.

BONNIE

Why do you always have to make a dark situation worse?

WILLIAM
What are you going on about?

BONNIE
You, always with that stupid bottle.

WILLIAM
This is a supreme cut of Brandy. I paid a lot of money for this brandy-

BONNIE
-A lot of OUR money-

WILLIAM
MY money. Those are MY pension checks coming in, you know.

BONNIE
Oh, here we go again...

*Moira climbs the stairs carefully while her parents argument dims into the kitchen quiet. *(see addendum)*

She tiptoes across the upstairs hallway.

There are three doors upstairs. The Master Bedroom, Moira and Maeb's old room, and the bath. Moira opens the door to her old room.

It is dark.

The universe holds for one last moment before tipping irrevocably onto its head.

Moira turns on the light. She listens for her parents. She slowly steps towards the large, old fashioned bassinet. She peeks inside, digging around the blankets.

Moira stares, agape.

MOIRA
All the hairs on my neck...

Bonnie and William stand in the doorway.

BONNIE
Moira Angela Lane, you get away from that crib!

Moira stares.

MOIRA

Is this some kind of joke?

WILLIAM

Jesus, Bonnie, she's got such God awful pipes on her.
Sure we can't keep her outside?

Moira lifts what can only be described as a doll out from the crib. Only, it's not a doll made of fabric and porcelain, but a doll made of twigs, and red yarn. There are no discernible features, but four limbs and a "head". Moira lifts the thing by its "leg."

MOIRA

Just what the hell are you two playing at here?

Bonnie answers with a scream.

BONNIE

Moira, put her down! My God, what is wrong with you?
You give her to me right this second!

She rescues the "baby" from Moira's careless grasp and cradles it.

BONNIE

Maeb! Oh sweet lord in heaven. Are you alright?

She tenderly checks the "baby" over.

William claps his hands to his ears.

WILLIAM

You've gone and done it now, haven't you? There'll be no settling her after this.

BONNIE

Get out of my house!

MOIRA

What?

BONNIE

You heard me!

MOIRA

You can't possibly expect me to leave now-

BONNIE

I surely can! Shiva the Destroyer, you are!

WILLIAM

Ah, let her alone Bonnie, she's barren.

MOIRA

I'm not- What? Barren?

WILLIAM

I'm just saying is all-

BONNIE

What does that have to do with anything?

MOIRA

-I'm *not* barren-

WILLIAM

Just that she's a bit dim on the subject of child rearing is all.

BONNIE

William, you don't have to be a genius to know better than to be swinging babies around by their ankles!

WILLIAM

I'm just saying-

MOIRA

That's not a baby!

BONNIE

You're both mad! The pair of you. You make me sick.

MOIRA

My God, you're serious-

BONNIE

Get out of my sight!

MOIRA

But...

Moira tries to make sense of things...

BONNIE

OUT!

WILLIAM

(softly to Moira)

Come on, let her simmer tonight, she'll be stew by morning.

He escorts her out of the room.

Bonnie bounces and hums to the baby.

Moira feels, for the moment, that she has gone mad.

She doesn't like the feeling.

She doesn't like it at all.

Black.

SCENE 4

The next day.

All the shades are open. Unfortunately, the sky outside has decided to hide and the dirt seems to have grown. Wind and a spatter of rain rattles the panes.

Dim light creeps into the house.

William reads his book on the porch.

Moira makes breakfast. She makes a perfectly ordered breakfast, full of rhyme and reason. Everything makes sense again, down to the last fork.

She contemplates her masterpiece.

WILLIAM

It's too dark.

MOIRA

What?

WILLIAM

I said it's too damn dark.

He thumps down his book and shuffles into the kitchen.

WILLIAM

Goddamned strangest weather. Like the sun plumb fell out of the sky.

MOIRA

Do you want some coffee?

WILLIAM

I don't drink coffee.

MOIRA

You only pee in the mugs...

WILLIAM
 What?

MOIRA
 Nothing.

WILLIAM
 Too dark to read, too dark to sit. What's that smell?

MOIRA
 Breakfast.

WILLIAM
 I'll have orange juice.

Moira pours juice.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)
 You didn't make crepes did you?

MOIRA
 French toast and eggs.

WILLIAM
 Ach, french toast, you're killing me. Why don't you tap a vein already and just bleed me dry.

MOIRA
 I don't know how to make crepes.

WILLIAM
 Any sign of your mother? I haven't heard her hooves this morning.

MOIRA
 I don't think she's up yet.

William slurps his juice.

Moira slurps her coffee.

MOIRA
 Dad, when did Mom bring... "Maeb", home?

WILLIAM
 Oh, I don't know, thing's about 3 months old now, I think, so that's what... June or thereabouts.

MOIRA
 And did something... did mom maybe slip and fall first, or have a stroke, anything like that?

WILLIAM
 Ach, you're a right ray of sunshine this morning.

MOIRA

Or it doesn't have to be an accident. I mean, has she started drinking or taking anything... Has she been on any new pills maybe? New medications?

WILLIAM

No. Hasn't been to the doctor in I don't know how long. Healthiest she's been in years. In fact, I don't think the woman's been sick since...

MOIRA

Since when?

William thinks about Maeb. It fills him with a primal uncertainty.

He doesn't like it.

WILLIAM

Moira, I don't understand where you're going with this-

MOIRA

I'm just trying to find out why she's acting so... out of the ordinary.

WILLIAM

When has your mother ever been "ordinary?"

MOIRA

Well, what about the car? When did she do that? That's pretty unusual.

WILLIAM

Ai, the car again! What do I look like, her date book? How am I supposed to remember every fool thing she's up to? One day it ate gas, the next it was bugged. Christ Almighty. I thought you said there was breakfast.

MOIRA

I thought we'd wait for mom.

WILLIAM

Oh, so you want to be Little Miss Manners after last night, do ya? Well go ahead, detective. Be polite as punch. I'm hungry.

Moira hands him the french toast and eggs.

WILLIAM

Where's the bacon?

MOIRA

There wasn't any.

WILLIAM

Damnit Moira, I thought I smelled bacon.

MOIRA

Well you didn't!

William contemplates his daughter.

He begins to eat.

WILLIAM

Where you been, Moira?

MOIRA

What?

WILLIAM

Been a long time, don't even see you at Christmas anymore.

MOIRA

Things are... things got, it was challenging. I have a lot to do at work, I just couldn't get away.

WILLIAM

They make you work on Christmas?

MOIRA

I was still, I'm still taking care of things. The house, it's all paid up-

WILLIAM

Ach, I know business is... That's not what I'm asking, that. Been hard, is all. Not seeing you. Loosing one daughter is, hard enough, but you been gone so long, feels like I lost you both. 'Course, you're off conquering the world, suppose it's been a sight more appealing than... this.

Moira.

Moira.

MOIRA

Dad, I-

WILLIAM

Didn't ask me about the name, you know.

MOIRA

What?

WILLIAM

Maeb. Your mother didn't ask me. Decided it all up on her own, that reincarnated stuff... Don't think she's ever forgiven herself about your sister. People of all sorts saying it was "God's plan" and bringing us casseroles. Nice enough mind you, but don't do much once a mind is made up.

MOIRA

You think she feels guilty?

WILLIAM

Maybe. Could be she sees this as a new start. Could be why she went out there fornicating like a feral cat. Could be if I think about it like that I forgive her a little. Big breach of trust, a thing like this. Raising another man's baby... ach, not everyone could do it.

MOIRA

Dad, that's not a baby.

WILLIAM

Oh, she's monstrous enough aright, but sometimes when your mother don't know it I go up and have a peek. Babies have a way of softening your insides.

Bonnie can be heard coming down the stairs.

WILLIAM

Course you ever tell your mother I said all that I'll disown you.

He picks up his plate and heads to the porch.

Bonnie passes him in the living room.

BONNIE

Where are you off to?

WILLIAM

None of your damn business, that's where. And your daughter made us breakfast. Try not to bite into her too hard, eh?

Bonnie heads into the kitchen.

William sits on the porch and eats french toast while imagining crepes.

Bonnie and Moira.

Smells alright. BONNIE

There's no bacon. MOIRA

You made coffee? BONNIE

You want some? MOIRA

Did you wash out the mugs? BONNIE

I found some in the back of the cupboard, I figured they were safe. MOIRA

Ai, yeah then. BONNIE

Moira pours a cup of coffee for her mother.

Don't know what your father's thinking peeing in 'em like that. Empties 'em out every couple days, fills 'em back up. I tried sneaking them out, fill 'em with water. Lord, did I hear it then. BONNIE

Moira imagines a peaceful happy feeling.

Don't suppose you thought of breaking out the jam? BONNIE

Oh- MOIRA

I'll get it. BONNIE

Bonnie takes the jam out of the fridge.

You did a nice job on the table. BONNIE

Thanks. MOIRA

I don't think we've used these dishes in ages. BONNIE

MOIRA

Well, I thought it might be nice-

BONNIE

Apology accepted.

MOIRA

That's very... apology?

BONNIE

I thought about things and I guess didn't figure what a frightful day it must have been for you, what with all the travel and then your father loosing his mind, peeing all over the place-

MOIRA

Mh-hm.

BONNIE

Course, you can't blame me for being a little off, myself, left to take care of a senile old man and a tiny baby all as I am. But you were in a bit of a shock, and I have to judge that fairly.

MOIRA

Thanks.

BONNIE

You're welcome. Besides babies is like rubber at that age anyway, nature's version of a warranty. Why, when you were little I must have dropped you on your head a half dozen times. And look at you, a lawyer! Course, I suppose you'll be wanting an explanation. Seems a right awful thing not to know the whole story of your sister's reincarnation when it's as wondrous as it is. Can you pass me the butter?

She does.

BONNIE

I've been taking walks. Wonderful, long walks in the woods. Don't know what took me so long... perhaps it was knowing how your sister used to love them what made me afraid. Afraid to go out there by myself, enjoy myself in her woods. But now, well. There's peace out there. Peace that's been eluding man since the dawn of time. It's the trees, as if they're looking down on us with pity, "Paur little humans, their minds be so fraught with worries" (they're Olde English, you know). And it was just after I'd started going out there that I started feeling they were whispering to me, right out of one of them faery tails my mum would tell us when we were little.

(MORE)

BONNIE (cont'd)

Course, most of the stories she was telling were meant for frightening, "If you steal cream in the morning, the faeries will get ya", and so on, but this was different. This was something... sacred. They were communing with me, so I took to having longer and longer walks. Anyway, it weren't long after that I started feeling a different sort of presence. Real heavy like, and magic. Singular. I started bringing honey with me, mum used to say they like honey, and I'd leave offerings. I wanted to let him know I was enjoying the woods just the same as him. Oh, I could tell it was a him, there was something so... oaken about his weight. Sometimes I'd take a seat and it would settle all around me, holding me, and I'd stroke that honey bottle and give a little squeeze, and the whole of it would shiver. God, it was beautiful.

WILLIAM

(hollering)

Is there anymore of that sorry-excuse-for-French-cooking left?

BONNIE

(hollering back)

Why don't you come in here and see for yourself, you old goat.

She catches herself, listens for Maeb.

BONNIE

God, sometimes your father makes me loose my mind! Always yelling, it's contagious.

William enters the kitchen.

BONNIE

Why are you always yelling?

WILLIAM

S'pose I want to be heard.

MOIRA

The toast is on the stove.

WILLIAM

Don't suppose you stirred up some bacon?

MOIRA

I told you already, there isn't any bacon in the house.

WILLIAM

Just doesn't seem like much of a breakfast without bacon.

BONNIE

Ach, Willy, you know there's no bacon! Why you going on about it? Leave her alone already.

WILLIAM

You playing at being friends this morning?

BONNIE

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

William helps himself to more toast.

BONNIE

Where was I?

Moira opens her mouth-

BONNIE

Oh, right. The honey-

WILLIAM

Jesus Christ.

BONNIE

What now?

WILLIAM

You going on about them woods again? Lies, lies, and more lies!

BONNIE

I told you-

WILLIAM

Ain't no cloud in the woods fucking you on a bed of honey what makes a baby out of it!

MOIRA

Dad!

WILLIAM

What? She hadn't gotten to that part yet?

BONNIE

You think you're so clever don't you, insulting me every chance you get?

WILLIAM

Ain't nothing clever about it. It's factual.

BONNIE

Oh, go eat your toast and stay out of things!

William grumbles and shuffles out.

BONNIE

And try not to choke on it this time! I'll tell you one thing that Fleur was good for was keeping him off of my hump. Practically didn't speak to one another for two months. Not one word. Best two months of my life, I tell you that. More coffee?

Moira extends her cup and Bonnie fills it.

MOIRA

Listen, Mom, I was thinking I'd head into town today. I'm sure I can find a cab if I walk in a ways, I could come back here, get us a ride in?

BONNIE

What do you need me to go with you for?

MOIRA

I just thought it might be nice.

BONNIE

Oh?

MOIRA

Yes.

Bonnie regards her daughter with a suspicious eye.

MOIRA

We could, maybe we could go shopping.

BONNIE

Mmm.

MOIRA

Might be nice. Bring dad along. We could get some bacon.

BONNIE

One big happy family?

Beat.

MOIRA

Yes.

Bonnie takes her frustration out on the dishes.

BONNIE

Ach, I should have known. Making breakfast and letting me go on about my walks...

MOIRA

What are you-

BONNIE

-Meanwhile you're just scheming away-

MOIRA

-It's not a conspiracy!

BONNIE

Oh no? You're not, what, planning on dropping us off at a funeral parlour while we're out?

MOIRA

No. Jesus.

BONNIE

Willy? Twigs thinks we should all ride into town together, just for kicks. One big happy family. What do you think about that?

(to Moira)

Why don't you just go on and tell me what you're aiming for Twigg, save the indecency of playing at me like I'm a child.

MOIRA

Fine. I think you should see a doctor. I think you and dad are losing your minds and I want you to see a doctor. I'll take care of all the expenses-

BONNIE

Oh, you're a shiner, you are. My own flesh and blood.

Bonnie heads into the living room.

Moira follows.

BONNIE

Daughter knows best, eh? Come here to save us did you?

MOIRA

Stop twisting everything around. I'm just concerned-

BONNIE

Our daughter wants to put us away, what do you think of that Willy?

MOIRA

No one said anything/ about putting you away-

BONNIE

/Willy, I'm talking to you...

William stands frozen, staring out the door.

MOIRA

Dad?

William turns around, he has wet his pants.

WILLIAM

I saw it.

BONNIE

Willy, what on earth?

WILLIAM

I saw your damn cloud.

He starts to fall.

Moira steps in to catch him.

MOIRA

Oh my God, dad? Dad?

William stutters.

Bonnie looks outside with eager eyes.

BONNIE

Oh Moira, do you think he's come to see the baby?

Black.

SCENE 5

There's no telling what time of day it is, for the house is besieged by horrible weather.

The upstairs bedroom.

William is in bed, a mountain of pillows behind him. Moira wets a wash cloth and dabs at his face.

After a while, Bonnie comes in, hair blown about, shoes muddy, she's all a twitter.

BONNIE

Oh, Moira, Moira, me, where's he gone do you think?

MOIRA

Shhh! Dad's asleep. Where have you been?

BONNIE

Can't imagine he would come all the way here just to make your father piss his pants. You don't think Willy was rude to him, do you? Said anything strange? And Lord, what a storm. Is he angry maybe?

MOIRA

You need to stay with dad while I go for help.

BONNIE

What?

MOIRA

He needs a doctor.

BONNIE

You're in the middle of experiencing something here, a real damn miracle, and you want to go and invite science inside?

(She smells the air)

God, I can still smell him. He's not far off.

MOIRA

Stop it! Stop flitting around like that. Dad's sick!

But Bonnie is listening to another channel.

BONNIE

You know it wasn't like your father said. Her coming. There wasn't any *intercourse*. A presence like that, he doesn't deign to take our shape... It would be like you or me trading our skin for a parasite's. No, when he came unto me it was like a great rushing wind. And I knew. I knew that he had blessed us with a child. Your father just can't wrap his pea sized brain around it. Never did have much faith in the way of things beyond us. Couldn't understand it when your sister died, why he wasn't as angry as I was with God. Then I came to realize, it's because he never much believed in Him to begin with. Never much believed in anything he couldn't touch with his hands. Do you think I should put a dress on little Maeb?

Moira and her frustration.

MOIRA

No, I do not think you should put that thing in a dress! I need you to concentrate here. Now is not time for one of your fits. I need you to focus!

Bonnie touches Moira's furrowed brow.

BONNIE

I remember when the doctors first told us she wasn't long for this world, you put on that wrinkled brow and sat right down next to her bed. I knew there was no moving you. By her bed for weeks! I never even saw you use the toilet. I thought "That's it, I'm going to lose them both. One's dying and the other is turning to stone." You're father is old, Moira. But you, you're missing everything!

MOIRA

Mom, please. Dad could be having a stroke. I have to go out to the main road and try and get a signal-

BONNIE

Stroke! What stroke? He's just fainted is all.

Bonnie slaps William on his pale, sweaty, face.

BONNIE

Hey, Willy, open your eyes. You're scaring your daughter.

MOIRA

Stop that, what's the matter with you?

William opens his eyes.

WILLIAM

Ach.

BONNIE

Ai, there he is, see. Stop being dramatic.

Bonnie leans into him.

BONNIE

Hey, Willy, where'd he go? Where'd he go, Willy?

MOIRA

Give him some room, Jesus.

WILLIAM

Moira...

MOIRA

Yeah dad?

WILLIAM

Bring me my cups.

MOIRA

What? No, dad, I'm going to go for a doctor-

WILLIAM

My cups!

BONNIE

Typical. TYPICAL, asking for a fool thing like that.

MOIRA

Be quiet! He's sick, and you need to be nice to him. You need to stay here with him while I go for help!

BONNIE

I am not sitting next to him and that filth-

MOIRA

Yes, you damn well *will*-

BONNIE

Ach, stop trying to tell me what to do!

WILLIAM

(mustering strength)

Bring 'em to me! Set 'em round the bed, will ya?

MOIRA

Dad, you need help-

BONNIE

But Willie, *where'd he go?*

MOIRA

Leave him alone, for Christ's sake!

BONNIE

Willie-

MOIRA

Look, dad-

WILLIAM

(thunder and brass)

Get the cups! The cups! The cups!

Moira takes a breath.

MOIRA

Fuck. Fine, but then I'm going for some fucking help!

Moira storms towards the door.

WILLIAM

Good. Good girl.

He closes his eyes again.

Bonnie blocks the exit.

BONNIE

Oh, you'll bloody well listen to him about his stupid cups, but I can't have the time of day with you?

MOIRA

Move.

BONNIE

It's always been that way, the two of you... peas in a pod- never could get a word in edgewise. Like living in a foreign country where everyone got the punch lines but never let you in on the jokes.

WILLIAM

Bonnie-

BONNIE

It was always your sister, God rest her soul, who understood me. She cared. Then God went and stole her from me, and I'm left with the pair of you. Whispering, ganging up on me...

MOIRA

No one is ganging up on you.

BONNIE

Oh no? Oh NO?

MOIRA

We don't have time for one of your tantrums-

BONNIE

Right. What am I thinking, standing here talking. We've got to get your father's fancy cups.

Bonnie storms down the stairs, Moira follows...

WILLIAM

Moira?

MOIRA

It's fine, dad.

Moira feels the tiny tear in the universe is back. It has sucked the light from the downstairs.

In the dark, Bonnie has found one of Williams cups and hurls it against the ground with a CRASH.

William sits up at the shattering porcelain.

WILLIAM

What was that?

MOIRA

I don't know, just stay put. Mom, what are you doing?

CRASH

Moira makes her way to a lamp and switches it on.

The earth has moved into the corners and crevices, it's started to work it's way up the stairs.

MOIRA

Jesus Christ!

WILLIAM

Bonnie, you better not be breaking 'em!

William and his blanket head unsteadily towards the door.

MOIRA

(calling out)

Dad, I can handle this.

WILLIAM

No, you bloody well can't. Bonnie! Ya old bitch, stop breaking things!

BONNIE

Oh, shut it, you! Sitting around like a ripe auld king. People've got other things to tend to you know, than you and your stupid cups.

MOIRA

Stop, stop it! You need to stop playing this sick game! Why would you bring all this dirt in here?

Bonnie laughs.

BONNIE

You think I did this?

MOIRA

Yes.

*She laughs harder.**William makes it down the last of the stairs and wrestles with Bonnie for one of his cups.*

WILLIAM

Have you gone mad? What are you doing?

*It splashes everywhere.**William stutters, desperate.*

WILLIAM

No!

The two fight for a second, and a third... Bonnie works her way through the remaining cups under the following. Moira, at some point, enters the wrestling match.

BONNIE

(overlapping)

Mad? Mad? I'll tell what's mad is your bumbling, no good for anything, brandy-swilling self, coming after me, asking me to have anything to do with your filthy habits. I'm tired of it Willy, I'm tired of pretending they're not here, stinking the place up. Moira comes in asking about you and I think to myself, what can it hurt? But then you're here, barely breathing, and you want not to be with me, or the baby, but to be with your disgusting pots of piss! I'll not have it any more!

WILLIAM

(overlapping)

Stop it! I've a right to it, same as... goddamnit Bonnie, you have no idea what your...that's mine to be doing with! Wouldn't expect you to understand a man's magic- Give that to me you crazy auld bitch!

MOIRA

(overlapping)

Stop it! Both of you, Jesus Christ! ... I can't take it anymore... Dad, you need to- Give me that- you're both acting like children!

*The last cup splashes it's contents across Moira's face.**Everyone freezes.*

Moira's rage.

The house shivers.

Thump...

WILLIAM

Goddamnit, now you've gone and let things in...

THUMP!

Moira makes up her mind.

MOIRA

You're both sick. Do you hear me? SICK!

She marches to the door.

WILLIAM

Moira, don't!

It opens with a SNAP, hitting her square in the head.

A small mountain of dirt moves in to catch her as she drops, unconscious, to the ground.

BLACK.