

MIRABELLE

A Vaudeville Routine

Four actors: JOE (with an autistic twitch), COOPER, MIRABELLE (Mostly off), all the other parts played by one person. Dialogue in Parantheses are to the Audience. Proceed with Speed.

1.

JOE: Some people have imagination.

COOPER: I have plenty. Believe me.

JOE: Not me.

COOPER: Imagination.

JOE: Thoughts?

COOPER: No.

JOE: Imagery.

COOPER: No, I meant the hump on your back.

JOE: Worms.

COOPER: Seriously.

JOE: Lies and betrayals and bad thoughts.

COOPER: I don't see it that way.

JOE: Suit yourself.

COOPER: I will continue to see reality as it is.

JOE: Be my guest.

COOPER: Your hunch, and your vulgar appearance, and so I see in front of me a battered tribesman.

JOE: I been on the road.

COOPER: Where to?

JOE: The Carpathians.

COOPER: And where's your stuff?

JOE: On my back.

COOPER: I see.

JOE: Thank you, sir.

COOPER: I didn't give you anything.

JOE: No. *(Pause)*

COOPER: Not really.

JOE: I wish you the best, sir.

COOPER: Much obliged. *(Pause)* Perhaps you can join me? I'm searching for something.

JOE: What are you looking for?

COOPER: A woman.

JOE: A woman?

COOPER: A woman.

JOE: Alive?

COOPER: Living or dead.

JOE: What good is she dead?

COOPER: We don't know. Perhaps you can help me. Further on. Down the road?

JOE: No.

COOPER: Why not?

JOE: Perhaps too far, too mountainous and craggy. Desert and desolation.

COOPER: A humble tribesman like yourself?

JOE: My back is full of lies and betrayals, and so on. Can't carry much else. Limited travel ability. There's a lot going on in there.

COOPER: Like what?

JOE: Lovers. Fake lovers. False friends, and true. Professional competitors. Spiritual advisors. Cons. Weed. Tiny men with knives.

COOPER: Oh!

JOE: Some went on with their lives, sir, before packing the essentials of their crimes with me, on my back. Some were born there and have never left.

COOPER: Holy shit, why you?

JOE: I deserved it. One day you will see it all, with other amazing little delights, llke movies and comical turns, trips and skips, collisions and falls, dainty thrills and course reveals. I was at the Deli, sir, where they gave me scraps to eat. As well as other things, like the name of a mysterious woman.

COOPER: Mirabelle?

JOE: Yes.

COOPER: And mine?

JOE: Cooper.

COOPER: And yours?

JOE: Joe. "Find Mirabelle, son, and prepare to leave this world of good and evil spirits." I had no idea what was meant. That's a lie. I did have an idea. "Good-bye and good luck with Cooper in the Actor's Delicatessen."

COOPER: This *is* the Actor's Delicatessen.

JOE: I'll take a puff now, sir, in preparation, if you don't mind.

COOPER: Wait a minute.

JOE: I'm autistic. And so I must take a draft of cannabis. Once in a while, not so often. *(JOE takes a huge invisible joint from his back, takes a puff, and an enormous cloudy exhale appears somewhere on stage.)* Ah. Good. Better.

COOPER: Autistic?

JOE: Like I think my father was, careening around the Brooklyn streets and yards and apartment blocks and parks. Projects and alleys. I can't be a big help. But I'm smart and I know a lot. And I have a sensitive back, autism aside. And I knew Mirabelle.

COOPER: When did you know Her?

JOE: In early life, in our youth, when we were confident and sly, like elves or wolves. We kissed through veils and hugged in the tree tops. Secret caves were known to us, as were sweet meadows and grasses, dirt roads in the woods, mysterious pathways and maps. Discoveries, regrets, and so on.

COOPER: And so then what happened?

JOE: We were happy, and then one of us departed. One day, one of us was gone. Into the mist, into the night. Now I search for Her, like you. What do I get paid?

COOPER: Nothing.

JOE: Go fuck yourself and have a nice life.

COOPER: No, you go fuck yourself.

JOE: The hell with it.

COOPER: The hell with it.

JOE: Excuse me. I can't help it. Things come out of my mouth like – like mushrooms with daggers.

COOPER: I see.

JOE: No, you don't.

COOPER: Smoke your joint, why don't you. *(JOE Takes a drag, a cloud of smoke onstage.)* Now. What about Mirabelle?

JOE: She's come to a bad Fate. I feel it now in my back. I feel it in the whole of my autistic self. It is our duty now to search for her. Search and search and don't spare the postage.

COOPER: I agree. What if I told you – is it Joe?

JOE: Joe.

COOPER: Cooper here – what if told you, Joe, that we were sold to them by our own relatives? Whole clans, tribes even, were sold as chattel to barbarians, primitive people. Including me. Including you. The Underclass. Starving people, Joe, wandering the barren Earth.

JOE: Who were they?

COOPER: People related by blood or misdeeds. Losing a battle. Fucking with the books. Changing the language. Planning a coup. Fucking a wife. Betraying a friend. Yes. Hired mercenaries from all over Africa and the Arabias. Arabs rode South with their camels and got in on it. Sold their own slaves and the slaves of the others. Arabs on camels. Much feared. They kill everything in front of them. "Disrobe and die," was the mantra. Men, women, and children. And the blood sank into the sand and vanished into the depths of the earth. Yes. And they live in hovels. And they live in slop. Some peoples got to do it. Got to live on. Once the plague subsided. So the others could feel high up. Closer to God. Closer to the money. Slavery, whoredom, murder, lying, knives and guns, executions, hangings, waterboarding, fingernail plucking. Did I leave anything out? Mainly, I should say, it's stupidity. I was going to say *bad education*, but I don't know if these freaks in country are reachable by reasonable thought. Anyway. They're just stupid. A mistake. You could say God fucked up. And not only that, they're still religious, they stay religious. How could that be, Joe?

JOE: They think the country is God's country. And they think it's their duty to protect it from people who don't belong there. Like Blacks and Browns, and Asians, and Communists, and people like us. Intelligent people. Autistic people. Humpbacks. People who read books. Glasses. Pimples. Bruises. Darkly skinned. Hairy. Eager to compete, come up with shit, make a buck.

COOPER: Thank you, Joe! You have restored my equilibrium -- my self-respect, my feeling all-right about myself, my resistance to the forces of Chaos.

JOE: I'm glad.

COOPER: It's a flimsy thing, when you come right down to it. It could be lost in a New York Minute. New York City. You could go down underground and never come back. Flood and fire and teenagers with guns.

JOE: Mirabelle? I saw Her on TV once, Fifth Ave. -- tough little Beauty, aligned against the grain of the mob, untouchable, alone, coming my way, alone, anonymous, patient, giving no quarter.

COOPER: That was Her. But where is She now? Only water and mist and rocks and angelic clouds and untold secrets, and a sunrise and a sunset, electrical storms, and so on....Below, hustling and money and youth and sex and glamour and hustle and money and sex and diversity and speed and towers and crazy people in the streets and on the piers and in the parks.

JOE: Oh. I heard they cleaned up the subway. You can travel now, all the way to Pelham Parkway. Even the L train to Myrtle Ave. You're on the elevated, so you can see the buildings and the wash hanging out. You look hard enough and you can see the sexual action fighting back for existence, for the species. Sex in kitchens and bedrooms. Sometimes on the floor. New York City is making a stand. Hard as a baseball bat. *(Pause)* You know, I went back to my birthplace in Brooklyn. Not long ago. *(Pause)*

COOPER: And?

JOE: It's not there anymore. I could see the East River. I'm out there on DeKalb Avenue and you could see the East River and the towers of Manhattan. When I was little, I didn't know it was there. No East River, no Manhattan. Why? The buildings

were too high and close together. Your basic tenement construction. There was an alley I loved. Very mysterious. It went nowhere. I thought it belonged only to me.

COOPER: Me, I'm an American. I have no problem. America, It was a good idea until it flooded with guns and retards and cons and crooks. And bad entertainment. And commercials. But America 's still the place for me. They like Jewish lawyers here. I approach. They recoil and step aside. When I talk, they listen. Why, I don't know.

JOE: Well and good. France?

COOPER: Not anymore. Arabs everywhere. And anti-Semites galore. Lets get back to Mirabelle. The actress. A nice story. We'll tell the story. Do you mind, Joe?

JOE: Next time it's a shiv in your lower intestine.

COOPER: You're as mad as a hatter, Joe.

JOE: Reminds me of the old days, Jewish kids beating up younger kids. Ringaleevio. That's what people call me. Ringaleevio Joe. Why? Because i'm a hunchback, as you can plainly see. You'd catch a kid and beat the shit out of him.

COOPER: Have you been Vaxed?

JOE: No.

COOPER: Why not?

JOE: I don't trust the Government.

COOPER: Do me a favor.

JOE: What?

COOPER: Go home and die.

JOE: And I'm Jewish.

COOPER: So what?

JOE: You're not supposed to mess with the body.

COOPER: All the Rabbis in the world say it's ok.

JOE: Did you?

COOPER: I'm not an idiot. Here's a Doctor with a needle.
(Enter DOCTOR with a huge hyperdermic.)

THE DOCTOR

DOCTOR: We are being oppressed by little germs with spikes.
Why? Man his intruded into Nature, barged into Nature,
inserted himself where he doesn't belong, and this is the result.

BAM! (The Jab.)

DOCTOR: There you go.

COOPER: Say Thank you.

JOE: Thank you.

DOCTOR: Get another one as soon as you can. If you want to stay alive. It's planetary, like anti-Semitism, and it's out to get you. Did I ever tell you about the yellow man? He comes in off the street all yellow top to toe. Why? He had covered himself in tumeric as a cure for schizophrenia, happy as a clam.

JOE: Thank you.

DOCTOR: We had to lock him up. I could say more --

JOE: Thanks again.

DOCTOR: Goodbye and good luck. *(Exit DOCTOR)*

COOPER: When was the last time you saw a shrink?

JOE: Fifty years ago, I think.

COOPER: Wasn't enough. Didn't work. **Mirabelle**. A story, First line is: Some bad people got her. And they took her away. Look back: *A guy walks in. Camo. Rifle. Knives. I'll cut your fucking head off*, he says. "I'll tell you," she says back to him. "Whatever you want to know. The secrets of the Universe. Lead into gold. A speech that terrifies. Don't move. Hold up. Just stay where you are. As if you're made of cardboard."

JOE: He **is** made of cardboard.

COOPER: She tried to make eye contact and reason with them, even give 'em a hug and a kiss, but they broke down the stage door and smashed her mouth and eyes.

JOE: And?

COOPER: They took her away. In a costume van. In a cart. Props and scenery, magic acts, clowns and crowns. Driven by big white horses, a drunk with a derby hat on top.

JOE: And then what?

COOPER: They made her perform. In the Plaza.

JOE: As what?

COOPER: As *Mirabelle*. Before a motley crowd of citizens and immigrants. They gathered quickly, ripped each other's clothes, gaped, spit, laughed and cried, shouted obscenities, gossiped fiercely, applauded and threw coins. As Tolstoy would say, "They did how they do as when they're doing it, and now they're doing it again just as they did it before, and that's how you know that they're doing it."

JOE: I don't know if I followed that.

COOPER: But our girl was excellent in every way, holding her lines in her body and refusing all behavioural props, and she held the stage through the dart storms and peacock feathers thrown at her by certain weird gentlemen of the audience.

JOE: I'll kill them all!

COOPER: *Mirabelle*. The best. She got it right away. I just want to say something about that. *Mirabelle*. That never happens: A woman walks onstage and she is who she says she is. Anyway. That done, they rode her away toward the misty coast, where they tortured her gentle, silky body and threw her into the sea.

JOE: Damn! Why?

COOPER: I don't know why.

JOE: It's envy and ignorance, to be sure!

COOPER: To be sure. And hatred of the poor.

JOE: It's the priesthood, probably, bad acting, a cult, "what's right is right, and what's wrong is wrong." It's in the Bible, or some other book of rights and wrongs, Principles and Sayings.

COOPER: They want to see plot, they want to see message, She didn't like that. "That's not what we do here." Poor Mirabelle. Means "look at the pretty ocean." I said to him. The guy. Kakhi pants. Boots. **AR 15.** "What did you do to Her? " I says. "You buried Her head in the sand. Among the rocks. On the beach. So now I'm going to find out. Everything. I'm going to know the whole story. And I'll get you, you sonofabitch."

JOE: Do your best, Coop. *(A cardboard cut-out appears.)*

COOPER: **You fucking piece of shit.**

So are you. Nothing more.

COOPER: **Where's the rest of her?**

Who?

COOPER: **Mirabelle.**

Don't know. "In the wine-dark sea."

COOPER: **That's Homer.**

So what?

COOPER: **You're not allowed to use Homer.**

Why not?

COOPER: **You're a fucking idiot.**

Who cares?

COOPER: **Why think like that? Why do that shit?**

The World has ended. (Pause)

COOPER: (I had to pause. I had to ponder. Then everything I looked at was an illusion, and everything I remembered was a dream. And everything I thought was imagined.) **Do you perform, or what?**, I asked.

It's a tribal thing. Primitive, but useful.

COOPER: I would never do such a thing.

Not yet.

COOPER: You're a fucking animal.

*The Earth is covered with them. Eating one another.
Cannibalism is a constant threat.*

COOPER: She was family. We looked up to her. She had good personal qualities. And she could act.

Her voice was a weakness. Too high, too scrapy.

COOPER: But what was her crime? Her mouth was sewed up. That tells you something. And Her eyes. Her eyes were missing. Maybe She saw too much. Tired, I suspect. Looking at all that shit out there. Strip malls. Ads. Mental problems. People hunting Her. People staring at Her.

She didn't put out her own eyes.

COOPER: No!

It's a horrible thing. Goes all the way back, you know. Back centuries. Back to the beginning of Time.

JOE: That worries me, Coop, because he or she inferenced Time there.

COOPER: What's the problem there because of Time? Time is yesterday and tomorrow. Morning and night. This year and next. Five 0 clock in the afternoon.

Time is the disappearance of all things. (Cardboard figure disappears.)

JOE: Let's go back.

COOPER: The delicatessen?

JOE: We're old.

COOPER: Too old.

JOE: Can't go back, no reverse.

COOPER: What then? (Beckett again.)

JOE: Black holes?

COOPER: Not me! You go in as a dollar and come out as a dime.

JOE: No, you never come out. The relatives?

COOPER: They got money.

JOE: Right!

COOPER: This is true.

JOE: Or they think they got money.

COOPER: And prestige.

JOE: Yeah. Or they think they got prestige.

COOPER: And rights.

JOE: They got rights. They got crimes.

COOPER: To accuse and to prosecute. A whole side of the tribe. The poor side, the fucked-up side. Mute. Penned up and ruled by degenerate aristocrats. They were carrying serious diseases.

JOE: Like?

COOPER: Mental illness. Cousins marrying cousins. Romance in the ghetto. The plague.

JOE: My direct ancestors!

COOPER: Syphilis. On both sides. You fucked around in those days, you paid a price. Now you can cure that disease with modern medicine. **Pennicilim.**

JOE: And Mirabelle, She of the bright, most fabulous name? Stage and screen?

COOPER: They were hoping the tide 'd bring Her out, out to the depths. But She had hair like the Medusa. Caught on the reef. Where we found Her. Who killed Her? Who put Her there?

JOE: People with whips and low self-esteem. Afraid to lose their indoor plumbing.

COOPER: Why?

The world is ending.

JOE: Why Mirabelle?

COOPER: Made it through slavery, poor thing. And then?

JOE: What?

COOPER: I just want to say something here.

JOE: Please.

COOPER: There are those who contend that misanthropy is the answer to our problems. In other words, kill all the people. I obviously don't agree with that solution. I am a person.

Anyway. Mirabelle. She knew something, She saw something.
Dangerous even to the intellectually challenged out there.

JOE: Just a minute. *(Pause)*

COOPER: The world is watching.

JOE: There is one aspect of the economy that is booming.

COOPER: Really?

JOE: As we speak.

COOPER: What is it?

JOE: The trade is in body parts. Kidneys and hearts. Livers and spleens. Her family was prosperous. I'm talking about our Mirabelle. Who once had all Her parts.

COOPER: Let's talk to her mother. *(MOTHER appears.)*

THE MOTHER

JOE: Hello.

MOTHER: Who are you?

COOPER: We are Lawyers.

MOTHER: What's wrong with your back, you?

JOE: Nothing, Ma'am.

MOTHER: Horseshit. It's got a stump on it.

JOE: Oh.

MOTHER: Are you blind? Do you never look in a mirror?

JOE: It was bent. It was straight when I was born, and then it started bending and growing as I grew.

MOTHER: Ah. That was because you lied a lot.

JOE: Nobody knows why, Ma'am.

MOTHER: I do.

JOE: How do you know?

MOTHER: I talk to Jesus. Lies and fornication foul the back, so the whole tribe knows: stay away from that guy. He's got a bunchful of lies.

JOE: I was only a child.

MOTHER: "He 's got the devil's spit in him." Get an exorcism. Get a life.

JOE: I have one. Better 'n yours. I have a purpose. I search for meaning and sanity. You just sit around complaining.

MOTHER: And you?

JOE: I'm a Second generation Jew. I can't adapt. America scares me. Too many guns and too many drunks and too much Religion.

COOPER: And you, Ma'am?

MOTHER: Me, what?

COOPER: Do they let you vote, Missus?

MOTHER: I'm an American citizen. Born and bred in Maryland.

COOPER: They should give you a test, Ma'am. See if you can count to twelve.

MOTHER: **Fuck you.** That's for the colored people. Keep them off the polls. Hang 'em from the trees. Chip 'em from the weeds. Jail ail of 'em for their deeds. Troll 'em on the Internet. Electrocute 'em on the train tracks.

COOPER: Hold up a minute.

MOTHER: And **fuck you** if you don't like it.

JOE: (I can't stand this shit anymore. This person is retarded, like the mob who attacked the heart of Democracy. Back in the day.)

COOPER: We wanted to talk with you about your daughter, Ma'am.

MOTHER: Which one?

COOPER: Mirabelle.

MOTHER: Tits and ass. *(Pause)* Here **he** is now, you jerk.

COOPER: Who?

MOTHER: **Jesus.**

COOPER: Where?

MOTHER: Hovering over your left shoulder.

COOPER: That's a hummingbird.

MOTHER: The form he takes. At the moment. He says, "tell the kikes to take a hike."

JOE: Jesus was Jewish, you know.

MOTHER: I don't think so, that was a myth, a lie, propagated by the Jews themselves. Ask anybody.

JOE: (She's got stringy white hair, purple teeth, wrinkles up and down her body occluding her face -- like an old white oversized prune.)

MOTHER: She was an innocent. Didn't know a Jack from a King. That's why she fucked whoever asked her and had to flee to New York City. Too many boyfriends. She had no idea.

JOE: Of what?

MOTHER: What is. Behind the demure is a self-righteous *poseur*.

JOE: (She rhymed!)

COOPER: We knew her to be a fine person and an excellent actress. She could be anybody.

MOTHER: That's because she was a nobody. **A cunt.**

COOPER: I beg to differ. She was a fine person, very intelligent, with high moral standards.

MOTHER: Suit yourself.

JOE: What was your business?, if you don't mind my asking.

MOTHER: I don't mind. People ask me all the time.

JOE: So, what was your business?

MOTHER: Soap.

JOE: How do you make your soap?, if you don't mind my asking.

MOTHER: Stop asking me if I mind. Fuck you, if I mind. Fuck you if I don't mind. Fuck you any which way. Up and down and sideways.

COOPER: Answer the question, please

MOTHER: Out of the bodies of dead animals.

JOE: Thank you.

MOTHER: Keeps the nation clean. This is a great country we got here. Just got to keep the right people in and the wrong people out. You get that?

JOE: Absolutely!

MOTHER: There's one more thing

COOPER: What's that?

MOTHER: Trafficking. She got trafficked. They put a sticker on the car so they know. That's how they know who's in the car. The package. L.A. A sticker. There's your Center for the Trafficking Industry. Girls from everywhere in the world. Lost girls. Have a nice life.

JOE: Thank you.

COOPER: I think that's it for today.

JOE: Thank you, very much.

COOPER: Did she have any friends?

JOE: Let's go, Coop.

MOTHER: I thought you were her friends.

COOPER: Besides us?

MOTHER: Americans. Patriots. All-American guys. Christianized. White guys. Blonde. Football players. Huge linemen. Folks I wouldn't mind having a drink with. Young men. Hard cider. White lightning. Bit of bourbon. Once in a while.

COOPER: Nice. Thank you.

JOE: Thank you, very much.

MOTHER: Take that hike that was mentioned.

COOPER: Yes. Sure thing.

MOTHER: From on high.

JOE: You bet.

COOPER: Bye.

JOE: We're on our way.

COOPER: Bye, bye. *(Exit The MOTHER.)*

JOE: Fucking witch.

COOPER: Fucking bitch.

JOE: Selling chopped up cows.

COOPER: Butchery, name of the game.

JOE: Turned her body into soap – left her head and sewed up her mouth and eyes, our Mirabelle.

COOPER: More than likely. Sold Her kidneys and other parts.

JOE: We don't know. More to go. Can I take a puff now?

COOPER: I'll have one, too.

JOE: The pleasure is all mine.

COOPER: To the bottom. *(They smoke, enormous clouds, etc.)*

JOE: For the coming generations. Faults and foibles, complexes and delusions. No reason not to suffer. It's a message to our progeny.

COOPER: Of which there are none.

JOE: Future generations.

COOPER: They'll get it in the neck. No water. No oxygen.

JOE: Still.

COOPER: Why is it?

JOE: Why what?

COOPER: We can't find a girl. Get along. Get married.

JOE: I'm a hunchback, myself.

COOPER: And me?

JOE: No excuse. Maybe you rush things. Too romantic, too ardent. I'll watch and see, if you want.

COOPER: Maybe you're right. I'm too romantic.

JOE: You want me to watch and see? What happens?

COOPER: I think so.

JOE: I'll watch and see.

COOPER: Watch and see. What happens. Okay?

JOE: Okay.

COOPER: Meanwhile, I'll look into my own. My relations, if I can find them. Everyone knew Mirabelle, everyone had an idea. Stage and screen, and TV land. And ads in magazines, not to speak of the Internet, that spidery web of lies and forgeries.

JOE: Lies. Lies and forgeries. Call the fucking cops.

COOPER: There are no cops. Nobody is watching. They're out, eating all the donuts. *(Smiles)* Anyway. Why you never had a girlfriend. You work day and night. A slave to status and success. If not a hunchback, then a fool. Fame and fortune, praise and flattery. Now, I'm done.

JOE: How'd you do it?

COOPER: I shot some deputies, just like in the movies. Imagine low I. Q.'s flying through glass, falling off balconies, crashing through saloon doors, shot off of horses – Stunts, forming the American Character.

JOE: Well done, Coop.

COOPER: They don't figure on stupidity. Which is the majority. They ought to give a test, an I. Q. test. That's what Mirabelle used to say, before you sold them a ticket. The audience, I mean. Mirabelle. Thought she was better than them in every way. Had no right to criticize. Find the motherfuckers and hang 'em. Clean 'em all out. The manipulators. Shoot 'em while they're on their planes. That was Mirabelle's POV.

You don't know the half of it, Cooper.

COOPER: That was Mirabelle! What's that you say?

I said you don't know the half of it.

COOPER: Like what?

Like rich men flying around with their girlfriends. Can you hear me now? Are you listening now? White men. Rich men. Who knows how they got their money? Charming and conning. Disarming and cunning. Words. Sentences and promises. Meals and deals. Get these teen empty-headed girls to lie down and so on. Touch their cocks and stroke their wrinkled asses. Jews, too, I might add, so don't get too high on your horses. These men, powerful men, with planes. Around the world they go, promising and seducing, horny old men with the girls. Orgies and corruption. Get to a high place and it has no meaning, so at least get laid. Get laid and get laid. Young girls.

COOPER: Never done that.

JOE: Me, neither.

I'm not talking about you, bonehead. So they catch one guy, somebody flipped, one of the girls, he's a handsome motherfucker with a manly charm and they throw him into the box where he strangely hangs himself, mainly to avoid snitching on his friends, or pang of conscience, but in fact he was murdered. Guard walked away for a minute, let the cell open, in walks the killers with a rope.

COOPER: Where are you, Mirabelle?

I'm in Hell, motherfucker, with the rest of these stinkheads.

JOE: Here 's the thing: They're in the movies. They're glamorous and calm, nervous and hysterical, but they look good and they look at the *camera*.

Oblivion awaits these egomagamaniacs.

JOE: I was saying. The ones on TV. They make you want things. Products. Shouting and yelling and making faces. Happy, happy They make a lot of money. They're untouchable. Quick cuts -- **bam, bam**, there's no more attention. What's left is a Boobie.

Turn off the sound.

JOE: The White Southern Christians. Or what. Evangelicals. Fanatics. They're still running around in the streets. With flags and guns. Making noise. Making comments. Attacking the truth. Four good men, guardians of the Temple, killed themselves. They couldn't take the memory: Crazy white Amuricans, retards and mental defectives, assaulted them on a slaughter march.

COOPER: OK. We start with what's here now. What's left. The Believers. The insane. The lying commentary. The trafficking. We'll expose the truth.

JOE: That was Mirabelle!

COOPER: I know.

JOE: She's in Hell.

COOPER: I heard.

JOE: What should we do?

COOPER: We should go on.

JOE: I'll help you.

JOE: Who 's putting up the money?

COOPER: Nobody knows. Mercier, maybe.

JOE: Money, money.

COOPER: Somebody will pay. (It's Mercier!)

JOE: We'll make them pay.

COOPER: Make a fucking living. **Survival.**

JOE: This is America. in America you get paid. That's why people come here. To pick up their check.

COOPER: Who pays?

JOE: It's the government what pays. They print it up.

"A liberal kabal. A pedophile underground."

JOE: Is what?

Just send an email and ask for money. Put boxes on it. They check the wrong box, they're paying forever. We have met the SUPER-CON, and he has won.

JOE: Now he should hang, like Mussolini.

COOPER: I used to go out my window and up the street for food. A beggar is what I was. Especially in the Seventh Grade. Give me a quarter, I used say, so I can eat lunch like the rest of the boys and girls. And you?

JOE: Children splattered on the monkey-bars and see-saws. Happily playing and singing songs. Get under the desk. Atomic War. Bombs were falling. Everybody vaporized. Sordid poverty up the kazoo.

COOPER: It goes back centuries. Deals, trades, IOUs, contracts, tribal rivalries, accounts, starvation, destitution, even beer. They go back centuries.

JOE: I don't think so.

COOPER: You don't think so?

JOE: No. Not body parts.

COOPER: I think you're wrong about that. It goes back to the beginning of Time. Why?

JOE: I don't know why.

COOPER: People need others to look down upon. And not only that.

JOE: What else?

COOPER: The biological. Because of the birth canal. Things can go wrong in there. I think women can understand that.

JOE: Obviously.

COOPER: No, I mean the scheme, the species. Wait till you see 'em, toothless and rabid. The Boss. Foaming at the mouth. Who was he? He was a Congressman or a Governor or a Party boss, or the President of the United States?

JOE: It's **Him**. Now. Here he comes. (*Enter the PRESIDENT*)

THE PRESIDENT

JOE: Why don't you do something?

PRESIDENT: Like what?

COOPER: Save us from idiocy and perdition.

PRESIDENT: How?

JOE: Like kill off some of 'em.

PRESIDENT: I have bills.

COOPER: Bills.

PRESIDENT: Bills of the law, or shadows of law, or lawful commendations and regulations. That's the way it works.

JOE: Like how?

PRESIDENT: First you have to have the votes.

COOPER: I see.

JOE: I don't.

PRESIDENT: Trouble is.

JOE: What?

PRESIDENT: They're owned by the corporations. American companies are the wonder of the world.

COOPER: Why don't you actually do something?

PRESIDENT: Like what?

JOE: Kill the guy who came before you.

COOPER: Would be a start.

PRESIDENT: I don't do things like that.

COOPER: Better men than him have been *kaput*. Hanged, shot, or beaten to death.

PRESIDENT: He'll disappear into the winds of time.

JOE: What about now?

COOPER: And tomorrow and the next day.

PRESIDENT: I have a plan.

COOPER: Which is?

PRESIDENT: To soothe the anxiety of the population, so they'll get off the streets and into their homes and stop the complaining and get a useful job that helps the great American economy.

JOE: How?

PRESIDENT: I'll give them payments.

JOE: Who pays?

PRESIDENT: There was a time, you wrote a chit, and you sent the chit to your cousin in Moscow, or you wrote a note, and that was the money. And that's why we have the world's best economy in the world. I mean the Planet Earth. We beat them all and ground them into dust.

COOPER: And that's why they're attacking us with crowbars.

PRESIDENT: Who told you that?

COOPER: Mirabelle.

PRESIDENT: You shouldn't listen to people who hallucinate or fornicate.

JOE: Get rid of the fuckin' gigantic companies! They're eating up the country!

PRESIDENT: Calm down, son.

JOE: No!

PRESIDENT: I have people on it. I'm on it. Takes time.

JOE: There is no Time!

PRESIDENT: Who is your friend here?

COOPER: This is Joe, sir. He's autistic.

PRESIDENT: Tell him to shut up.

COOPER: Shut up, Joe.

JOE: No way! You shut up!

COOPER: Let's talk about Mirabelle, if we may.

PRESIDENT: I only have a minute.

COOPER: They tore her apart and threw her into the ocean.

PRESIDENT: I'm sorry.

COOPER: Sewed up her mouth and eyes.

PRESIDENT: I'm truly sorry.

JOE: And now she's in Hell!

PRESIDENT: Hopefully I have people there.

COOPER: What do you mean?

PRESIDENT: Is she Jewish?

COOPER: No!

JOE: Yes!

PRESIDENT: I'll see what I can do.

JOE: He can see our Mirabelle!

PRESIDENT: Not exactly.

COOPER: What then?

PRESIDENT: We have machines, mechanisms, whereby dimensions are crossed and phenomena are revealed.

COOPER: It's fabulous! Yes?

PRESIDENT: You just gotta keep an eye on them and keep 'em away from natural resources.

COOPER: Good luck with that!

PRESIDENT: Things have to be organized. You can't have people walking around and defecating wherever they feel like it.

JOE: And schools and hospitals and wardens and police!

PRESIDENT: That's right.

COOPER: Excuse me, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT: You're excused.

COOPER: What about this?

PRESIDENT: What?

COOPER: Trafficking. Girls. In L.A.. Coulda been our Mirabelle. Whadoyaknow? What do you think about that?

PRESIDENT: I think it should be taken care of.

COOPER: How, sir?

PRESIDENT: Round 'em up and lock 'em up and throw away the key.

JOE: Yea!

COOPER: Thank you.

PRESIDENT: Anything else?

COOPER: L. A., sir.

PRESIDENT: L.A.?

COOPER: I think we should send some shooters down there, I think we should kill all 'em pimps and influencers. Am I right?

PRESIDENT: No. You don't seem to understand, son. This is a country of laws. Too many guns in this country. Every idiot and his brother is carrying a weapon.

COOPER: We totally agree, sir.

PRESIDENT: Good. We got teenagers walking around with AR 15's killing people in the streets.

COOPER: Stop it, sir.

PRESIDENT: Can't stop it, not up to me.

JOE: I saw them cutting up one of those guys for market, sir.

PRESIDENT: No, you didn't.

JOE: Yes, I did.

PRESIDENT: Your mind is addled and incomplete.

JOE: OH!

COOPER: No, he's autistic and 1Y neurotic, far as I know.

PRESIDENT: Well, there's a place for that kind of thing in our humanistic democracy.

JOE: Where is it? *(No answer)*

COOPER: What about migration on the border?

PRESIDENT: The South is coming North. Why? Former bastard massed them at the border, where they're pimped and starved and hopeless. Kidnapped and raped, murdered and squalid -- but there'd be nothing I can do. Beginning of the End. The South will be moving North in numbers. Caravans. Armies on the move.

JOE: They're coming to take our places. They're not Jews, they're immigrants.

PRESIDENT: Can't stop 'em, Joe.

COOPER: What about the trafficking? Girls from all over the world, sir, lives ground up by dirty dicks and bad actors. In cars. On the street.

PRESIDENT: I gotcha there. World could be gone for all I know, ten, fifteen years, or some twit takes over. All hell will break loose, as the Prophet said. **Jeremiah**, I think, will turn over in his grave..

COOPER: Lost tribes. Lost girls. I feel that they are connected. They found her head on the rocks, on the border between the old slave lands and the owner's properties. Right on the border. Her eyes were missing, and she was partly eaten away by the ocean. But it was Her. She had several scars from childhood, fighting in the wars.

PRESIDENT: Too many fuckin' wars. For no fuckin' reason. Maybe the reason is, can't be helped, it's in the blood and the body parts, fighting, killing, eating shit. Gots to have wars and a fighting army, kick the crap out of people.

JOE: I agree with that. Drafted in '63. Never said a word. Got all the way up to the chief psychiatrist of the American Army, an Austrian with a mane of gray hair. Whitehall Street. He looked at me. I looked at him. Gave me a 1Y, which was totally right, anxiety neurotic, to this day, no doubt about it.

PRESIDENT: I'd contact the Army, if I were you. The Army knows everything there is to be known. Meanwhile, I have an

appointment. You can't believe what goes on in the world. Conferences and meetings. Just get the money out there, buy shit, we'll be alright.

COOPER: No *problema*.

PRESIDENT: Spanish? You're supposed to speak English. This is America. We speak American in this country.

JOE: Thank you.

PRESIDENT: Anytime. Remember, the Army knows everything. Get over to the Pentagon and pester them.

JOE: Wait. How 'bout a firing squad?

PRESIDENT: What's wrong with you?

JOE: I'm a hunchback, sir. Line 'em up, Chicago to New York.

PRESIDENT: You're a bloodthirsty little sheany, you.

JOE: Liars about the climate, sir. Minutes to go.

PRESIDENT: Get over to the Army.

JOE: Soon be dead, sir.

PRESIDENT: No worries. I'll call ahead. (*Exits*)

COOPER: The Pentagon.

JOE: We're here. Here we are. The place is large. You could get lost here, walking around. Halls and offices gleaming and shiny and slippery and I don't know what.

COOPER: Let's slide over to the General. (*The GENERAL appears.*)

THE GENERAL

GENERAL: Good day, or good afternoon, as you like it, I don't care, people do their thing. At my age, I don't care. I couldn't care less.

JOE: He's senile.

COOPER: Quiet.

GENERAL: Nice. Nice day. Nice breeze. Nice. (*Pause*) The quiet, the ease and quiet, fruits and flowers, the sense of Presence, a Higher influence all around. But one must be quiet, enjoy, enjoy the elegance of old age.

COOPER: Definitely.

GENERAL: An elegance fought for, you may know or not know, fought for savagely, in the East, where it was I who was in command, the Generalissimo, that was I, though not of everything, but of the best, the most brave and brutal warrior assembly known to man in those days.

JOE: Geez.

GENERAL: You may wonder – an old man, a silken robe, a cup of tea, an enamel cane, a pool, the singing of birds, a sense of

peace --- this has come from wanton, almost indiscriminate killing on a large scale, daily, for months and years, the slaughter of men. Women and children. The elderly. Everyone who had to be fought and killed. Beaten, hanged. Imprisoned, gassed, tortured, raped, burned alive, and all the rest of it – and yet I sit here at peace. Enjoying the gentle breeze.

COOPER: (Here he sits by his pool unperturbed, enjoying himself. You may wonder at his reasoning.)

JOE: Yes. I do.

COOPER: My God.

JOE: Be quiet.

GENERAL: First of all, there are too many people. Far too many. Way too many. It's on the Scale of insects. So that's the first thing. And I reasoned, like any reasonable man, that this could get out of control. This could get out of control. Idiots could end up ruling towns and villages, imbeciles could take over entire countries, this has happened more than once and could happen again, disorder and chaos could become the norm. And so I reasoned with myself: choose the most promising side, the most likely to win, and give it all you have, and don't worry about it afterward, and then enjoy the privileges of winning. And so. You understand?

JOE: Of course. I just wanted to say –

GENERAL: What's that?

JOE: The only difference between us, as far as I can see, is, for us, that the Messiah hasn't come yet.

GENERAL: Is that right?

JOE: Yes. And he may never come. I don't see any signs...in the sky...from the Heavens...on Earth...

COOPER: No doubt about it.

JOE: And how. (!) My father used to say that.. They don't say it anymore. And how!

COOPER: Thanks, Joe. Very helpful.

GENERAL: And, you know, we have drones in theater, we have drones. Machines we set up there, they do the work, they have the firepower, we don't have to lose a single soldier, this is advanced technology, in service to the American people. So.

COOPER: That's great.

GENERAL: It is. Great. What can I do for you?

COOPER: We are in search of Mirabelle.

GENERAL: Who is she?

COOPER: She was the best of the best, sir.

JOE: And how!

GENERAL: What does that mean?

COOPER: The most beautiful, the smartest.

JOE: The raunchiest.

GENERAL: How would I know her?

COOPER: She was an actress and singer, sir, and could dance, as well, and teach eloquence and rhetoric, and make children laugh, famous in those parts.

GENERAL: Which parts?

JOE: Where you campaigned, sir.

COOPER: In the War, sir.

GENERAL: Let me think a minute. *(Pause)* I may have heard of her. Mirabelle?

COOPER: Yes.

GENERAL: Yes, a famous beauty with a sarcastic wit. Sexually direct, so to speak. But I don't know what happened to her. Anything could have happened. Tortured, hanged. You must understand, on that level –

JOE: It's Dante, sir, or worse.

GENERAL: On that level it's anything goes, murder and mayhem, disease and idiocy on a planetary scale. I could go on, but I don't have time.

JOE: One more thing. sir, as you say.

GENERAL: What did I say?

JOE: She's in Hell, sir, where no birds sing.

GENERAL: So what do you want from me?

JOE: Send a tank down there, or a battalion of Marines.

GENERAL: I can't do anything without an order from the President.

COOPER: We just talked to him sir.

GENERAL: A direct order.

JOE: How about this?

GENERAL: Yes?

JOE: An armed insurrection against the insurrectionists. Try a bomb or two, maybe.

GENERAL: You're out of your fucking mind, Corporal.

JOE: Thank you, sir.

COOPER: Sorry to disturb, sir.

GENERAL: Never mind. People do what people do. Shitting and pissing till the end of Time. There's nothing I can do. Greater powers than I have deemed it so. Tea awaits. Ancient porcelain cups, from China. *(Exits)*

JOE: Now there's a fuckhead, Coop.

COOPER: We need to bring her back, Joe. From the Dead.

JOE: How?

COOPER: Now. *(Claps his hands)*

MIRABELLE

COOPER: Here she is.

Don't beat me, you shit. Stop beating me. If you keep beating me, I'll kill myself. I will not marry that fat old religious fanatic with the beard and the fart. I will kill myself first.

JOE: The magic of the Stage.

COOPER: How are you?

I'm just an actress. I do plays.

COOPER: Good for you.

One after the other.

JOE: What are they about?

War and sacrifice. Love and death. Honor and disgrace. Hell on Earth.

COOPER: Brings you back to the ancients, the Greeks. the Trojan wars, the Odyssey.

Pythagorous. The Egyptians.

COOPER: The inevitability of it all. Fate.

JOE: Well, there's a debate we can have one day. Not today. I don't feel up to it today.

COOPER: Not today.

JOE: So how are you down there? In Purgatory, in Hell, or Limbo, or some electromagenticochemico reality?

I'm right here, Joe.

JOE: Oh.

Take a hit and slow your mind.

JOE: Thank you. *(Does his bit with a joint.)*

Stop the twitch.

(Huge exhale.)

People don't realize. The Spirit World. Check out the Cheyenne or Arapaho. Or the Lakota Sioux. There's up and down. But it's more like round, like a circle. You get that? No sideways lying.

JOE: I think so.

I'm hanging by a thread, on a hook pierced into my heart, swinging in the wind, hearing the songs of dead heroes. Those who fought back and gave their lives.

JOE: We get that, Mirabelle.

COOPER: We're on the road, my dear, in search of you.

Meanwhile, I'm alive. Dealing with the present and the past. I feel privileged.

COOPER: And I, as well.

Good. My body feels like the ocean, soaked in brine and endless. My eyes are closed. My mouth is sewn up like a rag doll.

COOPER: But you can see!

I can see.

JOE: And you can talk!

I can talk.

COOPER: What can you see?

A hunchback and a lawyer.

JOE: We're both lawyers --

*Trapped. Trapped by the body, by Time, by the insolvable and incomprehensible. **(Crows)** Listen to the **crow**s, who call to each other in the mist, over the distant valleys; no, from telephone pole wire to a barn somewhere, or a grave, or a steeple, or a town, a rooftop – time is passing, they say, time is passing, take a look around, take a breath, life is good.*

COOPER: Who threw you into the sea, Mirabelle? Who squashed your eyes out and sewed up your mouth?

Creatures just like us. They had certain beliefs. There's something wrong with us. You, me, him, and them. White men, mainly. Hard-ons and pickup trucks.

JOE: Of course, it all begins with myself. I'm not the person I was. Even the word "person" throws me a bit. A hunchback is not a person. A little loss of balance. Organs misplaced. Some parts still enslaved. Head pointed in the wrong direction. Reactions, reflexes. Opinions. And so on. But, on the whole....

On the whole you're an asshole.

JOE: Thank you.

I'll tell a riddle. Ready?

JOE: Go

Comedian's ex tells the best friend to act like a man in front of his kid because he doesn't have the balls. Guess who?

JOE: I give up.

I'd whack him if I was you.

COOPER: I give up, too.

OK. Talk to the Judge, why don't you, the fuck who sent me here into the doom? Talk to him, the fathead. And then we'll deal with him.

JOE: Let's kill the motherfucker!

COOPER: Calm down.

JOE: Bring him on, Coop!

2.

THE JUDGE

COOPER: Enter the Judge. (*JUDGE appears.*)

JUDGE: I was fooding my job, is all. Everybody has a right to live, even the squirmiest of tadpoles.

JOE: Who asked you?

JUDGE: The tiniest of eggs.

COOPER: Upon what principles to you confirm or deny, sir?

JUDGE: The spark of life, it seems to me, is higher than your imagination of justice. You may be too dumb to understand. I don't know you, to be true, a hunchback and two Jews, I mean a hunchback and a lawyer, one of whom is a Jew.

JOE: We are both Lawyers, sir, and Jews. I been meaning to ask you --

JUDGE: Be that as it may, you have wrong ideas between the two of you, and you are associated with a convicted criminal. This is a nation of Laws and Customs. Not everyone agrees. Some people feel more entitled. Others may want it all for himself.

COOPER: So what do you do about it?

JUDGE: We do the best we can. What else can we do? The laws are written down.

JOE: Where?

JUDGE: On paper, in the Capitol.

COOPER: It's turning to shit, as we speak, the poop of an imbecile with a bible.

JUDGE: I tell you what.

COOPER: What?

JUDGE: I sentence both of you to hang.

JOE: Wait a minute.

COOPER: Mirabelle?

Let him finish and then we'll electrocute him.

JUDGE: Thank your lucky stars, you pinheads, you coneheads, because electricity doesn't work no more. They tried it and half the place burned down, the courthouse and the jail, *todo*. It's powerful stuff, it makes your heart beat, believe it or not, so we humanized it now and the sonsabitches we have to deal with now -- we hang 'em from the gallows.

COOPER: Is that it, Judge?

JUDGE: No. We're talking about the stars, we're talking about the heavens. We're talking about the incomprehensible.

JOE: We're not talking at all.

JUDGE: The stars, my friend, the galaxies, the sun and moon, the laws of Justice on Earth -- all are One. And we must obey the power and – *(The JUDGE is hit by lightning and crumbles to a little mound of embers.)*

So much for the Judge.

JOE: Wow.

COOPER: Hang in there, Pal. Mirabelle?

I'd see a preacher now if I were you, or a shrink or a professor of some kind who actually knows what's what.

JOE: Yeah.

Talk to him, like the guy who said words about me, who talked me into the sea, into the Land of the Dead. Go ahead, give him a wave, give him a chance, give him a punch in the mouth, see if I care, which I don't.

JOE: Okay.

Hang the fuck and cut his balls off.

COOPER: Will do.

Good. Now get going. Don't run anyone over on your way.

JOE: Excuse me?

They harvest the organs.

JOE: Holy shit.

They harvest the organs. They kill for the organs. So avoid accidents. Drive carefully.

COOPER: Excuse me. Mirabelle?

Yes?

COOPER: You have an idea, Mirabelle?

Yes. I told you already. Stay within the speed limits.

JOE: Then what?

Blood. It's all in the blood. Blood all over the place. Blood of the genes and the hormones. I can't fuckin' remember all the ratios and the algorithms or the numbers.

JOE: Okay.

Yes. You hear that? (Static) It's the radio. You hear the voices?

JOE: Yes.

They're all the same. The voices are all the same.

COOPER: What do you mean?

It's terrible what's happening, it's the end of the world. There'll be no oxygen, there'll be nothing to eat. Boils and bloody murder, children thrown into the fire, deer falling to the ground

bleeding from their eyes, birds dropping from the sky, mass migrations moving North, and yet –

COOPER: And yet –

Listen. They all sound the same, life goes on, the announcers and the pundits, listen up: “Not to worry, the house stands, the plague has to eat, the weather has to change, but we ourselves will make it, we will survive, because the products must be pitched, and the show must go on, and I’m not worried, are you? There has to be a way, they’ll find a way, and Jesus loves us, so let’s clean the shit up and go on, or just fuckit and go on, in a happy tone, happy, happy.” There you go. (Pause) And one more thing.

COOPER: Say on.

Poverty. Class. They don’t talk about it here. There’s a tarp of lies over it, a media blanket -- no one starves in America, no one becomes pathological with fear -- the misery of addiction and hunger, people calling you trash, and the bullying and jail time and kids committing suicide, and tents under bridges -- they don’t say nothin’ about that shit, plus the dumb-downed farmers in shacks in the country where nothin’ can be grown anymore because the soil has turned to rancid dust. You don’t hear any of that – it’s all pull yeself together -- make a buck and stop complaining.

JOE: Can you eat, Mirabelle?

Put me in a freezer. A nice one. Not a cold piece of shit with slabs of meat hanging down. Look out – the Preacher Man is coming. (Pause, the PREACHER appears.)

THE PREACHER

PREACHER: I SAID A FEW WORDS. Words from the Bible. The word of God and his precious SON. Christian words, like get thee to a TEAN CHALLENGE house in America and learn obedience and humility and control of your facility. I mean the body, the yearning and the loss. The bleeding cunt, the sorrowing heart.

I'm an intelligent person and I have dreams.

PREACHER: Dreams? What the fuck are dreams? Nothings. Fantasies.

And I want to keep my child. I don't want to give it up to a stranger.

PREACHER: Go to class and keep your mouth shut or we'll sew it up for good.

JOE: Geez.

Go fuck yourself. I knew mercenaries, back in the day, they'd kick your head in like a soccer ball.

PREACHER: Who was that?

COOPER: Nobody, sir. We came to you for help, sir. This here is a man with problems.

PREACHER: What kind of problems?

COOPER: He 's autistic. Plus he has a 1Y from the Army, meaning Anxiety Neurotic. And a hump on his back.

PREACHER: I don't see too much there.

JOE: You're blind as a fuckin' bat.

COOPER: Don't mind him, sir. He doesn't know who he is or how to be.

PREACHER: He's a fuckin' Jew is what he is. We don't allow Jews into our facilities.

JOE: I don't want anything to do with your lousy facilities, your prisons, your dumb restrictions and laws, I don't want anything to do with it, and I resent your attitude. As a matter of fact, I'd like to whack you in the head with a twobyfour.

Go ahead, Joe! (JOE Whacks him.)

JOE: Why do you lock people up? Why do you do that?

PREACHER: So they don't make stupid mistakes, out of lust or boredom, or frustration, or confusion, teenagers especially. Girls, especially. Pregnancy, especially. We give them a home and a structure for their feelings.

COOPER: Whack him again, Joe.

PREACHER: Wait a minute. The parents can't handle it. So they send the kid away. The parents, they're like criminals who believe in God and his precious Son, so they think their doing something nice, but they're criminally negligent, is what they are.

JOE: I agree with that.

COOPER: Is that what happened to Mirabelle, our Mirabelle of the dusty dawn and the cloudy, rainy night? What'd you do to her?

PREACHER: I just said a few words.

COOPER: Whack him.

(Whack)

PREACHER: Okay. I won't quote any biblical phrases here, because I know you're an Anarchist.

JOE: Definitely.

PREACHER: The Seed of Solomon.

JOE: Correct.

PREACHER: In other words: a Jew.

JOE: Fuckin' A.

PREACHER: And so, you know: we cut it in two. We cut the baby from the mother, and the baby is saved. It's a sacrifice. The mother loses her soul.

COOPER: Oh, no! Our Mirabelle!

PREACHER: I know an Anarchist when I see one, or hear one, or get hit by one, but watch out, watch your ass, because the Antichrist, who is here, now, right here now, waiting in his Villa -- so go fuck yourselves, hide, disappear, because he is here and

he will see you and abomnate you, and finish his business and the End Times will come and you ain't invited to the party.

COOPER: Hit him again.

(Whack)

JOE: We'll avenge our Mirabelle. You can be sure of that. So take a hike, Preach.

COOPER: Yeah.

JOE: Take a long hike.

COOPER: Take hike off a long pier and jump into the ocean and die.

PREACHER: Fuck you.

JOE: Okay, good. Motherfucker.

COOPER: I don't know what's going on with these fuckin' Christians. Hypocrites and fools. This jerk is the epitome. Let him go. No, let's kill the cockroach and cut his nuts off. *(Whack. Whack. PREACHER vanishes.)*

JOE: What now?

Can you get it up, Joe?

JOE: Whoa! *(Stretches.)* *(Thoughts of sex, they make me stretch.)*

COOPER: Let's visit your Uncle Paul. He 's got your blood. Like Mirabelle said. G-d knows why.

JOE: It's about blood, Coop. Blood. Blood of the Fathers.
(*UNCLE PAUL appears.*)

UNCLE PAUL

JOE: (So, we went to visit the oldest member of the family, Paul, in Las Vegas. My uncle Paul, my father's half-brother. He 's ninety-nine, but relatively lucid, though he doesn't talk much and seems to resent me, maybe because of my hunch. Maybe because he's only half-related. He lives in one of those grey plastic towers in the heart of the fantasy world of entertainment, amongst white evangelical Okie families with a hundred blonde bigoted kids making screechy noise.)

PAUL: Which one are you?

JOE: I'm your brother's oldest son.

PAUL: Which brother?

JOE: Saul.

PAUL: Ah. The Dealer.

JOE: He wasn't a Dealer.

PAUL: Yes, he was. In parts. Body parts. It all started in the Old Country, big demand for body parts.

JOE: (The Old Counry – vast swathes of Asia.)

PAUL: And endless crucifixions on the roads. A profession handed down, father to son, as slave employment. Regular, and you could make a buck, depending on the organ. But he kept a low profile. They got him eventually.

COOPER: And you?

PAUL: Not me.

JOE: No, you're too good for that kind of activity. Cutting up corpses.

PAUL: I didn't say that.

COOPER: What did you say?

PAUL: I said I'm not into that kind of activity. *(Laughs)*

JOE: What's so funny?

PAUL: I forget now.

JOE: I hate that.

PAUL: Sorry. Bodies in the ground. Endless. Got to dig 'em up. That's why we have plastic structures and bags. Cleaner, though the air is bad.

COOPER: (The apartment is tidy, with a view of the city, and all his needs are easily met. He sets about making a high-end pitcher of coffee with the very latest technology.)

JOE: I also wanted to know about Aunt Mirabelle.

PAUL: Mirabelle?

JOE: Like where she is. On land or sea.

PAUL: I have no idea. Nobody tells me anything.

JOE: (This is probably true. Paul was born from another woman. The woman, traveling with my Grandfather, Louis, died in childbirth on the Canadian border during a winter storm. A blizzard. Below zero, snow and sleet. Ice. My Grandfather buried the woman, who remains nameless, probably a teenager. He saved the infant Paul, and then took him all the way to New York City. Since then, he's been considered an outsider by the wider, subsequent brood of Coopers, though everybody seems to like him. He talks briefly and straight to the point. Quiet. Keeps to himself.)

PAUL: Drink your coffee, it's good stuff. Hawaiiin.

JOE: (I actually never met the man. Sounds like he wants to get rid of me. I'm wondering where he gets his money from, some scam or other, or a deal with the casinos. Or a rich girlfriend. Of course, he ain't telling me anything.)

PAUL: Never been a slave.

COOPER: (He says. Enigmatically. Nobody mentioned slavery, that purest symbol of the Specie Mankind.)

PAUL: Never knew the name of the girl on the border, either. She latched onto me on the way over.

JOE: No. You got that wrong. You got that muddled. She's in the ground on the border. Your mother. You were inside her. You're thinking of someone else.

PAUL: Am I? Never knew her name. Can't say. Was it her? Don't sound right. Sounds like a Mediteranean name. Girl would have been a Jewish peasant from a Russian *shtetl*.

JOE: (I'm trying to decide whether to tell him about the condition of Mirabelle's fucked up head. My aunt's head? "They found her head," I say. He thinks I'm referring to the woman buried at the border, but officially, nobody mentions the woman buried up there on the border and no one seems to know her name. "No, I'm talking about Mirabelle," I say, "who is mystical and unaffiliated.")

PAUL: Mirabelle, as a name, means "look pretty" or something. Or, "looking at the pretty girl." Or "Look beautiful, or beautifully." Or beautiful itself.

COOPER: It's a fucking catastophic disaster how people do, Paul. They'll do any fucking thing if you say if to them three times.

PAUL: I don't have anything to do with it.

JOE: Are you married?

PAUL: No.

COOPER: What happened?

PAUL: Voodoo Woman. Had a flirty affair. A text romance. On and on. Asked her to bed, finally, and she said, "No. I don't

have the freedom. Don't turn against me," she said, and then she turned on me. Nasty. Had to move my business. That's it, I said, and came up here to Vegas.

COOPER: Sorry.

PAUL: What a fool I was. Haven't been laid in thirty-five years. That's life, son.

JOE: Thank you, Uncle Paul.

PAUL: You've heard all those sayings. I know another woman, that's what she's made of. Sayings. Hundreds of sayings, all through the day. I won't mention any names, but she's from *Chiapas*, and her name is Rosa.

I knew that woman. They trafficked her and she disappeared! I see her now: Looking good, looking beautiful, a sexy, dark, overweight, mystical, indigenous, Mexican mujer.

PAUL: That's her. A *bruja*. You could feel her coming miles away.

COOPER: (I don't tell him about the legendary missing eyes or the sewed up mouth of Mirabelle.)

Good. Just as well. He'll get his cumuppance now.

JOE: They are looking for her killer. Mirabelle's.

PAUL: Who is *they*?

JOE: The authorities.

PAUL: Bunch of mediocre bureaucrats. Lazy and sleepy and narrow minded. Stupid, actually. I could tell you all kinds of things about the cops.

JOE: Name one.

PAUL: They kill Black teenagers, keeps 'em off the streets.

JOE: (Paul himself is not a slave. He's an accountant. Stashed money. Secure. Head closed, same as his father, only his eyes stay open, staring out, and his mouth talks like a horny old man who has money hidden away in mattresses.) What about the cops?

PAUL: I said already.

COOPER: Don't you care about what happened to your Mom?

PAUL: No, I never met her. Bones frozen into the Canadian tundra.

COOPER: No tundra. This is America. America and Canada.

PAUL: I know that. Dollar-land and Disney-land. I know all about it.

JOE: Our ancestors sold us to America as slaves.

PAUL: No, they didn't. It was just an exchange. You're talking about Africans. Get your facts right. We, ourselves, are Semites. In any event, there was no America at the time. Only savages roaming the land. Hunting beasts and making war. Learn your history. People were starving in Russia because

there were too many of us, so they exchanged us for some ears of corn. We were expendable. That's what I heard.

JOE: How many ears?

PAUL: You mean Human ears?

JOE: No, **corn** (you idiot.).

PAUL: Bushels.

JOE: How many bushels?

PAUL: Millions.

COOPER: The corn was already here. The corn was already here. They didn't need anymore corn.

Pause.

PAUL: My mother is some kind of Russian peasant whose bones have merged with the soil by now. I imagine her as a little thing, maybe four feet tall, with blonde hair and blue eyes and tiny pink hands.

JOE: What was her name?

PAUL: I don't know.

JOE: She gave birth to you.

PAUL: So what?

JOE: You should know her name.

PAUL: I don't. She was a slave, like you. The whole antiquated tribe. We were sold. They got rid of us. And we're still paying off the ransom.

COOPER: How much is it?

PAUL: More than we can pay. I'll bet you got money hidden somewhere, Joe, and you pay a rotten lawyer fifty dollars a week for permission to be a hunchback in America.

JOE: Don't criticize me, because I hate to be criticized. And I hate to be told what to do. It goes back to childhood, like everything else. You can think what you want about the unpayable debt, but I better get paid soon or your ass is mullet.

PAUL: Listen. I have relatives who own banks all over the known world.

COOPER: Is that right?

PAUL: That's right, and you don't fuck with us. We run the financial system of planet Earth and all the movies made in the world and all the movies disrespecting the Chinese. And all television as well, excepting maybe the Russians, who do strictly propaganda.

COOPER: (The Man is obviously in Disneyland, trapped in a child's imagination. Buttered Popcorn. Sugared Air. Crowds of Temps and their offspring.) You gotta go back further than that. My friend the hunchback with the Hebraic nose.

JOE: You asking me?

PAUL: Like way before. Species devolution. Ape-like, pig-like, take a good look around.

JOE: Like where?

PAUL: Like all over. The World. Like, what kind of animals are we, anyway? What are we for? *(Pause)* You don't know. You will never know.

JOE: *(Offering)* Do you smoke?

PAUL: Never touch the stuff. Causes hallucination and strange thoughts..

JOE: Fine by me.

PAUL: So long. See ya downstairs, in the casino. Remember, weed is bad for you. Leads to addiction and paranoia. See if I care. *(Exits. JOE smokes his joint.)*

JOE: Ah. The World. To mission to the world. To bring Monotheism and the Commandments to the Nations of the World.

COOPER: Is that right?

JOE: I don't know. Big job.

COOPER: Who has time for that?

JOE: We must talk to the living.

COOPER: Why?

JOE: I don't know why.

COOPER: Mirabelle?

No. Talk to somebody else for a change.

JOE: We'll talk to Barachevsky, who was my Grandmother's best friend. My Grandmother's name is Bella. She's on her way. *(A slavic woman appears, whose name is **Liliana**.)* Here she is.

LILIANA

LILIANA: Lemme tell you about Bella. I was her best friend.

JOE: Was she a hunchback?

LILIANA: No.

JOE: What was she?

LILIANA: A ballbuster. A ball-breaker. She ran a laundry business. I'm sorry, that was *me*. Bella was a cook. I ran the laundry business.

JOE: Ok. Thank you.

LILIANA: Those were the days.

JOE: Who sold her into slavery?

LILIANA: Oh, this was a time so long ago it was before the Bible.

JOE: That can't be true. Before the Bible there was nothing.

LILIANA: I'm telling you, it was before the Bible. And not a minute too soon.

COOPER: (She's a big woman, a 300 pounder, huge white apron, towel on her head, wrinkles down her neck, few teeth in front, Slavic accent. She knows nothing.)

LILIANA: What happened was this: All the animals were scattered around and nobody knew who to eat or what could eat them. It had to be organized. Who was allowed to eat whom? Deals had to be made. Finally, God came along and ordered what's what and everybody knew what to eat and the chosen ones were the Yids who were to keep order and spread the Word.

JOE: And?

LILIANA: Well. They sold off a section first.

JOE: Who did?

LILIANA: So a certain amount could be slaves. Some of them ended up in Egypt. You must be one of the descendants.

JOE: How do you know what you're talking about?

LILIANA: Because of what it says in the Bible.

JOE: You'll have to go back. Back wherever you came from. Sounds like a slum somewhere where they have hoops and gunfights and fields of junk.

LILIANA: Fuck you and the horse you rode in on.

JOE: I'm on a mission right now. Partly medical. It's not only my spine -- I'll tell you more about it if you want to hear --

LILIANA: No, I don't. You people. The point is: Bella, a beautiful teenager, seduced in the bunk of a ship.

JOE: Impossible!

LILIANA: Not if you cuddle up and be quiet. Bella was 17 years old when she got on a boat in Odessa, which is on the Black Sea.

JOE: I know where it is.

LILIANA: From a town called Pinsk. Which is now rubble. And she married the guy who was an Austrian con man, preying on her in the crowded boat, giving her candy and rolls and sweets and God knows what. She 's a seventeen year old virgin from Odessa. No, Pinsk.

JOE: Cons. Cons everywhere.

LILIANA: A very nice city. Odessa. She gets on the bus with all her goods. The boat was crowded dick to butt. Next thing you knew, she was a missus, and pregnant. They get to Brooklyn in New York City. Brooklyn is full of Irish and Italian hoodlums and slums -- the Austrian took one look and put on his good shirt and his suspenders and headed home. Bella was no fool. She packed up her kid and went after him. Back to Europe she goes, in God knows what kind of boat, a freighter, maybe, or an English gunboat, who knows, and she goes to Austria and walks into the Viennese living room of her prosperous in laws, and there's her husband, Irving, listening to the radio, just as

cool as you please. This is in 1906. Everybody we're talking about is dead now. Including the parents who march into the Viennese living room ready for a fight. One of 'em has a classy European shotgun. Silvered and Polished and Monogramed. Bella grabs the shotgun. "What's this?" The hosts implore.
(Enter BELLA)

BELLA: This is your shotgun. And this is your grandson whose name is Harry, who has lost his father, Irving, who is sitting right there in a doomsday daze until I whack him on the head and take him back to America, where he belongs, and where he can resume his responsibilities as a father and maybe a husband, God help the little asshole.

COOPER: (Irving Shwartz is a very nice Jewish boy who is only 21 years old, and has never gone anywhere like America -- he loves his homeland, Austria, and his parents, who would never go near a piece of shit like you -- who is sitting right there in our house under parental and governmental protection and you can go back where you came from immediately, or I'll call the cops.)

JOE: (One long sentence. Bella is stunned.)

COOPER: ("Meanwhile, you can go fuck yourself," continues the parents. "Go back where you came from, the dirty slum-dump where you came from -- our boy stays home, where it's nice and safe and clean." *(Pause)* Little did they know.)

BELLA

JOE: (Bella has had enough.)

BELLA: Two oceans I have crossed for this shmuck, carrying his child everywhere in Europe, God knows where, but everywhere, my feet are blistered and the child never stops crying, and so I'm going to leave him here with you forever, so you can forever go fuck yourselves and use him as your own forever bawler.

I don't think so, Bella. Let him go.

No, I wouldn't do that to my Harry – I'll kill you myself, you fuckhead *malbushim*. (*Exit BELLA*)

JOE: And she proceeded to beat the shit out of all of them with her Ukrainian umbrella and the silvered shotgun, before taking her Harry away with her -- back to Brooklyn. Something like that. The shotgun turned out to be almost useless. A showpiece more than a weapon, belonging to the Shwartz's.

COOPER: Harry and Bella saw – no, endured --the Atlantic twice. It's a hard ocean on a burning planet.

JOE: And then? Back to Brooklyn, A crying baby. A crying Bella. The dregs of a ship. Friends and relatives met her at the dock and she found a room on Cherry Street, somewhere in Central Brooklyn. Bushwick or Greenpoint.

COOPER: Months later, the story has it, she ran into the very same Austrian fuckhead on a trolley in Brooklyn, on Nostrand Avenue; he was a conductor, and she proceeds to beat the shit out of the Austrian -- Irving -- right there in the trolley with that same Ukrainian umbrella.

JOE: Really?

COOPER: That's how I see it.

JOE: So Irving had made it back to Brooklyn?

COOPER: So they say. No mention of Bella or the child, Harry. Just came back to Brooklyn and married someone else.

Fuckin' nutcase. They're out there, watching, scheming, leering.

JOE: You been to an asylum lately?

COOPER: What kind of asylum?

JOE: An insane asylum.

COOPER: No.

JOE: You see what's underneath the faces?

COOPER: I don't look under the faces.

JOE: Look in the mirror. At least five levels of face in the mirror.

COOPER: Five?

JOE: But other people see something else, which is really us. And I don't know what that is. So I'm walking to the store for coffee, and I don't know what they see in me.

COOPER: Who?

JOE: I'm talking about the insane.

COOPER: I don't want to talk about the insane.

JOE: My mother was insane. I see the gargoyle, with his sister, another gargoyle, my mother, years in the institution. They looked fixed, unchangable, smiling awkwardly into the camera. A portrait of the living dead. I have it somewhere. I'll show it to you. Take a look. Crawling into the lacerating dark. A glimmer of light on the horizon, like a random memory.

Here we are, Joe!

COOPER: No, thanks.

Have mercy on us!

JOE: Underneath is pain and suffering, and nothing more. Pain and suffering and nothing more. You can still see it in their faces. A kind of knowing. It's the ember of life. The fifth chamber.

COOPER: You've lost me there, Joe.

JOE: It's about love, maybe. She loved me until I was two or so. She taught me to read and write. I was a prodigy. And then the hunch, and there was a turning, a rise of something from the deep, anger, hate, frustration, or something genetic, and she changed. Never loved me since. I grew up. And so did my hunch. She wanted me to get out there and make money. Mainly for her. So that will help.

COOPER: How?

JOE: Not to starve. Not to lose all self-respect. Not to live in slop, with faces from Hell.

In such a case, heroin is the only solution.

COOPER: Right. The only one I can see.

JOE: The only problem then, between you and me, is constipation, and running around all day buying borax from Black teenagers in the projects. Speaking of teenagers. Here's a memory. I went to see my mother, in the Institution. But first I had to go through a barracks of so-called crazy teenage girls, Black and Latino. There was nothing wrong with them. They just hadn't seen a Boy for a while. A male. Years, maybe. They attacked, screaming and yelling and grabbing my clothes. The nurses formed a phalanx and got me to my mother's ward. She sat there looking at her feet. I remember the color blue... White sheets...

COOPER: And?

JOE: That's all. Maybe I was dreaming.

Let'd go. They're falling asleep now, Joe.

COOPER: On we go. Trolleys are going by. Bam, bang. Clang, clang. Bells are ringing. Papers are flying. Birds are dying. People are riding. Bounce, bounce. Electric sparks. Faces, faces. And there's the conductor, wised up in the front, mustachioed, whiskers, red cheeks, long hair, white cap, watching the New Yorkers in their hustle and bustle and rustle.

JOE: It's him! Irving! Who screwed my Grandmother and ran away back to Austria, a country ruined by fanatics! We should have kicked the shit out of him – like Bella -- right there in front of the rest of the riders, or rioters, but what the hell. No

time. So, we didn't. We chickened out. We wanted to keep our jobs. We didn't feel like it. What's the good?

No good. No good there. But a little satisfaction. Goes a long way.

JOE: I never saw that Austrian again. Did he have remorse? Bad thoughts? But Bella took care of him. Both her fists and her umbrella. We used to go to Coney Island. On the trolley. The place was so crowded you couldn't move. Eyes on the hunch. You'd fight for your little square of sand and you couldn't move. The working classes herded to the beach. Weird faces on the storefronts. Stunts. I had this idea that the ocean and the sky were one.

COOPER: Was Moses an Egyptian baby, found in the waters of the Nile? In the reeds? A handsome Hebrew lad *shtupping* a princess?

JOE: Maybe all of the above.

COOPER: Never mind. I quit.

JOE: There is no bottom to it. My Grandfather, Louis, was a notorious philanderer who never said a word to me. One time he took me on the subway all the way to Brownsville, Brooklyn. Not a word. We went to Belmont Ave. --- to my lodging with one of his girlfriends, Gittel Kanterman, Dark rooms. Heavy furniture. Lace. She had a buttons store downstairs. I could hear them talking in *Yiddish*. Standing there with my suitcase and my hump. Louis never learned English or became a citizen.

COOPER: So?

JOE: I was an honors student. Humpback and all. Twelve kids and four professors. Fifteen thousand students. You could hardly get down the hall without crashing. The subway stop was Rockaway Avenue. Long walk in the cold. Down to Atlantic, change trains for the Flatbush line.

COOPER: So they took Mirabelle's body but they left the head. Why?

JOE: They ate it.

COOPER: Don't talk like that.

JOE: Mirabelle has become a part of someone's scheme.

COOPER: Here's the thing, Joe.

JOE: I was talking about my father. He projected. Light which became motion pictures. He was in the union. He lifted his head when he said that. **"I'm in the union."** He was a Union man. I loved that. Your father was a crooked cop in Queens, Coop.

COOPER: That he was, Joe.

MIRABELLE

I was a beautiful girl. Shiny Black hair, and all the rest – feminine beauty, Semitic, at its best. The curly, shiny black hair, full lips. Olive skin. In those days we were given ecstasy, we danced, we could delight in each others bodies and then go to the baths and clean up. Then someone decided we were having too much of a good time (maybe it was God) and we had to go to

school or into the fields. After that I was kidnapped and cracked in the head. Fucking world collapsed into colors and shapes.

COOPER: Who were they who abducted you, Mirabelle?

Newcomers to the country. They called themselves Americans. They wore leather and boots and cowboy hats and were armed to the teeth with guns and belts of ammunition. They made a living hunting Indians and collecting scalps for fifty dollars a scalp. Before that they went around chopping down trees and living off berries and honey and apples from the trees.

JOE: Then what happened?

Nothing happened.

JOE: Something had to happen.

I think they went into business.

JOE: What was it?

I was the business. Pussy. Fucking whorehouses in the West. Beavers and scalps. A bloody mess. They're in business to this day. Only now they're selling themselves. They'll lie and cheat first chance they get. And they're into body parts. And they have a position and get paid a pension. When they die they go to a special Hell where their tongues burn perpetually, Tongues, assholes, and pancreases, spleens, and so on, burning forever.

JOE: That's disgusting. I don't want to wait. I think we have to kill them all now.

COOPER: We'll get 'em later. It's got to be done. Why? They disagree about the facts of life and have a creepy way of making a living. You've been a great help, Mirabelle. Thank you.

Any time.

JOE: How can we reach you?

Call me.

JOE: How?

Use your phone.

JOE: Will do.

You have one shot.

JOE: Oh?

That's it. A law of Nature. So make sure it's accurate. Hit the target.

COOPER: One shot?

Wait. I'd like to suck your cock. How about that?

JOE: I'll be right over. *(Stretches)*

COOPER: What was that?

JOE: Never mind.

No worries. There'll be no changes in methods or types or races or business as usual.

JOE: This is the skinny, Coop. You have to know everything. Everything you need to know, you need to know it.

COOPER: Everything?

JOE: What did I say?

COOPER: You said: **Everything**.

JOE: Coop, we didn't find out what happened to her head or her eyes. And maybe her ears were cut off, too. And her mouth. Her lips.

COOPER: We're done.

JOE: I think so.

COOPER: You remember that, Joe, the movie, American shoots his head, shoots his brains out, **one shot** he says, Russian Roulette in Saigon, who could forget? Blood all over the place. Crazy Orientals?

JOE: Yeah. Who knew? Helicopters flying off buildings, falling into the sea off Aircraft Carriers. Millions on the move. Running from the Viet Cong.

COOPER: Right. I was on their side at the time, if I remember right.

JOE: Those were the days. **(Trance)**

Hey! Wake up!

COOPER: We had people once who were capable of thought. And used to persecution. We might have reasoned with them, and come to the facts.

JOE: No.

COOPER: Turns out to be a species problem. Something wrong in the brains. Repetition and gullability. Make sure I have bread in the tank, I mean bread on the table and gas in the tank, and don't bother me anymore. Anyway. Don't fuck with me while I feed my face and do my thing and piss on my inferiors. Everything else is a lie. And take care of my kids and beat my wife. Okay?

JOE: Okay. We started out as servants, and now they shoot us for fun. Slaves first. Mercenaries. Wanderers. And then we found the one God. What were these people thinking?

COOPER: I'm looking. I'm hoping. I don't know if I'm looking or hoping. I'm glad that I get up in the morning. In pain. To continue our search. And that's all I can think of, and I'm probably wrong. I don't know if I can stand it anymore, what's going on out there. The crazies are the believers, and they're armed. God used to be on *our* side.

JOE: He's on their side now, the white American Evangelical Christians, with a mad Oaf as the Head Priest.

COOPER: Our necks are on the line.

JOE: You said that.

COOPER: I'll say it again.

JOE: I thought of mass revenge.

COOPER: And?

JOE: You?

COOPER: Of course. Line 'em up by the hundred thousand and mow 'em down, canals to catch the blood. A system of pipes, maybe.

JOE: Pipes?

COOPER: Yeah. They don't even speak English anymore. They drawl. These people.

JOE: Let's go back.

MOSES

Guess what.

JOE: What?

The Chosen People built the Great Pyramid of Giza.

JOE: So?

Then Moses brought the 10 Commandments.

JOE: Right.

Okay. (Pause)

COOPER: So, we're on the far-flung edges of the Roman Empire. In Poland, in Bulgaria, in Romania. The legions have to be supplied. They need clothes, they need arms, horses, they need food, women, whatever, so the emperors borrow the money at interest and we do the supplying, as well, so we got 'em by the tail, so to speak. The Roman Senators put up the money. They were bankers and hustlers. And we took a taste. That's how it worked. And then there was Moses.

JOE: He was before the Romans.

COOPER: I know that.

JOE: So it doesn't even count.

COOPER: He brought the Commandments. So that counts. But what was going on there?

JOE: In Rome?

COOPER: A religious war. Who was God and who were his Friends.

JOE: Roman pride.

COOPER: That's what's happening now. A religious war. Go figure. We don't count in it, except to get chopped with an axe.

JOE: Another Great Awakening. Before that, it was berries and rocks. Huntergathering.

COOPER: We are not Black nor White. We are Semites.

JOE: Mirabelle?

What?

JOE: Are you still there?

One shot.

JOE: What?

Shoot!

COOPER: Say something.

I said already.

JOE: What?

Like I said, it's a species problem. People can't think for themselves. They mob think. So awakenings are awakened and sides are taken, and the truth is forsaken. Something clicked inside, just now, if you're wondering, and I rhymed.

COOPER: Don't apologize.

I'm not apologizing.

COOPER: It's pointless and self-serving.

JOE: Lemme ask you something – you think you're smarter than me? You think you're better than me? Why? Because I'm a hunchback?

No.

JOE: Otherwise, you'd tell me things. You'd let me know what's happening. I could be in on major decisions.

The answer is 'no', but here's something. There's this one guy, he's one of the tribes, he's declared war on the world economy. He's our one chance. Maybe. A Monster. Maybe. He's declared war on the Commandments.

COOPER: Uh, oh.

JOE: What else?

He's built like the rest of us, born from a tadpole and an egg. But he's turned the color orange and smiles like a snake.

JOE: Let's kill the motherfucker.

He's got what they call a platform for lies, and the more lies, the more money he makes. A platform is like a social membrane and people bite into it and are sucked into it, and are never heard from again as persons.

JOE: Why don't they kill the motherfucker?

They're all in on it. There's a bunch of 'em. A crowd of 'em. An ocean of 'em. And they all believe in the Saviour. Which is who or what, I don't know.

JOE: Saved from what?

COOPER: Life, I think. The difficulty of living.

JOE: Let's you and me kill 'em all.

COOPER: What?

JOE: I'm sorry. I can't think of anything else.

COOPER: Get back to the real world, Joe. You can't just go around killing people. And it plays into their hands, certain big shots or oligarchs, they got to get rid of people, too many people. Ruins their comfort zones.

JOE: The Germans did it. The Americans. Mirabelle?

I'm gonna take a pass on that one. I've overstated. I can't talk no more. You can't communicate with the guy because he doesn't say anything. He makes sounds. He's on a screen. He may not even exist. He may be just a tee shirt. An algorythm. Or a hat.

JOE: Also. We wanted to learn about whatshername, on the border, abandoned in the cold dirt. We don't even know her name. I imagine her. A tiny, blonde woman, blue-eyes, a teenager. Now dirt and worms. The baby was big. Louis had to get the kid to NY for a *bris* and a new woman. He cut the tube with his belt buckle and swaddled the baby with his scarf and his hat and walked or ran to New York City.

COOPER: What happened in between?

JOE: No one knows.

COOPER: Tell the truth, knucklehead.

JOE: Maybe he got a ride. Maybe he took a bus. They had to cut the kid's dick and find a *shatzen*, a marriage broker. In Brooklyn. That's all I know. I wasn't born yet.

COOPER: Were you born with the bump?

JOE: No.

COOPER: You put the bump on?

JOE: Well...Yeah. They said it was me. I put the hump in my back, by my thinking, I was thinking bad thoughts about myself. Why? My mother didn't love me. She loved me in the beginning and then she stopped. She hated God. My hump grew. Saying bad things about myself. The hump grew. And now I'm used to it.

COOPER: Get rid of it.

JOE: Good luck with that.

COOPER: Go to a hospital.

JOE: One day I'll shave it off with a giant biological saw.

There you go. Andale!

THE MAIDEN

JOE: And stand up straight and go on a date. Watch and see. Here she comes. (*A beautiful maiden appears.*) Hello.

MAIDEN: Hi.

JOE: You're an amazingly attractive girl.

MAIDEN: Oh?

JOE: You must be Jewish.

COOPER: (Picture this: she's got a tight blue silk dress on that emphasizes her curves and she sways sexily when she walks, and she has a beautiful olive face, with dark brown eyes and long black glowing hair.)

JOE: I think I'm in love with you.

MAIDEN: Wait a minute.

JOE: You've got that essence.

MAIDEN: What essence?

JOE: A certain type, a certain vibe. An impulse, a guess. Tribal. I'm learning a lot. I have a hunch. You see it?

MAIDEN: A hunch?

JOE: Yes, on my back.

MAIDEN: I don't see no hunch.

JOE: You don't?

MAIDEN: You don't see hunches with the eye, sweetie. Hunches are not visible to the eyes.

JOE: Is that right?

MAIDEN: Yes, I sense it.

JOE: I'll be damned.

MAIDEN: It's on an animal level, a species level. Sex. Yes, a lot going on in there.

JOE: Let's get married!

MAIDEN: Forgetaboutit, I'll see you in the lobby.

JOE: Where?

MAIDEN: In the dining room.

JOE: When?

MAIDEN: Then.

JOE: (We exchange phone numbers but hers was the wrong number and she never called me back. Once in a while we'd run into each other at events. One time there was a certain look. Half a second. A look of understanding, a look of recognition, a look of good-bye.) *(Exit the MAIDEN)*

COOPER: Very romantic.

JOE: She called me *Sweetie*.

COOPER: I heard that. You're carrying a lot on your back, Joe.

JOE: The Chaos of the world.

COOPER: Think of that, dying like that, blood and guts teeming between your legs, screaming out of your body. *Lazer* was a character.

JOE: He was a character.

COOPER: Why end up on the Canadian border when he could have been on a boat? I think there's something funny there. I can see him as a certain saloon comedian or a card sharp, A CARD-COUNTER. Did they have that in the *Yiddish* world?

JOE: And she was a hoothcie-cootchie dancer. I'll bet.

COOPER: Maybe she was an actress. They had theatre in those days. And maybe he was an actor. He picked up roofing and plumbing on the way. You couldn't make a living in the theatre, then as now.

JOE: Are you kidding me?

COOPER: No. Why should I kid you?

JOE: They were the founders, they were the foundation, theatre in America, the motion picture, the TV sitcom. Otherwise there was nothing but manure, horseshit in the streets.

COOPER: Okay, stop your mind for twenty seconds.

JOE: They got it from us! Louis. He did a church dome in Brooklyn, with brass tiles, singlehandedly. I think it was Catholic, Polish Catholic.

COOPER: And Mirabelle?

JOE: Mirabelle was also non-existent. Unborn. Ponder that – the unborn, the trillions of unborn spirits up there!

Where?

JOE: I don't know where.

I'm right here!

COOPER: Well, let's give her the life she deserves.

JOE: She's born all wet and bloody, screaming in a room full of screaming, no let-up, it's like a big drum or a bell, a room full of hysterics screaming for their food.

COOPER: Why?

JOE: I don't know why. Imagine a ladder. A ladder up to the sky, the universe, endless starry night needs a portion for its existence. That's why they named her Mirabelle.

MIRABELLE!

See the sky. Check out the Kabballa. The Tree of Life.

COOPER: That's absurd. I don't know what to make of that. A book bursting with crazy thoughts and songs. It's not a book. It's a mist. It's a rainy day while the sun 's still out.

You may think so, but think of the goings-on around here. People bite and claw and lie and cheat and then become fertilizer, but Pachamama (the Earth) doesn't like the taste. The stuff 's poisonous. And it smells bad. They put you in the ground as fast as they can, or they burn you up. Or they hang you in a tree to be

eaten by vultures. (Pause) Mistakes were made. Blame the gods. Pick a god. They made creatures unintelligent. Pick a god and throw him into a volcano. It's molten iron down there. Hot. It could remake the parts, the building blocks, the code.

COOPER: What code?

The code.

COOPER: Is what?

Is the code.

COOPER: Come on.

JOE: Like DNA. I'm wondering lately, like what's going on, what the DNA is, the genes, we have to protect them for some reason like having kids and living long and going on into the future – to what?

Blessed is Life the Sages say.

COOPER: For what?

A Saying: God knows himself through Man.

COOPER: I'm disgusted by the whole thing. I've lost faith in Mankind. I've lost faith in Sayings. The same code made the imbeciles and retards who screw everything up.

I'm trying to help you. I've given you a riddle.

COOPER: I realize that. I'm thinking of you, Mirabelle, a doll, a rag doll, eyes and mouth sewn up, on the rocky shore -- what would you say to all this, and have we solved the mystery?

No.

JOE: No.

COOPER: No, what?

JOE: Ask her.

COOPER: Mirabelle?

You get a character, he's always right, he can't be wrong, you tell him he's wrong and he spears you or hangs you, then he finds out he's strangled his wife. There you have it. Tragedy.

JOE: Here's my sorrow, the enslavement to the gods, to the code, fools and knights, dying like clay figurines, or dolls sewed up in shrouds.

COOPER: Like Mirabelle.

You have a guy, he keeps thinking he can make a tower but he keeps tripping on the wires and fucking up the joints and mucking up the drawings, and then he falls down and goes to the corner bar and claims he's the owner of the new building, and comes on to the bartendress and is arrested by the police and there you have it – Comedy.

COOPER: That's our Mirabelle!

Yes, and the trade is in body parts, like changing the tires or getting a new battery. Did you find the guy?

COOPER: No. People want to survive. They'll eat shit if they have to. And that's all and that's it.

And then you have a person, he displays his manhood in front of his best friend's kid.

(JOE Whacks COOPER with a fake baseball bat.)

COOPER: What was that about?

JOE: From before.

COOPER: Before what?

JOE: For acting like a jerk in front of my girl.

Whack him again, Joe.

(Whack)

Say thank you.

COOPER: *(Recovering)* Thank you.

The guy, the man, the father of my child, my son, the prick, he used to beat me up all the time. I told you about my cousin, Nina?

JOE: No.

Her boyfriend killed her.

JOE: You're kidding.

No, he strangled her and fled to Mexico and he's still out there.

COOPER: Say more, my dear.

We fought all the time, day and night. He tried to kill me in the car one day. In front of the post office. White guys in there, they don't know they're alive, walking around with piss in their pockets, and they vote.

JOE: An American?

They tell you in high school, be grateful you're in America.

COOPER: Copy that.

My boyfriend, he liked to fool around, have a good time, party, druggie, you had to be careful with him. I said to him, you know, you think you're cool.

JOE: Fuck you, he says.

I said, you're just a cardboard robot.

COOPER: I'll kill you, you little bitch.

I said, you're brain is in the shityard.

JOE: Yeah?

You have no brain.

COOPER: You shoulda been more careful, Mirabelle.

I told you, my best friend, she was also murdered. We called the cops but they said it was too late for that. No restraining order, nothing, they just took a shit on that one.

COOPER: Is she still alive?

Yes, smart girl, got it together. Went to school and so on. Now she cuts hair in a salon, right here in Los Angeles.

JOE: Thank God.

And, you know, on the Rez, they kidnap the girls and they rape 'em and kill'em. Welcome to America. Fuckin' barbaric.

JOE: And you?

He killed me finally, with his scarf. Pulled my hair out first and punched me in the mouth.

JOE: What else?

That's all. Then he sewed me up and dug a hole in the backyard and stuffed me in it. I'm not sure anymore. Coulda been, threw me into the sea and I ended up on the rocks. Tangled up on the rocks. The sea makes a beautiful sound, a mourning sound, like a Hebrew prayer, or a lone Indian on a mountain, an American mountain, named for some stupid general famous for massacres.

COOPER: We're sorry, Mirabelle.

There's one more thing: cons and marks.

COOPER: (Burroughs again!)

JOE: Tell, tell.

The Master of the Con became the Leader of the Pack, or God. The Marks were his followers, who, like I said, ate his shit. Amuricans. They check an email box and send him money monthly, for life. And there you have it.

JOE: Wait a minute.

He's still at large, the motherfucker. Be careful. Watch your step. The killers are loose on the land.

COOPER: Thank you.

*Thank you, thank you. (Pause. The cardboard figure re-appears.) **One shot.***

JOE: You ready for this?

COOPER: What now?

JOE: Let's kill the motherfucker!

COOPER: Where?

JOE: Here!

COOPER: When?

JOE: Now! *(A loud shotgun blast.)*

Postscript

This is Cooper, and I'm here to tell you: There'll be no oxygen in the air because the Fourth World will be eaten by fire and flood. This is the **Hopi** prophecy. You can take it or leave it, but that's what's happening. Of course, you want to eat your popcorn and fuck your girlfriend and watch your TV show and believe in God, and have a job, and think that blue is green, and black is white, and get all the colored people out of America -- but that's all over my friend, though you're not my friend by a long shot, like Joe, the hunchback, who actually knows something, and you vote for stupid businessmen and imbeciles, etc. -- you're a piece of shit who will not face reality, but all these savories and titilations will be gone, forever, and I don't care if you believe me or burn me on the stake or whatever, because I know now, impeccably, due to the influence of my dearest Mirabelle, the living from the dead.

I got another riddle for you.

JOE: Shoot.

I saw it on TV. The Pyrimid of KOOF00. Gots 3 chambers. The sarcophagus is empty. 2 more slits, empty. Slanted.

COOPER: And?

The Earth is part of the Solar System. You figure it out.

Ending

Murray Mednick
Los Angeles, December 14, 2021.

