

# **Shatter 'n Wade**

*by Murray Mednick*

*Shatter 'n Wade was first performed at the 1990 Padua Hills Playwrights Festival with the following cast:*

**Wade:** David Officer

**Sayer:** William Dennis Hunt

**Cross:** Scott Paulin

**Wally:** Matthew Goulish

**Shatter:** Susannah Blinkoff

**Bint:** Mark Fite

**Ann:** Allison Studdiford

**Martin:** Nick Love

**Ginnie:** Laura Owens

**Sally:** Elizabeth Iannaci

**Bruno:** Bob Craft

**Bill:** Peter Schaaf

**The Screamer:** Joseph Goodrich

**Director:** Murray Mednick

**Assistant Director:** Kim Brown

**Music:** James Campbell

**Lighting Design:** Jason Berliner

**Stage Manager:** Nick Flynn

*Shatter 'n Wade was subsequently produced in February, 1991, by Diantha Lebenzon and Wayne Long at the Matrix Theater in Los Angeles and was directed by the author. The cast was the same except as follows:*

**Wally:** James Cox Chambers

**The Screamer:** Hank Bunker

**Set Design:** Kenton Jones

**Stage Manager:** Kathi O'Donohue

## **Characters**

**Sayer** *Middle-aged; wired; golden hair.*

**Martin Sharp**; *balding.*

**Wally** *Early thirties; cowboy outfit.*

**Cross** *Fifty; white hair.*

**Bint** *Thirty-one; blue hair.*

**Ann** *Late thirties; sensitive, emotional; brown hair.*

**Ginnie** *Late thirties; strong; black hair.*

**Shatter** *Twenty-two; wired; red hair.*

**Wade** *Nineteen; bandage on thumb; green hair; carries boom box.*

**Sally** *Thirties; blonde.*

**Bruno** *Corpulent.*

**The Screamer** *Unseen.*

**Walk-ons**

## **Scene**

*In front of the entrance to a meeting hall. Night. SAYER, MARTIN, WALLY, BINT, and CROSS, hanging out; waiting. CROSS and MARTIN stand off at opposite sides, the others stand with SAYER.*

**Sayer** When I was growin' up there were families! A man had a family! A person belonged to a family and a man had a job and supported the family!

**Cross** Did you know that tombs and mausoleums lined the Appian Way from Rome to Brundisium?

**Sayer** No. Brundisium? Is that Brindisi?

**Martin** So what?

**Cross** Different attitude toward the family dead is all. Visibility. That's all I meant.

**Sayer** *(To BINT)* Chairs set up?

**Bint** Yes, sir. There's people.

**Sayer** *(To MARTIN)* Cross here is new.

**Martin** I know he's new. We've met, we've talked.

*BRUNO enters, approaches behind them.*

*(Of CROSS)* He says odd things at inappropriate moments.

**Sayer** Goin' to the meeting, Bruno? *(BRUNO ignores him, goes inside)* Attaboy!

**Martin** You know how people bob their heads?—here, like this—they bob their heads like ducks—guys—guys do it—they get up, they're on their way to the john—they do this—  
*(Demonstrates as the others laugh)*

**Wally** That's it, Martin! *(MARTIN walks off a few steps—he likes privacy)*

**Sayer**           *(Uneasily)* Hey, anyone see my two mutants? One's got red hair, the other's got green. Ha!

**Bint**             Uh, uh, no.

**Sayer**           Kids these days, they do actions. *(To CROSS)* You know what an action is?

**Cross**           Well, yeah.

**Sayer**           What?

*CROSS doesn't know.*

Observe.

**Wally**           Anger is a disease. *(Pause)*

**Bint**             Anger is not a disease.

*The SCREAMER screams, off.*

**Sayer**           *(To CROSS)* You don't know. Watch this.

**Wally**           *(Formally)* A woman who sleeps around—it's bad news. You have to guard against it, like the Muslims. It's a problem old as the rocks. A good body can get whatever it wants. Whomever, whenever. A wink and a smile, let's fuck around, have a good time. It's elemental. You want to stone such a woman, and destroy her power. Don't you? In a bed, a car, under the stairs, in an alley...

**Bint**             Say no more!

**Cross**           Wait a minute. Are those your thoughts? Do you think that?

**Wally**           Me?

**Cross**           No, I'm looking at the moon.

**Wally**           That's not me.

**Cross**           Because otherwise you have serious problems.

**Wally** I didn't think it. I regret it now, okay?

**Sayer** Ha!

*SALLY arrives for the meeting.*

**Cross** *(To himself)* Wild.

**Sayer** Welcome, Sally!

**Sally** Well, I can't believe I'm here, really. I don't know how anyone can arrive at a point of view. One second I'm thinking one thing and the next second I'm thinking the opposite. How can anyone make up their minds about an issue?  
*(Sigh)* Well, I guess there's feelings.

**Sayer** There you go, Sally! *(She goes inside)*

**Martin** She's so cute. She's so cute I can't stand it. What is that?

**Wally** Marry her, Martin!

**Martin** You marry her, Wally! What you need—round off the edges.

**Sayer** Ha!

**Cross** *(To SAYER)* An action is oratory. It is speaking. *(To MARTIN)* That's what I was talking about. I didn't think it was inappropriate. It is relevant. In the ancient city, in the days of old, that's how it worked. You spoke before the assembly—  
*(Walking away)* Yeah, yeah, rock and roll.

**Cross** What's with this guy?

**Wally** He never married. Independent fellow, Martin.

**Bint** *(Awed)* He's a lawyer.

**Wally** Got close to bein' pussy-whipped once and ran like a jackal.

**Cross** Who is he to judge?

**Bint** He's a judge?

*CROSS looks at him.*

**Sayer** (To CROSS) Whatsamatter? Everybody has to like you?  
(To BINT) What's the worst thing that can happen?

**Bint** You can get married?

**Sayer** Come on!

**Bint** You can die.

**Sayer** You do die! Everybody dies! That's not the worst thing!  
Come on!

**Bint** You can be sick.

**Sayer** No. You can get better! Come on! *(Pause)* YOU CAN LOSE!  
LOSERS DON'T WORK! LOSERS DON'T MAKE IT! LOSERS CRAWL  
LIKE DOGS!

**Bint** Okay. *(Walks off)*

**Cross** The father was the priest of the household, and he knew  
the sacred formulas and rites—he knew what to say—in  
relation to the household gods and to the family dead.  
You know what I'm saying?

**Wally** I don't think so.

**Sayer** *(Ruefully)* Where are the families now? Look what happens!  
Guys make it and live in fortresses behind iron gates. Inside  
the fortress, nobody's talking. They don't know who each  
other is. These are the ones on top. In the middle, they are  
changing partners like rabbits. On the bottom, there are  
no fathers. The fathers are on the street and there's no  
money for the women and children! The women are in  
there exchanging sex for crack! They're doin' it in what  
they call crack houses! So aids and syphilis are skyrocket-  
ing and the kids are gettin' born with it!

**Wally** "Skyrocketing." I love it.

**Sayer** Wally, the students we got here are beastie boys and bums!  
They are a tribe of barbarians! They are a primitive-type

people addicted to noise! It's awful! They are just beating our brains out with the bass and the drums!

**Wally** Fantastic!

**Sayer** My ex says it's because they got pushed out of the womb, slapped around, and dumped into the school system! Yeah, yeah, rock and roll! Noise and dope! And they start fucking when they're twelve!

**Wally** Whoa!

**Sayer** I heard Wade today, he's talking about these high school coke dealers, they're teenagers walking around with beepers so they're available day and night, they're driving thirty-thousand-dollar cars and they're afraid of no one! They're too young to do time and they fit snugly into the fuck you, fuck me entrepreneurial tradition! Who can fault them?

**Wally** Good, Dr. Sayer!

**Sayer** They're loading up, these functional illiterates and know-nothings! They can do business—they are organized and armed. Wade, he's telling me how these kids get initiated into the business—into the gang. You stick a shotgun out the car window and blow somebody away, he says. It doesn't have to be a person you know. It could be anyone—you do a murder and that's how you make your bones.

**Wally** It's the fucking cars! You got teenagers shooting around in lethal weapons—they're always on the verge!

*Enter ANN.*

**Sayer** Ha!

**Ann** Hi, honey!

*CROSS, startled, goes to ANN as SAYER and WALLY watch.*

**Cross** *(Trying not to be overheard)* I feel crazed. I feel disassociated. I am not myself. I am appalled.

**Ann** Let's take those one at a time.

**Cross** What am I? Somebody is acting like he's me, and he's not me and he's outta control.

**Ann** What do you mean?

**Cross** Crazed. I'm doing things and saying things I don't like but its me and I'm appalled at what I'm doing and saying.

*ANN calls to SAYER and WALLY.*

**Ann** What time is the meeting?

**Wally** Uh, it's now!

*SAYER opens the door, looks in.*

**Sayer** Meeting's now!

*He goes inside, followed by WALLY.*

**Cross** There's a guy pretending to be me, and he's outta control.

*They watch WADE approach; he stops, stands shyly, walks away.*

I would call it the pain of manifesting, of having to be in this world.

**Ann** Then do something about it.

**Cross** What?

**Ann** Well.

**Cross** WELL, WHAT? *(Pause)* I don't want to stand here like I'm dumb and paralyzed.

**Ann** I'm sorry.

**Cross** I feel like I'm seeing everything very clearly, and guess what, Ann?

*WADE re-enters behind them, goes to door, looks in, hesitates.*

**Ann** No laceration, Cross. At this stage in life, we might not get over it.

**Cross** That's what I feel. I definitely feel that. I couldn't agree with you more, Ann. I just don't know where that comment came from.

*ANN sighs, looks around to WADE, who is leaving again.*

**Ann** *(To WADE)* Are there many people in the meeting?

*He walks away.*

*(To CROSS)* Odd.

*Off, the SCREAMER screams.*

God, who is that?

**Cross** Do you pray for the dead?

**Ann** What are you getting at?

**Cross** Do you pray for the dead?

**Ann** No, do you?

**Cross** No. I don't pray at all. I don't know how.

**Ann** Maybe you should learn how.

**Cross** A prayer for my ancestors. In the old days, they worshipped the dead. That's how they found meaning.

**Ann** Why don't you ever talk to me about what you're doing?

**Cross** We were just talking about what I was doing with reference to the meaning of what I was doing, which is research into the ancient world.

**Ann** Never mind, we should go in.

*BINT reappears, lights up a smoke.*

**Cross** You go on in.

**Ann** What are you doing?

**Cross** I am going to continue to stand here.

**Ann** Gimme a kiss.

*He hesitates, relents.*

Come in soon.

**Cross** Yeah, sure.

*She goes inside. He mutters fiercely to himself.*

Goddamn it! I hate that! I hate that shit! What am I!

Am I a slug! Am I an actor! Am I a toad! What is that!

Damn it! (*Regards BINT smoking*) Looks good and smells good.

**Bint** Want one?

**Cross** No, thanks. I quit.

**Bint** Hey, that's awesome. *(Pause)* That's a wonderful present you've given to yourself. *(Pause)*

**Cross** Thank you.

**Bint** You should feel good about yourself. *(Pause)* Do you?

**Cross** *(Sardonic)* I feel great about myself.

**Bint** How long you been not smoking?

**Cross** Three months.

**Bint** Congratulations. *(Offering his hand)* That's a real statement, a positive affirmation on your part.

**Cross** I'd rather smoke.

**Bint** How'd you do it?

**Cross** I turned fifty.

**Bint** Fifty. Whoa.

**Cross** Yeah.

**Bint** I'm gonna put it out now, go to the meeting.

**Cross** Okay.

*ANN steps out.*

**Ann** Cross!

**Cross** What?

**Ann** Excuse me. Are you coming in?

**Cross** No! Not yet!

**Ann** All right.

*ANN goes back inside. BINT starts to cough.*

**Cross** What's the matter?

**Bint** *(Gulping)* I can't breathe!

**Cross** Take it easy.

**Bint** It's my heart!

**Cross** You wanna glass of water?

**Bint** What a shock! I can't believe it! Cindy! Jesus Christ, that was Cindy! Was that Cindy?

**Cross** You know each other?

**Bint** Hell, yeah—I know her! She still looks good, too! Unfuckinbelievable! (*Gasping*) She looks great.

**Cross** Pull yourself together.

**Bint** I'm impressed is all, I'm totally impressed. Cindy! She looks fuckin' great.

**Cross** Cynthia.

**Bint** Cynthia?

**Cross** That's her name.

**Bint** Oh, wow.

**Cross** How do you know...Cindy?

**Bint** Hey, are you kidding? This is a charge, man. This is intense. We're talkin' twelve or thirteen years here.

**Cross** Really?

**Bint** Yeah, I dunno if I can go in there now.

**Cross** You can do it. What's your name?

**Bint** Bint.

**Cross** You can make it, Bint.

**Bint** (*Nodding*) Thank you. I appreciate that. I'll wait a minute. Where are you from?

**Cross** New York.

**Bint** Yeah, I can hear that. You're not from here.

*MARTIN re-enters, stops at door.*

**Martin** Hey, Bint!

**Bint** Yes, sir!

*BINT doesn't move, so MARTIN goes to them.*

**Martin** Sayer. He's a fantastic guy. But he's hysterical, ya know?  
We love him, ya know, but what are we gonna do with him?

**Bint** It's not for me to say, Sir.

*CROSS shrugs.*

**Martin** Yeah, yeah, rock and roll. (*Hunches himself, starts for the door, stops*) Bint! Don't let anybody slam the door!

**Bint** I'll try, sir!

*MARTIN goes inside.*

**Cross** What happened twelve years ago?

**Bint** Cindy?

**Cross** Yeah, yeah.

**Bint** Nothin' happened. I just knew her. Hey, she was great.  
Cindy.

**Martin** (*Inside*) The world is abusive! Life is abusive! Who is looking to feather someone else's nest? You don't have to go far—if you walk on your ass you'll end up with a sore ass!

**Sayer** (*Inside*) Don't interrupt others when they are speaking.  
Counselor!

*Someone closes the door. Off, the SCREAMER screams.*

**Bint** Weird neighbor.

**Cross** (To BINT) How'd you know her? Cindy?

**Bint** Actually, my brother knew her. I met her through my older brother, Brian. (Pause) You okay? (Pause) Yeah, Brian knew her first.

**Cross** And then you knew her.

**Bint** What a knockout! Beautiful! Still is. And friendly? Boy! (Pause) I mean, she was such a beautiful woman, ya know? (Starts heaving)

**Cross** Are you having convulsions, or what?

**Bint** No, I'm all right. I'm all right. I'm goin' to my brother's house. Tonight. After the meeting. Maybe now, actually. Maybe tomorrow. Clean up. He's a neat guy.

**Cross** Sounds like a good idea.

**Bint** Yeah, I need a rest. It's harsh out there, harsh. No mercy. You must know, right? New York City.

**Cross** New York City. Tell me about Cynthia.

**Bint** I was just a kid, an' here's this beautiful woman, gorgeous, and she's just real friendly. It makes an impression. You know what I'm saying?

**Cross** I think so.

**Bint** Cindy. She was the hottest thing in the valley, man.

*Silence.*

**Cross** Meaning?

**Bint** I'm sure she's changed. Ya know, older.

**Cross** I'm sure.

**Bint** I was still in high school, man. It was like a dream, like a dream come true, like a movie. A kid would go a long way for that ya know, a long way.

**Cross** Times have changed.

**Bint** I hear ya there. Kids are goin' at it now. No holding back now. Ha! *(Pause)* A beauty, man. A total beauty. And she really got around, I'll tell ya. I guess I was too young to be jealous.

*Pause. BILL walks on.*

**Bill** Meeting happening, Bint?

**Bint** You bet! It's a happening, Bill!

**Bill** Listen to this. There's gonna be a whole new breed of people comin' through: they're called Brazilians. Once they got all the forests down, once they've cut all the trees, then they're comin' over the border! They're gonna invade America! A new species! Brazilians! Okay?

**Cross** Thank you.

**Bill** Brazil! They got death squads now, knockin' off the street kids! *(Goes inside)*

**Bint** *(To BILL)* I hear ya!

**Cross** Let me ask you something.

**Bint** Go for it.

**Cross** Why do you talk like that all the time?

**Bint** *(Pause)* Is that an insult?

**Cross** And why do you love noise so much?

**Bint** Who?

**Cross** You people. You love noise.

**Bint** What people?

**Cross** You—the young Californian. The dudes. You like noise. Why is that?

**Bint** You mean like loud music?

**Cross** Yeah. Loud music. Loud cars. Loud bikes. Loud talk.  
Empty noise.

**Bint** You hostile, man?

**Cross** Just answer me the question.

**Bint** It's comforting, pal. Comforting.

**Cross** Comforting. Thank you.

**Bint** You're hostile. I don't need nobody being hostile. It's like  
the last thing I need, man.

**Cross** Take a hike, asshole.

*Tense pause.*

**Bint** I get it. You guys together?

**Cross** She's my wife.

**Bint** Hey, it's not my fault. How do I know? *(Stepping away)*  
I'll bet you're a fucking Arab. Arabs can't handle it, man.  
They like their women closed. *(Makes gesture of turning  
a key)* Click. *(Laughs)*

*Enter SAYER from inside.*

Hello, Dr. Sayer.

**Sayer** Hello, Bint. *(Sarcastic)* Comin' to the meeting?

**Bint** Yes, sir.

**Sayer** You gentlemen know each other?

**Bint** No, sir.

**Cross** *(To BINT)* Get outta here before I piss on you.

**Bint** I don't like that.

**Sayer** Go on in, Bint.

**Bint** Right, Dr. Sayer! *(Goes inside)*

**Martin**      *(Inside)* Don't slam the door!

*BINT slams door. SAYER laughs.*

**Sayer**      What an assembly, Mr. Cross. *(Takes out a large cigar)*

*Enter WALLY from inside, leaving the door slightly open.*

Here comes another one. Can't take the heat.

**Wally**      Hello, Mr. Cross!

**Cross**      Hello, how are ya?

**Wally**      *(Half to himself)* Fuckin' Bill's talking.

**Bill**      *(Inside)*...I think tension grows on the planet, ya know, and it's got to be expressed by, like, war. It's like, ya know, a boil, it's like, lanced by fighting, like on the street, right? You know what I'm saying?

**Wally**      No, Bill!

**Bill**      *(Inside)*...The stuff gets kicked off into space, maybe even to the moon. It's not just the asshole in front of you on the freeway fucking up your day, or the crazed sharks biting around in the culture for money and power: It's death squads and invasions and massacres and epidemics! And I'll tell ya something else here: You can't sit on the down-trodden too long—it starts to stink—that's my opinion, that's my point of view on it!

*Boos and applause inside.*

One more thing: they're trying to buy into Africa now, for a dumping ground, a place to bury the garbage! Africa!

**Sayer** Who was that?  
**Wally** Sounds like Bill.  
**Sayer** Close the door, will ya?

*WALLY closes it.*

**Cross** *(To SAYER)* Are you gonna light that thing?  
**Sayer** *(Not lighting up)* They were talking about the dead in there.  
**Cross** What dead?  
**Sayer** Children.  
**Cross** There are no dead, Sayer. People vanish and that's the end of it. No problem about the ancestry, the bloodline, the family name. But in the old days the dead were around, they were in the house or in the tomb or in the field. The dead were near.  
**Wally** They're in graveyards, Mr. Cross.  
**Cross** Yeah, but you don't see 'em.  
**Wally** So what? Who wants to see 'em?  
**Cross** You don't know anything. And you're a sycophant on top of everything else. *(To SAYER)* The dead are important.  
**Wally** Why?  
**Cross** Because once they were alive, sir, like you and me. Like Tacitus, who breathed air and shit and had opinions. Walkin' about with ears and smells and hungers and strategies. *(Pause)* He had a Roman education and he worshipped the dead.

*WALLY partly opens the door.*

**Bill** *(Inside)* YOU WANNA TALK ABOUT CENTRAL AMERICA? YOU WANNA TALK ABOUT THE RIGHT WING? DEATH SQUADS AND TORTURE? YOU WANNA MENTION BRAZIL?

**Bruno**        *(Inside)* BRAZIL IS NOT IN CENTRAL AMERICA.

**Bill**            *(Inside)* THEY KILL THEIR WIVES IN BRAZIL! THEY KILL THEIR  
WIVES WITH IMPUNITY!

**Sayer**        *(To WALLY)* Shut the door.

*WALLY does so.*

**Wally**        Kids don't wanna real education. Don't wanna learn nothin'.  
This is a good subject for a meeting. Talk about dollars  
and sense. The economy. Values.

*BINT is on his way back out.*

**Bill**            *(Inside)* THEY GOT PACKS OF WILD KIDS ROAMING  
THE COUNTRY!

**Sayer**        Don't slam the door.

*BINT carefully shuts the door.*

Christ, can't anybody stay in the meeting?

**Bint**            *(To CROSS)* I looked at her. I coulda been wrong.

**Cross**        I'm gonna kick your fuckin' head in.

**Sayer**        Stand clear, Bint.

*BINT steps back. MARTIN comes out the door.*

*(To CROSS)* Reproduction's the most important thing, anyway.  
That's all that's goin' on. Reproduction. Planet earth don't  
care 'bout nothin' else. Get 'em all reproducin', vibing into  
the stratosphere.

**Martin** What kind of an idea is that, Sayer?  
**Sayer** What kind of idea?  
**Martin** What kind of idea.  
**Sayer** A big idea. What I've been trying to tell you, Martin. An observable phenomenon, Martin.

*MARTIN goes back in.*

Why you look at the girls and the girls look back, Martin.  
**Wally** I love that! *(Pause)* Electricity is what it is. Ever seen it?  
**Bint** In the air?  
**Wally** Everywhere. Right, Dr. Sayer?  
**Sayer** Ha! Right on, Wally!  
**Wally** Seen the grid from the sky? Satellite point of view? Come on!  
**Sayer** I got two kids to talk about, myself. That's Shatter and Wade. Shatter's the girl. They're totally dysfunctional.  
**Wally** For example, forty years ago we beat the Japanese and the Germans and now they're both trying to slap us around.  
*(To CROSS)* That's an historical truth.

*BINT starts to go back in.*

**Sayer** *(Stopping him)* Bint! Ha! Kids don't wanna work, neither one of 'em. Wanna live for free. You take my daughter, Shatter—  
**Wally** Shatter, I love it!  
**Sayer** Yeah, that's my wife's idea, "Shatter." Ex. Shatter, she's been living off me. I told her, get out, find a job. You can stay with me a month or two, the minute I find any booze or drugs you gotta leave. I go to empty the trash, there's empty whiskey bottles and beer bottles. I told her, no partying in

my house. I threw her out. She goes to live with this woman on welfare, the old man is screwing the kids!

**Bint** Sonofabitch!

**Sayer** Wade, he ploughs right under the axle of a tractor-trailer! Engine's in the back seat, they had to slice him outta there. Kid lives! He's got cuts and bruises and a broken thumb. Third time in a year he's totaled a car. You think he's trying to tell somebody something? Nineteen years old, he's going eighty, ninety miles an hour into a load o' timber, he's leveled by the axle of the truck! Broken thumb and he lives! He's banged up, though. This time it's his mother's car, my ex-wife's. I told him, you're not driving my car! He did his, then he did his girlfriend's, now he's smashed his mother's!

**Cross** I have no opinions, Sayer, and no preferences. As far as I'm concerned, you can sell both your kids for meat.

**Sayer** Yikes, Cross. *(Lights his cigar)*

*MARTIN comes out, quickly shuts the door.*

**Martin** *(Frustrated)* It's a free-for-all in there.

**Cross** *(Stepping away)* That's how we get into trouble, Sayer. With our beliefs and requirements.

**Sayer** *(To MARTIN)* Trouble, counselor?

**Martin** They don't understand the rules of order! They don't understand the goddamn law! The law is clear—you do wrong—wham, bam, into the slammer!

**Cross** Our expectations and delusions.

**Martin** Oh, that's just your fuckin' attitude of the day, Cross.

**Cross** *(Stunned)* What?

**Sayer**        *(To BINT)* You don't work, you don't eat. You can't read, you're illiterate! Hey, Martin! What's a virus?

**Martin**        Don't do that shit with me, Sayer.

**Sayer**        A virus is a formula! It is neither dead nor alive! It's in between! It is numbers, Martin, actin' like parasites! And they mutate! *(Goes abruptly inside)*

**Cross**        *(To no one)* "The first bringer of unwelcome news hath but a losing office."

**Martin**        What is that referring to?

**Cross**        I wasn't talking to you.

**Martin**        That's how people do!—They come around with an attitude—this week they got one attitude, next week they got another one! And don't start talkin' about the fuckin' Romans! They were choppin' people's heads off and throwin' 'em off cliffs and sewin' 'em up into sacks with chickens and dumpin' 'em into the fuckin' river! Fuckin' animals!

**Cross**        *(Quietly)* It was to deprive them of burial, of the sacred rites.

**Martin**        *(Going to the door)* Rights!

*BINT opens the door slightly, listens.*

**Sayer**        *(Inside)* There will always be torture! Because torture is interesting! And I will tell you why! It is a way of playing with the energy of a man! It is a way of saying NO to life! It is rebellion! It is a poking, a tweaking of the invisible, a provocation to God, a denial! It is a stripping away of conscience! It is a form of sexual activity! For some, it is a method of preparing the will for the spirit world! For this life is only pain, pain is its product, its substance, which can be transformed, through endurance, into power!

*MARTIN shuts the door.*

**Martin** *(To no one)* He's a fuckin' maniac. *(To Wally)* You got people in there—they're so fuckin' nervous—they squeak—

**Wally** I know it!

**Martin** You got people in there—they feel your eyes on 'em—they shrink—their heads turn like fuckin' snails, man!

**Wally** I know it!

**Martin** You take pills?—I take pills—I take aspirin—I drink coffee—I used to guzzle booze—

**Bint** Whoa!

*They watch as someone else arrives for the meeting.*

**Martin** Don't slam the door!

*Door slams.*

Christ!

**Cross** *(Uncomfortable)* I guess the real meeting's inside.

*(Turns to go, hesitates)*

**Martin** They don't know! Nobody knows! Electromagnetic fields! Who can talk about that? We've got power stations and cables all over the country fer chrissakes! What are we gonna do, tear 'em down? There's no evidence magnetic fields are causing cancer in kids! You wanna live in society, you got exposure to electric and magnetic fields! You hear what I'm saying? This is a world that uses electricity!

**Bint** Whoa! Say no more!

*Off, the SCREAMER screams.*

**Cross** Man was meant to walk through earth's direct current, steady-state magnetic field. Man-made alternating currents will cause anything magnetic in their path, including the human brain, to vibrate sixty times a second.

**Bint** Whoa!

**Cross** *(To WALLY)* That's a scientific fact.

*Off, the SCREAMER screams.*

**Martin** *(Of the SCREAMER )* Someone should shoot that guy. There're all kindsa diseases, fer chrissakes—we just got over polio—remember?

**Bint** No.

**Martin** That's right—before your time—buy lands—way things are goin'—the Japanese'll beat us to it—be so many fuckin' people there won't be room to piss—buy lands!

**Wally** People don't have jobs, you can forget about it. You gotta build.

*They watch as SHATTER goes by.*

Pacific Rim, Martin. Pacific Rim.

**Martin** *(Watching her)* Pacific Rim, Wally. *(Of SHATTER)* Cute. I can't get over this thing—what drives us?—she's so cute.

**Bint** You mean...?

**Martin** I mean—she looks at me, I look at her, she looks at me, I look at her—she gets in her fuckin' car! What is that?

**Bint** I get it!

**Martin** She seems like she's a real honey—I think I'm gonna have a good time—like she's gonna worship my dick and what have you—and what? She starts sayin' things!

**Wally** *(Sly)* Scares ya, eh, Martin? Scared they'll leave ya, scared a betrayal.

**Martin** Forget about it, Wally.

**Wally** You know what it takes? Get on TV? Make a commercial?

**Bint** You gotta be gorgeous, right?

**Wally** Big lips. That's what it takes, big sexy lips. I know, 'cause I buy ads.

**Martin** First they're Daddy's little girl—Daddy's girl. Then calamity falls— *(To CROSS)* That's Greek—

**Wally** You almost got married, didn't ya, Martin?

**Martin** Don't get cute, Wally.

**Wally** That's right. Better see what's goin' on. *(Opens door, listens)*

**Sally** *(Inside)* I just don't know if you can walk the streets anymore! I can't cross the street near my house! I can't get across because of the cars and the trucks! I just want to say that! Because you can get run over! You can get smashed! They don't stop and they don't slow down! The whole neighborhood is shaking and rocking with the noise! When I was a girl right here a person could cross the street! Hasn't anybody noticed what's going on anymore? I just wanted to say that!

**Bill** *(Inside)* Thank you, Sally!

**Bruno** *(Inside)* Can I add to that? I'd like to mention the homeless who are on our streets, the vagrants and panhandlers and poor people who are on our streets, who are living in the park and in the alleys and who can be quite aggressive!

**Ann**           *(Inside)* I think that's a good point! But I don't agree with this man's attitude! What kind of a society is this? What kind of a culture is this? What kind of a neighborhood is this?! Where families don't have a decent place to live?! And people have to threaten and beg for their lives?!

**Wally**           *(Shouting in)* Next time someone asks me for money, I'm gonna crush his face!

**Folks Inside** *BOO! SHUT THE DOOR!*

**Martin**       Shut the door.

*WALLY, laughing, shuts the door.*

I'll tell ya—I'll tell ya what I think—

**Cross**       What's that?

**Martin**       I think we should protect the rich—I'll tell ya—I go to the opera—and I see all these white-haired gentlemen in the audience with their ladies—and I'm comforted—I'll tell ya—these guys are holding the whole thing up.

**Cross**       I see what you're saying.

**Martin**       If you're gonna take care of people, who should you take care of? The ones who have a stake in everything or the ones who wanna bring it down? Who? Think about it.

**Cross**       I do.

**Martin**       It's the upper classes—we wanna make sure they survive—that they take an interest—I'm telling ya the truth, I see all those guys in the audience with their ladies, and I'm reassured—I feel better about the future.

**Wally**       Yeah, yeah, and they listen to the music.

**Martin**       Well, not only that—they hold it up—they hold the damn thing up—you gotta be stupid not to see that the ones

with the most investment are the ones most needing the protection!

*SAYER steps out, annoyed.*

**Sayer** Jesus, can't anyone stay in the meeting? This is serious!  
Say what you got to say in the meeting!

**Wally** *(To himself)* Yeah, yeah, rock and roll.

**Martin** Come on!

*MARTIN and WALLY start in—a confusion at the door—  
SAYER stays out and CROSS starts off.*

**Sayer** *(To CROSS)* Where you goin'?

**Cross** I'm goin' to the bathroom. *(Exits)*

*BINT snickers.*

**Sayer** What?

**Bint** I'll bet he's an Arab.

**Sayer** He's not. He's a Jew.

**Bint** Cross?

**Sayer** Russian.

*Enter GINNIE.*

Ginnie!

*BINT sneaks off.*

**Ginnie** What's up, Sayer?  
**Sayer** You came to the meeting!  
**Ginnie** So?  
**Sayer** You don't come to public meetings.  
**Ginnie** This isn't going to the meeting, this is standing outside.  
**Sayer** (*Showing cigar*) This is the real meeting, Ginnie.  
**Ginnie** Okay.

*Pause. WADE'S boom-box music can be heard, off.*

What's this about power stations and cancer?  
**Sayer** Transformers and cables, Ginnie, adjacent to the school.  
Makes waves.

*They look around.*

**Ginnie** God. (*Facetious*) Is there reason for hope, Sayer?  
**Sayer** Certainly. Anything can happen, Ginnie. Science. We'll unlock the secrets of nature. Who knows what's possible? We can get energy from sand, from sea water. We'll have skylabs. We'll monitor the planet from space. We'll have factories on Mars. We can solve everything. We just don't know now. It's in the future. There is a future, and it is endless, like the sand, the sea.

**Ginnie** What do we need?  
**Sayer** We need more faith, faith in knowledge, in the future. Think of the future. Think of a hundred, a thousand years. Think of it!  
**Ginnie** That's good, Sayer. You're good. (*Pause*) All these people in the government know how to say is, everything's all

right. Don't predict anything bad happening at all, ever. Be a reflection on them. Don't predict anything good happening, either. No change at all, Sayer, good or bad.

**Sayer** Status quo. You have your reproductive processes and the eternal menace of the Left. Ha! You got that?

**Ginnie** Conglomeration of timid assholes. It's not all right, Sayer.

**Sayer** I'm not interested in making this a better world, Ginnie. Everything is just right and the way it ought to be and couldn't be otherwise. Let's legalize it and leave it alone. Come on, I'll escort you in.

**Ginnie** Better leave the cigar, Sayer.

*CROSS reappears as GINNIE goes in. SAYER hangs back to put out his cigar. ANN passes him, looking for CROSS. SAYER bows and tips his hat.*

**Sayer** That was Ginnie. Ol' Ginnie just wants to make sure the real estate keeps goin' up. Ha!

**Ann** *(Distracted)* Oh.

**Sayer** *(Pointing)* There he is, Mrs. Cross.

**Ann** Thank you.

**Sayer** *(Taking her arm)* I just wanted to say, Mrs. Cross, since you're leaving the meeting—

**Ann** I'm not leaving the meeting.

**Sayer** It seems to me that certain people are harnessing the power of the universe in order to transform it into noise! They are doing it in all ignorance. I saw a program on television, the talking heads had figured out chaos! They could see chaos, there on the screen, the very design of chaos! They didn't know anything. *(Indignant)* They

thought they were important! *(Pause)* And you could see the dying there that were plugged into the machines, into the sockets, into the walls! It had to do with the heartbeat, with heart attacks! The silent, intimidated anguish of chaos! That is, without sense or order or meaning! No meaning to the dying nor to the lives that had gone before! All the moments to this moment plugged into the wall!

**Ann** I'm sorry. I'm sorry you saw that.

**Sayer** No problem, ma'am. Excuse me.

*SAYER goes back inside. ANN approaches CROSS.*

**Cross** You didn't have anything to do with it.

**Ann** I know I didn't.

**Cross** So why are you sorry? He's pulling your chain.

*BINT re-enters, pretending to be a man of hurried purpose; checks them out; goes to door.*

You know him?

**Ann** No. Who is he?

**Cross** One of Sayer's boys. A subject! A pal. *(Snickers)*

*BINT goes inside, leaving the door ajar.*

**Ginnie** *(Inside)* So what the hell do you propose, Martin? What's your proposition?

**Martin** *(Inside)* MUTUAL PROTECTION! WE LIVE IN A DANGEROUS WORLD! SHUT THE DOOR, BUT DON'T SLAM IT!

*BINT slams the door. CROSS snickers.*

**Ann**           *(To CROSS)* Why are you treating me this way?

**Cross**           Did I ever tell you about the Greeks? Did we ever talk about that?

*She turns and walks away from him. Pause.*

Shit!

*Enter SHATTER, smoking. CROSS watches her, fascinated.*

*ANN goes inside. SHATTER approaches.*

**Shatter**       Do you despise weakness? *(Pause)*

**Cross**           Yes. *(Pause)* Don't you?

**Shatter**       Yes, it makes me sick, and I see a lot of it.

**Cross**           *(Facetious)* Just say, "no."

**Shatter**       Feels like food poisoning. *(Pause)* Nauseating.

**Cross**           Do you always talk to strangers?

**Shatter**       Always. And you?

**Cross**           Ah. I take your point.

**Shatter**       This is a good time and place for an action, a discussion.

**Cross**           An action?

**Shatter**       It's a protest. We're protesting.

**Cross**           What?

**Shatter**       The murder of the universe.

**Cross**           I see.

**Shatter**       By man. *(Pause)* By poison and fire. *(Pause)* By noise and anger. *(Pause)* By wind. *(Pause)* What will you do?

**Cross**           Uh, I'll play a teacher.

**Shatter** Okay. (*Pause, formally*) I have to destroy his power. I'll get into a trance and I'll stab him a thousand times.

**Cross** Who is he?

**Shatter** He has to be cut up, dismembered. I'll destroy his power. If I don't cut him up in a hundred parts, he'll still have his power.

**Cross** Did he come to this meeting?

**Shatter** Later, maybe I can forgive his spirit. I can evoke his spirit, and offer him forgiveness. Later. Now I must dismember him. First things first.

**Cross** Let's talk about it. Let's take it easy.

**Shatter** You're full of shit. You're not doing it.

**Cross** Are you Shatter?

**Shatter** What a bogus disappointing drag you turned out to be.  
(*Starts to leave*)

**Cross** Wait! Listen!

*She stops.*

The set for the Greeks, the ancient Greeks, was a giant door. This has to do with the old religion. Wait!

**Shatter** (*Stopping again*) Go.

**Cross** For the Greeks there was a door, a big upstage door, the door to the household, to the palace. All the action was in front of the door or behind the door, and the chorus moved around like a wave and the messengers and visitors came and went. The action—(*He stops, considers*)—was in motion, in progress, and the murder was behind the door. Wait. Not necessarily the murder. Behind the door was the hearth, and the household gods, and images of the ancestors. Next

to the house or in back of the house was the tomb of the ancestors. The father and his father and his father's father!

**Shatter** Was what?

**Cross** Was the worship, the religion.

*SAYER steps outside, door open.*

**Ginnie** *(Inside)* Society is not organized for cultural reasons!  
Society is not organized for justice! Society is organized for survival! Every other consideration is a pain and a joke and a waste of time!

**Cross** Survival...

**Bill** *(Inside)* May you be loved and liked and may you die immediately!

**Ginnie** *(Inside)* That means competition! You stupid clown! That means an economy!

**Shatter** I can't stand it.

**Folks Inside** Shut the door!

**Sayer** Come into the meeting, Cross! Ol' Ginnie is holding forth for the real estate! Ha!

**Cross** No!

**Sayer** *(Closing the door)* Why not?

**Cross** Too much smoke!

**Sayer** There's no smoking anymore! *(Seeing SHATTER)* Talking to someone? Trying an action?

**Cross** I was saying how the dead were more with us in the old days, Sayer; they had a real place among the living, and watched, and waited, and were fed.

**Sayer** As if alive?

**Cross** Yes, by virtue of the inheritance, the patrimony. The dead

fathers were served by the sons. Burnt offerings, Sayer, sacrificed to the dead.

**Sayer** Goddamned kids think everything just appeared, for their use. Forget it all got to be worked for and maintained. Want to live like bloodsucking parasites. *(To SHATTER)*  
This is Mr. Cross.

**Shatter** *(To CROSS)* How are you?

**Cross** Devastated.

**Sayer** Don't let me interrupt the event, the action, the occasion.

**Shatter** We're talkin' power.

**Cross** Look up to him and admire him but stay out of his life.

**Shatter** Power plays with equal or more power.

**Cross** That's the law of power.

**Shatter** In obedience to the law of power, women are dishonored. Wives, daughters, secretaries, sisters—dishonored! *(Slaps hands with CROSS)*

**Cross** *(To SHATTER)* Very good. *(Pause)*

**Sayer** *(To SHATTER)* Where's Wade? Come on!

**Shatter** He's around.

**Sayer** What's he doing? Come on!

**Shatter** He is skulking.

**Sayer** How'd he get here? You bring him here? Come on!

**Shatter** No.

**Sayer** DID HE DRIVE HERE? DID HE DRIVE HERE IN A CAR? COME ON!

**Shatter** Yes, Dad.

**Sayer** WHERE'D HE GET THE GODDAMN CAR? WHOSE CAR?

*Shatter doesn't answer.*

FUCKIN' IDIOT!

**Cross** (To SAYER) Who?

*SAYER goes back into the meeting.*

**Shatter** Wade. That's my brother. He stays down in the City of Commerce. He lives in rooms.

*ANN re-enters from inside. She and SHATTER size each other up. SHATTER moves off.*

**Ann** Who is she?

**Cross** That is Shatter. Her brother's name is Wade. They're Sayer's kids.

**Ann** I feel sorry for them. The man is out of his mind.

**Cross** He's ecstatic.

**Ann** Oh, come on.

**Cross** Did people call you Cynthia?

**Ann** When?

**Cross** Whenever.

**Ann** Very few. *(Pause)* Why?

**Cross** Do you know a guy named Bint and a brother, Brian?

**Ann** I know neither a Bint nor a Brian. *(Pause)* What kind of a name is Bint?

**Cross** Maybe the family name.

**Ann** No.

**Cross** As in Cynthia Ann?

**Ann** What's the matter with you?

**Cross** Sorry. You never bargained for this.

**Ann** For what?

**Cross** For presiding over this decline of powers, this moral diminution.

**Ann** Oh, stop it!  
**Cross** Please don't talk that way!  
**Ann** How?  
**Cross** With the OH prefix.  
**Ann** (*Choking him*) I'll stop if you stop it!  
**Cross** Go ahead! Finish it! End the terrible slide!  
**Ann** My God! I thought I was marrying an intellectual, a historian.  
**Cross** And instead?  
**Ann** Instead I got Bozo the Clown. Wait here.  
**Cross** Where are you going?  
**Ann** To the ladies' room. Which way?  
**Cross** The other one.

*She goes off. SHATTER reappears.*

**Shatter** They're lying! They don't know what's real!  
**Cross** How do you know?

*WALLY sneaks out, singing to himself.*

**Wally** *Why not stay on her good side  
And be on your own side too  
A man has got a lotta strong  
So what have you got to lose  
A man knows how to play it  
An actor knows how to choose  
Dummies can't find...to say it  
And smart guys get along...*

**Shatter** (*To WALLY*) Shut up, you fucking male chauvinist putz.

**Wally**           *(Staring at her)* What?

**Shatter**        You heard me. You're a male chauvinist putz and a liar.  
*(To CROSS)* Excuse me.

**Cross**           Sure thing.

*Shatter goes.*

*(To WALLY)* You two know each other?

*WALLY doesn't answer.*

How's the meeting...?

**Wally**           *(Lighting a cigarette)* Wally.

**Cross**           How's the meeting, Wally?

**Wally**           Oh, it's just fine. Peoples expressing their views. You  
ought to participate, it's the American Way.

**Cross**           I brought my wife.

**Wally**           There you go.

**Cross**           Can I stand next to you and breathe your air?

**Wally**           *(Alarmed)* What's that?

**Cross**           The smoke.

**Wally**           Sure thing.

**Cross**           What are you into, Wally? I mean in life.

**Wally**           Cattle.

**Cross**           Oh?

**Wally**           There are four levels to the cattle business. First you got  
the ones who make the calves, the cow and calf operation.  
There's about a million of those in this country. They're  
marginal. Their place in this business is hard to see. They  
go to the bank—the bank's got the calves as security—and

get a loan to produce the calves and then they sell the calves to the larger ranches where they pasture. There's maybe a hundred thousand of those. They get the calves up to three hundred pounds and then they're finished off at the feed lots with another coupla hundred pounds. And then they go to the packers. There's only three or four of those. And that's the structure of the cattle business.

**Cross** Thank you.

**Wally** You're welcome.

**Cross** H2-0, Wally.

**Wally** What's that?

**Cross** That's water, pal.

**Wally** I know what water is. Are you saying something?

**Cross** Once the earth was a fireball, Wally. *(Pause)* And then it rained. *(Walks away)*

**Wally** I hear ya.

*Enter WADE.*

**Wade** I thought I'd come to the meeting.

**Wally** So?

**Wade** Okay.

**Wally** What makes you think I'm interested in that? *(Pause)*  
You don't know me. We've never been introduced.  
We've never talked. We have no idea who each other is, do we?

**Wade** No. I just thought maybe I'd come to the meeting. I thought it might help me to talk about myself.

**Wally** It might.

**Wade** I don't know, though.

**Wally**        *(Referring to the bandage)* What happened to you? Run into a truck?

**Wade**        Yeah. I don't go out much at all. You can't trust anyone. My sister wants to do an action. I don't know how things work. I can do refrigeration, I guess.

**Wally**        Do you go out with girls?

**Wade**        Ha! *(Shyly)* No. Do you think I should?

**Wally**        Come on! What's your name?

**Wade**        Wade.

**Wally**        Come on, Wade! Good for your health!

**Wade**        Do you do that?

**Wally**        What?

**Wade**        You know. I don't think I could do that. You know, like, talk to a girl.

**Wally**        Pull yourself together! *(Starts away)*

**Wade**        Do you think all women are the same? I mean, do you think there are any differences at all?

**Wally**        Yes and no.

**Wade**        Of course.

**Wally**        There's no free lunch, I can tell you that. Fuck 'em and watch the spin! Ha!

**Wade**        Ha!

**Wally**        Humans!

**Wade**        Yeah.

**Wally**        It's like we gotta do it!

**Wade**        That's what I mean! I mean, the family. Actually, what I mean is, what if this is just a moment? Where it's here and it's gone, you know, where it'll be something else, some other kind of creature? *(Pause)*

**Wally**        Nah! If I get your meaning, can't be.

**Wade** No?

**Wally** Why? Because we got all the electronics now. That's why I see it that way. Sure. We've broken through into the electronic world. We've got all kinds of electronics. Never go back, never flash off forever. Sure, that's why I feel that way. Can you feel that?

**Wade** Oh yes, I do.

**Wally** Okay?

**Wade** Thanks a lot. Thanks a lot for talking to me.

*WALLY starts off. Enter ANN.*

*(To ANN)* Are you hungry?

**Ann** I beg your pardon?

**Wade** I'm sorry. I just think about food all the time. I don't know why.

**Ann** You have an eating disorder.

**Wade** Are you...?

**Ann** Well, yes.

**Wade** Is that all right?

**Ann** Well, yeah, if you face up to it. *(Pause)* I don't mean that in a violent sense. I just meant, you can see it for what it is and work on it, one day at a time.

**Wade** I guess I don't understand.

**Ann** That's okay. *(Pause)*

**Wade** Are you waiting for someone?

**Ann** My husband was here just a moment ago.

**Wade** Is he an older person?

**Ann** Well...

**Wade** People don't intend to look old.

**Ann** He's got white hair. But he's not old.

**Wade** Okay. (*Silence*) I have poor communication skills. I saw you go into the meeting. I guess you didn't like it.

**Ann** I like the meeting.

**Wade** You like the meeting?

**Ann** Sure.

**Wade** You do? My father is in there.

**Ann** Which one?

**Wade** Dr. Sayer.

**Ann** Why don't you come in?

**Wade** I can't do that.

**Ann** Why not? Don't you have views?

**Wade** Views?

**Ann** An opinion. You can speak up in the meeting.

**Wade** (*Sincere*) Do you think it would do any good? Do you think anybody is doing any good in the world?

**Ann** (*Touched*) Yes, I do. Teachers can help. Workers can help. Children can help. It's the children who are dying.

**Wade** You don't ever see 'em.

**Ann** They're dying of electricity. From the cables, the power stations, near the schools. It is a poison. It can be slow. It's in the air and in the water and in the food.

**Wade** I'm hungry all the time.

**Ann** Me too.

**Wade** Are you?

**Ann** Yes, I am.

**Wade** For a while, I didn't eat at all. I was starving myself, I guess. Now I eat everything.

**Ann** You have to eat—

*WALLY comes over; he's very interested in ANN.*

- Wally** I just wanted to tell this kid—you think the Japanese would be into what they're into if, uhm, you know? Electronics?
- Wade** I don't know.
- Wally** Electronics! The Japanese! Remember? It's forever!
- Wade** Okay!
- Ann** *(To WADE)* You have to look at it. When you're hungry, is it a feeling, or do you really need food?
- Wally** Oh, you guys talking about eating?
- Ann** Well...
- Wally** *(Keeping her there)* It's like bugs or something, what people eat. They'll eat anything if it's got like a crust and it's soft and sweet inside. You got chemists, you got biological engineers all over the globe coming up with substances that the human organism will pay money for. Substances, stuff. They'll eat. They wanna eat, they gotta eat. They eat when they're hungry, they eat when they're not. They eat for reasons, any fucking reason. They eat because they're afraid, they eat for sex, they eat for entertainment. They like it, they'll buy more, they don't just eat once. They eat until they're sick, they eat until they die. They don't know what they're eating—it's in a package, it's called food, they'll eat it. So you got these professional junk food manufacturers—I saw a program on this—they make a study of what you like to chomp down on, what kind of texture you like, they plug you right into a computer and they figure out what the human brain will go for in the way of eating shit. Then the chemists go to work and they make it. Say it's like blue cheese, they wanna make a blue cheese deal to go

in the middle of something with just the right texture on the outside, they take a molecule of blue cheese and they break it down and analyze its structure and they build up a molecule which tastes like cheese and smells like cheese but it ain't cheese. It's the ghost of cheese, a facsimile of cheese, a cheese-like substance which is a lot cheaper than cheese, and they put a crust around that, which is equally unreal in that it is not made from anything that has grown in the ground or walked on the earth. Then the marketing geniuses design a bright little plastic package for it and they call it the Blue Cheese Donut Delight! Ha! Okay?

**Wade** Are you...?

**Wally** I'm in the cattle business. Real food. Meat.

*ANN looks for CROSS.*

I was telling a white-haired gentleman about it before.

**Ann** That's my husband. He must be inside.

**Wally** He ain't!

*She goes in anyway. He watches her leave, follows to the door, looks in.*

Uh-oh.

*SAYER starts out. WADE puts distance between them.*

**Sayer** *(Half in, half out)* THE MOST IMPORTANT DEATH OF ALL IS MINE. IT IS IN FACT THE ONLY DEATH. IT IS MINE IN SOLITUDE, AND THE ONLY ONE.

**Martin**        *(Inside)* SHUT THE DOOR, Sayer. *(SAYER does so)*

**Wally**        What I was trying to tell you before, Sayer, about electricity—

**Sayer**        That wasn't you, that was Bint.

**Wally**        That was me. Bint doesn't know anything. The power, the electricity, is sucked out of the flow of water, out of the air, out of the little worlds and big worlds, sucked out, drained, and grounded as waste into the earth.

**Sayer**        Time is running out, running out into the walls, into the machinery!

**Wally**        That is to say, the flow of electrons, with vibration, movement, currents, waves, is channeled into the machinery and then dumped as waste into the earth.

**Sayer**        THE MOST IMPORTANT DEATH OF ALL IS MINE. IT IS IN FACT THE ONLY DEATH. IT IS MINE IN SOLITUDE, AND THE ONLY ONE.

**Wally**        Good, Dr. Sayer!

**Sayer**        *(Shouting, to WADE)* What is the sun? Come on!

**Wade**        The sun is a star.

**Sayer**        No! The sun is a hole! Come on! What is the moon?

**Wade**        The moon is a planet.

**Sayer**        No! The moon is a rock! Come on! Where is the earth?

**Wade**        The earth is between.

**Sayer**        Right! Between a hole and a hard place! Ha! Come on! Don't you find this entertaining?

**Wade**        Sure, Dad.

**Sayer**        Come on! Why are people round?

**Wade**        Are people round?

**Sayer**        Well, they have a round shape. And all the microbes are equally round. What do you make of that?

**Wade**        I don't understand where the competition comes from then.

**Wally** Good point, Wade! Ha!

*Enter CROSS.*

**Sayer** Best get back to the meeting, Wally.

**Wally** Yeah, yeah, rock and roll...RAP...OP-ER-RA...(Goes)

**Martin** *(Inside)* DON'T SLAM THE DOOR.

**Sayer** Hell of a meeting, Mr. Cross.

**Cross** Is my wife in there?

**Sayer** For example, cocaine is a product, right? Opium is a product. It's a product. It comes out of the ground, it's a flower. It's a pretty flower, right? So where do we draw the line? What's going on?

**Cross** Are they talking drugs now?

**Sayer** How can you not talk about drugs? You can't not talk about drugs anymore! You got a group of guys running the coke trade, you got others running the opium, you got the marijuana business. Ain't it the same with tobacco? I mean, where is the difference there? And what about alcohol? It's not good for ya, either. It's an abused substance, fer chrissakes! So you got these fucked up economies, right? You got these populations out of control. You got these huge debts. They owe us money! These people owe us a lot of money! And we got this huge demand here. We got an America with an insatiable appetite for drugs. And these people are supplying the demand. And they owe us money. You see what I'm saying? You look at it clean and there ain't no difference. These agricultural products are meeting a market demand. I mean, what is it we are doing? Let us leave the market be and get our money back, with interest! *(Pause)* Ha!

**Cross** Ah.  
**Sayer** *(To WADE)* How'd you get here? COME ON! DID YOU WALK? DID YOU DRIVE?  
**Wade** I'm okay, Dad.  
**Sayer** DID YA RIDE OVER IN A CAR?

*WADE doesn't answer. SAYER stares at him.*

*(Wheeling, to CROSS)* What's a CANCER CLUSTER, CROSS? COME ON!

**Cross** No.

**Sayer** I still have a bone to pick with you, sir, about speaking and oratory.

**Cross** My mother was schizophrenic and abusive; my brother is schizophrenic and retarded; my sister is so shy she's in a convent in Ohio; and I got a great aunt left in the family, but she's had a series of strokes and is losing her mind. Ha.

**Sayer** Ha! Back into the fray now, Mr. Cross! *(At door)* Watch out for ol' Ginnie, for she is in a foul mood! *(Goes in)*

**Wade** Ginnie's his friend.

**Cross** Ah.

**Wade** She's conservative.

**Cross** Ah.

**Wade** I think about suicide a lot.

**Cross** *(Dismayed)* Why?

**Wade** I don't know. I have thoughts. He's very creative. He's an entrepreneur.

**Cross** Who?

**Wade** My father.

**Cross** True.

**Wade** It's hard to live with a man like that.

*CROSS sighs.*

**Wade** She pulled up my big sister by the hair and threw her around the room, against the walls.

**Cross** Who did?

**Wade** My mother. My sister has problems.

**Cross** Everybody, Wade. Everybody in that room's got problems.

**Wade** Oh, yeah, sure, I see what you're sayin'. Thank you. I feel better talkin' about it.

**Cross** You don't have to thank me.

**Wade** Okay.

*WALLY comes halfway, hesitates.*

**Bill** *(Inside)* I don't have a stake in this fucking country and at my age, and you got nothing but contempt for that! I can see it on your face as you go farting through the K-Mart!

**Martin** *(Inside)* Fuck you!

**Ann** *(Inside)* Did you hear uh, uh...that Doctor...? His talk was of angry children...? That was his theme. That the children are angry, because of all the abortions. When the child is killed in the womb, then the soul of the murdered child is made angry. And they come back, they come back as the newborn, as angry children! *(Cries)*

**Ginnie** *(Inside)* It's all right, honey. There, there. Just a theory. Don't take it all to heart.

**Martin** *(Inside)* CLOSE THE DAMN DOOR, Wally.

*WALLY goes back in, closing the door.*

**Cross** That was Ann.

**Wade** Oh. Is that your wife?

*CROSS nods.*

She seems nice.

*CROSS nods.*

Oh, I forgot to tell you, she was looking for you.

**Cross** Thank you. *(Of the bandage)* Hurt yourself?

**Wade** Yeah, I had an accident, I guess.

*CROSS stares.*

**Cross** When I was your age I was blasting away at myself, blasting away, like a miner, like a saboteur, like a terrorist. I wasn't investing in my future, I was trying to smash a loop into the sublime.

**Wade** Oh, that's good!

**Cross** You're thinking, "That old fart, he's difficult to get along with." Naturally, you don't think it'll ever happen to you. I see what I've become and I can't do anything about it. Time and experience wear you out. I've lived five lifetimes already.

**Wade** I don't think like that.

**Cross** You don't?

**Wade** I'm sorry.

**Cross** Come on!

**Wade** I cruise in the City of Commerce. I live alone in rooms. He drove right into a trailer. He drove right into a truck. He drove right into the bay. He killed himself. He took a hike. That's how I think. The black guys out there take advantage of me. I don't know why.

**Cross** You don't?

**Wade** Yeah, I do.

**Cross** What do you do for fun?

*CROSS stares in disbelief as WADE replies.*

**Wade** I like music, I guess. I drive a lot. I don't like to drive, but I do a lot of it. I don't understand where everybody comes from or where they're going. I just wanna crash it. Everybody's angry. It's not my fault. They all had mothers. They're psychopaths, alcoholics, and addicts. When I'm thinking about it, I'm thinking about smashing her. Do you drive?

**Cross** I'm new here.

**Wade** Oh, I see. That's it, then. Do you...uh...teach?

**Cross** History. Ancient.

**Wade** Bitchin'.

*CROSS stares.*

**Cross** It's the most amazing thing: a school in the valley, a house with a porch...

**Wade** Yeah...I wanted to love her. I was an innocent child.

**Cross** *(Not hearing him)* I should have been a filmmaker.

**Wade** Really?

**Cross** I keep having this vision. I see this image. It's a film image, a sequence in black and white. A woman, wearing a shawl, a wanderer, is approaching. She is dark, in her forties, greying, still beautiful. Very sad. She is coming for her allotment, her allotment, on a street. The sky is background, a sunset. It is near the sea. The woman approaches, staring at the street. She knows the people in this place, who will provide her allotment, her portion. She is one of those...one of those upon whom vengeance has been taken, and she's saying, "Have you seen my man? Have you seen him? I was just hoping you'd seen my—my husband, he's vanished."

**Wade** It's sad. Is that how it ends?

**Cross** Yeah...I want a drink. I want a smoke. I want to check out. I'm okay and you're okay. I feel crowded. I'm gone.  
*(Walks away)*

**Wade** Where you goin'?

*CROSS doesn't answer, wanders off. SHATTER appears, way off, calls out.*

**Shatter** Wade! Wade!

*WADE steps back.*

ARE YOU ANGRY? ARE YOU ANGRY, Wade? COME ON!

*WADE takes another step back. SHATTER withdraws. ANN comes out, searches.*

**Ann** *(Seeing WADE)* Oh!

**Wade** Hi.  
**Ann** I'm looking for my husband. Have you seen my husband?  
**Wade** *(Shocked)* Well...no.  
**Ann** *(Distraught)* Oh, where is he? What's wrong?  
**Wade** He's coming back, I guess.

*ANN looks at him.*

**Ann** What kind of a kid are you?  
**Wade** I'm a beastie boy and a bum, I guess.  
**Ann** Oh, God!  
**Wade** Did I say something wrong?  
**Ann** Nothing. Never mind.  
**Wade** What's the matter?  
**Ann** Oh, I don't know. *(Pause)* I don't know what they think about me. I'm embarrassed how much I care what they think about me.  
**Wade** They maybe don't think about you at all, I guess.  
**Ann** Oh, how would you know! You won't even attend the meeting! There's a woman in there who hates my views! Why don't you even go inside!  
**Wade** Do you think I should?  
**Ann** *(Distraught)* Oh, God! What's the matter with you? They're trying to help!  
**Wade** Well...I don't say what I have to say because I don't know. I don't know what I have to say.  
**Ann** But you can't act as though nothing's happening! It's possible to become monstrous!  
**Wade** Actually, I have nothing to do with it.  
**Ann** God. I need a break.

*WADE walks away, leaving his boom box. Yelling inside.  
ANN wipes the tears from her eyes. GINNIE comes out.*

**Ginnie** Hi.

**Ann** Hi.

**Ginnie** I didn't mean to insult you. You weren't the target. *(Pause)*  
I agree that we should all save money on nuclear arms now.  
I just hope they don't put it into social programs. Makes  
for a weak country.

**Ann** What about health care?

**Ginnie** Nobody has to pay for health here. You just have to know  
what to do. People come here and live off the fat of the  
land. Like the Mexicans.

*ANN bursts into tears.*

All right, all right. Listen to this. I heard a chiropractor the  
other day, she's talking about the new age: People will live  
a thousand years, they won't get to puberty till they're a  
hundred, they'll be as calm as clocks and clear-minded. She's  
got the idea that billions of years of accident and cosmic  
debris are in the body. Health is detoxification of enemy  
vibrations from the past life of the earth. Ha! That and the  
realignment of entities. As I understand it, an entity is any-  
thing that moves. Everything that moves is from the Divine  
Will toward Being, the explosion of space into space, the  
first endless moment. All is and isn't, as the Masters say,  
for in the beginning was Nothing.

*GINNIE laughs; off, the SCREAMER screams.*

**Ann** Who is that person?

**Ginnie** You get used to it. You get used to everything.

**Ann** *(Cold)* Thank you.

**Ginnie** Don't thank me. Self-reliance is what makes a country strong, honey, and violence is a part of that. It's the struggle for life. It's competition. Violence is the key, violence is the mode. What's good for me may not be what's good for you. Should we treat people like children and take care of them? Sex is violent. Eating is violent. Should we stop killing animals for food? At least we don't burn them alive, like in the old days, for the gods and spirits. Politics is violent because that is its nature. Power means violence. It does not mean civility. Civilization means amenities for the powerful, for the ones who can afford it. Culture is an amenity, a way to occupy the mind, to pass the time. Otherwise you work, eat, sleep, fuck, and die. In any event, you die. Working is better than not working. Working is for the morally fit. To lay around, to do nothing, to indulge, to want to be taken care of—this is a life unworthy even of insects.

*ANN walks away from her.*

What are we supposed to do, give up our energy? Our light and heat?

**Ann** We're gonna bring the whole thing down, them and us!  
Take the very breath out of the atmosphere!

**Ginnie** What difference does it make? Old age and death are curses enough! Earth is nothin' but a pain factory! It will bubble up, when the time comes, with a new set of employees!  
Insects, probably!

*SHATTER has appeared on the periphery, listening in.*

**Shatter** Were you talking about incest?

**Ginnie** No. Insects.

**Shatter** I thought you were talking incest.

**Ginnie** Insects.

**Shatter** I could say a few things.

**Ginnie** Of course, dear.

**Shatter** But I won't!

**Ann** Excuse me. I...I'm looking for my husband.

*(Walks off)*

**Shatter** Yeah.

**Ginnie** And so's your father, dear.

**Shatter** All over the nation men are hurting women, husbands are killing their wives and getting away with it.

**Ginnie** So what do you want from me?

**Shatter** Ginnie! *(Cries)*

**Ginnie** Oh, fer cryin' out loud.

**Shatter** Ginnie! I'm livin' in this house. I'm livin' in the back room. Right here in the Valley. The father, he hates his job, he beats his wife and he screws his daughters! Then he wants me to listen to his troubles and feel sorry for him and pay his goddamn rent!

*MARTIN steps out, disgusted.*

**Martin** *(To GINNIE)* I have a choice—I have one choice—I can maintain my fuck-you attitude to the bitter end or I can turn myself around and start a new life.

**Ginnie** What do you think it'll be, counselor?

**Martin** I don't know—it's late in the day—and I like fighting and I love revenge—so it's a toss-up as far as I'm concerned—I could go either way—there's something very appealing about goin' out with my shit intact to the last—let's go for a ride, Ginnie.

**Shatter** Hey! We're talkin' here! My father kicked me out! They put me in a hospital and gave me drugs! If people stopped taking drugs, this whole country would turn to shit! You got that? I'm protesting!

**Martin** *(To SHATTER)* Talk! Talk! Rock and roll!

**Shatter** I drink and I smoke. I know that. I don't feel good about that. I'd like to talk about it. At least Wade doesn't drink, doesn't smoke. Wade's clean. He is now. He had enough of the City of Commerce and he went home. People pickin' on him in the City of Commerce. Gross shit. Scared li'l white boy. Call him a mushroom. What's he to do now? At least he's a poet.

*ANN approaches the door, looks in.*

**Martin** *(To SHATTER)* Get adjusted! That's the trouble! Nobody makes an adjustment! Move away! Find a home!

**Shatter** *(Singing wildly)* They'll always negate you  
*Prosecute and hate you*  
*Humiliate and screw you*  
*Sacrifice and fool you—!*

**Ginnie** Stop that!

**Shatter** I'M GONNA KILL SOMEONE!

**Martin** HEY! CAN YOU DO NO WRONG? ARE YOU A SAINT? WHO ARE YOU TO JUDGE? OBEY THE LAW AND WATCH YOUR ASS! YOU SHOULD GET OUT OF BED IN THE MORNING AND SAY THANK YOU A THOUSAND TIMES YOU WOKE UP IN AMERICA!

*ANN opens the door.*

**Sayer**      *(Inside)* Something is going to happen—worse than AIDS. A plague, a virus, it's in the works now. It's being prepared. Somewhere, in the womb of the earth, in the atmosphere, is being prepared an antidote to man. The catastrophe is here, but the correction awaits us. Floods, famine, drought, the burning of the forests. Massacres. Planes falling out of the sky. We have despoiled the chain of existence. But these are ticks, these are spasms, signs and portents. The fulsome planetary shudder is yet to come. I don't think it will be nuclear, no—it will be just as total, but more subtle: atomic, viral. A virulence never seen on earth, because we are so many. And the poison in the chain—no, the lawful results of the poisoning of the chain—will destroy all but a few: the renaissance man, the enlightened, the fit to live. I won't be here. I am neutral. I am interested in the science of it, in the laws. I won't be around. I will have met my Maker, the Initiate of Laws, who regards his Work with sublime neutrality from a higher world. His Will be done. Let the survivors remember what happened here—if there are survivors. I couldn't say. This is only an opinion. It could be indiscriminate. It's possible. The fit could die with the unfit.

**Ginnie**      The sonofabitch is reading! He's making a prepared speech!

*ANN steps back as BINT comes out.*

**Martin**      *(Of SAYER)* Who is he?—Who does he think he is?—He doesn't make a dime!—Nobody pays attention to him!—

Nobody votes for him!—Nobody puts his name in the fuckin' paper anymore!—Fuck him!

**Ginnie** He read from a text!

**Shatter** I can't stand it!

*Attacks BINT and beats him.*

*Music. SAYER and the others come rushing out.*

**Wally** OH, SHE'S A SPITFIRE, SHE IS!

*SAYER pulls SHATTER off of BINT.*

**Shatter** (TO WALLY) DROP DEAD, YOU SCUMBAG!

**Sayer** (TO SHATTER) HAVE YOU BEEN DRINKING?

*BINT starts crawling off. The SCREAMER screams. A huge, shattering crash, close by. CROSS comes running in, finds ANN and takes her in his arms.*

**Wade** (On boom-box tape) You talk as though you don't know and maybe you don't, but maybe you better express your feelings because time is wearing out your sneakers and fiendish darkness is wearing out your welcome. (Pause) You don't have to smile when I smile and I don't give a shit if you know or you don't.

**Shatter** Wade?

**Wade** (Tape) The earth will bounce its axis and momentum like the snap of a ball and shake off the slugs and everything else on it into oblivion which is a long fall past the moon deader than

absolute nothing and meanwhile I'm hanging here figuring things out responsibly like I know what to do, going from here to there on my rump and saying things with my mouth.

**Sayer** *(To CROSS)* Where?

*CROSS points, SAYER rushes off. MARTIN follows him.*

**Wade** *(Tape)* What I want to do is come alongside with my wheels on straight and eyes level with things as they are and have the knives out for people who bother me—because if you don't win, you lose around here, pal—but my head feels like a tired tree with old leaves in the smog and my chest is like crusty with like thirty-two years of Agent Orange and I wish it would rain.

**Ann** *(Upset, to CROSS)* What happened?

**Cross** He crashed, honey. Let's go home. *(Leads her off)*

**Wade** *(Tape, continuing)* I want to be left alone to die but by the same token I don't. Of all the moments gone and coming how many would be shaken out into the void like dead leaves when the big shake that's on its way is here? Like a ball, like a towel, like a rug—SNAP.

*GINNIE turns off boom box.*

*BLACKOUT.*

**The End**

