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SF PERUSALS

The Nature of Captivity

Matthew Paul Olmos

A Samuel French Acting Edition



SAMUEL FRENCH
FOUNDED 1830

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ISBN 978-0-573-70100-9

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THE NATURE OF CAPTIVITY was first produced in a workshop by Mabou Mines/Suite in New York City on March 22, 2011. The performance was directed by Victor Maog, with sets and costumes by Deb O, movement direction by Jennifer Golonka, lighting by James Clotfelter, and sound by Daniel Kluger. The cast was as follows:

NELLIE/ELEANOR . . . . . Sarah Nina Hayon
LULU/LUCY . . . . . Chantelle Cherisse Lucier
JUSTUS/JUSTIN . . . . . Keith Eric Chappelle
GOOCH/GOON . . . . . Juan Francisco Villa

PART I – THE OUTSIDE

"Wherever somebody fightin' for a place to stand
For a decent job or a helpin' hand
Wherever somebody strugglin' to be free
Look in their eyes Ma, you'll see me.'

– Bruce Springsteen,
"The Ghost of Tom Joad"

CHARACTERS

JUSTUS – the alpha
NELLIE – the one that needs protectin'
LULU – the one always out the house
GOOCH – in love with Lulu

SETTING

Place

TIME

Just before progress

(Lights up on a salvaged space, broken doen, leftover, it looks like the last structure standing.)

(A few sounds from outside, like the stepping on branches, like broken cement crumbling, **NELLIE** *sits alert.)*

(Something makes its way into the space, **NELLIE** *tenses, but then releases as* **JUSTUS** *enters holding a dead chicken)*

NELLIE. You scared the shit outta me.

JUSTUS. It's same sound I always make, Nellie, I dunno what you can't tell the difference.

NELLIE. Ya haffta racket everytime you come back, geez.

JUSTUS. I see you lookin'at this chicken, Nellie, don't you be pretending that you ain't.

NELLIE. I can smell it.

JUSTUS. Yea, an what do you smell?

NELLIE. Mostly what I smell is *you*, Jus. Stink much?

JUSTUS. What's a matter?

NELLIE. Nothin', c'mon get that bird over here an let's get it opened up some.

JUSTUS. Let's do it just outside right there.

NELLIE. I heard the shots, ya know.

JUSTUS. Yea, well *they was loud.*

NELLIE. So?

JUSTUS. What.

NELLIE. Don't mess, Jus, just tell me what.

JUSTUS. Awh, c'mon, Nellie, here I brought home something special that we could have together an you just sittin' there pretending you don't care.

NELLIE. I said to get it over so we can open up.

JUSTUS. And I said let's just step outside a few steps and we'll do exactly that.

NELLIE. And I said what was the shots.

JUSTUS. …tell ya after we eat.

NELLIE. I dunno how I'm goin' eat a thing if there's gunshots in my mind that ain't been accounted for.

JUSTUS. There's been lots of shots ain't been accounted for, Nellie.

NELLIE. Not when Lulu's still out there, Justus.

JUSTUS. Lu's fine.

NELLIE. You seen her?

JUSTUS. No, but –

NELLIE. Then how you know?

JUSTUS. Cuz I looked for her an nothin'.

NELLIE. The shots, Jus.

(beat)

JUSTUS. They hit the bridge, Nellie.

NELLIE. I weren't askin' about no bridge, Jus, I was askin' about shots.

JUSTUS. Who was holdin' up under*neath* that bridge, Nellie?

NELLIE. Can't you ever just answer me what I ask?

JUSTUS. They gone, Nellie. They bloodied up on that heap now. *(pause)* C'mon, Nellie, now it's alright, you cry if you feel to.

NELLIE. Ain't cryin'. That ain't what I do no more.

JUSTUS. What is it then?

NELLIE. What is it??? Lu was with them at that bridge that's what it is!

JUSTUS. There was only three shots, Nellie; three shots an three of them. An Lu weren't one of 'em.

NELLIE. You went to the heap?

JUSTUS. Where you think I come across this chicken you too stubborn to admit yer salivatin' over

NELLIE. I don't salivate.

JUSTUS. So there I is, at the heap. Checkin' to see if they piled anymore things on top –

NELLIE. You mean, if they was goin' pile Lu on top, don't you.

JUSTUS. You wanna hear my tale or don't you wanna hear my tale? Cuz I can stop tellin' my tale and you can just sit there not knowin' shit.

NELLIE. One uh these days, Jus, yer gonna wanna know something that I got inside my head, yer gonna be salivatin' for it, and you know what?

JUSTUS. No, you tell me what.

NELLIE. I ain't gonna give it to ya.

JUSTUS. So, right there, right in the mess and slop of that ol' heap I come across this sloshing about.

NELLIE. Slosh what?

JUSTUS. Oh, Nellie, I don't even know I can describe it for ya.

NELLIE. Well, what it sound like?

JUSTUS. …like when ya step inta something wet.

NELLIE. What it look like?

JUSTUS. …like…

*(***JUSTUS** *makes some sort of fucking gesture.)*

NELLIE. What it scent like?

JUSTUS. …like the nastiest leftover juices you ever seen leftover.

*(***JUSTUS** *gags,* **NELLIE** *disgusts.)*

NELLIE. Well, what was the hell was it!?

JUSTUS. It was Gooch, crouched an mountin' some bitch that I would not go inside for warmth. An just as he's squishing into her, Nellie, I could see little squirts of juices sprayin' outta her everytime he pushed it in.

*(***NELLIE** *gags.)*

NELLIE. Jus, *what* is the matter with you, why'd you go an tell me a foul story like that for?

JUSTUS. Because, Nellie, I want for you to appreciate just what the situation was when I turned from watchin' Gooch squish squish, to hear this pit pat pit pat…

NELLIE. Pit pat pit pat?

JUSTUS. Right there, peckin' along behind me was…

*(***JUSTUS** *mimes with the chicken.)*

Pit pat pit pat…

NELLIE. Oh, pit pat, heh, I get it now.

JUSTUS. So forget the Gooch and I get goin' towards it. Thinkin' how it'll feel when I get my grips, then –

NELLIE. Then what, what?

JUSTUS. The shots, Nellie. Three of 'em. One then two then three. So I throw myself down –

NELLIE. And chicken?

JUSTUS. What about chicken?

NELLIE. Did chicken get down, did the chicken get scared the shots?

JUSTUS. Well, you know what, I don't know what chicken done.

NELLIE. Musta done something.

JUSTUS. Well, I guess when I could hear there wasn't anymore shots to come I looked back, and yea, chicken was pit pat peckin' just like before.

NELLIE. You think chicken didn't hear?

JUSTUS. *(to chicken)* Hey! Hey! Was you heard the shots or nuh uh? Hello??? *(pause)* Well, what do shots mean to chicken anyways, Nellie.

NELLIE. You think chicken don't know shots?

JUSTUS. Well it don't know they're shots.

NELLIE. How could chicken not know they're shots?

JUSTUS. Same as we didn't know they're shots when we first heard' em.

NELLIE. Yea, but after all that what's happened –

JUSTUS. You have to *learn* shots, Nellie.

NELLIE. How do you know one of those shots wasn't, Lulu? I don't think that you do.

JUSTUS. I waited for them tractor machines to pull up.

NELLIE. Yea, so.

JUSTUS. They put three bodies, Nellie, one, then two, then three. An that's it.

NELLIE. Yea, but you didn't see her, you *don't* know –

JUSTUS. There was nothing else inside that tractor machine, Nellie. If they'd uh kept her, I'd have seen her in the nets with all the other shit they collect. Believe in me, Nellie, Lulu is comin' home.

NELLIE. Maybe she with Gooch, maybe Gooch got right up from that smelly bitch an ran as fast as his legs would allow to make sure that his Lulu was okay.

JUSTUS. Well that is not what Gooch done after them tractors moved off, after they put those bodies.

NELLIE. He helped you with the bodies?

JUSTUS. Nellie. I can't just go atop the heap and start removin' bodies, they'll know we're here.

NELLIE. Oh.

JUSTUS. But even if I had been able, I doubt ol' Gooch woulda been much help.

NELLIE. I don't know why you gotta talk so down on Gooch everyday of his life, what's he ever done to us 'cept love after our Lulu everyday, allday?

JUSTUS. Nellie, I'm gonna give you one educated hint as to what Gooch was doin' so special that he did not run after Lu today: Sniff sniff.

(He touches her nose.)

NELLIE. Hey, what're you touchin' my nose for.

JUSTUS. Because I am trying to get you to use a bit of logic, now what was it Gooch was doin' at the beginning of the story?

NELLIE. So what, Jus.

JUSTUS. So what do you think he went back to doin' at the end of the story?

NELLIE. He…he went back to doin' *that?*

JUSTUS. Well, I'm assuming he hadn't finished.

NELLIE. Finish?

JUSTUS. Yea, finish.

NELLIE. How could he wanna finish after where there's been blood!?

JUSTUS. Nellie, only somebody who's never finished could ever ask the question, how could he wanna finish.

NELLIE. Well I'm sorry, but if there are bodies up above, bodies that used to…used to be alive with us –

JUSTUS. Well, doin' that helps.

NELLIE. Oh, you are a nasty, Jus. And that is why you'll never get a family of yer own, you've a rancid mind.

JUSTUS. There ain't a thing wrong doin' that, Nellie. Something you'd know if you ever went outside.

NELLIE. I don't wanna know, Jus, it sounds just about awful.

JUSTUS. Oh, it ain't awful, Nellie.

NELLIE. Oh yes it is, why it uncaring and selfish and apparently it smells awful.

JUSTUS. Smelling awful is part uh what makes it good tho'.

NELLIE. Well excuse me but smellin' awful is not part of what I call good, Jus.

JUSTUS. When yer there, you get a good foothold, an ya just…

NELLIE. Just what?

JUSTUS. You just let go, Nellie. Of everything. Why I used to take my Rose Marie an I'd get that downright slamming, that straight up banging goin' on her! Why, it knocked the worry clean outta her. And me.

NELLIE. Well…I'd like not to worry so much about things.

JUSTUS. An yea, my Rose Marie could smell something godawful sometimes, but smellin' her, tastin' her, scratchin' at her, just bitin' into her and hearin' her

howl through me, Nellie…it's like there we are usin' all our senses like all at once.

NELLIE. That sounds okay, I guess. But –

JUSTUS. What.

NELLIE. Whys it gotta be so…

*(***NELLIE** *gives a fucking gesture.)*

JUSTUS. Oh, believe you me, Nellie, that is not what you'll be complaining about when it happens for you.

NELLIE. Whys it gotta be so slamming and banging into.

JUSTUS. Just trust, Nellie, when you are layin' there getting' thumped nice an solid, you will be wishin' there was more slamming, more banging into.

NELLIE. An there's another thing, why's it gotta be *me*? Don't I ever get to give it to them?

JUSTUS. I'm sure they wouldn't mind.

NELLIE. Somebody who's sweet on me, who says the most kindest things on me, who'll let me give it to them ever so soft, ever so nice.

JUSTUS. You ever wanna meet anybody you can give it to like that, Nellie, you're gonna haffta put yerself out there.

NELLIE. I'll meet somebody, Jus, and I'll go outside to do it. But not today tho, not with gunshots.

(beat)

Now, c'mon, we better get ready this chicken 'fore Lu get home.

JUSTUS. Alright, then, split' her into three parts. You sure you don't wanna just separate it right there in the door way? I'll be right there with ya. We'll even leave the door open.

NELLIE. Justus.

JUSTUS. Small steps, Nellie, if you don't take them, ain't nothin'gonna ever change.

NELLIE. …just I think what if the feathers fly off and give us away that we're here.

JUSTUS. You know they're gonna find us, Nellie.

NELLIE. You don't know that, Justus, I know that you don't.

JUSTUS. Nellie.

NELLIE. Maybe they'll forget to check this spot. Maybe they'll make some of them new buildings so tall that they'll shadow us, make us easy to overlook.

JUSTUS. No, Nellie. They'll come here. With their strange voices and their loud noises. And if they see us still here livin' –

NELLIE. Ma wouldn't let them.

(awkward silence)

JUSTUS. Ma's not in a place to help us anymore, Nellie.

NELLIE. You shut up, Jus; she's strong all places. Ma an Lulu are gonna not let them. Cuz they're females, females who are strong.

JUSTUS. *Lulu* almost got herself killed today! *(beat)* I tried tellin' em, but *no* they all had it in their stupid heads they was just gonna go right up to them strange voices/ tractor machines and welcome them right on in.

NELLIE. But how come if we was friendly to them, how come they…

JUSTUS. Ever since they showed up in that boat thing uh theirs, you seen' em make one act uh niceness to us? No, nuh-uh, they not here ta be welcomed, Nellie. They here cuz they want something an they don't care who or what be in their way.

NELLIE. What *do* they care about then?

JUSTUS. I don't know, Nellie.

NELLIE. Well, just cuz it didn't work talkin' to em at the bridge today, that don't mean it won't ever work –

JUSTUS. They don't talk, Nellie, they DO! *(pause)* You've never seen'one of'em, have you?

NELLIE. They eat don't they? They breathe in an out just like we do. They got hearts, hearts with blood in them, same as we got…

JUSTUS. When this is all over. When this whole distress is done…I'm goin' *cut* one uh them open for you, Nellie. I'm goin' cut one uh them open an show you how their insides aren't nothing like how ours are. Any hearts they have probably are made with sharp an harsh edges, any blood they pump is likely thick and ugly-colored like oil, and I'll show you, Nellie, how everything will be twisted and not in the right place. There will be *something* to explain why they do the things they do!

NELLIE. …I don't want you to cut anyone open, Justus. I don't imagine it'll help any. *(beat)* C'mon, why don't we get ready the chicken 'fore Lu get home.

JUSTUS. You wanna do the feathering, so you can make sure none of the feathers fly away?

*(***NELLIE** *stops, looks at* **JUSTUS.***)*

NELLIE. None of the feathers fly away??? *(pause)* You mean I had a right thought, Justus, what I said about the feathers flying off? You mean I was right about that?

JUSTUS. …yea.

*(***NELLIE** *eagerly defeathers the chicken.)*

You had a right thought, Nellie, a real right one.

NELLIE. It's nice you know, Jus, when you say stuff like that.

JUSTUS. Stuff like what, Nellie?

NELLIE. Stuff like about how when somebody done right, instead of how always they've done wrong.

*(***JUSTUS** *pulls a piece of meat off the chicken and bites in, then offers to* **NELLIE** *who pauses.)*

Should we really be eatin', we don't even know where Lu at.

*(***JUSTUS** *puts a piece of chicken at* **NELLIE***'s nose, she cannot resist, she devours a pull of meat. They begin to feed ravenously, lights remain low over them while across the stage, lights pullup on* **GOOCH***, who waits outside; we hear the sounds of nature; insects, birds, wind.* **LULU** *enters. He jumps a bit.)*

GOOCH. That you, Lu?

LULU. Well, look who it is.

GOOCH. Course it's me, you know I always wait for you.

LULU. What are you looking at me like that for, Gooch?

GOOCH. Are you, hurt or –

LULU. Shot?

GOOCH. Yea, that I guess.

LULU. Do I look shot to you?

GOOCH. No.

LULU. Well, there you go then.

GOOCH. I was so –

LULU. So what?

GOOCH. Worried, worried that you –

LULU. That I?

GOOCH. I guess they didn't take to kindly to your welcoming wagon, huh?

LULU. If you mean they murdered everyone but me, then no, not too kindly.

*(***LULU** *begins to laugh,* **GOOCH** *tries to join. Soon actual laughter takes them both over. A few moments.)*

GOOCH. Wait, what're we laughing for, that ain't funny.

LULU. We're not laughing because of funny, Gooch, we're laughing because what else is there. *(pause)* Really, Gooch, what else is there?

GOOCH. Just us, I guess. And Nellie. Justus too.

LULU. Know what I have been thinking about tho', Gooch?

GOOCH. I never know what you're thinking, Lu

LULU. Love.

GOOCH. Love?

LULU. Yea, like loving. Like to love. Like being loved.

GOOCH. I'm listening.

LULU. What do you think, Gooch, about loving a different kind than us? A different sort.

GOOCH. How do ya mean?

LULU. I mean look at us. There isn't anymore of us left. And all the love that used to be between our family, yours, it's gone. So now, we'll have to learn to love other kinds of families.

GOOCH. What other kinds?

LULU. You know what other kinds, Gooch. The only other kinds there are now.

GOOCH. Sometimes I can't sleep, so I think about how warm things could be. To lay next to, to be my face alongside some other face. An it don't even matter, I suppose, what kinda face. Any kind. It don't matter.

LULU. I think if I had to, if I was put somewhere with no other things to love, I might. I might be able to. If I had to, Gooch, I think I could love most anything

GOOCH. 'Cept me, huh?

LULU. Gooch, can I ask you.

GOOCH. Do.

LULU. All these years, all these days, you've known there wasn't any chance I'd ever look across at you the same way you look across at me.

GOOCH. Thank you for reminding me.

LULU. So what do you follow me around then for?

GOOCH. I don't stay by you, Lu, because I think I'll change your mind. But what else can I do? It's either be near you or don't be near you. It's an easy choice.

LULU. And do you know *they* won't ever change their minds out there, Gooch. They didn't come to this place to change their minds about anything.

GOOCH. Okay.

LULU. So we can either stay hiding out till they find us and be put up on that heap or we can –

GOOCH. But you don't know, Lu, you don't how come they put some in the nets and not others; you don't know nothing about why they do.

LULU. I been watching them, Gooch. An I believe it that if we put ourselves over by that one building, the one

where they take all the shit they collect, I believe it that they might figure us for a couple of strays that got loose somehow. An take us on inside. Alive.

GOOCH. Yea, but inside what?

LULU. I don't know.

GOOCH. At night, sometimes I can hear' em. Our kind. Inside that building thing. They don't sound too happy.

LULU. Least they still breathing, Gooch.

GOOCH. Least they're all together.

LULU. So what do you choose, Gooch? Its either wait for that heap or –

GOOCH. You know what I choose, Lu.

LULU. Say it.

GOOCH. You. I choose you, Lu. That's what I'll always choose, no matter what the question.

LULU. It's good to see you're taking this seriously, Gooch.

GOOCH. What about Nellie.

LULU. …I couldn't do that to her.

GOOCH. Oh, just to me, huh?

LULU. If Nellie not once has to see any of this with her own eyes –

GOOCH. She an Jus probably worried for you, Lu.

LULU. You don't mention this to either of 'em, Gooch, do you understand me?

GOOCH. I'll never understand you. But okay.

LULU. C'mon then, let's – *(pause)* What is, Gooch? *(pause)* You sure you wanna come with me, Gooch?

GOOCH. …yea. That's the only thing I ever been sure of, Lu.

(They walk. Lights shift to **JUSTUS** *and* **NELLIE** *wiping the grease from their mouths with enjoyment; chicken bones on the floor; time has passed, it is getting dark. A sound heard offstage, both look up.)*

NELLIE. It's Lu!

JUSTUS. Stay you down, Nellie, till you hear me say otherwise.

*(***NELLIE** *quickly hides herself away.* **JUSTUS** *opens the opening. Notices something.)*

Hey, not only can I see yer ugly head stickin' out, but I can smell ya just as good. C'mon now 'fore yer stink give us away.

*(***GOOCH** *enters.)*

Now what is the point of hidin'like that?

GOOCH. I didn't wanna bother you is all.

NELLIE. That you Gooch?

GOOCH. Yea, Nellie-belly, it's me.

*(***NELLIE** *pops up.)*

JUSTUS. Nellie, what did I tell you about stayin' put?

NELLIE. It's just Gooch, what's he ever brought harm to?

JUSTUS. If I say it to you ta stay put, than you do that till I unsay it.

NELLIE. Justus, that don't make no sense –

JUSTUS. Down, Nellie, now.

*(***NELLIE** *gets down.)*

GOOCH. Are you just gonna let Nellie stay down like that?

JUSTUS. Are you a part of this family, Gooch?

GOOCH. …no, I suppose I'm not.

(Enter **LULU.***)*

LULU. Justus. Nellie.

*(***JUSTUS** *glares at* **LULU***, who goes about her business.)*

JUSTUS. *(to* **LULU***)* Really???

LULU. What.

JUSTUS. That's all you got to say?

LULU. Oh, sorry. How are you? Nellie, how's it going?

NELLIE. Well I didn't get shot, so…y'know, that's good.

LULU. An Justus?

JUSTUS. No, I wasn't shot either, Lu. Yourself?

LULU. I seem to have avoided that for one more day. Good to be home.

JUSTUS. Yea, *home*. I'm glad you remember that.

LULU. So…wow, did you all hear the shots today?

NELLIE. I did!

GOOCH. I heard 'em too.

LULU. And how about you, Justus, did you hear the shots. There was 1, 2, 3 of 'em.

JUSTUS. I can do you better than that –

NELLIE. He was at the heap today!

JUSTUS. Hey Gooch, what happened to that smelly ol' piece anyways, where'd she run off too?

GOOCH. I don't know.

JUSTUS. Ya don't know?

LULU. You don't even know if she's okay, Gooch, if she's even –

GOOCH. She got a hidin' spot. A real good one

JUSTUS. Good, where is it?

GOOCH. Well, it wouldn't be that good if I went around telling about it.

JUSTUS. Yea, well if they close in on us, maybe we could –

GOOCH. There's no room. It's…it's just room for one, barely that even.

JUSTUS. Oh, well forget that idea then.

*(***JUSTUS** *tosses a piece of chicken at* **LULU**.*)*

Apologies, Gooch, don't mean to tease ya, but, hell, you must be used to that.

NELLIE. What's that supposed ta mean, Jus? Gooch's gotta be hungry, specially after all that thumpin'he been doin'.

GOOCH. Don't you worry about it, Nellie. Justus is right, he's gotta watch out for you and Lu, that's what he's gotta watch out for.

NELLIE. But…if yer hungry, an we got food. It don't make no sense that three of us sit with our bellies okay while one of us not.

JUSTUS. Nellie, we put the chicken into three parts, one for me, you, and Lu. We didn't put it into four.

NELLIE. That's how come Gooch can't eat, cuz numbers?

LULU. Gooch, go on, have a bite, I ain't even all that hungry.

(She tosses to **GOOCH**, **JUSTUS** *aggressively takes it away and forces it back to* **LULU**.*)*

Jus, it's my share, what do you care what I do with it.

JUSTUS. I am not out there everyday puttin' myself right in the middle of danger for just anyone, Lu. I'm doin' it cuz you two is my family, and Ma set me to take care of you.

LULU. Ma wouldn't have had anybody go starving, Justus.

GOOCH. Please, I don't need anything, I'm not –

NELLIE. You had you some good canned food today, huh?

GOOCH. Yea, Nellie, why I found me three or four good cans almost all the way full. You shoulda seen the way I stuffed my Gooch-belly today. See that, lookit how round.

NELLIE. It don't look round.

JUSTUS. If Gooch wanted help in getting food, he shoulda got his own family.

LULU. He had his own family, Jus, an they died. Yers just happened to not. It ain't his fault to be alone.

JUSTUS. Well then he coulda started his own new family then, couldn't ya, Gooch.

GOOCH. Please don't get a raise in voices over me.

LULU. You didn't start any family, Jus. You just lucked into this one.

JUSTUS. If all this hadn't come about, me an Rose Marie'd have us a family right here in this spot. An there I'd have two families. You tellin' me Gooch can't get one?

LULU. Yer no better than he is, Jus, yer just luckier.

JUSTUS. Life don't have luck, Lu. It has effort. And anybody who has anything will tell you same.

LULU. And anybody who don't have anything, what will they tell you?

JUSTUS. They'll tell you that nothing is their fault, that they just stumbled onto some bad luck. And that's how come

LULU. How come what?

JUSTUS. How come everything.

NELLIE. But, Gooch tried, Justus, he tried harder than anybody I ever known. He been tryin' with Lulu since I don't even know cuz I wasn't born yet.

JUSTUS. That ain't tryin', Nellie. That's just stupid.

LULU. Oh, really, Jus and why is that.

GOOCH. You all do realize I'm standing right here, right?

JUSTUS. Because it ain't trying if you got no chance, is it?

NELLIE. Awh, he's got a chance, don't he, Lu?

JUSTUS. Yea, Lu, answer her. Do he?

GOOCH. Still standing. Right here.

LULU. And because he doesn't have a chance with me, Justus, what do you propose he do?

JUSTUS. Something else.

LULU. What else.

JUSTUS. Anything else.

LULU. Give me an example.

JUSTUS. Lu, I don't have the first slightest idea what Gooch ought to have done with his life besides waste it next to you. I have my own life and family to worry over.

GOOCH. Maybe I should go.

LULU. Don't go.

NELLIE. Yea, stay! That way I got somebody to watch them fight with.

LULU. What if, Justus, I was the last female in existence? What if there were no other females, not anywhere. What would you suggest Gooch do then?

JUSTUS. You know, I really am glad with all the shit that is going on right outside our home, you somehow find the time to drag me into these stupid –

LULU. What should he do?

JUSTUS. …fine, so in this so very realistic scenario, does he have a chance at a family with you or don't he?

LULU. No, he does not.

JUSTUS. With no other choices in life, then yes, I suppose he might as well just follow you around as opposed to bein' –

LULU. What.

JUSTUS. Alone.

LULU. So it's better to settle for almost, than it is to have nothing?

JUSTUS. That's a weird way to sum it up, but okay.

NELLIE. Wait, are we still talking about Gooch and the chicken?

JUSTUS. I doubt it.

LULU. So can he?

JUSTUS. Can he what?

LULU. Have some of my chicken, it is the last piece left

JUSTUS. Yer goin' do what you want anyways, Lu, no matter how much I care. Always have. Matter of fact, it don't even have weight how much somebody love and care for you, do it? Lulu is gonna do what's best for Lulu, everytime.

LULU. Least I don't let hungry go hungry.

*(***LULU** *gives piece to* **GOOCH***, who devours it.)*

NELLIE. Thought you was full up, Gooch?

GOOCH. Maybe them canned foods wasn't as full as I thought, Nellie-belly.

JUSTUS. So?

LULU. What.

JUSTUS. What, did we just meet, like for the first time, is that what you think?

LULU. Do you think they're ever gonna stop looking for us, do you?

JUSTUS. Well if we –

LULU. And if/*when* they do find us, do you think there is any chance they're not gonna just shoot us down, then cut our throats.

*(***NELLIE** *gasps.)*

JUSTUS. Lovely.

Nellie, you can thank your sister for how you sleep tonight.

NELLIE. Is that what...how come they cutting our throats for??? Why would they…cut our throats for?

GOOCH. Oh, they don't cut *all* the throats, Nellie-belly. Just…you know…most of 'em

JUSTUS. An now you can thank Gooch for you sleep tomorrow night.

NELLIE. What do they do when they *don't* cut the throat?

GOOCH. Well –

LULU. Gooch.

GOOCH. Some of 'em they don't cut nothing. They shoot you in the leg, sure –

JUSTUS. Well, this is *much* better.

GOOCH. They have to keep you from running, but then –

LULU. GOOCH.

GOOCH. *Without* hurting, they take you up into a net thing and carry you back to one of their buildings where they let you live for ever and ever.

NELLIE. And ever?

GOOCH. Uh huh, Nellie, just like that.

NELLIE. Well who the heck would want the cut throat thing, let's go do the ever and ever option!

*(***JUSTUS** *glares at* **GOOCH**.*)*

JUSTUS. No, go on, Gooch, I'm curious myself how yer gonna back yer way outta this one.

LULU. Maybe he doesn't have to.

*(***JUSTUS** *looks at* **LULU**, *then grabs her, forcing her outside. Split scene, as* **GOOCH** *and* **NELLIE** *stay inside awkwardly.)*

NELLIE. That means they want to "have a discussion that I wouldn't be able to contribute to."

GOOCH. It's probably best that way, Nellie.

NELLIE. But I meant what I said, if living forever and ever is something we can do, why don't we just do that?

(outside)

JUSTUS. Where you been all day?

LULU. You got something to ask, Jus, ask it.

JUSTUS. Were you over by those buildings? Were you?

LULU. No, Jus, I promise to you, I was not.

JUSTUS. If you think for even a second I'd let Nellie be put into one uh them buildings –

LULU. I wouldn't either, Jus, of course not.

JUSTUS. Well, I know Gooch didn't just come up with that scenario all on his own.

LULU. No, neither would I.

JUSTUS. So…?

LULU. I want for Nellie exactly what we discussed; the less she see, the better

JUSTUS. I'd rather have my throat cut a thousand times than her see just one time what me an you seen.

LULU. Gooch wasn't supposed to speak.

JUSTUS. About what.

LULU. What you agreed with, Justus. We don't have any other choices. We are down to just those two. And I'd rather settle alive than dead

JUSTUS. We said ta Ma we would not separate. Not ever.

LULU. That was a different world, Jus.

JUSTUS. You, me, and Nellie is the only world there is.

LULU. No, it's not. And maybe if that wasn't how you think, we might –

JUSTUS. Might, what!?

LULU. Don't get me wrong, Jus, I appreciate what you done for us. I do. But…

JUSTUS. Say it!

LULU. Maybe if you hadn't told every family to watch for their own an that's it, maybe we could have helped each other, we could have come together, we could've –

JUSTUS. *That* is how we get by, Lu, that's exactly how Ma got by too. You think she worked herself like she done that for anybody but us three?!

LULU. No, Justus, maybe you don't remember or maybe you don't want to remember, but when we were young, you couldn't tell any of us apart. There'd be so many little ones running around from house to house, and everyone's door was open. There was no this-is-ours an that-is-theirs. It was all everyone's And it was you, after she got weak, it was you that started telling us to mark what was ours and keep what we had to our own.

JUSTUS. Our mother was not going to be here anymore, Lu, we had to prepare, we had to make sure we had enough for Nellie to –

LULU. Nellie would've had hundreds of enough, she would've been surrounded by it! But instead, she just had you and me. The three of us behind closed doors.

JUSTUS. It wasn't safe anymore.

LULU. It wasn't safe because everyone sitting alone by their separated selves getting picked off one by one. Of course they weren't safe, because for all your protection, Justus, for all your posturing about, all you really did was make everyone by themselves. What do you think your Rose Marie run off for, *if* she run off.

JUSTUS. She's alive, Lu. She's off somewhere safe, I know it that she is.

LULU. Believe what you want, but we are alone here. Even with each other, we are the last ones left. And we have no more choices left ta make.

(inside)

GOOCH. And you see that's how possibilities work, Nellie-belly.

NELLIE. I see.

GOOCH. The number say while it may be possible that you'd live forever and ever –

NELLIE. And ever, yea.

GOOCH. More than likely –

NELLIE. I'd be shot in the leg, then have my throat cut across with blood all over, before they dump me onto the heap.

GOOCH. Precisely.

NELLIE. I admit I don't know much about it, but I'm beginning to think I hate numbers.

GOOCH. Me too.

NELLIE. And while I like talking to you an all, Gooch, I don't really. I'm gonna see what Lu and Jus are discussing through.

(Enter **JUSTUS** *and* **LULU**. *Awkward silence.)*

GOOCH. So...I'm wondering, as its dark outside an all, if it might be possible I might stay here tonight?

JUSTUS. What for, you been outside in the dark before.

GOOCH. Well, I mean, I guess cuz…everyone else got killed today, that's the main reason, if I had ta pick.

JUSTUS. Don't you stay with that piece from the heap sometime, isn't that what you do?

GOOCH. ...oh, you're right. I'm an idiot. I'll just stay with her, I guess. Well. G'night to you, Nellie-belly, a –

*(***LULU** *shoots* **JUSTUS** *a look.)*

JUSTUS. Do you snore?

GOOCH. Yea.

NELLIE. Oh, you goin sleep by Lulu?! That's so nice. See, Jus, not everything got to be so harsh, just the two of 'em layin' nice by each other. An there's nothin' nasty about it.

JUSTUS. Well, look, just layin' near Lulu ain't gonna keep you warm, 'specially considering how cold she been to you for…your entire life. You goin' have to go out an scrounge up yer own things to keep warm with, lay on top of.

GOOCH. Is that okay, Lu?

LULU. You don't need to go get yer own anything, Gooch, we got enough right here.

JUSTUS. Oh, no we do not. I had to take some of the shit with our scent an put 'em way over past the water to throw 'em off where we at.

LULU. Fine, but Gooch, when yer out there, scrounging up, you feel free to bring back whatever you see fit for any of us. There ain't no reason for you to go an put yourself in danger just for yourself. From here on out, there is no more this is for you an that's for me. We're together.

GOOCH. Alright, I'll just be…

*(***GOOCH** *moves to exit, nobody pays attention. He exits.)*

JUSTUS. Yer just givin' him more work, you realize. You put that in his head, he's goin' be out there for three times as long.

NELLIE. You bringing up a lotta numbers today, Jus.

JUSTUS. Nellie, if you don't shut yer mouth, I'm gonna take away a couple of them pillows you like so much an see if you don't stay up half the night tryin' to count how many you got left.

NELLIE. I stay up the whole night anyways, Jus, I dunno what you go thinking half.

JUSTUS. Wha's that mean?

NELLIE. It was numerical, Justus, you oughta understood it real real good

JUSTUS. You ain't sleeping?

LULU. Nobody is.

JUSTUS. Why not.

NELLIE. What was you an Lu discussin' outside?

JUSTUS. Nothing.

NELLIE. Fine, then I don't know why I ain't sleeping. It's a complete fuckin' mystery.

LULU. Its okay, Nellie, let's just nevermind all that, okay.

JUSTUS. Yea, let's just nevermind everything. We'll nevermind what we have each other, we'll nevermind the whole world and just settle, ain't that right.

LULU. Its okay if yer not sleeping, Nellie, pretty soon all that not sleeping'll add up and then guess what.

NELLIE. What?

LULU. Poof, without even noticing, your eyes will shut, and they'll stay shut for a long time, until you aren't sleepy anymore.

NELLIE. And then what?

LULU. Then when you wake up, you won't feel the awful that you do now.

NELLIE. Is that what you an Jus was discussin' out there then, the future uh my sleep patterns?

JUSTUS. The moment you two go over there, Lu. We're done. They'll never let you back out again. We'll just begin breeding and rebreeding underneath them. An that'll be who we are.

LULU. Least I'll be able to sleep.

JUSTUS. Will you, Lu? Or will you always be on alert. The smallest sound, the most distant notice and your whole body will jump up scared. Cuz you'll be in their world, not ours. And no matter how long you stay there, they'll never let you forget that.

NELLIE. Jus, what're you talkin' about, I don't like it, what're you talkin' about.

LULU. Nothing, Nellie. He's just, he just wants us all to sleep better that's all.

NELLIE. You goin' somewhere, Lu. You an Gooch?

LULU. Of course not. Gooch is out gettin' us all stuff. Huh, won't that be nice, Nellie, having one, two, three, four of us in here, just like how it used to be.

NELLIE. I wanna know what you two was yellin' at outside.

JUSTUS. Nellie, I'm sorry. That was my fault. I told her not to go the bridge today, but she went anyways. And well, we know how that turned out. I was just telling her how I told her so. How I wish she'd listen to me, how close she got to bein' hurt, how lucky she was, that once.

LULU. C'mon, Nellie, why don't we lay you down.

NELLIE. I'm not stupid, you know.

LULU. Never stupid, Nellie.

JUSTUS. Just a few years younger is all.

NELLIE. Don't talk numbers to me, Jus! Not once more.

LULU. Sleep, Nellie.

JUSTUS. Listen to yer sister.

NELLIE. Know how come I'm not stupid?

JUSTUS & LULU. Why.

NELLIE. Cuz you two never agree on anything. The only time you two bandy up is when yer lying to me.

LULU. We'll talk about it in the morning.

JUSTUS. We'll talk about it in the *afternoon.*

NELLIE. Why the afternoon?

JUSTUS. No reason, Nellie, I was just trying to disagree with Lu, so you'd feel more at home.

NELLIE. …is it…is it cuz in the afternoon Gooch and Lulu will be out by those buildings, trying to get that net put around them? Is that why, is it…

(A silence. **NELLIE** *breaks down.)*

LULU. Nellie?

JUSTUS. You okay, Nellie?

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