

Moon Man Walk

By

James Ijames

Monarch

Esther also plays Flight Attendant, Nurse, Dry Cleaner Lady, Historical Novel Lady

Petrushka

The Astronaut also plays Funeral Guy, Flower Guy, Kesi, Front Door Guy, Barista Guy, Mystery Novel Guy, Romance Novel Guy

We ourselves are made of star stuff- Carl Sagan

Text Notations

/ Indicates overlapping dialogue

~~words~~ These words should be meant, felt and tonally inform the line but should not be spoken. Don't leave space say they line as though the word wasn't there but allow the word, inside of that moment, to color it's delivery.

(An empty stage. Could be anywhere. The coast of the cosmos or the coast of the ocean. A lovely place. ESTHER, MONARCH, ASTRONAUT and PETRUSHKA stand on the edge of this space. They look up to the sky. They are re-membering this story. Putting it back together.)

In the beginning. ESTHER

There was a boy. MONARCH

Who grew up to be man size. PETRUSHKA

But still remained a boy. ESTHER

Which made him...I guess, a man-boy. MONARCH

Average height. ESTHER

Uh...Above average height. Who wrote stories and dreamed in big bold colors. MONARCH

Right. ESTHER

His name was Monarch. PETRUSHKA

Monarch? ASTRONAUT

His mother named him Monarch. ESTHER

Cause his father wanted her too. ASTRONAUT

She...hated the name. ESTHER

MONARCH

When she said his name it was with terrific love and mild contempt.

ESTHER

He was a good child.

PETRUSHKA

Kind in manner and gentle of eye.

MONARCH

Near sighted and cautious.

ASTRONAUT

His father wasn't around. He was far away. Hard to find.

MONARCH

So he lived his life as a mighty Man-Boy.

ESTHER

Looking at the moon.

(The space opens. Everyone scatters at the sound of some cosmic music enveloping the space. It can be everywhere. It should be big. Sweeping. Orchestral. MONARCH and ESTHER stands and look out of a window that is facing upstage. They should look like one of those "halted traveller" painting from the romantic period. As though they have been stopped by a sight either beautiful or terrific.)

ESTHER

This story begins at the end of things. And then...goes back.

MONARCH

He loved books.

PETRUSHKA

You love books.

ESTHER

It's you, now baby.

MONARCH

Right.

(Recognizes the audience. Beat. They are his friend.)

I love books. Always have. I wanted to be a writer, couldn't finish my first novel so, I decided to be a librarian. I know. I know. But, I'm very good at it. My days are simple. Typically, It starts with Mister Mystery Novel.

(Mystery Novel Guy enters.)

MYSTERY NOVEL GUY

Have the new Parker Newport Thriller?

MONARCH

What's it called?

MYSTERY NOVEL GUY

Timberwell Falls.

MONARCH

No. No I don't think /we do....

MYSTERY NOVEL GUY

/Oh fudge. You know for years, I thought Parker Newport was a man but turns out he's a lady. She's great. Very suspenseful. Ever read any of her books.

MONARCH

No. I haven't.

MYSTERY NOVEL GUY

You should. It's a great way to meet...the ladies.

MONARCH

What?

MYSTERY NOVEL GUY

Ladies love a man of mystery.

MONARCH

Really?

MYSTERY NOVEL GUY

Oh yeah! Just wander around the mystery section of any bookstore. Or sit down in a nice little cafe with one of these bad boys...man. Beating them off with a stick!

MONARCH

Ah...I see...thank you. For the suggestion..

MYSTERY NOVEL GUY

Sure thing.

(Historical Fiction Lady enters.)

HISTORICAL FICTION LADY

Hey there Monarch.

MONARCH

Good morning. Looking for the McCullough book?

HISTORICAL FICTION LADY

Of course.

MONARCH

Right here! Reserved it for you the moment it came in!

HISTORICAL FICTION LADY

Oh...you are just the best! He is an exquisite writer you know?

MONARCH

I know.

HISTORICAL FICTION LADY

Well thanks! See you next week.

(ROMANCE NOVEL GUY enters.)

ROMANCE NOVEL GUY

Psst. Psst.

MONARCH

Hey!

ROMANCE NOVEL GUY

Shhhhhh...

MONARCH

Oh...are you okay?

ROMANCE NOVEL GUY

Yeah yeah yeah...what's up with the...the...new Nora Robert's book.

MONARCH

Oh, well we have it.

ROMANCE NOVEL GUY

Can I...Can I have it.

MONARCH

Sure.

ROMANCE NOVEL GUY

Thanks man.

(MONARCH hands him the book.)

Lets keep this between us.

MONARCH

Okay.

ROMANCE NOVEL GUY

Thanks. Thanks.

MONARCH

Sure thing.

ROMANCE NOVEL GUY

So...I'm...I'm just gonna go.

MONARCH

That's probably a good idea.

ROMANCE NOVEL GUY

Yeah my girlfriend is out there...

MONARCH

Is this for her?

ROMANCE NOVEL GUY

No Man! This is for me.

(Romance Novel Guy exits.)

(PETRUSHKA enters. Sharply and thoughtfully dressed. Funky fly and fresh. Not severe at all. Flow-y. Pretty and fresh faced.)

MONARCH

Oh! Hello!

PETRUSHKA

Hello to you too handsome.

MONARCH

What uh, what can I help you with?

PETRUSHKA

I'm looking for the new Walter Mosley book. Do you have it?

MONARCH

Oh. Uh. Sure.

(They begin moving through the stacks of the library. This should feel elaborate and complicated. A journey.)

PETRUSHKA

Do you like working here?

MONARCH

Yes. I love books.

PETRUSHKA

Who's your favorite writer?

MONARCH

Whitehead. My mother loves him. My mother has great taste.

PETRUSHKA

Sounds like she gave you the passion for books.

MONARCH

I'm a complete momma's boy. She used to say "my feet never touch the ground until I was five."

PETRUSHKA

I can tell.

MONARCH

What?

PETRUSHKA

Oh just that you seem well raised.

MONARCH

Thank you. Uh—

PETRUSHKA

—Where is she?

MONARCH

Home.

PETRUSHKA

Oh you live with her?

No. MONARCH

Oh uh...no I meant... PETRUSHKA

What? MONARCH

Nothing. Never mind. Is it close by? PETRUSHKA

MONARCH
(The book appears)
Uhhhhh...it should be riiiiight. Here it is.

PETRUSHKA
Great! Thank you. What's your name?

MONARCH
Monarch.

PETRUSHKA
Great name.

MONARCH
Yeah?

PETRUSHKA
Big destiny with that name.

(They head back to the check out counter. The journey back it swifter.)

MONARCH
I guess.

PETRUSHKA
I bet you read a lot of books.

MONARCH
Yes. Quite a few.

PETRUSHKA
You don't talk much, do you?

MONARCH

I'm uh...I'm kind of...I don't really like to...talk.

PETRUSHKA

Oh no!

MONARCH

What?

PETRUSHKA

Well I love to talk and you don't...We have to fix that right?

(They are back at the counter.)

When do you typically work?

MONARCH

I'm here everyday.

PETRUSHKA

Funny, I've never seen you here before?

MONARCH

I...guess...

PETRUSHKA

Maybe I just wasn't paying attention.

MONARCH

I can be a touch invisible sometimes.

PETRUSHKA

I find that hard to believe.

MONARCH

It's true.

PETRUSHKA

I see you right now.

MONARCH

Thank you.

PETRUSHKA

Hey...good talking with you. You're a weird dude. I like that.

MONARCH

Thank you?

PETRUSHKA

It's good thing.

MONARCH

You...you too. It was good talking to you as well. I mean--

PETRUSHKA

--I got it. Petrushka.

MONARCH

What's that?

PETRUSHKA

My name is Petrushka.

MONARCH

Great name.

PETRUSHKA

I know!

(Winks.)

See you 'round.

(Petrushka exits)

(A memory approaches. Esther calls to Monarch. The memory of her is perfect to Monarch. She should feel a bit like a fifties TV mom. June Cleaver. In Monarch's mind his mother is perfect. She is all smiles.)

ESTHER

Come eat, child. Come eat. It's going to get cold.

MONARCH

ZOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO

(ESTHER laughs)

ESTHER

What are you doing, you little rascal?

MONARCH

I'm flying.

ESTHER

Sit. Eat.

MONARCH
ZoooooooooOOOOOOOMMMMM

ESTHER
Alright now. Sit down. It's gonna get cold.

MONARCH
Superman don't need to eat Momma!

ESTHER
Oh no?

MONARCH
Nope he don't need too.

ESTHER
Well my super man needs to eat.

MONARCH
I'm gonna be like Superman when I grow up.

ESTHER
Sure you will! Eat.

MONARCH
I don't like this.

ESTHER
Well it's what we have. Eat.

MONARCH
Couldn't we have McDonald's?

ESTHER
(Drops the June Clever bit)
You have McDonald's money?

MONARCH
No Ma'am.

ESTHER
Welp...you better dig into that cheesy macaroni.

MONARCH
I'm gonna be here alone tonight again?

ESTHER

You know I have work baby. You won't even know I'm gone. Tina will check in on you. She's right next door. You just knock on the wall and she will come over. When you wake up in the morning. I'll be here.

MONARCH

I pretend like I'm guarding a castle.

ESTHER

That's right little man.

MONARCH

I'm not little.

ESTHER

You more little than me.

MONARCH

But...you've been here longer. That's the only reason.

ESTHER

Yeah maybe.

MONARCH

You'll be back in the morning?

ESTHER

Yes! Of course. I'm not gonna leave you baby.

MONARCH

Yes ma'am.

ESTHER

*You bet your purdy neck I do
A doodle oodle ooh doo
A doodle oodle ooh doo
A doodle oodle oodle ooh doo*

(Esther fades away. Monarch is still transfixed by her. BARISTA GUY enters.)

BARISTA GUY

Hey.

MONARCH

Oh!

BARISTA GUY

Uuuuuuh sorry...didn't mean to startle you. Here's your coffee. Sorry it took so long. I'm the only guy working today and I had to brew more.

MONARCH

Thanks.

BARISTA GUY

Sure thing.

MONARCH

Morning coffee. Over priced and slightly burnt. Just the way I like it.

BARISTA GUY

Yeah it's pretty shitty coffee...I can't believe anybody drinks it.

MONARCH

That's not a great sales pitch.

BARISTA GUY

Maybe not. You need anything else?

MONARCH

No. That's all.

BARISTA GUY

Alright. Later.

(DRY CLEANER LADY enters)

DRY CLEANER LADY

Hey Baby!

MONARCH

I'm picking up---

DRY CLEANER LADY

(Handing him his dry cleaning.)

I saw you crossing the street. I got that coffee stain out of your stripped shirt.

MONARCH

Oh! Thank you!

DRY CLEANER LADY

Sure thing baby.

Do you call everyone baby?
MONARCH

What you think baby?
DRY CLEANER LADY

Right.
MONARCH

I'm everybody's momma and all my customers are my babies, baby.
DRY CLEANER LADY

I see. Well. Thank you!
MONARCH

Have a good day.
DRY CLEANER LADY

(Condo entrance. FRONT DOOR GUY "opens" the door for Monarch)

Evening B 826
FRONT DOOR GUY

Evening.
MONARCH

Fine day we had.
FRONT DOOR GUY

Fine indeed.
MONARCH

Package for you.
FRONT DOOR GUY
(Hands MONARCH a small parcel.)

There ya go.

Oh. Okay. Thanks.
MONARCH

New book?
FRONT DOOR GUY

What?
MONARCH

FRONT DOOR GUY

I know you order a lot of books from the amazon.

MONARCH

Oh...uh...well yeah I think it might be. How do you--

FRONT DOOR GUY

Big reader myself...

MONARCH

I see.

FRONT DOOR GUY

Have yourself a good evening there buddy.

MONARCH

You ever feel like you're life keeps repeating itself?

FRONT DOOR GUY

I work the front door of an apartment complex.

MONARCH

True...

FRONT DOOR GUY

But you know...Every once in a while. Something ticks askew and the ordinary jumps a little. The day becomes strange.

(Monarch's phone rings.)

FRONT DOOR GUY

You should get that.

MONARCH

Yes. Excuse me.

FRONT DOOR GUY

Night buddy.

MONARCH

Hello?

NURSE

Mr. Taylor?

MONARCH

This is he.

NURSE

Mr. Taylor I'm sorry to have to tell you that your mother passed away last night.

MONARCH

Wha...I'm sorry I didn't quite hear what you--the connection is--

NURSE

--Your mother died last night. She's gone. We are trying to determine what--

MONARCH

--Gone? Gone where?

NURSE

Mr. Taylor.

MONARCH

What...what are you saying?

NURSE

I'm a nurse at Mercy West--

MONARCH

--My mother is in the hospital?

NURSE

She had a--

MONARCH

--Why wasn't I called?

NURSE

We are calling you now.

(Silence...for as long as we can allow...just before it becomes too long:)

NURSE

Mr. Taylor?

MONARCH

Yes.

NURSE

Did you hear me?

MONARCH

Yes. Yes I did.

NURSE

So you understand what has happened?

MONARCH

Yes.

NURSE

We wanted to know when you--

MONARCH

--I'll be there tomorrow morning.

(Instantly he is on the airplane looking for his seat. Petrushka is seated buried in a worn copy of SkyMall.)

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

(Over PA system)

We have a full flight today so if you would not stow coats in the overhead bins we would much appreciate it!

(He locates his seat. It is beside Petrushka. She is still buried in the magazine. He sits down. Suddenly!)

PETRUSHKA

HA!! Just what I need! A life size garden gnome. Oooo this one is a zombie crawling out of the ground.

MONARCH

Excuse me?

PETRUSHKA

Oh don't mind me. I love these stupid magazines. Full of useless toys.

(She finally emerging from the magazine.)

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Welcome aboard flight #2678, San Diego to Philadelphia. We are here to ensure that you do have a safe and comfortable flight with us today.

PETRUSHKA

I love these speeches. They are so pleasant and cheerful while they tell you how to survive a plane crash.

At this time I would like to draw your

attention to the safety information card in the seat pocket in front of you and encourage you to follow along as we perform our safety demonstration.

MONARCH

You should really listen to what she's saying. We may need it.

PETRUSHKA

It's the same every flight. Watch this.

To fasten your seat belt, insert the metal fitting into the buckle and adjust the strap to fit low and snug on your lap and simply lift the buckle release to unfasten.

To fasten your seat belt, insert the metal fitting into the buckle and adjust the strap to fit low and snug on your lap and simply lift the buckle release to unfasten.

What I tell you?

MONARCH

I don't fly very often.

Please take a moment and locate the two exits closet to you at this time.

PETRUSHKA

No? I think it's the best way to travel personally.

Should cabin pressure drop while in flight oxygen compartments will automatically open in the panels above your head. Pull the mask to your face and this will begin the oxygen flow. Place the mask securely over your nose and mouth before helping you neighbor with their mask.

MONARCH

Even to the grocery store?

PETRUSHKA

Well no...Oh...Ha! That was funny. You got me. You got me.

Now sit back and relax we will be in the air shortly.

MONARCH

I missed what she said about the mask.

PETRUSHKA

Hey! Wait a minute. Don't I know you! Yes! I know you!

MONARCH

Uh...

PETRUSHKA

You're the librarian. Monarch right?

MONARCH

Y-yeah.

PETRUSHKA

I knew it! Never forget a face or a name!

MONARCH

Uh huh.

PETRUSHKA

I have a system. Cute guy who likes books. Books are really old. Old King Cole was a merry old soul. King. Monarch. I have a system.

MONARCH

That's very complicated.

PETRUSHKA

Steal trap up here. Wellwellwell fancy meeting you here. Look at that! HA! Synchronicity!

MONARCH

What?

PETRUSHKA

Synchronicity. Cowinkydink. I'm Petrushka. In case you forgot.

MONARCH

Oh right. You wanted the...Noir book.

PETRUSHKA

That's me! Mrs. Noir!

(Silence.)

MONARCH

That's an interesting name. Where's it come from?

PETRUSHKA

It's Russian.

MONARCH

Are you Russian?

PETRUSHKA

Half. My mother got knocked up while studying Pushkin in grad school.

MONARCH

Oh.

PETRUSHKA

Some bartender named Nikolai.

MONARCH

Uh huh.

PETRUSHKA

She said he had big hands...and you know what they say about men with big hands.

PETRUSHKA

They make excellent basketball
players...that's right.

MONARCH

Big....gloves?

PETRUSHKA

I always say to myself, I say, "Petrushka...girlfriend...sisterwoman...you need to write a book."
Right!? I should right? I should write a book. Then they can make it into a movie. Punch it up
with some car chases and iron curtain spying! Who you think should play me in the movie?

MONARCH

...I don't know.

PETRUSHKA

Somebody hot! But smart. With nice legs. Like that girl on the show about models that
moonlight as private eyes. The caramel colored one. Her. Boom! She should play me!

MONARCH

Sounds like you have a plan.

(The flight attendant enters. She has a very sweet southern accent. Monarch is
startled by her.)

MONARCH

Oh my god.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Are you all right suga?

MONARCH

Yes...I'm sorry, you...you remind me of someone.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

I get that a lot. Familiar face. Can I get you something to drink?

MONARCH

Wha...

(conspiratorially, sotto voce)

We haven't taken off yet.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

(mimicking his conspiratorial inflection, sotto voce)

I can get you a beverage before we take off, sir.

MONARCH

Really?

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Indeeeee. We have sodas, an assortment of juices. Fine spirits, wine and beer.

MONARCH

Oh...water. Please.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Alright...

MONARCH

Thank you.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

And you ma'am?

PETRUSHKA

Gin and Tonic. And uh...Cancel his water. Give him a whiskey. Whatever kind you have.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Good idea.

MONARCH

I don't really drink--

PETRUSHKA

--Sure you do. On him.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Of course. Right back.

MONARCH

No wait could you--

(She's gone)

PETRUSHKA

Guess you'll have to drink the damn thing now. Soooooo, I always wanted to vist Philadelphia. So I decide! Hey girl! Just go! I've never been.

No? MONARCH

No. PETRUSHKA

Ah. MONARCH

Still not a big talker I see. PETRUSHKA

(Monarch offers a weak smile and then knits up his brow again. Looks away from Petrushka. They sit in silence. As long as possible. It should be painful. Fill this time with as much uncomfortable business as humanly possible. In spite of this being excruciating it should also be full of sexual tension. Maybe Monarch reads, Maybe Petrushka whistles Vivaldi, Maybe Monarch looks out of the window, Maybe Petrushka fans her self with the magazine. In fact. Do all of those. Yeah. I like that. The Flight Attendant brings the drinks.)

Here you are. And you ma'am. FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Thank ya /kindly. PETRUSHKA /Yes. Thank you. MONARCH

You're welcome. FLIGHT ATTENDANT

(Flight attendant exits.)

Drink. PETRUSHKA

(Monarch does so. One gulp.)

Better? PETRUSHKA

Ahhhhhh yes. MONARCH
(The whiskey burns)

Good. You looked like you needed a drink. PETRUSHKA

MONARCH

High strung...I guess.

PETRUSHKA

You know...you're more likely to get struck by lightning than to die in a plane crash.

MONARCH

What?!

PETRUSHKA

It's true! Fun fact. So...what's taking you to Philadelphia?

MONARCH

My mother died last night.

PETRUSHKA

Oh.

MONARCH

There's a funeral. Well...there's gonna...there will be--

PETRUSHKA

--I see.

MONARCH

I have to go...I don't have any siblings I have to try to plan--

PETRUSHKA

--Want a date?

(Silence)

MONARCH

Yeah.

PETRUSHKA

(Monarch holds a stack of letters. He does not respond.)

Your mother has really nice things. Oooooo Look at these! I've never seen so many Ebony and Jet magazines in my life. So many Newport ads and Beauties of the Week. So black. You're mother is very negro-dian.

MONARCH

Most black people in the 80's were.

PETRUSHKA

...touché.... What did you find?

MONARCH

Trinkets. Baubles. Stuff. These letters. There's like a whole stack of letters.

PETRUSHKA

Oooooooh like love letters. Are they from like a secret lover?

MONARCH

They're from my father.

PETRUSHKA

Oh. That's nice.

MONARCH

No.

PETRUSHKA

No? You've never seen them before?

MONARCH

...No... He wasn't...I've never met him.

PETRUSHKA

Really?

MONARCH

No. My mother said he was far away...

PETRUSHKA

But he wrote letters?

MONARCH

She...she must have kept them...

PETRUSHKA

What the address?

(He hands her the envelope.)

PETRUSHKA

Oh.

MONARCH

Yeah.

Wow.
PETRUSHKA

She lied.
MONARCH

All parents lie.
PETRUSHKA

Not my mother.
MONARCH

You don't really believe that right?
PETRUSHKA

I don't know what I believe.
MONARCH

Kesi Jaffa.
PETRUSHKA

Didn't even know his name. She never told me.
MONARCH

What are you going to do?
PETRUSHKA

What do you mean?
MONARCH

Don't you want to know who he is?
PETRUSHKA

I'm not sure.
MONARCH

Know what I'd do?
PETRUSHKA

What?
MONARCH

PETRUSHKA
I would find his ass and do this: "Yo Pop...where the hell you been. I been lookin' for you my whole life and where you at? Huh? I can't even deal with you right now. I can't believe this! You

just dropped the ball, dawg! Left me and my moms high and dry, playa! I'm yo' son! How you just gonna leave me?"

MONARCH

Are you drunk?

PETRUSHKA

Was trying to cut the awkward moment with humor. Successful?

MONARCH

...Mildly...

PETRUSHKA

Well. That's something.

(Petrushka keeps reading. Same as before. Esther appears. August 1985. She sings a little song.)

ESTHER

*I love you. A bushel and a peck
A bushel and a peck and a hug around the neck*

MONARCH

*A hug around the neck and a barrel and heap.
A barrel and a heap and I'm talking in my sleep.*

PETRUSHKA

What's that?

MONARCH

Little song. Can't get it out of my head.

PETRUSHKA

You know how you get a song out of your head?

MONARCH

How?

PETRUSHKA

Finish singing it.

ESTHER

*'Cause I love you a bushel and a peck
You bet your purdy neck I do
A doodle oodle ooh doo
A doodle oodle oodle ooh doo*

Night baby.

(ESTHER turns off the light)

MONARCH

Why come I ain't got no daddy?

(ESTHER turns the light back on)

ESTHER

That's a fool question.

MONARCH

You said there are no stupid questions.

ESTHER

I said it was a *fool* question. Which it is. You're here are you not?

MONARCH

Yes.

ESTHER

I've told you about the birds and the bees haven't I?

MONARCH

Yes ma'am.

ESTHER

You know it takes two to make one, yes?

MONARCH

Yes ma'am.

ESTHER

So how is it that you think you don't have a father?

MONARCH

He ain't here.

ESTHER

No, he's not. I'm not good enough for you?

MONARCH

I didn't say that.

Well then say what you mean.

ESTHER

Where is he?

MONARCH

He's not here.

ESTHER

Where is he?

MONARCH

The Moon.

ESTHER
(A beat. Then a lie)

What?

MONARCH

You seen those pictures of the men that landed on the moon? Before you were born?

ESTHER

Yeah.

MONARCH

Yes...not yeah.

ESTHER

Yes.

MONARCH

There. He one of them.

ESTHER

That's not true.

MONARCH

Yes it is. He the one that drive the space ship...like how Zebulon drives the 14 bus.

ESTHER

Really?

MONARCH

Would I lie to you?

ESTHER

MONARCH

You lie to the gas company, and the power company, and to--

ESTHER

--Alright now...I'm not lying about this. He was...on a...mission.

MONARCH

A mission?

ESTHER

(Deeper lie. No turning back.)

That's right. He was a...He was going to...talk to the Moon men...about...how to live...better.

MONARCH

So...what happened to him.

ESTHER

He...got...stuck there...

MONARCH

How do you know?

ESTHER

...Cause he never came back, that's how...

MONARCH

He still there?

(beat...then)

ESTHER

Far as I know he is.

MONARCH

What happened to him?

ESTHER

Monarch please leave me alone about this. I have enough on my--

MONARCH

--Terrell at school say I'm a bastard.

ESTHER

Watch your mouth.

MONARCH

Am I?

ESTHER

Tell Terrell to mind his own business 'fore I'm come down there and mind it for him.

MONARCH

So I'm not?

ESTHER

No.

MONARCH

So tell me why he not here.

(A beat.)

ESTHER

These space men...

MONARCH

Astronauts.

(The Astronaut enters. He looks around. He brings a kind of white noise with him. He explores. Perhaps he examines the boy and his mother. Perhaps he examines the audience. Perhaps he does a dance. Perhaps he moves set pieces. Perhaps he does all of the above....yes....that's it. He does all of the above.)

ESTHER

Yes...Astronauts. Landed in that big ditch in the middle of the....Lunar Mountain range. The space capsule landed....tumbling down, it spilled it's contents. One of the astronauts was a man with hair like yours and eyes like yours and lips, thick, like yours. The man stood among piles of rocks and long canals of milky way water. His space suit was silvery and white in the distant sunlight of his own galaxy. He wondered "can I breath in this air." Unlocking the latch. He lifted his helmet, breathed in. This place reserved room for the living.

MONARCH

If he never came back...how you know that happened?

ESTHER

He put...a message...in a coke cola bottle and let the great sky carry it down to me.

MONARCH

Really?

ESTHER

Yes Monarch! Sailors, stranded on desert islands would put messages in bottles and throw them in the ocean. Hoping they would find a lost love or anybody that could save them. Space is like a big black ocean between here and there.

MONARCH
(Slightly skeptical)

Go on.

ESTHER
Thank you...now...uh...oh yes...His helmet in his hands, looking around at the dented pot-marked orb, he dipped his hand into the cool water and sipped.

MONARCH
There's water on the moon?

ESTHER
Are you gonna let me tell you this story or what?

MONARCH
Go on.

ESTHER
A long mournful sip, that he could feel from his lips to the bottom of his stomach. He said to himself:

ESTHER AND ASTRONAUT
"This is how satiation must feel."

ESTHER
Alright. Now you need to go to bed.

(The Astronaut exit)

MONARCH
Tell me some more?

ESTHER
No-now...you gotta go to sleep, child.

MONARCH
That a true story?

ESTHER
Yes...Yes.

MONARCH

Well...how he get there?

ESTHER

You know those space shuttles the astronauts shoot up to the sky in?

MONARCH

Yes ma'am.

ESTHER

Well...that's how.

MONARCH

I wanna be like him when I grow up.

ESTHER

(knowingly...huge history)

Maybe you can bring him home.

MONARCH

More. Just a little bit more.

ESTHER

Then you have to go to bed.

MONARCH

Yes Ma'am.

ESTHER

MmmKay. Where was I? Oh yes. His throat was a hollow deep deep hole that burrowed it's way from his head to his belly and landed, like a clap of thunder, on the bottom of his guts. Night now. Night baby. Mommy loves you. I do.

MONARCH

I know.

ESTHER

Night now.

(ESTHER recedes into the dark. Her silhouette looks on.)

MONARCH

Night Momma.

(ESTHER turns off the light. Petrushka watches Monarch.)

MONARCH

Look at that moon.

PETRUSHKA

It's so close to the earth tonight.

MONARCH

Beautiful.

PETRUSHKA

It's almost like you could take a boat over and jump up on to it.

MONARCH

And yet...it's so very far way.

PETRUSHKA

I think you should find your father.

MONARCH

Would you?

PETRUSHKA

Sure. But...You know...I do things like that.

MONARCH

I know everything there is to know about the moon.

PETRUSHKA

Oh! That...weird. Why?

MONARCH

When I was little she told me my father was on the moon.

PETRUSHKA

Oh my god I love your mother.

MONARCH

So I started learning everything there was to learn about the moon. About how the lunar landing happened. I was going to get to him! There was proof that you could go there so I wanted to get to him.

PETRUSHKA

Monarch that's beautiful.

MONARCH

Billions of years ago...when the earth was just a baby planet, another smaller planet collided with the earth. Just smashed right into it. And it vaporized the earth. Just turned it into a big mass of

hot hot gas. I imagine the molten mass being pulled back together from the pull of gravity. Cooling itself and making itself again after the fall out. The detritus of the collision mending and healing. This broken orb looking for its balance and orbit. From the debris...a smaller orb formed. It was so close to earth at first. Spinning so closely that it could almost touched the boiling seas. Over time the two orbs learned to live further and further apart but still drawing and pulling on the other. The moon is a part of earth and we are all moon men. Looking for home. The Moon. That's the story I want to believe. That's what I remember. That's what I believe in.

PETRUSHKA

That's a pretty thought. But it's not real.

MONARCH

(lightly sings)

*You bet your purdy neck I do
A doodle oodle ooh doo
A doodle oodle oodle ooh doo*

PETRUSHKA

Why don't you try to find him.

MONARCH

I'm not going to the moon.

PETRUSHKA

No negro...your father.

MONARCH

No.

PETRUSHKA

Chicken.

MONARCH

Did you just call me a chicken?

PETRUSHKA

...Yeah.

MONARCH

What are we 2 year olds?

PETRUSHKA

Are you hungry? I wanna dance!

MONARCH

We are 2 year olds.

PETRUSHKA

Come on show me what you got.

MONARCH

What?

PETRUSHKA

Let's dance. Whole stack of records over there. Pick one. Put it on. Come dance with me.

MONARCH

I don't really dance.

PETRUSHKA

Yeah you do. Let's see...Harold Melvin and the Blue Notes? Big Maybelle. Ooooo that's just greasy. I love it! Uhhhhh...Coltrane? Not really dance music is it.

MONARCH

I don't really want to--

PETRUSHKA

--Carlos Santana? Your momma got good taste!

MONARCH

You're pushy.

PETRUSHKA

Yes. Oh snap...The Pointer Sisters. Big hair and big voices!

MONARCH

I love them.

PETRUSHKA

See...

MONARCH

What kind of dancing?

PETRUSHKA

(finds the perfect album)

Ha! Goooooooooot iiiiiiiiiiit! Chaka Khan.

MONARCH

No.

PETRUSHKA

Yes.

(Petrushka places the album on the turntable. The crackle. Then gently...The music begins to play.)

PETRUSHKA

Come here.

MONARCH

I can two step.

PETRUSHKA

All you need, baby.

(They slowly turn in place. Very middle school dance. Stiff. Sweet.)

PETRUSHKA

See. Not so bad.

MONARCH

You're leading.

PETRUSHKA

Someone's got too.

MONARCH

I guess I should.

PETRUSHKA

That's fine with me.

MONARCH

Alright.

(he does)

There.

(beat)

Feels the same.

PETRUSHKA

It should.

MONARCH

Right.

PETRUSHKA

And you said you couldn't dance.

MONARCH

I can't.

PETRUSHKA

But-cha-are Blanche. Cha-are dancin'.

MONARCH

You're kinda crazy.

PETRUSHKA

Nuts.

MONARCH

I've brought a crazy woman home to my mother's house.

PETRUSHKA

Better than a boring woman.

MONARCH

She would clean to this record.

PETRUSHKA

Yeah?

MONARCH

Oh yeah.

PETRUSHKA

Coolest mom on the planet. You had the hot mom didn't you?

MONARCH

...yeah...

PETRUSHKA

I can tell. I did too. She would pick me up from school in her red mustang in a leopard catsuit that looked like it had be painted on.

MONARCH

Oh.

PETRUSHKA

Obsessed with Marilyn Monroe. She had a beauty mark tattooed on her face.

MONARCH

Wow.

PETRUSHKA

She was something else.

MONARCH

Where is she?

PETRUSHKA

She uh...she passed away when I was in high school. Been on my own really ever since.

MONARCH

I'm sorry.

PETRUSHKA

Hey...Parents die.

MONARCH

You're never...uh...prepared for it...I...uh guess.

PETRUSHKA

Tell me about her?

MONARCH

About my mother?

PETRUSHKA

Yeah.

MONARCH

I'm uh...We don't need to talk about her.

PETRUSHKA

Why not?

MONARCH

She was a mom. You know.

PETRUSHKA

Ah...

MONARCH

Yeah.

PETRUSHKA

Well...I'm here. If you wanna tell me more you know.

(Petrushka dances by her self. Monarch stands alone. Esther enters singing along to the song.)

MONARCH

Why that song make you sad?

ESTHER

Get on out of here boy.

MONARCH

Please. Can I watch?

ESTHER

Fine. But stay out my way I'm cleaning.

MONARCH

Keep singing.

ESTHER

You got me self conscious!

MONARCH

What's that mean...self...con...

ESTHER

You know how you don't like doing your Christmas speech in front of the whole church?

MONARCH

Yeah.

ESTHER

It's like that.

MONARCH

Oh.

ESTHER

Pass me that Ajax.

(He does so. The song switches to something up tempo and fun.)

ESTHER

Oh that's my song! Turn that up!

(she hums along)
Come dance with your momma!

MONARCH

Mooooooooooooooooo!

ESTHER

Come on now! Shake a leg!

MONARCH

Okay.

(He shakes a leg. Sort of)

ESTHER

That is a son of mine! Look at you! Go'on Boy! Go! Go! Go! Go! Go!

(He gets lost in this. Dancing and dancing and dancing. He comes back to himself. He stops the record player. The following scene is split between the two women in the room. He is talking both to Petrushka and his mother.)

PETRUSHKA

Hey...I...what's wrong?

MONARCH

(To Petrushka)

There uh...there was something I...

PETRUSHKA

Yes?

(Quickly. Another day. Esther takes his focus.)

ESTHER

Boy you not dressed? We gonna be late.

MONARCH

Yes.

PETRUSHKA

Something you?

ESTHER

Well come on! You gotta get to school.

MONARCH

Yes Ma'am.

ESTHER

Did you do your homework?

MONARCH

Yes Ma'am.

ESTHER

Lemme see it.

MONARCH

I did it.

ESTHER

Let. Me. See it.

(Monarch hands her a notebook from his back pocket.)

MONARCH

(to Petrushka)

Something I want to...say.

PETRUSHKA

Okay.

MONARCH

Something I needed to do...

PETRUSHKA

Hey...

MONARCH

Something I was supposed to do you know?

PETRUSHKA

Something you wanted to say to me?

MONARCH

No.

ESTHER

Lord child...you got this all balled up in your back pocket. Have those teachers thinking I don't teach you how to---

(ESTHER looks through the book. Concerned and then annoyed.)

ESTHER

What is this?

MONARCH

My Homework.

(to Petrushka)

Something I didn't get a chance to...say.

PETRUSHKA

Something you wanted to say to her?

MONARCH

We were supposed to write a family history.

ESTHER

But...this isn't--

MONARCH

--That's what you told me.

ESTHER

Lord have mercy. I know what I told you--You can't turn this in. They gonna think you crazy.

MONARCH

Makes sense to me.

ESTHER

No boy.

MONARCH

(to Petrushka)

Yes.

PETRUSHKA

What?

MONARCH

You ever want to tell someone something and can't remember it. Like it just escapes your mind.
Like it just flies away.

PETRUSHKA

All the time.

MONARCH

I can't remember.

PETRUSHKA

You never told me your mother's name.

MONARCH

What?

PETRUSHKA

What's your mother's name?

MONARCH

Esther.

PETRUSHKA

The queen names her son king.

MONARCH

What?

ESTHER

I'll write a note to your teacher and tell her you didn't get a chance to finish your work.

MONARCH

Why?

ESTHER

Because I don't want you telling stories to your teacher.

MONARCH

You are.

ESTHER

I don't have time for this. Fix yourself, get your lunch, we gotta go.

MONARCH

Can I have my notebook back?

ESTHER

No.

MONARCH

Why?

ESTHER

Ask me WHY one more time and see what happens! Go on now!

MONARCH
Yes ma'am.

ESTHER
I'll give it to you when you get home.

MONARCH
Yes Ma'am.

ESTHER
What am I gonna do with you?

MONARCH
He ever gonna come back?

ESTHER
Wha--No...

MONARCH
That make you sad?

ESTHER
No. Does it make you sad?

MONARCH
Sometimes.

ESTHER
Here's your milk money. Buy milk and not junk food.

MONARCH
Ok.

(ESTHER puts on her coat. She gives Monarch his coat.)

ESTHER
Button up. It's cold out there.

MONARCH
(to Petrushka)
I'll be back. Going for a walk.

PETRUSHKA
Alright.

(Petrushka exits)

ESTHER

Come on now!

MONARCH

Yes ma'am. So what else happened to the spacemen?

ESTHER

Monarch, baby...I can't keep telling you stories you too big...

MONARCH

Tell me while we walk.

ESTHER

Fine. Hustle your butt. Let me see...

(Monarch walks. The moon consumes the stage. The Astronaut enters. He has his helmets on. He cross down. He look around.)

ASTRONAUT

Where's the shuttle?

(Beat)

Where's...the...Shuttle?

It was right here.

Uh...how many paces did I walk?

(He thinks back over his steps.)

22.

Should be right here.

Maybe I got turned around or something.

(He looks around a bit.)

Nah. See right there. Those dancing foot prints?

Yeah that's me man. It was right here.

Do you think...?

(Considers)

No.

(Realization. He has been left.)

I think they split.

HELLO!!!! HELLO!!!!

Ain't that a--

(Astronaut starts laughing uncontrollably. Partly out of fear)

This is just great!

Man they probably laughing they asses off.

They'll send someone back to get me. Easy mistake to make. Right?

Oh yeah. It's real easy to leave the only brotha on the SPACE SHIP!

ON THE MOON!

That's real easy!

That's that everyday shit like forgetting your keys!

(He paces)

Oh no...no no no nononononono. This can't be happening. I gotta get back to my kid.
There's a box. They left a box!

(He goes to the box. Inside is some old books. Some clothes. And a note.
Astronaut reads the note.)

"Back in 15." Back in 15. Is that code?

15 what? 15 minutes, days, years!

Come ON man!

This cannot be happening. I'm a dead man.

I can't breathe I can't breathe!

No plants, no oxygen right.

I should be dead! No oxygen on the damn moon!

Unless...

I'm not really here.

(Esther enters)

ESTHER

*I love you a bushel and a peck
A bushel and a peck and a hug around the neck*

ASTRONAUT

Esther?

ESTHER

*I love you. A bushel and peck.
You betcha prudy neck I do.*

ASTRONAUT

Is that you baby?

(Esther enters. Late 70's. Philadelphia. Astronaut sees Esther. He is now
Monarch's father.)

ASTRONAUT

Hello.

ESTHER

Oh Hey.

ASTRONAUT

I know you don't I?

I don't know.

ESTHER

Where you go to school?

ASTRONAUT

I go to Truman High.

ESTHER

Where?

ASTRONAUT

Truman!

ESTHER

Oh I go to Chandler. Man you're pretty! I need to make you my wife.

ASTRONAUT

Do you now?

ESTHER

Before some other boy snatch you up.

ASTRONAUT

I'm gonna be a teacher.

ESTHER

What you gonna teach?

ASTRONAUT

Math.

ESTHER

Look at you! We gonna have some smart kids. You the smartest and prettiest girl I ever seen.

ASTRONAUT

I'm not all that pretty. And for all you know I could be--

ESTHER

--don't do that.

ASTRONAUT

Do what?

ESTHER

ASTRONAUT

Plenty of people standing in line to tell you what they think of you. You don't have to do that. And you are pretty! Prettiest girl here.

ESTHER

My sister told me about you.

ASTRONAUT

Who's your sister?

ESTHER

Caroline Taylor. She say you were in her class. In high school. She was a year ahead of you.

ASTRONAUT

Oh yeah, I know you're sister.

ESTHER

Uh huh. She say you're trouble.

ASTRONAUT

I'm not that bad.

ESTHER

Don't seem to be.

ASTRONAUT

I'm gonna kiss you.

ESTHER

...all right...

(He does so. Esther gives in...then...is overcome with giggles.)

ASTRONAUT

What?

ESTHER

Real sloppy kiss.

ASTRONAUT

Oh...

ESTHER

It's fine.

ASTRONAUT

Didn't like it?

ESTHER

I didn't say that.

ASTRONAUT

You believe in love at first sight?

ESTHER

I--

ASTRONAUT

--I wanna see you again

ESTHER

I could do that--

ASTRONAUT

--You ever kissed anybody before?

ESTHER

Not really. Neighborhood boy. Just once.

ASTRONAUT

You could practice on me.

ESTHER

(Laughing)

Is that right?

ASTRONAUT

Sure! I don't mind.

ESTHER

I guess I could teach you a few things.

ASTRONAUT

So you gonna be the teacher for me too.

ESTHER.

Would you learn from me?

ASTRONAUT

Yes.

(He kisses her again. The two separate. The Astronaut exits. Monarch enters.
Esther looks to Monarch.)

MONARCH

The dreamer gets to see all this beauty.

ESTHER

Monarch.

MONARCH

Yes ma'am?

ESTHER

I gotta go.

MONARCH

No.

ESTHER

I'll be back in the morning.

MONARCH

I don't want you to go.

ESTHER

Monarch.

MONARCH

Don't.

ESTHER

You won't even know I'm gone.

MONARCH

It's really scary when you leave. You're always leaving.

ESTHER

No I'm not.

MONARCH

Yes you are!

ESTHER

Watch your tone Monarch.

MONARCH

You're a liar.

(This stuns Esther. She begins to leave. This is not easy but she does it)

MONARCH

Wait. Wait no. I'm sorry. I...I didn't mean that. I'm sorry.

(Petrushka enters)

MONARCH

She's gone.

PETRUSHKA

Sit. I'll sit with you.

MONARCH

Alright.

(There is a silence.)

PETRUSHKA

How old do you think your father is now?

MONARCH

I don't know.

PETRUSHKA

You can see him.

MONARCH

But...

PETRUSHKA

Just go man.

MONARCH

You don't--

PETRUSHKA

--Just go.

MONARCH

I'm not sure I want to.

PETRUSHKA

It's like she's trying to...hell I don't know...guide you from the other side!

MONARCH

She didn't want me to know him...and I don't want to know him either.

PETRUSHKA

Yeah you do.

MONARCH

You don't really know me.

PETRUSHKA

I know people.

MONARCH

Huh.

PETRUSHKA

Shhhh. Hear that?

MONARCH

What?

PETRUSHKA

That sound?

MONARCH

I don't know.

PETRUSHKA

Quiet.

(beat)

MONARCH

Can I lay my head in your lap?

PETRUSHKA

Rest.

(On the Moon. The Astronaut enters. He sits.)

ASTRONAUT

Captains log. Day 859...Not getting any older
The days are weird here.
There is no blue sky...
Just surrounded by darkness
I can see the earth from here.
Big beautiful bright jewel spinning
Spinning in a sea of space.
Saw a comet today.
It was a lovely moment
It pulled across the sky
And for a few illuminated minutes
I wasn't alone.

I think about my son a lot here.
The isolation
It makes the brain play tricks.
It is not good for man to be alone.
I'm not made for this solitude.
I'm designed to love and be held.
That's why I keep trying...
Keep talking...
Even if no one is listening.

I'll keep trying to be heard.
My son...
He's probably starting school today.

I know he's gonna be bright.
Like his momma.

(Esther enters.)

ESTHER

What you sitting in her in the dark for?

(Lights switch on to the past. Astronaut is holding his face. He has been injured)

ASTRONAUT

Don't turn on the ligh--

ESTHER

--What on earth happened to your face?

ASTRONAUT

It's nothing.

ESTHER

Let me see.

(He shows his face)

Jesus man.

ASTRONAUT

It...It just happened so fast. They came from out of no where.

ESTHER

Who?

ASTRONAUT

The police.

ESTHER

...Cops?

ASTRONAUT

I need to hide or something. I need somewhere to go.

ESTHER

What did you do?

ASTRONAUT

You don't need to know.

ESTHER

I think I do.

(Blue lights flash by)

ASTRONAUT

I'm in a lot of trouble.

ESTHER

What you been doing?

ASTRONAUT

Stay out of it!

ESTHER

No. You wanna stay up in my house and you got the police chasing you and you don't wanna tell me what I'm harboring?

ASTRONAUT

I'm making things happen for us. You gotta make hard...you gotta do things you don't wanna-

ESTHER

--I know that talk. Not in in this house. You take that ill dealing back out to the street.

ASTRONAUT

How you think I was able to afford all them nice dinners and that fine ring you wearing.

ESTHER

Don't bring it here! That was the deal—we—you don't bring that dirt here.

ASTRONAUT

You gonna act like you're clean/ here? Like you didn't--

ESTHER

/I am. Now you got to get on out of here.

(She removes her ring and tosses it to The Astronaut)

You take that and get on out of here.

ASTRONAUT

This my house.

ESTHER

Not anymore. Go on.

ASTRONAUT

You can't—

ESTHER

—Go. Lock the door behind you and put the key in the mail slot.

(Esther exit. The Astronaut stands shocked for a moment. He looks at the ring.)

MONARCH

I wanted to kiss you.

PETRUSHKA

I know. Seemed like as good a moment as any.

MONARCH

I couldn't.

PETRUSHKA

I gathered that.

MONARCH

I don't kiss people very much.

PETRUSHKA

I see.

MONARCH

Could I now?

PETRUSHKA

Yes.

(He does so. Petrushka giggles.)

MONARCH

Did I do it wrong?

PETRUSHKA

It's wet.

MONARCH

Oh.

PETRUSHKA

You are something out of a movie Monarch.

MONARCH

So are you.

PETRUSHKA

Tomorrow would you like me to go with you?

MONARCH

Yes.

PETRUSHKA

Okay.

(Petrushka exits. Monarch sits. Esther enters with a book reading a loud. The Astronaut see her...They know each other.)

ESTHER

“Now stop!” Max said and sent the wild things off to bed without their supper.”
(She see’s him and closes the book)

ASTRONAUT

Hey...Listen...

ESTHER

Don’t talk to me.

ASTRONAUT

You don’t understand.

ESTHER

Oh no I understand.

ASTRONAUT

I had to do this.

ESTHER

You don’t have to do anything you don’t wanna do.

ASTRONAUT

You ain’t never had a dream? I’m trying to make life good for us. You know how much money I can make. Dream big!

ESTHER

You’re my dream, man.

ASTRONAUT

I can’t be that.

ESTHER

It’s fine. It’s gonna be fine.

ASTRONAUT

What’s that?

ESTHER

A book.

(She reads to the “baby”)

“And Max the king of all wild things was lonely and wanted to be where someone loved him best of all.”

ASTRONAUT

What you doing?

ESTHER

They say it's good to read to the baby.

ASTRONAUT

Baby?

ESTHER

Yes.

ASTRONAUT

You're--

(She reads more. He is apoplectic.)

ESTHER

—" Then all around from far away across the world he smelled good things to eat so he gave up being king of where the wild things are."

ASTRONAUT

Do you even want to know what I think?

ESTHER

You do what you want...I do what I want. I know what you think.

(She tries to refind her place in the book)

"Now stop!" Max said and sent the wild things off to bed without their supper. And Max the king of all wild things was lonely and -- No I've read that part already.

ASTRONAUT

I can't have a baby right now?

ESTHER

See how you just said *I*. It's not gonna be you. It's gonna be me.

ASTRONAUT

Well I guess your mind is made up...

ESTHER

It is. You don't have to worry I'm not gonna ask you for--

ASTRONAUT

--I would take care of my own.

ESTHER

Right. How many babies you gotta kill to take care of your own. You a man, right! How many lives you gotta mess up? You're killing us and you don't care. I don't want nothing you giving.

I ain't killing nobody--
ASTRONAUT

—It's done.
ESTHER

I'm sorry.
ASTRONAUT

No you're not. You don't lose anything.
ESTHER

You happy?
ASTRONAUT

I'm not sad.
ESTHER

Well...there it is.
ASTRONAUT

Yes.
ESTHER

I love you. You know that right?
ASTRONAUT

I want to love you.
ESTHER

You don't no more?
ASTRONAUT

I'm waiting.
ESTHER

To love me?
ASTRONAUT

No...For you to disappear.
ESTHER

For me to--
ASTRONAUT

ESTHER

--It's fine. I know you will. They gonna take you out of here one day.

ASTRONAUT

...I'm not going to disappear.

ESTHER

You will.

ASTRONAUT

We...we oughta name him something special.

ESTHER

Him? Could be a girl.

ASTRONAUT

Nah. It's a boy. I can feel it.

ESTHER

You sound stupid.

ASTRONAUT

Mark my words.

ESTHER

Whatever man.

ASTRONAUT

We gotta name him something big. Something that matters.

ESTHER

Like?

ASTRONAUT

Name him Monarch.

ESTHER

No

ASTRONAUT

What's wrong with that name?

ESTHER

I don't like it.

ASTRONAUT

It's classy. Sound like a white boy's name. Means he can get a job. My momma named me one of them slave sounding names.

ESTHER

Yes she did.

ASTRONAUT

Kenyatta?

ESTHER

I ain't gonna say nothing.

ASTRONAUT

Strong African Name.

ESTHER

Says who? Just cause it's got Kenya in it...don't make it African.

ASTRONAUT

Shango?

ESTHER

Mmm.

ASTRONAUT

Patrice.

ESTHER

That's a girls name.

ASTRONAUT

Like Patrice Lumumba.

ESTHER

I like Lumumba better than Patrice.

ASTRONAUT

Fine. What bright ideas do you have?

ESTHER

I don't know. Your name?

ASTRONAUT

I hate my name. Name him Monarch

ESTHER

...Why you so hung up on that name?

ASTRONAUT

So I know him when he come looking for me.

(Lights out on Esther and the Astronaut. Lights up on Monarch and Petrushka in the funeral home. The caskets are tiny miniature versions. Like doll caskets.)

MONARCH

When I die I wanna be rolled up in a carpet wearing a three piece tweed suit and tossed in the middle of the ocean. I hate flowers and all perishable forms of affection. I hate mourning. I hate funerals and dead bodies. Funeral homes are like country clubs for black folks.

PETRUSHKA

I think it's all very peaceful.

MONARCH

You can't romanticize burying someone.

PETRUSHKA

Yes you can. Look at this.

MONARCH

This is ghoulish.

PETRUSHKA

It's got a light inside.

MONARCH

What does a dead person need with a light.

PETRUSHKA

Or this one! Check it. Wall to wall velvet lining, mahogany finish, with a memento and keepsake box.

MONARCH

Ghastly.

PETRUSHKA

Half off on granite head stones.

MONARCH

I don't know where to bury her. She doesn't have a—

PETRUSHKA

Did she go to church?

MONARCH

Wasn't really the church going type.

PETRUSHKA

(Pointing to a casket)

Wait a minute. Look. At. This! I like this one.

MONARCH

It looks like a Cadillac.

PETRUSHKA

Got something against Cadillacs?

MONARCH

I'm not burying my mother in a car.

(The funeral director enters. He is smartly dressed. Kind of creepy. This guy digs funerals.)

FUNERAL GUY

Oh my goodness. So sorry to keep you waiting. This has been a particularly high traffic day.

PETRUSHKA

Lot of death and dying huh?

FUNERAL GUY

Yeeeeesssss...You're daaaaaark. I like that.

PETRUSHKA

You're welcome.

FUNERAL GUY

Mmmmm.

MONARCH

It's fine. We weren't waiting that long.

FUNERAL GUY

So...our sympathy is with you and your family at this time of lost.

MONARCH

Oh...She's--

PETRUSHKA

--Thank you.

FUNERAL GUY

Would you like services in a church or...?--

MONARCH

--Oh...here is fine. Yes? It will just be myself and--

PETRUSHKA

--Just the two of us.

(She takes MONARCH's hand. MONARCH bristle...but...really dawg...he digs it.)

FUNERAL GUY

Something small and tasteful. Lovely.

MONARCH

Well it's not like a wedding.

FUNERAL GUY

Beg pardon?

MONARCH

We're not planning a nuptial here. This is my mother's funeral.

FUNERAL GUY

I know...this is a funeral home.

MONARCH

Well you're using wedding planning language.

FUNERAL GUY

I...am?

MONARCH

How many "tasteful and lovely" funerals have you been too?

FUNERAL GUY

Quite a few actually.

What he means to say is--

PETRUSHKA

--I know what I'm saying--

MONARCH

--Right. Of course whatever you want. Did your mother have any special request?

FUNERAL GUY

...Not that I know of...

MONARCH

What's her favorite flower? Colors? Music she loved?

FUNERAL GUY

Oh. I...I'm not...She used to like daisies.

MONARCH

Lovely....uh....I mean...perfect.

FUNERAL GUY

She wore a lot of green.

MONARCH

Yes.

FUNERAL GUY

And grey.

MONARCH

Right.

FUNERAL GUY.

And purple.

MONARCH

Great!

PETRUSHKA

Right.

MONARCH

FUNERAL GUY

This is all very good information.

MONARCH

Ooooooh wait!

FUNERAL GUY

Yes?

MONARCH

Magic in his eyes.

FUNERAL GUY

She loved Chaka Khan. You would want one of Chaka Khan's song sung at the services?

PETRUSHKA

Soooooo many "s"s.

MONARCH

Yes.

FUNERAL GUY

I see.

PETRUSHKA

Cookout music at a funeral?

MONARCH

It's not cookout music.

FUNERAL GUY

It sort of is.

MONARCH

It was her favorite song.

PETRUSHKA

My favorite song is "Smells Like Teen Spirit" do I want it sung at my funeral? No!

MONARCH

It's not your funeral.

FUNERAL GUY

How about “Come ye Disconsolate?”

PETRUSHKA

I love that song.

FUNERAL GUY

Me too.

MONARCH.

No. “Magic in his Eyes”

FUNERAL GUY

Very well. Do you have a...soloist in mind?

MONARCH

Oh. No.

FUNERAL GUY

Well I happen to know this back up singer for--

MONARCH

I'll sing.

F.G. AND PETRUSHKA

Can you sing?

MONARCH

Does it matter?

F.G. AND PETRUSHKA

Yes.

MONARCH

Fine...we can just play it.

PETRUSHKA

Good idea.

FUNERAL GUY

Then it's all settled. Did you decide on a casket?

MONARCH

This one.

Alright. But we also have—
FUNERAL GUY

That one..
MONARCH

It is an option.
FUNERAL GUY

I've made up my mind..
MONARCH

Are you sure?
PETRUSHKA

(To Petrushka)
No...I don't know.
(To Funeral Guy)

Yes.

Terrific...I mean...very well.
FUNERAL GUY

Yes. Where...Flowers. Do you have them here?
MONARCH

No. Families typically like to take care of that themselves. I have a florist you could work with.
He is wonderful and a good friend of mine.
FUNERAL GUY

Good.
MONARCH

Great. I'll be right back.
FUNERAL GUY

(Funeral Guy exits. Petrushka sits beside MONARCH.)

This is going to be very special.
PETRUSHKA

MONARCH

Yeah. Can you uh...can you give me a minute?

PETRUSHKA

Sure. I'll be just out in the lobby.

MONARCH

Thanks.

(FUNERAL GUY exits. Esther enters.)

ESTHER

You ready?

MONARCH

No.

ESTHER

Monarch.

MONARCH

I'm not going.

ESTHER

You have too.

MONARCH

Why?

ESTHER

Out of respect.

MONARCH

I don't wanna see him in no casket.

ESTHER

He would want you there.

MONARCH

No he wouldn't he would want me to remember him the way I last saw him.

ESTHER

Put on your suit and let's go. We gonna miss our bus.

MONARCH

Where did he go?

ESTHER

Who? Oh...he...he went to be with the Lord.

MONARCH

You're lying.

ESTHER

I beg your pardon? You will not--

MONARCH

--To be...with the Lord. Where is that?

ESTHER

Heaven.

MONARCH

Is that like where daddy is?

ESTHER

What?

MONARCH

Heaven. Is that the same place you send all the men that leave you.

ESTHER

We're going to pause...alright...I want you to think about who you're talking to son.

MONARCH

Answer me.

ESTHER

(mean)

No. That's some place different. Maybe I'll send you there.

MONARCH

Soooooo...Granddaddy could be on the moon too for all you know.

ESTHER

No. He's in heaven.

The Moon.
MONARCH

Heaven.
ESTHER

THE MOON!
MONARCH

Heaven!
ESTHER

The Moo--
MONARCH

ESTHER
--Shut up! My father is dead. You in here talking about the moon. Come back to earth boy! This is not some impossible story I told you! You too big for this! This is now. The truth. This moment! Stop acting like a child!

MONARCH
(Furious the kinds of yelling young boys do.)
I AM A CHILD!

ESTHER
(Stunned. Tenderly.)
You don't wanna go...stay here.

MONARCH
(Just mean)
Fine.

ESTHER
I miss him too, you know.

MONARCH
(Terrifically mean)
No you don't! You don't act like it. You don't care about anybody but yourself. Wish it was you.

ESTHER.
(Sweetly)
I'm gonna let you talk to me, like you ain't got no sense cause, I know you don't know what it is you're saying. You don't understand that words mean things yet. That people can be hurt by

words. That little thing they teach you at school...sticks and stone can break my bone. That's all bullshit. I'm gonna let you sit here alone and think about how what you just said to me, has changed this. Us. I ain't your momma no more I'm something else. Something you created with carelessness. You be angry. You scream and holler and be angry with me and be angry with God and who ever else you want. But you look me in my eyes and you know, that is the last, hear me, last opportunity you will ever have to hurt me. Cause I just sewed up that space in me that gave a damn about you.

(Esther glares at Monarch. Monarch slowly crosses to her and embraces her around the waist. As if he were a child. Esther embraces him back. All is mended)

MONARCH

You hate me?

ESTHER

No child. *That* would be impossible.

MONARCH

They all leave.

ESTHER

I will never go anywhere.

MONARCH

I'm sorry.

ESTHER

Stay here. I'll go.

MONARCH

No. I'll go.

(Petrushka enters. Esther exits. Perhaps they see each other. Maybe not.)

PETRUSHKA

You ready?

MONARCH

Yeah.

(Instantly we are transported to a flower shop. EPIC! Everything is covered in flora. The floor, the walls, the tables, the people. It should look like a garden. A man, 50's, enters. He is dressed immaculately. Pink. Lavender. Gorgeous. He floats about the flower shop...grabbing flowers, putting together a fabulous

arrangement. Note: there must be hydraindas in the arrangement...just cause I said so. This is FLOWER Guy. Monarch stand in the doorway.)

MONARCH
This is it.

PETRUSHKA
That's a lot of flowers.

MONARCH
It's a flower shop.

PETRUSHKA
Where's the guy.

MONARCH
I don't know.

PETRUSHKA
Hello!

MONARCH
Is anyone here?!

(Without looking he speaks to them.)

FLOWER GUY
Hello! Welcome to Flora. What is the occasion?
(Looks up at the couple. Gasp)

Let me guess you two are getting married. I have the perfect book for you to look through. I've been chomping at the bit to work on a wedding!

MONARCH
Uh...well.

PETRUSHKA
No.

MONARCH
Right.

FLOWER GUY
Oh. Well you are too cute. How can I help you?

MONARCH
My mother died.

Oh no!

FLOWER GUY

I need flowers.

MONARCH

Sure. My sympathies.

FLOWER GUY

Daisies?

PETRUSHKA

Suresuresure.

FLOWER GUY

Thank you.

MONARCH

Anything else?

FLOWER GUY

A wreath. That would be nice.

PETRUSHKA

Of course!

FLOWER GUY

Can you make it look like this?

MONARCH

Can I?! This will be my greatest creation! A living...well...faintly living memorial--

FLOWER GUY

--That's sounds great--

MONARCH

You know why I love flowers? Plants aren't like us. When you cut a rose it doesn't just die. It lives. It keeps its color. It's fragrance. You drop it into a vase of fresh water and it thrives for a season. It refuses to succumb. Beauty won't just crumple and die. It holds on to it's existence. Humans ask "Why am I alive? How do I stay alive? How do I live? Why is my life the way it is?" Plants just thrive. They drink up the water of life until it dries up. And then they wilt. They dry. They crumble. But they fight.

PETRUSHKA

S Roždestvom Khristovym!

FLOWER GUY

I KNOW RIGHT GIRL! I'll be right back. It will be beautiful!

(Flower Guy exits. Monarch looks at Petrushka. Silence)

MONARCH

What did you say?

PETRUSHKA

Merry Christmas.

MONARCH

Merry Christmas?

PETRUSHKA

It's all the Russian I know. That and "Tvoja golova vseгда v otvete za to, kuda sjadet tvoi zad."

MONARCH

What's that mean?

PETRUSHKA

Your head is always responsible for where your butt sits.

MONARCH

I see.

PETRUSHKA

It comes in handy when I'm arguing with cab drivers.

MONARCH

When I look at you I see so much.

PETRUSHKA

What?

MONARCH

Russian is sexy.

PETRUSHKA

Wanna have sex.

MONARCH

Yes.

(We are instantly back at Monarch's mother's home. They are kissing. Making out. It's getting hot. Then.)

MONARCH
Wait. I can't.

PETRUSKA
Oh. What's...are you alright?

MONARCH
It's just...my mom's house.

PETRUSHKA
Right. Right...right.

MONARCH
I'm sorry.

PETRUSHKA
No no. I understand. It's...it's complicated.

MONARCH
Yes.

(In the distance The Astronaut enters. He begins drawing a map of the solar system on the wall of the theatre. Perhaps there is a ladder or scaffolding he sets up.)

PETRUSHKA
Of course. I'm...I'm gonna go and get ready for bed.

MONARCH
I'm sorry.

PETRUSHKA
Hey Monarch. I understand.

MONARCH
It's not you--

PETRUSHKA
--Do NOT finish that sentence. I got it. Good night.

MONARCH
Good night.

(Petrushka exits. Monarch stands. Frozen. The Astronaut draws the face of the man in the moon. He talks to Monarch.)

ASTRONAUT

This here...is a map of the sky.
Worked for the cave men.
If you come looking for me one day.
I want you to know where to find me.

I lost count of how old you are.
You'll be old as I am now when I get out, I bet.
Missed you whole life.
Trapped out her...in this cold empty place...
(to the moon itself)
You understand that?
Mister Moon.
You just hang out here in the sky.
Spinning around and around
Like you in one place.
This your cell too.
We stuck here.
Together.
Least I'm not alone.

(The Astronaut continues drawing the map. It's quick but poetic. Esther enters. She speaks on the phone to Monarch.)

ESTHER

Monarch?

MONARCH

Hey Momma!

ESTHER

How's my boy?

MONARCH

I'm well. Missing you.

ESTHER

I don't know why you have to go across the country to learn how to write. You wrote every day here.

MONARCH

I like it out here Momma.

ESTHER

Of course you do! I'm...I miss you.

MONARCH

Thanksgiving will be here before you know it.

ESTHER

Nice room you got?

MONARCH

Just cinder blocks and steel.

ESTHER

You're awfully cynical for a poet.

MONARCH

That's good cause I'm a novelist.

ESTHER

That mouth of yours is just as fresh as salt. Guess you get it honest. My momma stayed slapping my jaw.

MONARCH

You ought to move out here. We can be like Bonnie and Clyde.

ESTHER

Shot up in a car? I saw that movie. I'm not moving out there boy. Somebody gotta pay for all that schooling.

MONARCH

Don't have to pay back a scholarship.

ESTHER

Well, you gonna need books. Clothes. Money for dates.

MONARCH

Don't think I'm gonna be doing much dating.

ESTHER

Good looking thing like you. You gonna have to bat them off with a stick. I'm proud of you.

MONARCH

Don't start.

ESTHER

I am! My little...uh...Earnest Hemingway.

MONARCH

Not there yet.

ESTHER

You will be.

MONARCH

Momma.

ESTHER

Yes son.

MONARCH

I know...

ESTHER

What?

MONARCH

...no...I appreciate everything.

ESTHER

Didn't do anything.

MONARCH

You kept me.

ESTHER

Kept you?

MONARCH

I could have not been here you know.

ESTHER

That was never an option.

MONARCH

Yes. It was. Thank you.

ESTHER

For what?

MONARCH

For saying yes.

ESTHER

Boy you crazy.

MONARCH

You know what I mean.

ESTHER

I think that poster your aunt gave you could go over your desk. Did you get it?

MONARCH

Yes. I did. That's a fine place.

ESTHER

Well.....I'm gonna get on off this phone. I have to work tomorrow morning.

MONARCH

I know.

ESTHER

I'll call you this weekend.

MONARCH

Please do.

ESTHER

My boy is a man.

MONARCH

Still feel like a boy.

ESTHER

All I see is a man. See what this carelessness and youth has finally made.

MONARCH

What?

ESTHER

You ain't the only writer in this family. I love you boy.

MONARCH

I love you too.

ESTHER

Don't mess up. And don't come back stupid. Bye.

MONARCH

Good bye momma.

(Esther lays down in the grass. Two scenes happen here. Monarch stands alone. Adjusts his suit. We are at the funeral. We are in a field. Banks of flowers. The Astronaut finishes the map of the solar system and sits beside Esther. Funeral home lighting. Too harsh for mourning but some how fitting. Petrushka sits and listens. Her back is to us.)

MONARCH

The first memory I have is of my mother I am in a huge field of green grass with her. I'm off playing and she is sitting in the grass. In the prettiest dress this side of creation.

ASTRONAUT

That him?

MONARCH

She was always the most luminous human being I ever knew.

ESTHER

Beautiful ain't he?

ASTRONAUT

Yeah. Looks like you.

MONARCH

I remember her being perfect. I believe that's how we all see our mothers. It's that madonna and child thing. It's also a bit selfish I think. The notion that somehow we are created out of purity. When in truth we are the product of a litany of bad choices.

ESTHER

When do you go?

ASTRONAUT

Three.

ESTHER

You gonna be late.

ASTRONAUT

I don't care about that.

MONARCH

In the last year or so. I didn't visit her much. But we talked on the phone a lot. She was my biggest cheerleader. She was my biggest fan. Just don't seem right for me to be talking about her

in the past tense. I mean. She should be here. It's hard for me to conceive of her not being with me and yet...well...here I am.

ESTHER

I don't want him to see you.

ASTRONAUT

I understand.

ESTHER

Thank you. How long they give you?

ASTRONAUT

I better go.

ESTHER

Sure.

ASTRONAUT

It's better if I go. I'll send letters.

ESTHER

No.

ASTRONAUT

I want him to know I exist.

ESTHER

What difference it make to you? You not here man? You don't have to wipe tears every time the mail man come.

ASTRONAUT

You can't stop me from writing.

ESTHER

You right. I can't.

ASTRONAUT

I'll send money when I can.

ESTHER

You don't do that. I have it.

ASTRONAUT

I know you do. But I'd like to just the same.

ESTHER
It's getting late You better go.

ASTRONAUT
Goodbye Esther.

ESTHER
I named him Monarch.

ASTRONAUT
Thank you.

ESTHER
Goodbye.

(The Astronaut exits)

ESTHER
Monarch! Come on we gotta go.

(Esther exits)

MONARCH
She was my best friend. My life. I'm gonna miss you momma. Goodbye.

(The funeral home is whisked away. We are now outside of the funeral home. Monarch and Petrushka stand. The sky is grey. It could rain at any moment. The map of the solar system stretches across the back of the stage like a giant mural. Petrushka stands close beside him. It's perhaps just beginning to be chilly.)

PETRUSHKA
You spoke beautifully.

MONARCH
Thank you.

PETRUSHKA
She would have been pleased.

MONARCH
How do you know?

PETRUSHKA
Well I don't I guess.

MONARCH

You're right. You don't.

PETRUSHKA

Okay.

MONARCH

You don't know anything. Why are you here huh? Are you homeless or something. Am I your lodging while you're in town. You've been following me around like a little puppy--

PETRUSHKA

--I'm gonna stop you right now.

MONARCH

No I'm not done talking.

PETRUSHKA

Yes. You are. Figure out what you're angry about.

MONARCH

What?

PETRUSHKA

Figure out what you're angry about cause it not about me. It's not about her. What is it Monarch? Figure it out.

MONARCH

No one stays! No one! I'm alone! I've always been alone! I'm so fucking sick of being alone! Will some one please just stay! Here. Here. HERE! I'm here!

(Through great emotion)

Will you stay? Are you going to stay?

(The sound of an ice cream truck.)

PETRUSHKA

Ice cream?

MONARCH

...What?

PETRUSHKA

Ice cream. You deserve some ice cream.

MONARCH

It's too cold.

PETRUSHKA

C'mon. Last one of the season. Strawberry? Vanilla?

(Beat)

Chocolate.
MONARCH

Atta boy.
PETRUSHKA

(she goes)

Petrushka?
MONARCH

Yes?
PETRUSHKA

I want...
MONARCH

You don't have to...
PETRUSHKA

No. I do. ~~You change me.~~
MONARCH

~~Boy stop.~~
PETRUSHKA

~~You do. It amazes me. I carry you.~~
MONARCH

It's just ice cream.
PETRUSHKA

Tell me something.
MONARCH

(Petrushka walks to Monarch. She kisses him tenderly on the lips.)

PETRUSHKA
You ain't been alone...at least for the last four days.

MONARCH
With sprinkles.

Okay...

PETRUSHKA

I think I'm ready.

MONARCH

I know.

PETRUSHKA

Yeah.

MONARCH

Want me to go with you?

PETRUSHKA

No. I should go alone.

MONARCH

He's waiting.

PETRUSHKA

(She exits. Instantly we are in a prison visiting room. The Astronaut is now Kesi, Monarch's father. He sit across from Monarch in a prison uniform.)

Well...

KESI

Wow..

MONARCH

What can I do for you?

KESI

I'm Monarch.

MONARCH

Are you?

KESI

Yes.

MONARCH

Kesi. Oh. Boy.

KESI

I wanted to meet you.

MONARCH

Yeah?

KESI

Yes.

MONARCH

What else?

KESI

That's all I guess.

MONARCH

Well. Here I am.

KESI

I've dreamed of this. It's not nearly as terrifying as I thought.

MONARCH

You're a good egg. Turned out a lot better than me.

KESI

I found your letters.

MONARCH

Oh...I figured she just threw them out.

KESI

No. She...she kept them.

MONARCH

I was hoping she would.

KESI

Took me a while to find them I guess.

MONARCH

I thought of you every single day.

KESI

Is it weird that...I feel like I've missed you.

MONARCH

KESI

Not at all.

MONARCH

Good.

KESI

Yes.

MONARCH

Is there anything you want to know?

KESI

I just...want to look at you.

MONARCH

Alright.

KESI

Monarch...

MONARCH

Yes sir...

KESI

She died?

MONARCH

Yes.

KESI

Never thought I would out live Esther. Was she sick?

MONARCH

No.

(Esther enters in the distance)

ESTHER

Esther, daughter of Clairee, daughter of Beulah who did hair, daughter of Esther who I was named for, daughter of Judith, daughter of Dorcas who they all called Sister...

KESI

Suffer?

MONARCH

I don't think she did.

KESI

She did a good job with you.

MONARCH

Yes.

KESI

I think what scares me most about your face is how much it looks like my own. How easily we pass down the part of ourselves that we like the least to our children. I saw it the moment I laid eyes on you.

ESTHER

Daughter of Bethany, daughter of Sarah who was the first to read and write, daughter of Georgia, daughter of Gloria, daughter of Helen who saw her husband killed but still raise her children...

KESI

It took my breath away.

MONARCH

Well...can't change my face.

KESI

You sound like her. I see her there as well. In your jaw line.

MONARCH

I think I look just like her but she...

ESTHER

Daughter of Lass, daughter of Pearl, daughter of Josphine...all the way back...till I run out of names. All the way back til the beginning begins. That's where you come from.

(Esther disappears)

KESI

So...what did she tell you about me.

MONARCH

Well...that...you were...

KESI

What?

MONARCH

An astronaut-

-Huh- KESI

-Stranded- MONARCH

-Where- KESI

-On the moon. MONARCH

She told you I was an astronaut stranded on the moon? Didn't you-- KESI

—I figured it out. MONARCH

Jesus, Esther. KESI

She wanted me-- MONARCH

--To what? Think I was a damn Astronaut. To lie about who I was. I haven't even flown in an airplane. KESI

Hey man...She did the best she could. MONARCH

I know that. KESI

That lie was for me. It wasn't for you MONARCH

I understand. KESI

Well...good. MONARCH

I'm sorry. KESI

MONARCH

Look...uh...I just wanted to meet you. I don't want anything. Just wanted...nevermind.

(Spence begins to exit)

KESI

Hey Monarch.

MONARCH

Yeah?

KESI

Come back next week. You're on the list now...you might as well...

MONARCH

Alright.

(Monarch exits. Kesi watches. Monarch stands. Stardust begins falling from the sky. Petrushka enters. She takes Monarch in. They connect somehow. I leave that up to your collective imagination. I should feel playful and childlike and then end with smolder. Lights out.)