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SF PERUSALS

Blast Radius

Part Two of
The Honeycomb Trilogy

Mac Rogers

A Samuel French Acting Edition

SAMUEL FRENCH
FOUNDED 1830

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THE HONEYCOMB TRILOGY was originally presented by Gideon Productions in three separate productions over the first half of 2012 at The Secret Theatre in Long Island City, New York. ***ADVANCE MAN*** ran in January 2012, ***BLAST RADIUS*** in March and April 2012, and ***SOVEREIGN*** in June 2012. The performances were directed by Jordana Williams and produced by Sean Willams and Shaun Bennet Fauntleroy, with sets by Sandy Yaklin, costumes by Amanda Jenks, lights by Jennifer Wilcox, sound by Jeanne Travis, props and effects by Stephanie Cox-Williams, fight choreography by Joseph Mathers, alien leg design by Zoe Morsotte, and publicity by Emily Owens PR. The Production Stage Manager was Devan Hibbard. The cast was as follows:

RONNIE . . . . . Becky Byers
ABBIE . . . . . .David Rosenblatt
CONOR . . . . . Jason Howard
AMELIA . . . . . Kristen Vaughan
SHIRLEY . . . . . Nancy Sirianni
PECK . . . . . Adam Swiderski
CLEM . . . . . Alisha Spielmann
FEE . . . . . Felicia J. Hudson
JIMMY . . . . . .Joe Mathers
DEV . . . . . .Seth Shelden
WILLA . . . . . .Cotton Wright
TASH . . . . . Amy Lee Pearsall

THE HONEYCOMB TRILOGY was subsequently presented by Gideon Productions in repertory at the Gym At Judson in New York City in October and November of 2015. The performances were directed by Jordana Williams and produced by Sean Williams, Rebecca Comtois, and Mikell Kober, with sets by Sandy Yaklin, costumes by Amanda Jenks, lights by Jennifer Wilcox, sound by Jeanne Travis, blood effects by Stephanie Cox-Williams, alien leg design by Zoe Morsotte and Lauren Genutis, fight choreography by Adam Swiderski, and publicity by Emily Owens PR. The Production Stage Manager was Devan Hibbard and the Assistant Director was Mikell Kober.

RONNIE . . . . . Becky Byers
ABBIE . . . . . .David Rosenblatt
CONOR . . . . . Jason Howard
AMELIA . . . . . Kristen Vaughan
SHIRLEY . . . . . Nancy Sirianni
PECK . . . . . Adam Swiderski
CLEM . . . . . Alisha Spielmann
FEE . . . . . Felicia J. Hudson

JIMMY . . . . . Joe Mathers
DEV . . . . . Seth Shelden
WILLA . . . . . Cotton Wright
TASH . . . . . Amy Lee Pearsall

CHARACTERS

The Cooke family members can be any race/ethnicity. It would probably work best if they look biologically related.

RONNIE COOKE – 30, female

ABBIE COOKE – 27, male

AMELIA COOKE – 50s, female

CONOR – 50s, male, any ethnicity

PECK – 20s to 40s, male, any ethnicity

SHIRLEY – late 50s to early 60s, female, any ethnicity

CLEM – 20s, female, any ethnicity

FEE – 20s, female, any ethnicity

JIMMY – 20s, male, any ethnicity

DEV – 20s, male, any ethnicity

WILLA – 20s or 30s, female, any ethnicity

TASH – 20s to 30s, female, any ethnicity

SETTING

The Cooke family's living room twelve years after the events of *Advance Man*.

ACT ONE

One

(Twelve years after the events of Advance Man.*)*

(The living room of the former Cooke household. Night, lit only by oil lanterns. The living room is now with cracks, weathering, and mold showing. It's not filthy, though. Some of the old furniture – including the sofa – remain, but in a dilapidated state.)

(The front door has been crudely altered to be much larger. There are several pairs of muddy boots by the door. Outside the windows is the mangrove-dominated vegetation found in swamps, mixed with startling extraterrestrial plant life.)

*(***SHIRLEY***,* **FEE***, and* **CLEM** *surround a heavily pregnant woman,* **TASH***, who is lying on a cot with her belly exposed and a root of some kind in her mouth. Another unused cot lies nearby.* **SHIRLEY***'s older than the others.* **FEE** *and* **CLEM** *are noticeably pregnant.* **RONNIE** *looks out a window. A number of weapon-like gardening implements, reapers, hang on the wall.)*

SHIRLEY. Do you feel it?

FEE. I don't know.

SHIRLEY. You don't know? Feel it. Dig your hands in.

FEE. I can't.

SHIRLEY. You can. She needs you to. Get your hands in there. Ronnie!

RONNIE. In a minute.

SHIRLEY. Now. She's losing the choopie stick. That's your job. *(to* **FEE***)* Dig your hands in.

CLEM. Let me.

(She pushes her hands into **TASH***'s belly.* **TASH** *cries out.)*

Sorry, sorry Tash!

*(***RONNIE** *puts the root in* **TASH***'s mouth. She clamps down on it.)*

SHIRLEY. *(to* **FEE***)* Now you.

FEE. It hurts her!

SHIRLEY. Hurt her a lot more to leave it like this.

*(***SHIRLEY** *catches* **RONNIE** *craning her neck to look out the window.)*

Ronnie! Eyes here! Both of you: you need to know how to do this. Get your hands in there.

*(***RONNIE** *presses into* **TASH***'s belly.* **TASH** *groans.)*

Feel it?

RONNIE. Yeah.

SHIRLEY. Baby's crossways, right? Baby's breech. No way it's coming out, kill both of them. Old days, Time Before, we would've cut, but we don't have the stuff to do that safely now. This is our only shot. It's still small enough, maybe we can turn it and it'll come out breathing. You watch what I do, you watch how I do it. You're gonna see more of these, you need to know.

*(***SHIRLEY** *presses her hands into* **TASH***'s belly, carefully turning the baby in increments.* **TASH** *wails into the root.)*

FEE. You're killing her!

SHIRLEY. Hey! Everyone! What do we need?

FEE, CLEM, RONNIE. *(not in unison)* Every baby.

SHIRLEY. What do we need?!

FEE, CLEM, RONNIE. *(in unison)* Every baby!

(In the distance, a thunderous explosion. All stop and stare. **RONNIE** *leaps to her feet and runs to a window.)*

SHIRLEY. All right, that's for later. We're on this. Ronnie!

RONNIE. Peck's that way!

SHIRLEY. And you running out there does what? For him or anyone? You're doing *this* now.

CLEM. It's turning! Oh shit, it's turning!

SHIRLEY. All right, let me work alone.

RONNIE. *(scanning the sky)* Flyer's coming!

SHIRLEY. 'Course a flyer's coming. Bomb went off, your brother's gonna wanna throw weight around.

RONNIE. Abbie's back?

CLEM. Shirley it's turned!

SHIRLEY. Quiet now.

CLEM. I can't believe it!

FEE. She's gonna bite clean through!

CLEM. Did we save the baby?

SHIRLEY. Won't know until.

RONNIE. Who the fuck has bombs? How?

CLEM. Shirley, that was like magic.

SHIRLEY. Might be nothing. We'll see.

RONNIE. Coming down now! *(She grabs a reaper off the wall.)* Two on its back, my brother and Skin.

SHIRLEY. Lose the reaper.

RONNIE. And they're carrying something. Can't tell what.

SHIRLEY. Hey! You can't have a reaper when they come in!

(The sound of huge insect legs skittering across the roof and down the side of the house.)

RONNIE. *(looking out the window)* It's a person.

SHIRLEY. What is?

RONNIE. What they're carrying. It's a person.

CONOR. *(offstage)* House Four! May I be admitted?

RONNIE. Identify yourself!

CONOR. *(offstage)* Conor Honeycomb!

RONNIE. I thought bugs didn't have names.

SHIRLEY. Ronnie, open the door!

*(***RONNIE** *heaves the door open.* **CONOR** *enters, carrying an unconscious young woman.)*

CONOR. Where can I put her?

RONNIE. Who is she?

CONOR. She was hurt in the blast, please. She's carrying.

CLEM. *(to* **SHIRLEY***)* It's Willa House Ten.

CONOR. She's carrying, she needs to be here, Ronnie, please.

SHIRLEY. Don't talk to Ronnie, talk to *me.*

RONNIE. *(to* **CLEM***)* She told you she was carrying?

CLEM. Everybody's carrying, I don't remember.

CONOR. She reported missing her menstrual cycle, she told many others. Where may I put her please?

ABBIE. *(entering)* The other cot, Ambassador, and you don't have to ask permission.

*(***ABBIE** *and* **RONNIE** *look at each other.* **CONOR** *hurries over to the cot and sets* **WILLA** *down carefully.)*

SHIRLEY. What happened to her?

ABBIE. *(moving toward* **SHIRLEY***)* What, you didn't hear the explosion?

*(***RONNIE** *steps into his path, reaper raised.)*

RONNIE. That's close enough.

ABBIE. Shirley?

RONNIE. We have a right to protect our house and our babies.

ABBIE. Shirley House Four, are you allowing this?

SHIRLEY. Ronnie, put that in Clem's hands or you leave this house tonight.

CLEM. Come on. This is stupid.

*(***RONNIE** *hands over the reaper.* **SHIRLEY** *goes to* **WILLA**.*)*

SHIRLEY. Hit her head?

CONOR. That's correct, she struck it rather hard during the explosion.

*(***SHIRLEY** *examines her.)*

ABBIE. Interesting, isn't it? Fourth bomb in a month.

RONNIE. You know who's doing it?

ABBIE. Do you?

RONNIE. Any dead?

CONOR. Eric House Fifteen, Sandra House Sixteen, Mick House Twenty-One.

CLEM. Fuck.

FEE. Mick came by just today. Delivery.

ABBIE. And now he never will again. You might want to pass that on to anyone involved in this. You might wanna let them know they're mostly killing other humans. A bomb might kill one of the Honeycomb, more likely injure, but it'll definitely kill four or five of you. You might want to ask them what's the point.

RONNIE. Since when are you delivering injured personally?

ABBIE. I'm not. I came to see Mom.

SHIRLEY. *(to* **CONOR***)* She's gonna live. Can't tell about the baby. On the brain front, I'm just gonna have to wait for her to wake up.

RONNIE. Remember how they used to have machines for that? For looking at people's heads?

SHIRLEY. All right, Ronnie.

RONNIE. CAT scans? Am I right?

CLEM. MRI…?

RONNIE. MRI, right! What did that stand for? "Mental" something?

SHIRLEY. Ronnie, that's enough.

CONOR. Magnetic Resonance Imaging.

*(***RONNIE** *looks at* **CONOR**.*)*

RONNIE. See, that's interesting.

ABBIE. *(to* **SHIRLEY***)* Everyone in bed. Now.

*(***SHIRLEY** *nods to* **CLEM** *and* **FEE**, *who exit up the stairs. To* **RONNIE**:*)*

You too.

RONNIE. Nice trip? Got back fast.

CONOR. Just to the Pacific Northwest this time. We don't have to cross the ocean until next season.

RONNIE. Is that where they made you that Nampas outfit?

ABBIE. Get used to it. We'll be wearing them here, too.

RONNIE. The slaves dying out there as fast as they do here?

ABBIE. *(to* **SHIRLEY**, *meaning* **RONNIE***)* Why is this still happening?

SHIRLEY. Ronnie: upstairs. Now.

RONNIE. *(leaving, to* **SHIRLEY***)* Don't give them anything, don't concede *anything*.

CONOR. I'm happy to see you, Ronnie.

RONNIE. Now that you're back, *Ambassador*, maybe you can do something about the smell. Maybe get your people to quit shitting in the woods. Something to think about.

SHIRLEY. Now!

*(***RONNIE** *exits.)*

ABBIE. Can you control her or not?

SHIRLEY. I'm sorry, Ambassadors.

ABBIE. Her baby's weaned. She leaves tomorrow.

SHIRLEY. That's understood, Ambassador.

CONOR. *(looking at* **ABBIE***)* We're satisfied, Shirley House Four.

SHIRLEY. *(meaning* **TASH** *and* **WILLA***)* I gotta get back to these.

CONOR. May I assist you?

SHIRLEY. Assist me?

CONOR. And perhaps speak with you concurrently?

SHIRLEY. Concurrently. Sure. I think I remember that one.

*(***CONOR** *kneels down with* **SHIRLEY** *as she examines* **WILLA** *and* **TASH**.*)*

Only so much I can do. This one, you should've kept her awake. She may never wake up again. Start any time you want.

CONOR. The Honeycomb has decided against reprisals.

SHIRLEY. Oh yeah?

CONOR. At my urging, the Honeycomb has chosen not to impose greater restrictions on Coral Farm in response to the attacks.

SHIRLEY. That's appreciated.

ABBIE. That can change. Keep blowing things up, anything can change.

SHIRLEY. Who am I talking to here?

CONOR. We know human bodies get tired faster than Honeycomb bodies.

SHIRLEY. Well, you've got one.

CONOR. If the explosions were to stop, if they were to cease for a reasonable period of time –

ABBIE. I can't goddam believe it!

SHIRLEY. Who says we have anything to do with it?

CONOR. Perhaps you don't. But should you have any knowledge whatsoever, any influence with any relevant parties, even any information that will assist us in solving this problem… The Honeycomb is prepared to reduce the farming day by a quarter.

ABBIE. Shameful.

SHIRLEY. The whole farm, the whole camp, every house? A quarter off?

*(***AMELIA** *appears at the top of the stairs. She's clearly ill.)*

ABBIE. Please, don't pause to thank us for either of the two previous reductions.

CONOR. You have my word, you have the word of the Honeycomb.

AMELIA. Abbie?

(All turn to her.)

Abbie, oh my god.

ABBIE. Yeah, Mom.

AMELIA. Oh, I didn't know you were back! *(She goes to him, embraces him.)*

SHIRLEY. *(to* **CONOR***)* I'll look into it.

CONOR. Thank you.

AMELIA. I would have cleaned.

ABBIE. Cleaned?

AMELIA. Look at you, you're sunburned. You have to be careful.

SHIRLEY. Why doesn't Abbie come see you up in your room, Amelia?

AMELIA. Where were you?

ABBIE. Just on a trip, Northwest, not far.

AMELIA. Northwest?

ABBIE. We got a lot of good work done, a lot of training, a lot of –

AMELIA. No one tried to hurt you?

ABBIE. Who would try to hurt me?

CONOR. Amelia.

*(***AMELIA** *stiffens and looks at* **CONOR***.)*

AMELIA. Ambassador.

CONOR. Are you…at all…improved?

AMELIA. Improved?

(A strange sound, like unearthly cicadas, comes from outside the unseen downstage windows. **AMELIA** *winces.)*

CONOR. It's all right, Amelia, it's all right, you don't have to be frightened.

AMELIA. Ask them to stop, please.

CONOR. They're singing to you.

AMELIA. Tell them to stop.

CONOR. They're paying tribute. You're the First Ambassador.

ABBIE. Jesus Christ, Mom, it's a good thing.

AMELIA. *(barely holding it together)* Please, please tell them to stop.

ABBIE. *(to* **CONOR***)* We're staying the night, anyway.

(Over the following, **ABBIE** *goes to the window and signals to the creatures outside using hand gestures that resemble sign language. The sounds diminish and cease, and we hear one insect walk up the wall of the house and fly away.)*

SHIRLEY. Maybe Abbie can come see you up in your room.

AMELIA. All right.

SHIRLEY. Just lie down and you can talk and that'll be easier for you, right?

CONOR. *(to* **ABBIE***)* Your fluency with the hands language. Better than I am, I think.

ABBIE. In a generation this will be the only language. It's ridiculous that everyone doesn't know it already.

SHIRLEY. Ambassadors, would you like to join us?

AMELIA. *(to* **ABBIE***)* I'm sorry it looks like this.

ABBIE. Everything is great, Mom. Everything's perfect.

(He and **SHIRLEY** *gently guide* **AMELIA** *up the stairs.)*

Conor.

CONOR. A moment.

He goes to **WILLA** *and looks at her. At that moment,* **PECK** *nearly enters from the kitchen and walks directly into their sight. He meets eyes with* **SHIRLEY** *and backs out quickly and quietly with no one else seeing him.)*

AMELIA. Did you see Ronnie?

ABBIE. Yeah, Mom, I did.

AMELIA. You did? Did you talk to her?

ABBIE. I saw Ronnie, Mom, I promise.

*(***ABBIE***,* **AMELIA***, and* **SHIRLEY** *exit, followed by* **CONOR**. **PECK** *creeps back into the room.* **WILLA** *gasps and opens her eyes.* **PECK** *freezes, waits to see if she'll cry out.* **WILLA** *lies back down, closes her eyes.* **PECK** *starts to leave.* **RONNIE** *runs down the stairs.)*

RONNIE. Mother. Fucker. *(She runs into his arms.)*

PECK. I'm good, I was nowhere near. But Eric, he's –

RONNIE. Shut the fuck up.

(They kiss, intensely.)

Tell me.

PECK. Like he swallowed a bomb. Like he blew up from the inside.

RONNIE. What the fuck?

PECK. Might be them.

RONNIE. Except they think it's us.

PECK. I'll get going.

RONNIE. Like hell you will.

*(***RONNIE** *kisses him. It gets more intense.)*

PECK. This soon?

RONNIE. Soon? It's been *months*. I hate the babies.

PECK. No you don't.

RONNIE. I hand them right over. I only like fucking and I only like fucking *you*. But you know what?

PECK. You need another one.

(He picks her up. She wraps her legs around him.)

RONNIE. You're goddamn right I need another one.

PECK. I'll give you one.

RONNIE. Yeah?

PECK. Sure.

RONNIE. You'll give me a baby? You fucker, you'll give me a baby?

PECK. Come on.

(He carries her out to the kitchen.)

Two

(Dawn. **CONOR** *sits by* **WILLA***, reading a book.* **ABBIE** *comes downstairs.)*

CONOR. Did you sleep?

ABBIE. Sort of.

CONOR. And Amelia?

*(***ABBIE** *gestures: it's bad. Beat.)*

May I read something to you?

ABBIE. You shouldn't have that.

CONOR. The young man Douglas goes to the girl Anna's father. The father is Peterson. He owns a great deal of property.

ABBIE. What book is that?

*(***CONOR** *holds up the book cover so* **ABBIE** *can see.)*

CONOR. Peterson won't let Anna marry Douglas. Douglas owns very little property.

ABBIE. God, look at that.

CONOR. Douglas goes to Peterson, listen to this:

ABBIE. Conor, you realize –

CONOR. "It's true that I'm a poor boy. It's true that I have nothing to offer your Anna but a room above my workshop. But I ask you, sir, to consider this: My position is one of great responsibility. I make saddles for generals and queens. If you speak to any of the men who fought by me in the war gone by, any one of them will tell you that I am brave and reliable under fire. I have forged the strength of my character in both commerce and blood, and I offer that strength to your daughter for both our lifetimes."

ABBIE. You know that's garbage, right?

CONOR. Garbage?

ABBIE. If you're going to break Law, you should risk it for better books.

CONOR. You had better books than this?

ABBIE. Conor…yes, we had better books than this.

CONOR. Because this is entrancing. Do you know that Peterson still says no? After those words? And because the young man owns less property!

ABBIE. Well, people aren't judged like that anymore. Thanks to you.

CONOR. People also aren't married anymore.

*(***WILLA** *shivers violently.)*

ABBIE. Is she all right?

CONOR. She's cold.

*(***CONOR** *sets down the book and caresses* **WILLA**.*)*

ABBIE. How could she be cold?

CONOR. She just woke up in a new body: soft, exposed, nerve endings multiplied a thousandfold. The million voices she's heard in her mind all her life have gone silent. There isn't an exact feeling to go with all that newness, so the mind tells her she's cold. *(beat)* Your mother's touch, on my face, my arms, like this…for many months it was my only relief.

ABBIE. I hate these bodies.

CONOR. That's not true, is it?

ABBIE. It is true.

CONOR. When I touch your body and you cry out, is that pain?

ABBIE. No, you're right.

CONOR. *(going to* **ABBIE***)* I concentrate absolutely when I touch you. I want to be perfect.

ABBIE. You are.

CONOR. Don't say you hate our bodies.

ABBIE. Think about something. Think about when I'm touching you all the way.

CONOR. Do you mean orgasm?

ABBIE. And we're very close together. And I'm watching your face, and you're looking back at me, and there's a feeling, in those moments, that we're as close as two humans can be.

CONOR. Yes.

ABBIE. But then – just think, and be truthful – that last moment before orgasm: isn't it true that at that moment the closeness stops? Think about it. All your attention is turned inside, and you have to move just right, concentrating only on yourself in order to finish?

CONOR. Is that how it is?

ABBIE. That, right there, is everything you need to know about human life. Extraordinary effort to achieve split-seconds of connection before it's all lost in the thrashing.

CONOR. I'll keep my eyes open.

ABBIE. Compare that to the Honeycomb. Where you just live, always, inside each other's minds. *That's* connection, that's perfect pleasure, it doesn't well up like a blister 'til it pops, it just *is, always.*

CONOR. I'll keep my eyes on you the whole time. I didn't know that's what you wanted.

ABBIE. Sometimes, when I've been in the Honeycomb for weeks, I think I can hear it. Is there any way that's possible?

CONOR. I don't know, Abbie.

ABBIE. Well…lie, then.

CONOR. *(going to* **ABBIE***)* I can't. Not to you. This love here, yours for me, mine for you, this is a Honeycomb of our very own. There are no lies in the Honeycomb.

(They kiss. **ABBIE** *puts an arm around* **CONOR** *and looks at* **WILLA**.*)*

ABBIE. This has to work.

CONOR. Maybe it doesn't. Shirley's reasonable.

ABBIE. It doesn't matter how reasonable she is, she can't control Ronnie. *(meaning* **WILLA***)* We need her moving, we need her verbal. We're running out of time.

CONOR. She's not like me. She's a soldier. And she's prepared.

ABBIE. It always amazes me how *fast* it is. Every time. Transferring a mind between bodies, how is it so fast?

CONOR. The process is nothing. Establish the telepathic connection, then sever it. *This* is the part that's hard. I wish I could have nursed her through this in the Honeycomb.

ABBIE. If she'd vanished for months and suddenly reappeared, they wouldn't let her through the door. It's better like this, the explosion gives us cover.

CONOR. The explosion.

ABBIE. How are they doing it? It's impossible, right?

CONOR. Someone's doing it. It can't be impossible.

ABBIE. *(looking up the stairs)* I have to get Ronnie out of this house. Someone's gonna kill her. One of us, one of hers, but someone's gonna kill her. And she'll deserve it.

(Sounds upstairs: the house is waking up.)

The book. The book!

*(***CONOR** *conceals the book.* **SHIRLEY** *comes downstairs.)*

SHIRLEY. Ambassadors.

ABBIE. Shirley House Four.

SHIRLEY. Breakfast, or are you on your way?

ABBIE. I'm seeing Mom and then we're leaving. *(***ABBIE** *exits upstairs.)*

CONOR. Shirley House Four, I wonder if I can ask you for a liberty?

(She looks at him.)

May I help you look after her?

SHIRLEY. Are you serious?

CONOR. And come to visit her sometimes?

SHIRLEY. You're the one who gives the orders.

CONOR. The disorientation when we found her, the loss of language, the fear. It reminds me of my own injury.

SHIRLEY. Whatever you want.

CONOR. Thank you, Shirley House Four.

ABBIE. *(offstage)* Now!

*(***RONNIE** *appears as* **ABBIE** *shoves her onto the stairs.* **ABBIE** *appears just above her.)*

You're going back to work, right now. You're not staying here one more minute.

Three

(Afternoon. **FEE** *checks out the windows.* **CLEM** *reclines on the couch.* **WILLA** *sleeps on the cot.)*

CLEM. I need the pisser.

FEE. You know where it is.

CLEM. Who is it today?

FEE. Supposed to be just Peck, but I hear Ronnie too.

CLEM. Is she crazy? Peck they'll lash. Ronnie they'll kill.

FEE. Just what I heard.

CLEM. If I piss on this couch, you think Ronnie might sit in it by accident?

JIMMY. *(outside the door)* Fee!

FEE. Shit!

CLEM. Who is it? Nampas?

FEE. We have reapers, we're defended!

JIMMY. *(offstage)* Is that Fee?

FEE. Jimmy?

DEV. *(offstage)* Can you hold the door open?

CLEM. Oh god, it's both of them.

DEV. *(offstage)* Please?

CLEM. I'm seven months! You can't push?

DEV. *(offstage)* Not carrying this we can't!

*(***FEE** *helps* **CLEM** *to hold the door open.* **JIMMY** *and* **DEV** *enter, each holding an end of an enormous, multiply-jointed insect leg that they drop on the couch.)*

JIMMY. Who's a big bug NOW?

CLEM. Shit, Jimmy!

DEV. Crazy, right?

JIMMY. *(to* **FEE***)* Got it for you, girl!

CLEM. Get it off there, are you crazy?

FEE. You pulled that off a dead bug?

JIMMY. Yeah, dead!

DEV. That's what we'll do next time, we'll pull one off a live bug. Go bigger.

CLEM. Guys! You can't have this here!

JIMMY. Man, fuck a leg, I'll pull off a 'tenna, I'll walk right up in a bug's face and be all like – *(He mimics wrenching the antenna off of a giant insect)* – "Mine now!"

CLEM. If they find that here they kill us all –

JIMMY. *(to* **FEE***)* And I'll give that to you too, girl.

FEE. You're so stupid. *(She kisses him.)*

CLEM. Dev!

DEV. *(to* **CLEM***)* All right, you're right.

CLEM. Get it out of here!

DEV. I will, I am. *(He picks up one end of the leg.)*

FEE. That's weird, you never see 'em dead.

CLEM. 'Cause they go to the Honeycomb to die, it's really important to them! If they see this it's like the worst thing you can do!

FEE. Where did you find it?

JIMMY. Oh, you're not getting it.

DEV. I'm moving it! Jimmy, can you –

JIMMY. We didn't *find* it dead. *(beat)*

CLEM. Are you off your mind?

JIMMY. That's *right*! Reaper up underneath, right between the first two legs.

DEV. Well, it was me first, really.

FEE. You are *lying*.

JIMMY. I'm not lying!

CLEM. Are you off your fucking mind?

DEV. Jimmy help with this.

JIMMY. Look in my eyes, girl. Truth.

DEV. It was off by itself. Way more north than they usually go.

CLEM. What were you doing there?

DEV. You know, just…

CLEM. Smoking choopie, right?

DEV. Look, a little bit.

JIMMY. Shit, a little bit for *you*.

DEV. You have to get a bit away from Settlement or they smell it, or whatever they do.

FEE. Why was it all the way up there?

JIMMY. Looking for Shirley's bombs, right? That's what I think.

FEE. Shirley doesn't have bombs.

JIMMY. Shirley's got *something*. Or Ronnie, I bet it's Ronnie.

DEV. Jimmy, come on, help me here.

JIMMY. *(to* **FEE***)* Can I get in it?

FEE. What?

JIMMY. "What?" I said can I get in it?

FEE. Boy look at the size of me!

CLEM. Look, I'll do it. *(She moves to pick up the other side of the leg.)*

DEV. No, Clem, you can't. Come on. Jimmy!

JIMMY. *(to* **FEE***.)* Put your legs up or whatever.

FEE. You're so stupid.

JIMMY. Well can I get something?

FEE. Something. Maybe.

DEV. Jimmy!

JIMMY. Maybe? I brought you this *leg*.

FEE. What am I gonna do with that leg?

DEV. Jimmy *now*.

JIMMY. Hold up, hold up – Dev. My brother.

DEV. Brother?

JIMMY. Can you do watch? Me and Fee need to do something. My *brother*.

DEV. All right, but right after, *right after*, you have to help me –

CLEM. No! No right after, right now. That is death, sitting right in this room!

JIMMY. Come on, Clem –

*(***PECK** *enters.)*

CLEM. Death for all of us! Even me, even Fee! Kill a bug, it doesn't matter if you're carrying! Get that out of here now!

PECK. Fuck is this?

(All fall silent.)

The fuck. Is this.

JIMMY. Peck, Peck, my friend, my brother –

DEV. It's not Clem and Fee, they're not part of it.

PECK. Yeah. I guessed that.

JIMMY. Peck, my brother, it's all good, when I tell you how it happened – this was *defense.*

PECK. No it wasn't. Bug doesn't attack unless you attack first.

DEV. We were up by the north mangroves. Bug surprised us. We didn't know if we were outside Law or what, we didn't know what it would say to the Honeycomb. We just did it. Peck, they're never up there!

PECK. Except flyovers.

JIMMY. Exactly! My brother.

PECK. And things're blowing up. And nobody knows why. So that's when they're gonna do flyovers. Right?

(He seizes **JIMMY***'s face, looks in his eyes.)*

Fucking idiot.

JIMMY. Peck, man, my eyes are funny 'cause I'm sick, it's not what you think –

PECK. And your breath?

(He slaps **JIMMY** *in the side of the head.)*

JIMMY. Peck, shit!

*(***PECK** *crosses to* **DEV**.*)*

DEV. Peck, look, you're right, I get it –

*(***PECK** *slaps him as well.)*

PECK. Where's the rest?

DEV. Of the choopie?

PECK. Of the *bug*.

JIMMY. We left it there, man, I swear!

DEV. We just brought the leg. I mean I know that doesn't make it right, but we just brought the leg back, I promise.

PECK. I believe you.

JIMMY. See? My man!

PECK. I *believe* you did an unauthorized kill, fuckin' up Shirley right in the middle of negotiating less time on the farm. I *believe* you just brought the leg, and left the whole rest of the bug in plain fucking sight, not digested in the Honeycomb like Law says, but rotting in the *fucking sun*! That right?

DEV. We'll go back.

PECK. Yep.

JIMMY. Peck, brother, I promise we'll go back, but can I just grab a minute –

DEV. We'll go back *right now*, and we'll find a place to hide it.

PECK. Not hide. Bury.

JIMMY. Man, *bury*?

PECK. Under a bunch of mangroves so you can't see it from the sky.

DEV. Dig? In the mangroves? Peck, the roots, man –

PECK. Yep.

JIMMY. That'll take all night! We're on detail tomorrow!

PECK. Probably won't do that again, then.

JIMMY. Man, fuck!

PECK. *(to* **FEE***)* Shirley back yet?

FEE. Not sure when. I know she's expecting you. You hear Ronnie might be coming?

PECK. What?

FEE. Just what I heard.

PECK. *(to* **JIMMY** *and* **DEV***)* I'll be back in a minute. You'll be gone. *(He exits out the kitchen.)*

DEV. Come on.

JIMMY. *(pulling* **FEE** *towards a corner)* Just real quick, just real quick.

FEE. Are you crazy?

CLEM. You have to get that thing out of here!

FEE. You think I feel like it now?

JIMMY. Just real quick.

FEE. Oh, "just real quick."

CLEM. *(to* **DEV***)* Can you control him?

JIMMY. *(to* **FEE***)* I could die. Me and Dev, we could go out there and die.

DEV. I don't think we're gonna die –

CLEM. *(overlapping)* You could *always* die –

JIMMY. We could die, this could be it, we might never see each other again. I gotta feel you, girl. I gotta feel you next to me, I got to.

*(***FEE** *relents. They move the rest of the way into the corner and start making out. After a while* **FEE** *starts jerking* **JIMMY** *off.)*

Keep a lookout, man!

DEV. Yeah.

(A beat between **CLEM** *and* **DEV**.*)*

So…how are you?

CLEM. Well, I want this leg gone.

DEV. Sure.

CLEM. What're you doing smoking choopie?

DEV. I'll stop, I won't do it anymore.

CLEM. Why were you doing it already? You never did it before.

DEV. You know…something to do.

*(***CLEM** *gives him a look.)*

So I don't think about it.

CLEM. What?

DEV. You're here, and I'm not supposed to be here. You come out, it'll be the same: you'll be House Ten, I'll be across the marsh in Eighteen, they'll put the baby in House One with the other babies…

CLEM. So, we sneak around like everybody.

DEV. I miss you all the time. Like… I miss you all the time. But not when I smoke choopie.

CLEM. Well, shit. *(She kisses him.)* You're gonna be a pain to me with those eyes. Don't let the baby have those eyes.

(They kiss again.)

DEV. What if I asked to join the Nampas?

CLEM. Dev.

DEV. We'd get special treatment.

CLEM. You just killed a bug, pulled its leg off, and now you wanna join the Nampas?

DEV. So it'd be easier for us. *(beat)*

CLEM. Here's what you do: Don't smoke the choopie.

DEV. I won't.

CLEM. No, listen to me: Don't smoke the choopie. Take the pain instead. Walk right into it, keep walking, walk right out of it. There's no choopie like how that feels. That's the best.

DEV. Then I will.

*(***FEE** *notices something out the window over* **JIMMY***'s shoulder.)*

FEE. Oh shit they're back!

DEV. Shit shit!

JIMMY. Man I said watch!

CLEM. You gotta go!

JIMMY. *(finishing himself off and kissing her)* You're beautiful. You're beautiful, girl.

(He hurries over to where **DEV** *already has the other end of the leg.)*

DEV. Jimmy!

JIMMY. Well come on, man!

DEV. *Me* come on?

JIMMY. *(indicating the blanket over* **WILLA***)* Gimme that blanket real quick!

CLEM. It's on a girl!

JIMMY. You want *her* to see?

*(***CLEM** *and* **FEE** *pull the blanket off* **WILLA** *and drape it over the leg.* **WILLA** *shivers, legs jerking in unison.)*

JIMMY. Whoa.

CLEM. Get out of here!

JIMMY. Bitch is *creepy.*

DEV. Let's go.

JIMMY. Okay, now open the door when I say.

DEV. *(to* **CLEM***)* Walk into it?

CLEM. And keep walking.

JIMMY. Now!

*(***FEE** *opens the door. As* **SHIRLEY** *and* **PECK** *step in,* **JIMMY** *and* **CLEM** *race past her with the covered leg.)*

JIMMY. Good to see you Shirley!

DEV. Good to see you Shirley! *(They race off into the night.)*

FEE. Sorry, Shirley.

SHIRLEY. This is supposed to be a secret meetup. Sounds like a goddam campfire night.

PECK. They won't be back tonight, trust me.

SHIRLEY. We gotta be ready to break any time. Abbie and Skin could be back *any time.*

(A sound from the kitchen. Everyone tenses; **PECK** *grabs a reaper off the wall.)*

PECK. Expecting anybody?

SHIRLEY. No.

*(***PECK** *approaches the kitchen door.)*

RONNIE. *(from the periphery)* All clear?

SHIRLEY. Ronnie?

PECK. All clear.

(She runs in and kisses **PECK**.*)*

CLEM. I need the pisser.

(She exits out the front door.)

SHIRLEY. Ronnie, you can't be here!

RONNIE. I heard there was a meetup.

SHIRLEY. You've got no reason to be in House One, and if your brother finds out you were –

RONNIE. Sure I do. *(She touches her stomach.)*

PECK. What?

RONNIE. *(to* **PECK***)* Thanks to you. *(beat)*

SHIRLEY. You're not lying?

RONNIE. I've done this a couple of times. I know what to look for. Did you save my bed for me?

SHIRLEY. No, but you can sleep in a different one. Ronnie:

RONNIE. Yeah, I know.

SHIRLEY. No. You listen to me. I'm not gonna let you endanger this house. I'm not gonna let you wreck everything we've built. You're either here and walking the line or you're somewhere else.

*(***TASH** *appears on the stairs.)*

RONNIE. Did you promise the bugs something you can't deliver or not?

TASH. Ronnie?

RONNIE. Tash. *(***RONNIE** *walks over to her.)*

SHIRLEY. Hey there. Are you sure you're okay to be up?

RONNIE. Tash, I heard.

*(***TASH** *comes downstairs and embraces* **RONNIE**.*)*

TASH. They just took her.

RONNIE. I know.

TASH. They just took her little body to the Honeycomb.

RONNIE. They take everybody.

SHIRLEY. Tash, we could've…you know in the old days we could've…

RONNIE. I'm kinda thinking about paying them back. What do you think?

TASH. I'll do anything.

RONNIE. Well, I'll tell you what, why don't you help us out with our little problem?

SHIRLEY. Hey, Ronnie? It's my meetup, I say what we're talking about, and in what order.

RONNIE. So let's *not* talk about the explosions yet, let's talk about the more *urgent* stuff first. *(beat)*

SHIRLEY. Who has eyewitnesses?

FEE. Jesse House Seven came by with veggies. She was at the east fleshies, talked to some other folks there.

SHIRLEY. Anything?

FEE. Not really. Everybody there was supposed to be there, everybody worked all night right up until.

RONNIE. What about the Nampas?

FEE. Nobody saw anything funny. The same five bugs, the same twelve Nampas, and nobody saw them move all night.

RONNIE. What the *hell*?

(Over the following, **CLEM** *returns and heads for the stairs.)*

SHIRLEY. Maybe they snuck down from Cubano. Not bugs, but some Nampas, if they were quiet –

RONNIE. Let's stick to what we know, not what we guess.

SHIRLEY. Excuse me?

RONNIE. *(to* **CLEM***)* Hang out a second.

CLEM. I'm not part of this.

RONNIE. I'll make it worth your while.

SHIRLEY. Hang out, Clem.

*(***CLEM** *grumpily sits.)*

RONNIE. *(to* **FEE***)* What about the three lost? Eric, Sandra, Mick. Anything different on them?

FEE. Only that Eric was having a rough shift.

RONNIE. Rough how?

FEE. Panting, tired, used up his water ration early.

RONNIE. Okay now wait a minute. That squares, right?

SHIRLEY. With what?

RONNIE. Well we didn't have eyewitnesses on the first couple explosions, but the third one, on the Gathering Path? Cristobal House Seven was panting, tired, went right though his water.

SHIRLEY. What does that prove?

PECK. That could be any work shift ever.

RONNIE. I don't think so, most people learn to drink slow.

PECK. Plus you don't explode from being thirsty.

RONNIE. Fuck! What am I not thinking of?

SHIRLEY. Well you know, Ronnie, it's supposed to be kind of a group effort.

CLEM. Shit, don't tell her that.

RONNIE. *(to* **PECK***)* What you said about Eric, you said it was like he exploded from the inside?

PECK. Just pieces of him everywhere. Only knew it was him from his head.

SHIRLEY. Could be they're gaslighting us, the bugs, like a trick to draw us out?

RONNIE. It's not the bugs, I know it isn't. It was right there on Abbie's face, he doesn't know, they don't know, they're scared and they *don't know.*

CLEM. But that's just something you think.

RONNIE. What?

CLEM. That's just something you think. That's not something we know. You said we're just supposed to say things we know.

TASH. Hey! Show some respect!

CLEM. For what? What for? What's Ronnie ever done that I should be all respecting about?

TASH. She's a lot braver than you!

CLEM. What's Ronnie ever done except be the daughter of the man who brought them here in the first place?

(ugly beat)

Am I done "hanging out" now?

RONNIE. Say what we know.

CLEM. What?

RONNIE. You just heard the new info, now tell us what we know.

CLEM. I'm not in this!

RONNIE. I told you I'd make it worth your while. You're the smartest in this house. You just watched me hear the whole scoop and come up with nothing. Are you really telling me you're gonna pass up a chance to make me look like an asshole? *(beat)*

CLEM. Four explosions. Two on Coral Farm, two on Gathering Path. Nobody saw the bugs do anything different, nobody saw the Nampas do anything different. At least two times, one of the dead was seen just before out of breath and out of water. Is that it?

RONNIE. What about Eric?

CLEM. Blown up from the inside.

RONNIE. And? Come on. Anything jumping out?

CLEM. No. Can I go to bed now?

RONNIE. One good idea first.

CLEM. How about I just go anyway, and fuck you?

TASH. Coward!

CLEM. The places, all right? What do the places have in common?

RONNIE. What places?

CLEM. Coral and Gathering, where the explosions happened.

FEE. I mean, every place is the same as every other place. Mangroves and water.

RONNIE. Fuck!

TASH. Sorry, Ronnie, I can't think of anything!

SHIRLEY. Everybody needs to dig deep here. We could cut the workday by a quarter.

RONNIE. Oh fuck that, that's nothing.

PECK. There's the smell.

SHIRLEY. *(to* **RONNIE***)* You know what, I bet all the people pulling veggies on the farm right this second don't think it's nothing. You wanna go ask them?

RONNIE. We don't want concessions, we want them gone!

TASH. Ronnie's right!

SHIRLEY. Who's we?

RONNIE. *(to* **PECK**.*)* Wait, what did you say?

PECK. The smell. We haven't figured that in yet.

RONNIE. It's worse, right?

FEE. I think it's worse every year.

PECK. It's that stuff that comes out of them.

TASH. Oh yeah! When they're sucking the juice out of those fleshy flowers?

PECK. Every harvest. When the bugs're drinking out of the fleshies –

FEE. Yeah yeah, and something leaks out of them!

PECK. They have to drain off something inside to make room for the flower juice. Whatever it is gets in the water under the fleshies and smells. Worse this year than I ever remember.

RONNIE. What would be different this yeat?

CLEM. *(half to herself)* 'Cause they're laying eggs…?

RONNIE. What?

CLEM. Nothing.

SHIRLEY. So we think what, it mixes in the water, somehow causes a reaction –

PECK. No, if that's what it was half the Settlement would blow up every harvest.

*(***CLEM** *exhales impatiently.)*

TASH. Hey! If you don't wanna be here you can fuck right off!

CLEM. I was just gonna say –

TASH. If you don't wanna be in the Resistance at least you can –

CLEM. What "resistance"? You've killed a few bugs, you've killed a few Nampas, and *nothing's ever changed*. They're bigger and stronger and smarter and they all share a brain, and they've *got us*! Shouldn't the smart people quit crying about it and figure out the best way live with it? I'm gonna have a baby!

TASH. I was gonna have a baby.

RONNIE. You were gonna say what?

CLEM. What?

RONNIE. You said, "I was just gonna say." What were you gonna say?

CLEM. I don't know!

RONNIE. Yeah you do.

CLEM. Just…if Eric was thirsty, if he went through his water, if the others went through their water, maybe they snuck under the fleshies to take a drink. Maybe they drank the bad water. Maybe it happens when a person drinks the bad water.

*(***RONNIE, SHIRLEY,** *and* **PECK** *look at each other for a beat.)*

RONNIE. Motherfucker.

SHIRLEY. Okay, let's just take a minute.

PECK. 'Cause the thing is, to be sure?

SHIRLEY. Enough. Stop right there.

RONNIE. Do you get what this means?

SHIRLEY. Do you?

RONNIE. What if she's right?

CLEM. Can I be done now, please?

RONNIE. We can't drop this, we can't even *stall* it. If she's right we're on the *clock*.

SHIRLEY. I need to think.

RONNIE. One way or another, this will keep happening!

SHIRLEY. I said I need to *think*! Who's in charge here?!

(Something hits the roof of the house. Insect legs skitter down the side.)

FEE. Flyer!

SHIRLEY. *(to* **PECK***)* Clear out. Now.

RONNIE. *(to* **PECK***)* See you later?

PECK. Tell me first.

RONNIE. What?

PECK. You know you're carrying? Find me somewhere and tell me. They're our babies. We made them together. Don't let me hear like that. Tell me first.

RONNIE. Forgive me.

*(***PECK** *kisses her and hurries out through the kitchen.)*

ABBIE. *(through the front door)* House Four?

*(***FEE** *opens the door to reveal* **ABBIE** *and* **CONOR**.*)*

SHIRLEY. Come on in, Ambassadors. Nice to see you.

CONOR. *(entering)* Thank you, Shirley House Four –*(He stops when he sees* **RONNIE**.*)* Ronnie.

ABBIE. What the fuck are you doing here?

CONOR. I'm pleased to see you!

*(***WILLA** *sits up some more.)*

Excuse me, she's awake.

(He hurries past **RONNIE** *to check on* **WILLA**.*)*

RONNIE. *(to* **ABBIE***)* I missed bleeding. By several days. Don't you wanna say something nice?

CONOR. Has she been awake before?

FEE. A little, but she's never tried to sit up like that.

ABBIE. *(to all)* I have an announcement. The Honeycomb has granted me permission to institute a curfew in House Four. All inhabitants of House Four are to be in their beds by sundown. Anyone congregating in this room after sundown is outside the Law.

TASH. You can *fuck* your curfew –

*(***RONNIE** *puts a hand on* **TASH**, *silencing her.)*

ABBIE. *(to* **SHIRLEY***)* Unless – is anyone sleeping down here now?

SHIRLEY. *(indicating* **WILLA***)* Just her.

ABBIE. All right, but she does not leave her bed after sundown. Understood? Things are gonna be different here now.

RONNIE. *(to* **FEE** *and* **CLEM***)* Well, girls, I think it's bedtime.

CONOR. *(to* **WILLA***)* Sshhh. You don't have to be afraid.

Four

*(***CONOR** *teaches* **WILLA** *walking. He holds out his arms and she walks unsteadily to him.* **ABBIE** *appears at the top of the stairs and watches.)*

ABBIE. I remember Mom doing that with you.

CONOR. Just your mother?

ABBIE. Who else?

CONOR. You and Ronnie. You used to do it together. *(meaning* **AMELIA***)* Has she slept?

ABBIE. Little stretches. Never for long.

CONOR. I'll go to her.

ABBIE. No, that's not a good idea, keep working with her. We need her ready.

CONOR. Where are you going?

ABBIE. The Honeycomb. I can't sleep here. She did it deliberately, you know.

CONOR. Ronnie?

ABBIE. To get back in here to plan whatever she's planning in the one place the People won't go. Can you explain that to me? Close on twelve years and they still haven't conquered their revulsion?

CONOR. Imagine seeing live birth for the first time in the history of your civilization.

ABBIE. But twelve years! And they still can't walk through the door we built especially for them?

CONOR. It hasn't been revulsion for a long time.

ABBIE. What, fear?

CONOR. Reverence. The place of the queen is sacred.

ABBIE. Look, I'm not saying kill Ronnie. I should be, if she's doing what I think she is, she shouldn't be special, but all right, I fall short. But we know who she's talking to. Why don't we just kill them?

CONOR. The Honeycomb wants proof.

ABBIE. *(indicating* **WILLA***)* So either Willa gets into the inner circle, or we just have to wait for something to happen?

CONOR. Better that than kill innocent humans. The deal we made with your father was: save our people, and we'll save yours.

ABBIE. Then get her where she needs to be. The sooner they trust her, the sooner we can find out and stop it, and nobody has to think about contingencies. God, the whole point of this –

CONOR. Contingencies?

ABBIE. The whole point was peace, so I could get some peace, but there hasn't been peace for a minute.

CONOR. What contingencies?

ABBIE. I'll stay out of your way. You know what you're doing. I don't.

CONOR. Abbie, wait.

(He makes sure **WILLA***'s stable, then goes to* **ABBIE** *at the door.)*

Are you all right?

(Behind them, over the following, **WILLA** *takes a tentative step away from the wall. She totters, but maintains her balance.)*

ABBIE. What do the People of the Honeycomb ask themselves at the end of their lives?

CONOR. What small thing did I do to help build the Honeycomb?

ABBIE. So, I'm doing it. So I'm fine.

(He kisses **CONOR** *and leaves.* **CONOR** *notices* **WILLA**.*)*

CONOR. Are you…all right? Are you going to fall?

(She holds out her arms to him: she wants to walk again.)

CONOR. You're remarkable.

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