

GAUGUIN: A MUSICAL DRAMA

By Frederick Feirstein

c Frederick Feirstein 2017

Draft 2

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CHARACTERS

PAUL GAUGUIN

METTE GAUGUIN – his wife

ALINE and CLOVIS – their small children

GUSTAV AROSO – PAUL'S mentor

THEO VAN GOGH – PAUL and VINCENT'S art dealer

VINCENT VAN GOGH

TEHURA – PAUL'S fifteen-year-old Tahitian wife, also doubling as his fifteen-year-old daughter ALINE

SAILORS who form a CHORUS and double in all other male roles.

WHORES also form part of the CHORUS. The MADAME also doubles as TEHURA'S MOTHER, and THE CANNIBAL QUEEN

SET: The basic set is PAUL and METTE'S apartment, doubling as GUSTAV'S and METTE'S sister's apartments.

Other locations such as PAUL'S Tahitian hut and a small boat are props and/or **projections**.

Projections of PAUL'S paintings and some of VAN GOGH'S and the Impressionists are on the walls.

TIME: Late 19th Century and early 20th Century.

MUSICAL SYNOPSIS

ACT ONE

CALM
SAVAGE
BROTHEL
GUARDIAN
PAINTED GARDENS
I'LL PAINT SHOES AND YOU'LL BUY SHOES
SLEEP, ALINE, SLEEP
MY NAME IS PAUL GAUGUIN
PENILESS DREAMS
BOOM BOOM BUST
EVERY NIGHT THE STARS ARE BURNED OUT
A REAL JOB
HER SISTER'S HOUSE
ALONE&SLEEP, CLOVIS, SLEEP (REPRISE)
THE DEAL

ACT TWO

GENIUSES
MY ONLY FRIEND
DON'T RUN AWAY
STROKING WOOD
THE COCKTAIL PARTY
WELCOME MARY
THE WEDDING
THE LESSON
MY NAME IS PAUL GAUGUIN (REPRISE)
EVERY DAY THE SUN IS A FIST
RED WATER (REPRISE)
MY NAME IS PAUL GAUGUIN (REPRISE)
THE CANNIBAL QUEEN
ALINE
TEHURA'S VISIT
SLEEP, PAUL, SLEEP (REPRISE)

ACT ONE

Projections of GAUGUIN'S paintings create spectacular visual effects, as they will throughout. Here his sketch is projected.

Scene 1

Shipboard in moonlight.

PAUL GAUGUIN, a young sailor, is sketching a MODELS played by a SAILOR who later will play THEO GOGH and another SAILOR wearing a woman's wig who will later play VINCENT VAN GOGH.

Looking sideways he's also sketching in the background the CAPTAIN AND other SAILORS playing cards. They later will play briefly the art dealer THEO'S DELIVERYMEN.

SONG: CALM

PAUL

THE SEA IS CALM
BUT I CAN'T BE.
I RAN AWAY
FROM DOMESTICITY.

AND NOW I HATE
THIS BORING, ENDLESS RIDE.
I NEED SOCIETY TO KEEP ME OCCUPIED.

BUT WHEN I'M HOME
AND OVER-CIVILIZED,
I NEED THE METAPHORS
OF SIMPLE SEA AND SKY
TO CALM ME DOWN INSIDE.

I'M ALWAYS HALF AT HOME
AND HALF AT SEA.
THERE'S BOTH A CIVILIZED
AND SAVAGE ME.

SAILOR

Gauguin, what the fuck are you doing? Answer me. You look so serious.

PAUL

Serious? Please keep your mouth shut in your pose.

SAILOR

Come on, man.

PAUL

I'm sketching what will never leave me:
A Holy Trinity in a bloody sea
--My father, a radical journalist,
Fleeing France for his life,
My Madonna, his glorious wife,
And a mortified toddler – me –
Watching her lose her husband's protection
To the rapist Captain' erection.

CAPTAIN

And that's me in your damn doodle?

PAUL

THE SEA IS CALM
BUT I CAN'T BE.
I RAN AWAY
FROM DOMESTICITY.

AND NOW I HATE
THIS BORING, ENDLESS RIDE.
I NEED SOCIETY
TO KEEP ME OCCUPIED.

BUT WHEN I'M HOME
AND OVER-CIVILIZED,
I NEED THE METAPHORS
OF SIMPLE SEA AND SKY
TO CALM ME DOWN INSIDE.

The CAPTAIN puts cards into both MODELS' hands. PAUL
throws them down and gestures for them to continue posing.

The CAPTAIN takes the money PAUL paid the MODELS and tosses it into the gambling pot. He shoves the MODELS into the card game.

CAPTAIN
You'll make your money at cards.

PAUL
(to the MODELS)
Sit down.

CAPTAIN
No.

PAUL
Damn it, sit down.

CAPTAIN
Sit down with us or you'll drown.

PAUL tries to take his money out of the pot.
The CAPTAIN covers the pot with his hand.

CAPTAIN (cont'd)
Fetch.

PAUL desperately throws a punch. The much bigger man contemptuously blocks it and slaps PAUL.

PAUL in a fury charges into him.

At first the CAPTAIN is winning, He puts PAUL down on his back. But then the tide turns.

The MODEL who later will play, VINCENT VAN GOGH, takes PAUL'S guitar and heats up music as PAUL, wrestling, sings:

SONG: SAVAGE

PAUL

THE SAVAGE
FROM PERU
IS GONNA
TAKE YOU DOWN
AND SHAKE YOU DOWN
AND BREAK YOU DOWN
AND BEAT THE SHIT OUT OF YOU.

MODEL (later THEO)

STORM
THUNDER
LIGHTNING
BOLT
GET HIS THROAT
ON THIS NOTE.

PAUL chokes the CAPTAIN.

PAUL

STORM
THUNDER
LIGHTNING
BOLT
SQUEEZE THE THROAT
ON THIS NOTE.

As PAUL holds the note, MODEL (THEO) holds up PAUL'S
hand in victory.

Scene 2

A brothel in Southern France.

SONG: BROTHEL

MADAME

UNLIKE ALL MADAMES I AM BEAUTIFUL
AND GIVE MY LADIES TEN PERCENT
PLUS WHAT I PAY THEM FOR THEIR SERVICES,
ON THEIR KNEES OR ON THEIR BACKS.
WE KEEP EACH OTHER IN THE BLACK.

I AM THEIR STOCK BROKER IN A WAY
FOR THE INVESTORS I BRING IN.
AND THOUGH THEY ONLY SEEM TO LOSE, THEY WIN.
THEY ONLY SEEMINGLY GIVE IN
TO EVERY QUIRK, TO EVERY WHIM.

CHORUS

(to PAUL)

WE WHORES MAKE TEN PERCENT AND MORE.
WE WORK FOR THE FUTURE WHEN WE'RE FREE.
FOR NOW CHOOSE THE RED HEAD OR THIS FATTIE.
WE'LL LIFT OUR ASSES, BEND OUR KNEES.
WE ARE ALL PARTNERS, TAKE ME OR ME OR ME.

PAUL

(to the MADAME)

MY NAME IS PAUL. I'M A SAILOR.
I'M WARM AND TOUGH. I'M LUSCIOUS, YOUNG.
I'LL KISS YOUR SOUL UNTIL YOU COME.
I'LL PUT YOU IN STITCHES LIKE A TAILOR.
I'LL SAIL INTO YOU WITH MY BOW.

MADAME pushes him away.

FIRST WHORE

OH, PAUL, I'D LOVE TO BE YOUR HONEY.
OPEN YOUR EYES AND LOOK AT ME.
WHY ARE YOU EYEING OUR QUEEN BEE?
NO MAN WHO COMES HERE DARES TO TRY HER.
HER LUST IS JUST FOR JEWELRY AND FUR.

PAUL

(to MADAME)

MY NAME IS PAUL G, -- AN ARISTOCRAT.
 FROM PERU.WHO WANTS TO GO TO BED WITH YOU.
 WHY ARE YOU LAUGHING AT THAT?
 YES, I'M YOUNG ENOUGH TO BE YOUR SON
 BUT I'LL KISS YOUR FOOT, I'LL SMOOCH YOUR BUN.

MADAME

(laughs, gesturing at the SECOND WHORE)

JUST LICK HER HONEY TILL YOU COME.

SECOND WHORE

SHE'S LIKE A MAN, SHE RUNS THS PLACE.
 SHE WORKS AT HER DESK, NOT IN HER BED.
 I'LL ROCK YOU IN ME, STROKE YOUR HEAD.
 JUST FLATTER ME WITH YOUR DEMANDS.

PAUL

(to the MADAME)

JUST PLAY THE MADONNA TO MY CHRIST.
 I SEE THE HALO ON YOUR HEAD.
 LET ME REMOVE MY CRUCIFIX.
 LET ME SHOW YOU MY MAGIC TRICKS.

MADAME

LITTLE MAN, I'M TWICE YOUR AGE.

(indicates FIRST WHORE)

OPEN HER CURTAINS, NOT MY BACKSTAGE.

FIRST WHORE

I'LL PRETEND I'M MAGDALANA.

SECOND WHORE

(competitively)

SHE'S PNEUMATIC. YOU CAN'T SUSTAIN HER.

FIRST WHORE

I'LL PRETEND I'M CHRIST'S BLUE NURSE.

PAUL

(to the MADAME, taking gold coins from his pocket)

CAN'T YOU SEE IT IS OUR FATE
FOR ME TO PUT THIS IN YOUR PURSE,
TO LIE TOGETHER, FLESH AND BONE,
TO LIE TOGETHER, WET, ALONE?

THIRD WHORE

I'M FIFTEEN. I CALL HER "MOTHER."
SOMETIMES I THINK MY FATHER
WAS HER LOVER. I KNOW IT'S TRUE --
WHEN HE WAS YOUNG AND BOLD AS YOU.

PAUL

Madame, I am the grandnephew
Of the last viceroy of Peru
Which is why I'll conquer you.
Kiss my lips. It's not taboo.

MADAME

THIS IS A WHORE HOUSE. THIS IS A BROTHEL.
EVERY MAN COMES HERE WITH A DREAM
THAT WE ARE BETTER THAN WE SEEM
I'M NOT A MADONNA. I'M NOT AN ANGEL.
PICK ONE OF THEM, YOUR TIME IS UP.
POUR YOUR WHITE WINE IN ONE OF THEIR CUPS.

CHORUS opens their mouths wide and hit high notes.

Lights go red.

PAUL laughs and yanks the MADAME offstage.

Scene 3

Three years later.

The financier GUSTAV AROSA'S lavish Parisian apartment. **Projections** of paintings by Renoir, Manet, and Pissarro are on his walls. He is PAUL'S mentor and is quizzing him on what he sees. PAUL'S guitar is on his back.

SONG: GUARDIAN

GUSTAV

YOU'RE GOING TO BE AN ARTIST
AND A SUCCESSFUL BUSINESSMAN.
BEING YOUR LATE MOTHER'S FRIEND
AND YOUR APPOINTED GUARDIAN.
I'M GOING TO HELP YOU ALL THAT I CAN.

I'VE ALREADY HIRED THE BEST,
PATIENT TEACHER I COULD FIND
NOT THE BLOATED ACADEMIC KIND.
BUT THIS IMPRESSIONIST PISSARRO
WHO WILL SHOW YOU HOW TO STRING YOUR BOW.

BUT THE FIRST LESSON YOU MUST LEARN,
IF I MAY SAY, WILL COME FROM ME:
THAT BEAUTY IS BORN OF POWER,
THAT ART IS BORN OF CRASS REALITY.
IN OTHER WORDS, YOU'LL COURT THE BEST

WITH MONEY YOU'LL MAKE AS A TRADER
IN THE STOCK BROCKERAGE FIRM OF MY FRIEND.
YOU'LL FIRST COLLECT, LIKE ME, THE FUTURE:
THESE IMPRESSIONISTS FOR LONG-TERM INVESTMENT,
AND USE THEM FOR YOUR ARTISTIC END

OF BECOMING THE "GREAT GAUGUIN,"
SON OF ALINE, FRIEND OF GUSTAV AROSA
WHO ASKS NOTHING BUT SUCCESS
FROM MY AMBITIOUS, TALENTED PET
WHO RIGHT NOW IS GOING TO MEET METTE.

GUSTAV (cont'd)

M-e-t-t-e, that is a Danish name. In temperament, you are both the same,
Strong-willed, money-hungry, smart like your grandmother, the feminist.
I think, I know, she'll take your heart,
(exits)

PAUL

My heart?
I WAS DOTED ON BY SERVANTS IN PERU,
PRIMITIVE WOMEN BARE TO THE WAIST.
I WAS THEIR ARISTOCRAT,
FEEDING ME OFF GOLDEN PLATES.
THEY WERE GUARDIANS OF MY *SOUL*.

“Mette?”
I WAS DOTED ON BY BEAUTIES IN PERU:
PRIMITIVE WOMEN, BARE TO THE WAIST.
I WAS THEIR ARISTOCRAT.
FEEDING ME OFF GOLDEN PLATES,
THEY WERE GUARDIANS OF MY *SOUL*.

WHEN MY RICH UNCLE'S BODY WENT COLD,
MY MOTHER SWORE WE'D INHERIT HIS GOLD.

Rien!
WE WERE DIRT-POOR, BACK IN FRANCE.
MY MOTHER SEWED ZIPPERS INTO PANTS,
HEMS INTO GOWNS, BOWS INTO HATS.
SHE SLAVED FOR ME “MY ARISTOCRAT.”
EVERYTHING SHE DID WAS FOR ME
TILL ONCE AGAIN I WAS ROCKED BY THE SEA.

SO I'M GOING TO BE AN ARTIST
AND A SUCCESSFUL BUSINESSMAN.
SO SAYS MY DEAR MOTHER'S “FRIEND”
AND MY SELF-APPOINTED GUARDIAN.
YES, YOU MUST HELP GAUGUIN ALL THAT YOU CAN!

GUSTAV enters with METTE.

METTE is pretty and a bit masculine-looking like the MADAME.

GUSTAV
Paul, meet my Mette. Mette knows her own mind. My Paul is primitive and kind.

METTE
(firmly shakes PAUL'S hand)
Paul.

PAUL is immediately attracted to her.

GUSTAV tactfully exits.

PAUL
Gustav says you're a Danish Dame ... I don't speak Danish. Just stupid stuff
in French. Shall we speak French?

METTE smartly pucks the strings of PAUL'S guitar.

METTE
You're shy.

PAUL
Shy?

METTE
A mamma's boy, Gustav tells me.
(indicates guitar)
Let this speak for you.

SONG: PAINTED GARDENS

PAUL
NIGHT
SKY
STARS
MOON
AND THE PAINTED
GARDENS
IN THIS ROOM.

METTE

NIGHT
SKY
STARS
MOON
AND THE PAINTED
GARDENS
IN THIS ROOM.

PAUL

DAY
SKY
STARS
MOON
AND THE PAINTED
GARDENS
IN THIS ROOM.

METTE

DAY
SKY
STARS
MOON
AND THE PAINTED
GARDENS
IN THIS ROOM.

PAUL

Can it get much better than this?

METTE

It won't get much better than this.

PAUL

HANDS
TOUCH
EYES
LIPS
KISS.

He lightly kisses her.

METTE

HANDS
TOUCH
EYES
LIPS
KISS.

She boldly kisses him. He responds boldly.

She pushes him against the wall in an embrace.

METTE&PAUL

IT CAN'T GET MUCH BETTER THAN THIS.
IT CAN'T GET MUCH SWEETER THAN THIS.
LIPS, KISS, TONGUES, KISS.
IT CAN'T GET MUCH BETTER THAN THIS.
IT CAN'T GET MUCH BETTER THAN THIS.

Scene 4

Three years later. PAUL and METTE'S apartment. With different props it is the same set as GUSTAV'S. **Projected** on the walls are Impressionists as in GUSTAV'S apartment. Here there are also Post Impressionists, especially Van Goghs.

PAUL opens the door to surprise METTE with the three paintings he's bought.

She is smoking a cigar and quickly opens two packages filled with new pairs of stylish dresses, hats and shoes.

METTE

Like what I've bought?

PAUL

Look what I've bought: an anonymous Van Gogh, a shunted-aside Cezanne and a Mary Cassatt – my feminist grandma in me buying a woman.

METTE

"Buying" a woman?

PAUL

Come on, I'm putting Paradise on these walls. How do you like these new plants in our garden?

METTE partly pretends to be enthusiastic. She finds the work of VAN GOGH and CEZANNE too far out.

PAUL (cont'd)

Come on, our little Aline is dressed like this Cassatt girl. And I love what you bought. I'm thrilled you finally have all the money to shop.

METTE

But I don't want it to stop.

PAUL

Why should it stop?

(shows her a newspaper)

SONG: I'LL PAINT SHOES AND YOU'LL BUY SHOES

PAUL

Look,
HERE'S A PRINTED RAVE FOR MY ART
THE THRILL OF IT WHILE I'M LEARNING.
NOT LIKE THAT LOST-AT-SEA SAILOR
WHO INSIDE WAS YEARNING, BURNING.

Look!
SOON I'LL BE EARNING CASH FROM MY DREAMS,
I'LL PAINT GLOVES AND YOU'LL BUY GLOVES,
I'LL PAINT HATS AND YOU'LL BUY HATS,
WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THAT?

METTE

(hesitantly)

I think it's great, Paul, great.

PAUL

Then don't look so scared.

METTE

I'm not scared.

I'LL BUY SCARVES
AND YOU'LL PAINT SCARVES
I'LL BUY SHOES
AND YOU'LL PAINT SHOES,
MORE BRILLIANT YELLOWS
REDS, GREENS, BLUES.
YOU'LL BE MY CHECKBOOK,
I'LL BE YOUR MUSE
NOT USED
BY MY MASTER,
THE BRUTE.

NOW I'LL TO TRY ON
WHAT I BOUGHT, LOOK:
HATS, SHOES LIKE YOUR
PALATTE OF COLORS
SHARE THESE LIKE THIS CIGAR

PAUL

(holds newspaper high, like s trophy)

THIS CRITIC BUYS
THAT I'M A SELF-MADE MAN,
BUYS MY PERSONA,
"A SAVAGE IN FROM PERU,"
PAINTING CHROME YELLOWS.
REDS, GREENS. BLUES
BUYS MY ILLUSION.
FORGET YOU WERE AN
AU PAIR USED
BY YOUR MASTER,
THE BRUTE.

I'LL PAINT ALINE INTO
THE BEST SCHOOLS.
I'LL PAINT YOU THE
MONEY TO SHOP
TO SOP UP YOUR DREAD

METTE (cont'd)
 WITH YOUR WIFE
 AND TELL HER YOU LOVE
 OUR BOURGEOISE LIFE!

(shows off her clothes)
 SO I'LL BUY SCARVES
 AND YOU'LL PAINT SCARVES
 AND I'LL BUY SHOES
 AND YOU'LL PAINT SHOES
 MORE BRILLIANT YELLOWS,
 REDS, GREENS, BLUES.
 IF YOU'LL BE MY CHECKBOOK,
 I'LL BE YOUR MUSE.
 NOT USED
 BY MY MASTER,
 THE BRUTE.

PAUL (cont'd)
 OF RIDICULE,
 SEDUCTION, MOLESTATION
 ALL THAT HAS STOPPED!

(wields the paper)
 AND THIS CRITIC BUYS
 THAT I'M A SELF-MADE MAN,
 BUYS MY PERSONA
 "A SAVAGE IN SHOES,"
 PAINTING CHROME YELLOWS,
 REDS, GREENS, BLUES,
 BUYS MY ILLUSION.
 FORGET YOU WERE AN
 AU PAIR USED
 BY YOUR MASTER,
 THE BRUTE.

PAUL
 I LOVE BEING RICH AND WILL LIVE AS I PLEASE.
 SOON I'LL JUST BE PAINTING FOR MONEY.
 DON'T BE SCARED OF ANYTHING, HONEY.
 LET'S DEEPEN OUT MATTRESS. LET'S MAKE IT WHEEZE.

METTE
 Aren't you excited yet by what I've bought?

PAUL
 I LIKE YOU NAKED BEST, ALTHOUGH
 YOUR CLOTHES ARE ELEGANT AND CHIC.
 PRETEND YOU'RE MY MAID WITH FIRM BOTTOM CHEEKS
 WHO OPENS HER MOUTH FOR A SAILOR'S HOT DOUGH.

They make love.

Scene 5

PAUL is painting his sleeping 3-year-old daughter. The feeling is like the Madonna and her infant son. He is in front of a **projected** Mary Cassatt of a mother and young daughter.

SONG: SLEEP, ALINE, SLEEP

PAUL

SLEEP, ALINE, SLEEP,
CHILD WITH MY MOTHER'S NAME.
SLIP DOWN THE ROSE MARBLE
CLIFFS OF YOUR DREAMS
WHERE EVERYTHING IS WHAT IT SEEMS.
WHERE EVERYTHING IS WHAT IT SEEMS.

YOUR MOMMA DREAMS OF A GOLDEN HORIZON,
GOLDEN SAND, WHERE SHE STANDS
FACING A GOLDEN SUNRISE ,
TWO GOLDEN PURSES IN HER HANDS.
I'LL PAINT THE FREEDOM OF MY FANTASIES
AND RUB FOR LUCK THIS GOLDEN WEDDING BAND.

PAINTING FOR METTE MAKES LITTLE SENSE.
PAINTING FOR HER IS MY HOBBY.
PAINTING FOR HER IS MY CRAZY WAY
OF PLAYING WITH PASSION
WHILE SHE WHIRLS AROUND IN THE LATEST FASHION.

PAINTING IS MUSIC
--CRIMSON, INDIGO, GREEN, RED --
VISIONS FROM YOUR DREAMING HEAD,
AND VISIONS FOR SALES FROM MY SCHEMING HEAD.
I KNOW HOW TO SELL THEM FOR YOUR MOMMA --

RED
VIOLET
INDIGO
CRIMSON
GREEN
SLEEP YELLOW.

PAUL (cont'd)

PAINTING IS MUSIC,
A BRUSH THAT GOES WILD,
A BRUSH SOFT AS YOUR HAIR, MY CHILD.
PAINTING IS AN EXPLOSION OF COLOR,
A VISION FROM SLEEP.

EVENING IS CELLO GREEN.
MORNING IS TRUMPET BLUE.
NOON IS FIDDLE YELLOW ...
WORDS FAIL ME, SAVAGE FROM PERU,
LOST IN MUSIC, LOST IN REVERIE.

(waves his brush)

I WAVE MY BATON, WHAT'S MONEY TO ME,
LOST IN THE COLORS OF MY RHAPSODY?

RED
VIOLET
INDIGO
CRIMSON
GREEN
AND SLEEP YELLOW.

ALINE starts to wake up. PAUL stroke her head.

SLEEP, ALINE, SLEEP,
CHILD WITH MY MOTHER'S NAME.
SLIP DOWN THE ROSE MARBLE
CLIFFS OF YOUR DREAMS.
NOTHING IS WHAT IT SEEMS
WHEN I PAINT FOR YOUR MOMMA'S DREAMS.

He kisses her. She goes back to sleep.

SLEEP, ALINE SLEEP.
CHILD WITH MY MOTHER'S NAME.
SLIP DOWN THE ROSE MARBLE
CLIFFS OF YOUR INNOCENT DREAMS.
EVERYTHING IS WHAT IT SEEMS.
LIVE IN A BEAUTIFUL DREAM.

PAUL (cont'd)

SLEEP, ALINE, SLEEP,
CHILD WITH MY MOTHER'S NAME,
MY SOUL, MY MODEL.

(goes back to canvas. Aghast)

WHY HAVE I PAINTED THAT BROTHEL?
NOTHING IS WHAT IT SEEMS!
NOTHING IS WHAT IT SEEMS!

Scene 6

Two years later. Still a Sunday painter, PAUL enters a huge Salon in Paris with **projections** of the work of mediocre academic painters but also the work of a few Impressionists.

The mediocre painters form a CHORUS – along with the WHORES.

Here PAUL is prepared to prop up the Impressionists, although he knows they don't need it because they will win in the long run, in living time or posthumously.

SONG: MY NAME IS PAUL GAUGUIN

CHORUS

THIS STOCK BROKER COMES WITH A WINK AND A SMILE
AND MONEY TO LAVISH ON OILS AND PASTELS.
HE'S FULL OF IDEALS AS IF WALKING IN CHURCH.
WE'RE BUSINESSMEN FULL OF CHICANERY AND GUILF.
HE'S COME HERE TO BUY, AND WE'VE COME HERE TO SELL.
WE CLAIM WE ARE ANGELS – WE'RE ANGELS FROM HELL!

AND THIS STOCK BROKER WILL GIVE ALL HIS MONEY FOR ART,
FOR A BRUSH AND A CANVAS, A GARRET AND PASSION.
HE'S A VOYEUR AND WE'RE EXHIBITIONISTS. WELL,
SOME OF OUR YOUNGSTERS HERE PAINT FROM THE HEART
AND AREN'T MERE WHORES OF THE LATEST FASHION
AND DON'T GIVE A DAMN IF HE BUYS OR WE SELL.

PAUL

MY NAME IS PAUL GAUGUIN AND, YES, ART
IS MY RELIGION.
I LIVE IN BOURGEOISE MISERY:
IN MAKING MONEY THERE'S NO ECSTASY.
BUT I'VE A WIFE AND CHILDREN TO SUPPORT.
YOUR WIVES ARE GOOD FOR TUCKING INTO BED.
BUT FUCKINGWISE ARE LIKE THE DEAD.

CHORUS

WE PAINT ACADEMICALLY – HISTORY, MYTH.
 ACTUALLY VIOLENCE AND SEX IN DISGUISE,
 DOUBLED-UP MIRRORS, LIKE OUR DOUBLED-UP LIVES:
 IN BED WITH OUR MODELS, ASLEEP WITH OUR WIVES,
 DREAMING WE'RE DARING LIKE EDOUARD MANET.
 BUT WE ARE IN FASHION, OUR EFFORTS CACHET..

(indicates paintings of VAN GOGH and CEZANNE)

THEY LACK IN FINE CRAFT AND FINE BANK ACCOUNT,
 THE FLATTERY OF CRITICS AND MIMICS LIKE US...
 WE SOMETIMES FIND EACH OTHER TEDIOUS.
 MOST OF US WILL WIND UP IN TIME'S GARBAGE CAN.
 BUT THIS STOCK BROKER IS AN ARROGANT MAN.

PAUL

NEXT YEAR, I SWEAR, I'LL QUIT MY FIRM
 AND GO TO BRITTANY TO PAINT
 THE NATIVES, PRIMITIVELY QUAIN'T.
 THE WORK I'LL DO WILL MAKE YOU SQUIRM,
 LIKE YOUNG VAN GOGH AND PAUL CEZANNE.
 I'LL BE YOUR GADFLY, PAUL GAUGUIN.

CHORUS

THIS STOCK BROKER PAINTS ON THE WEEKENDS, AT NIGHT
 AND THINKS HE'LL BECOME MUCH BETTER THAN US.
 BUT TIME IS A BITCH WITH A VENOMOUS BITE
 WHO WEARS OUT THE SOUL ALONG WITH THE PURSE.
 WE ALL WERE YOUNG ONCE AND PRESUMPTUOUS.

PAUL

NEXT YEAR, I SWEAR, I'LL QUIT MY FIRM
 AND GO TO BRITTANY TO PAINT
 THE NATIVES, PRIMITIVELY QUAIN'T.
 THE WORK I'LL DO WILL MAKE THEM SQUIRM
 LIKE YOUNG VAN GOGH AND PAUL CEZANNE.
 I AM A FREE MAN, PAUL GAUGUIN.

Scene 7

PAUL and METTE'S apartment.

METTE is pregnant again, puffing a cigar and drinking.

PAUL enters carrying three paintings he will hang.

SONG: PENNILESS DREAMS

METTE

Another café? La Dreck's? Van Gogh?"Can't I cover my own walls, Paul? My friends ask when will I put an end to your being out every weekend with your friends, painting scenes we see every day. And now out every night carousing – with friends who need delousing!

PAUL takes the cigar she's puffing out of her mouth.

PAUL

Take a rest, Mette. Please. You think that if I keep "wasting time on low lives," this money machine will break down, that I'll impoverish you. Listen!

I'M GOING TO MAKE ANOTHER FORTUNE FROM ART,
FROM WORK THAT COMES FROM THE HEART, FROM MY HEART.
MY RICH PAINTER FRIENDS – RENOIR, DEGAS – THE GREAT
MANET SAY I'LL CATCH UP. SO WHAT IF I'M STARTING LATE?

PAUL tries to hold her. She pulls away.

METTE

YOU SPEND ALL YOUR MONEY ON WHAT NO ONE CALLS ART,
YOUR TIME ON YOUR PENNILESS DREAMS.
PLEASE DREAM UP NEW *BUSINESS* SCHEMES
FROM YOUR BRAIN, NO, NOT FROM YOUR HEART.

I CANNOT BE A MAID AGAIN,
AN AU PAIR, OR A TUTOR.
YOU HAVE SMALL CHILDREN TO SUPPORT.
YOU'RE NOT A SAILOR WHORING IN A PORT.

PAUL

I'M GOING TO MAKE ANOTHER FORTUNE FROM ART,
FROM WORK THAT COMES FROM THE HEART, FROM MY HEART.
MY RICH PAINTER FRIENDS –RENOIR, DEGAS -- THE GREAT
MANET SAY I'LL CATCH UP. SO WHAT IF I'M STARTING LATE?

METTE

YOU SPEND ALL OUR MONEY ON EVERYDAY ART,
AND TIME ON YOUR PENNILESS DREAMS,
PLEASE DREAM UP NEWBUSINESS SCHEMES
FROM YOUR BRAIN, NO, NOT FROM YOUR HEART.

I CANNOT BE A MAID AGAIN,
AN AU PAIR OR A TUTOR.
YOU HAVE SMALL CHILDREN TO SUPPORT.
YOU'RE NOT A SAILOR WHORING IN A PORT.

Scene 8

A year later.

METTE looks out the window at men and women, gathered in the streets, broken by the stock market crash.

SONG: BOOM BOOM BUST

CHORUS

BOOM BOOM BUST.
 WHO CAN WE TRUST?
 BOOM BOOM DUST.
 WHO ON EARTH CAN WE TRUST?

BOOM DUST DUST.
 WHO CAN WE TRUST?
 BOOM BOOM DUST.
 WHO IN HELL CAN WE TRUST?

SOME OF US HAVE GONE TO GRAVES FROM THESE BROKERS.
 SOME OF US WANT TO SHOOT OURSELVES – CHOKERS.
 SOME OF US PACE FROM ROOM TO ROOM TO THE WINDOW – JUMP!
 SOME OF US LIVING IN LUXUARY WILL NOW LIVE IN DUMPS.

BOOM, FURNISHED ROOMS, SQUALID ROOMS, BUST.
 WHO IN HELL CAN WE TRUST ?
 OUT THE WINDOW, BONES INTO DUST.
 LIKE CHILDREN, WE WERE STUPID TO TRUST.

METTE
 How could this happen?

PAUL
 Mania, Arrogance. Greed.

METTE
 Did we lose it all?
 (PAUL nods)
 You had no sense it could crash?

PAUL shakes his head.

METTE (cont'd)

I don't believe this! You're Christ in your paintings.
 (indicates their extravagant furnishings)
 This is all up in ash?

PAUL taps out his pipe.

METTE

Ash?

PAUL sadly surveys the good life now lost.

PAUL

Paradise lost.

METTE

That's all you care about – your art collection, your painting.
 They'll vanish.

PAUL

But my genius and business sense won't.

CROWD

BOOM BOOM BOOM, WE ARE FUCKED. WE'VE GONE BUST.
 NO JOBS, WE'RE HANDFULS, ARMFULLS OF DUST.
 BOOM! GO AWAY, YOU ARE BROKE, YOU ARE BROKEN.
 ALL DESKS ARE EMPTY. NO DOORS ARE OPEN.

METTE

And your job? Has that gone away too?

PAUL nods.

METTE (cont'd)

WE'VE HAD THE PERFECT LIFE IN THE BEST
 NEIGHBORHOOD, THE BEST SCHOOLS.
 WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO, YOU FOOL?
 LIVE OFF YOUR FANTASIES, YOUR HOBBY – YOUR ART?
 (PAUL sits her down)
 Now you have the time free to paint!

PAUL

It seems Fate has made a detour for us.

METTE

Was the market crashing just a mystery for you?

PAUL

There were scarcely any signs, any gossip, clues.

METTE

Your collection is all that's left?

PAUL

If we keep them, they'll all be in demand.

METTE

BUT IN THE MEANTIME WHAT DO WE DO?
WE CAN'T EAT THEIR PAINTED FOOD
OR DANCE TO THEIR SILENT BANDS
OR COOL OURSELVES WITH THEIR JAPANESE FANS.

PAUL

JUST COOL DOWN.
STOP GRIMACING, STOP PACING.

METTE

MY MIND AND MY HEART
AND MY LEGS ARE RACING.

THIS WILL WORK OUT, METTE.
MY PAINTINGS WILL SELL.

GO TO HELL, PAUL.
GOD, I DON'T FEEL WELL.

CROWD

BOOM BOOM BUST.
WHO IN HELL CAN WE TRUST?
OUR BONES HAVE TURNED INTO DUST.
OUR TIME HAS TURNED INTO RUST.

METTE

DEATH IN THE STREETS HAS TOLLED A CRACKED BELL.
YOU 'LL SEE NEXT THE ART MARKET WILL CRASH.
CRASH CRASH.

PAUL

I'LL BE A PHOENIX RISING FROM THE ASH.

(mutters)

Cash. Cash. Cash.

METTE

I FEEL LIKE AN AU PAIR, A MAID AGAIN,
SUCKING MY MASTER'S AWFUL PANTING,
GOING DEAF FROM MY MISTRESS'S ENDLESS RANTING.
I WANT TO TAKE THE CHILDREN HOME.

PAUL

This is home.

METTE

My sister will take us all in.

PAUL

In Denmark? This is preposterous! You're panicked.

METTE

Yes, I am! What are we going to do? I can't live on the edge again,
like I did before we met. Are you listening? I can't be degraded again!

PAUL

Please stop pacing. Your mind is off, racing.

METTE

Sorry, not sorry! I need you to reassure me that you won't use this to escape
into art. We can wind up in "Time garbage can!"

PAUL

Nothing, nothing will happen to us.

METTE

It has. Listen to them in the street...
DEATH HAS TOLLED LIKE A CRACKED BELL.
YOU'LL SEE NEXT THE ART MARKET WILL CRASH
CRASH CRASH.

PAUL

I'LL BE A PHOENIX RISING FROM THE ASH.

METTE

I FEEL LIKE AN AU PAIR, A MAID AGAIN,
SUCKING MY MASTER'S AWFUL PANTING,
GOING DEAF FROM MY MISTRESS'S RANTING.
I WANT TO TAKE THE CHILDREN HOME.

PAUL

Home?

METTE

Denmark. To my sister's.

PAUL

Calm down.

HAVEN'T I ALWAYS TAKEN CARE OF YOU?
 HAVEN'T I ALWAYS RISEN FROM THE ASH
 --A SURVIVOR OF EVERY FIRE,
 EVERY TAUNT TO RETIRE
 FROM WHAT I LOVE BEST – ART?

Listen.

We'll move into cheaper quarters – temporarily. Believe me, I'll make plenty of money – eventually. Soon! You will never again live in misery. I'm Paul Gauguin, the aristocrat

Please listen.

DO NOT CURL UP LIKE A CAT.
 PLEASE, DEAR, GET UP.
 YOUR CUP WILL OVERFLOW ITS RIM.
 I'M PAUL GAUGUIN. I'M REALLY HIM.

CROWD

BOOM BOOM BUST.
 WHO CAN WE TRUST?
 BOOM BOOM DUST.
 WHO IN HELL CAN WE TRUST?

METTE

You listen! Listen!

Despite the noise PAUL starts to fall asleep, infuriating METTE

CROWD

BOOM BOOM BUST
 WHO CAN WE TRUST?
 BOOM BOOM DUST?
 WHO IN HELL CAN WE TRUST?

CROWD (CONT'D)

SOME OF US HAVE GONE TO HELL WITH OUR BROKERS.
 SOME OF US WANT TO SHOOT THEM OR OURSELVES – CHOKERS.
 SOME OF US PACE FROM ROOM TO ROOM – TO WINDOWS.
 SOME OF US LIVING IN STYLE WILL TURN INTO WIDOWS.

CROWD (cont'd)

SO BOOM BOOM – FURNISHED ROOMS. BUST
 WHY WERE WE GREEDY? WHY DID WE TRUST
 IN THEM, IN OURSELVES – DUST.
 BOOM BOOM BUSTED BUST!

PAULS still asleep dreams:

The boat of Scene 1. In pantomime the CAPTAIN is throwing PAUL'S
 father played by the MODEL ("THEO") overboard.

PAUL'S mother played by the MADAME is naked to the waist. The CAPTAIN
 gropes her.

The SAILORS AND WHORES are carousing.

PAUL wakes.

SONG: EVERY NIGHT THE STARS ARE BURNED OUT

PAUL

I'M AT SEA AGAIN WITH MY GUITAR,
 FIGHTING MY OWN THUNDERSTORMS.
 MY SCARS OF LIGHTNING, RAINS OF FIRE.
 I'VE SOLD MY RENOIRS, MY PISSAROS
 FOR FOOD, FOR MEDICINE, FOR RENT.
 BUT I WON'T BE *PERMANENTLY* BENT.

I MUST BLOCK OUT THIS MEMORY.
 MY LIFE CAN'T BE A FANTASY.
 I'M GOING UP TO BRITTANY
 TO PAINT THEIR ORDINARY WOMEN
 --FARMERS DRESSED ALMOST AS NUNS,
 UNLIKE MY MOTHER WITH HER NAKED BUNS.

CHORUS OF SAILORS&WHORES

EVERY NIGHT THE STARS ARE BURNED OUT.
 EVERY DAY THE SUN IS A FIST.
 EVERY HOUR IS A CRACKED BELL FALLING FROM ITS TOWER.
 EVERY MINUTE PANTS LIKE DYING PREY.
 HE THINKS HE CAN SALVAGE A LIFE LIKE SUNKEN TREASURE.
 HE WILL NEVER FIND PEACE. HE WILL ALWAYS FAKE PLEASURE.

PAUL

I AM AT SEA AGAIN, LOST IN MY HEAD,
 CHURNING WITH AMBITION, BLOCKING OUT FAILURE,
 ALWAYS SEEKING PEACE, ALWAYS SEEKING PLEASURE
 FROM THE MELODIES OF GREEN, INDIGO, RED,
 INSTEAD OF CALLING "METTE," FROM BED,
 "WE CAN'T LOSE OUR PRIDE, METTE, TO DREAD."

CHORUS

EVERY NIGHT THE STARS ARE BURNED OUT.
 EVERY DAY THE SUN IS A FIST.
 EVERY HOUR IS A CRACKED BELL FALLING FROM ITS TOWER.
 EVERY MINUTE PANTS LIKE DYING PREY.
 HE THINKS HE CAN SALVAGE A LIFE LIKE SUNKEN TREASURE.
 HE WILL NEVER FIND PEACE. HE WILL ALWAYS FAKE PLEASURE.

PAUL

ARTISTS MAKE THEIR MISERY, RAGE, DEPRESSION
 IMMORTAL WORKS IF THEY STAY STRONG.
 ARTISTS CAN LOVE LIFE, WHILE THEY FAIL AT LIVING.
 ARTISTS MUST KEEP THEIR GRAND SELF-POSSESSION.
 ARTISTS IN THEIR ART MUST KEEP ON GIVING
 --IN THUNDERSTORMS, LIGHTNING, RAINS OF FIRE.

SO I AM GOING TO BRITTANY
 WHERE I'LL SUCCEED WITH THESE ORDINARY
 WOMEN. I'LL PAINT THEM RELIGIOUS, NAÏVE,
 AT SIMPLE TASKS YET SOMEWHAT EXOTIC
 --UNLIKE ME NOW LOST AND NEUROTIC,
 WITH NO CHOICE BUT TO PACK UP AND LEAVE.

CHORUS

EVERY NIGHT THE STARS ARE BURNED OUT.
EVERY DAY THE SUN IS A FIST.
EVERY HOUR IS A CRACKED BELL FALLING FROM ITS TOWNER.
EVERY MINUTE PANTS LIKE DYING PREY.
HE THINKS HE CAN SALVAGE A LIFE LIKE SUNKEN TREASURE.
HE WILL NEVER FIND PEACE. HE WILL ALWAYS FAKE PLEASURE.

Scene 9

Projections only of Paul's Brittany women are on the walls of PAUL'S and METTE'S now shabby apartment.

SONG: YOU WILL MISS THESE PRIMITIVE WOMEN

PAUL

YOU WILL MISS MY PAINTINGS OF BRITTANY.
THEO SAYS ALL OF THEM WILL SELL.
WE'LL BE RICH FROM MY TALENT AND ENERGY.
I SWEAR YOU WON'T BE MRS. POVERTY.

YOU WON'T BE MRS. INDIGNITY.
YOU WON'T BE MRS. CATASTROPHE.
YOU WON'T PANIC ANYMORE
WHEN A LANDLORD BANGS ON OUR DOOR.

METTE

BOOM BOOM, WHO CAN I TRUST?
WHO KNOWS IF THEO CAN SELL THIS, THAT, THIS?
GOD KNOWS WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO US.
WE CAN'T LIVE ON PRAYERS, ON COWARDICE.

PAUL

YOU WILL MISS THESE PRIMITIVE WOMEN.
THEY ARE GENEROUS AND NAÏVE,
NOT SUNKEN LIKE YOU ARE BECOMING.
YOU ONLY LOST MONEY, DON'T GRIEVE.

METTE

DON'T TRY TO COAX, KISS, OR PIROUETTE ME
WITH YOUR FANTASIES THESE PICTURES WILL SELL.
I DON'T HAVE YOUR MANIACAL ENERGY.
DON'T TOUCH ME WHEN YOU CAN'T PROTECT ME.

DON'T TELL ME YOU FEEL MY ANXIETY.
SO YOU REPEAT A MEMORY AT THREE.
YOU DID NOT HAVE TO PLEASE YOUR EMPLOYER
WHO'D PIROUETTE YOU, FUCK YOU IN HIS FOYER.

HEAD DELIVERYMAN

(played by the CAPTAIN)

We've come to carry your pictures to Theo Van Gogh's place.
Wait a minute, wait a minute. I know your face.

Other deliverymen, played by the other SAILORS, except
"THEO" and "VINCENT" take down PAUL'S paintings from the
walls.

PAUL

Careful, careful. This is all the work I've done.

HEAD DELIVERYMAN

You're Vincent's friend -- whose paintings don't sell.
(laughs)

These ...?!

All the DELIVREYMEN exit.

PAUL

MY NEW WORK WILL PAY FOR OUR RENT,
LET YOU BUY NEW HATS AND SHOES,
SIRLOIN AND LOBSTERS AND CLAMS
INSTEAD OF SPOONING OUT PEANUT BUTTER, JAM.

IN A LITTLE WHILE I SWEAR WE'LL RECOVER.
DON'T STARE AT ME WITH THAT GLARE.
I DIDN'T MAKE THE ART MARKET CRASH.
I'LL BE A PHOENIX RISING FROM THIS ASH.

YOU WILL MISS THESE PRIMITIVE WOMEN.
THEY WERE GENEROUS AND NAÏVE,
NOT WITHDRAWN LIKE YOU ARE BECOMING.
YOU ONLY LOST MONEY, DON'T GRIEVE.

METTE

"EVERY NIGHT THE STARS ARE BURNED OUT.
EVERY DAY THE SUN IS A FIST.
EVERY HOUR IS A CRACKED BELL FALLING FROM A TOWER.
EVERY MINUTE PANTS LIKE DYING PREY."

I AM CURSED WHEN ONCE I WAS BLESSED.
I WAKE UP EVERY MORNING DEPRESSED.
SOMETIMES I CAN'T EVEN GET DRESSED.
WE ARE CURSED WHEN ONCE WE WERE BLESSED.

Scene 10

A year later.

Instead of PAUL'S Breton women, looking like nuns and Madonnas, all that's on the walls are decorations for Christmas.

SONG: A REAL JOB

METTE

THEO HAS SOLD NOTHING AND YOU HOPE, HOPE.
WE'RE AS RICH AS HIS BROTHER VINCENT.
HOW CAN I MANAGE FOOD, MEDICINE, RENT?
"THE SAVAGE FROM PERU" IS A PUBLIC JOKE.

PAUL

THEO REASSURES ME MY PAINTINGS WILL SELL
SOON, YES, SOONER THAN YOU THINK.
HE HAS SOLD ONE OF CHRIST AND THE MADONNA.
YOU'LL AGAIN DRESS IN MINK.

METTE

THEO HAS SOLD NOTHING AND YOU
HOPE, HOPE
WE'RE AS RICH AS HIS BROTHER
VINCENT.
HOW CAN I MANAGE FOOD, MEDICINE
RENT?
"THE VICEORY FROM PERU'S NEWPHEW"
IS A JOKE.

PAUL

THEO REASSURES ME MY
PAINTINGS WILL SELL
SOONER, THAN YOU
THINK.
HE HAS SOLD ONE OF CHRIST
AND THE MADONNA.
YOU'LL AGAIN DRESS IN
DIAMOND CHO KERS, MINK.

METTE

There are paying jobs you can take – teaching children how to draw. Or become a salesman or a bank clerk.

PAUL

Or a tailor!

METTE

IN A CLEANING STORE. BRAGGARD, WHY NOT?
YOUR DISOWNED MOMMA WAS A SEAMSTRESS.
I STATE DESPERATE NEEDS AND YOU GET HOT.

PAUL
IN BED NOW YOU'RE NOT, NOT, HOT.

METTE
HOW COULD I BE WITH BILL COLLECTORS AT MY DOOR?

PAUL
DON'T TALK ANY MORE, ANY MORE, ANY MORE!

METTE
SILENT NIGHT, UNHOLY NIGHT!
NOTHING'S CALM, NOTHING'S BRIGHT.
WE'RE IN THE DARK WITH NOTHING TO BUY.
YOU'RE MY MASTER AGAIN, BUT POOR. I WANT TO DIE!

PAUL
Enough, Mette, the children can hear.

METTE
WHAT? THAT I'M DRENCHED IN FEAR?
ONE OF MY FRIENDS WALKS THE STREETS.
ANOTHER PEERS FROM A DOORWAY.
ANOTHER MARRIED A BRUTE. DO *YOU* HEAR?

PAUL
I'm trying to do, will, all that I can.

METTE
NOTHING COMES OF NOTHING.
NOTHING COMES OF PAINTING.
FINANCIALLY WE'RE ON OUR KNEES.
BUT YOU'LL STILL PAINT – AS YOU PLEASE.

I CAN'T FALL ASLEEP EACH NIGHT IN DESPAIR!
YOU HAVE TO GET A REAL JOB, BE REALLY BRAVE,
NOT LET FALSE HOPE TAKE ME TO AN EARLY GRAVE.
WHY DID YOU INVEST EVERYTHING? WHY DIDN'T YOU SAVE?

ALINE enters.

ALINE

I WAS ALMOST ASLEEP, DADDY, ASLEEP.
BUT THEN THE SHADOWS ON THE WALLS BEGAN TO CREEP.
WHEN I HEARD THE SAME LOUD NOISES OUT HERE
-- ANGER AND FEAR. MORE ANGER AND FEAR.

PAUL

OF ALL MY CHILDREN, YOU'RE MY SPECIAL DEAR.
I'LL LIE WITH YOU IN YOUR BED TILL YOU SLEEP.
IN THE MORNING LIGHT, ALINE, THERE'LL APPEAR
RED CHRISTMAS STOCKINGS AND GINGERBREAD.

BLUE CHRISTMAS STOCKINGS AND GINGERBREAD.

(He carries her offstage)

GREEN CHRISTMAS STOCKINGS AND GINGERBREAD.
SLEEP YELLOW STOCKINGS AND GINGERBREAD.
SLEEP YELLOW STOCKINGS AND GINGERBREAD...

Scene LL

Denmark area. Months later.

PAUL is painting himself as Christ – **projected** – while the melody of this song plays. Then too upset to continue painting, he picks up his guitar and sings:

SONG: HER SISTER'S HOUSE

PAUL

WHEN I COULDN'T EARN ENOUGH FOR A BOURGEOISE LIFE,
SHE MADE ME COME TO HER SISTER'S HOUSE,
BY THREATENING TO TAKE MY CHILDREN AWAY.
"OKAY, OKAY," I SQUEAKED LIKE A MOUSE.

HER SISTER SNAPS WHEN I COME "HOME" IN PAIN
FROM TRYING TO PEDDLE, TRYING TO SMILE
AT THESE DANES WHO BUY ONLY FROM DANES.
AND NOW SHE TELLS ME TO SLINK OUT, DEFILED

BY HER FAT, MONIED BROTHERS – MEAN, MEDDLESOME,
CALLING ME "DABBLER," "BOHEMIAN BUM,"
NO LONGER BEHIND MY BACK – TO MY FACE!
WHILE MY CHILDREN CLOSE THEIR EYES IN DISGRACE!

AND METTE SAYS NOTHING BUT AGREES. SO
I'LL TAKE MY BEST BOY BACK HOME WITH ME
WHILE SHE'LL KEEP THE OTHERS HERE HOSTAGE,
WHILE SHE'LL PLAY THE ABANDONED WIFE. "GO?"

WHAT CAN I DO BUT CREATE A LIFE FROM ART?
HOW ELSE CAN I STITCH UP A FUCKED UP HEART?
I FEEL OLD HERE, STUPID, DEPRESSED.
I NEED PEACE, REAL SUCCESS, I NEED REST.

Scene 12

Two areas --Paris and Denmark. PAUL is writing a letter to METTE in Denmark. Their son CLOVIS is in bed in PAUL'S area.

Projection of PAUL'S self-portrait as Christ.SONG: ALONE

PAUL

I'M SITTING ALONE
WITH OUR SON
IN A BARE ROOM:
NO FURNITURE,

NO CLEAN BEDDING,
NO WARM CLOTHES,
NOTHING TO EAT.
SEND MEDICINE, PLEASE!

CLOVIS

Where's Mommy, Mommy, Mommy. Doesn't she care that I'm ill.

PAUL

Shhh.

CLOVIS

I need pills. I don't want to die. Why doesn't she send anything?

PAUL

THIS IS THE COLD BOTTOM OF HELL
WHERE YOUR SON'S LIPS HAVE TURNED BLUE
WHY ARE YOUR EYEBALLS STONE
WHILE OUR SON PLEADS

FOR YOUR WARM HAND
--IN AN ENVELOPE:
CASH FOR FOOD, MEDICINE, CLOTHES?
MY MOUTH IS ASH, ASH, ASH!

METTE

(crumples his letter)

THIS IS A MANIPULATION
TO WREST MY SON FROM ME.
YOUR DEEPEST LOVE IS FOR ART!
YOU COULD SUCCED AT SALES,
YOU WERE FINANCIALLY SMART.

YOU'VE REDUCED YOURSELF TO POVERTY
SO YOU CAN DO NOTHING BUT PAINT.
IF YOU THINK I PLAY THE ICY QUEEN,
"THE SAVAGE PAUL" PLAYS THE SAINT.
SO MUCH FOR YOUR DAMN NEED TO PREEN!

I HEAR YOU'VE DONE ANOTHER CHRIST,
THIS TIME CRUCIFIED BY YOUR WIFE.
YOU KILL YOUR SON WITH PASSIVITY,
RUNNING FROM MY BROTHERS' MOCKERY.
YOU'VE MADE A MESS OF YOUR LIFE.

PAUL

REMEMBER THE DAYS
WHEN WE WALKED AMONG
THE GARDENS ON OUR WALLS,
REMEMBER OUR DINNERS,

OUR PICNICS, OUR SINGING.
CAN'T YOU HEAR CLOVIS HACKING?
YOUR SICK SON NEEDS YOUR BACKING.
YOU ARE MAD, MADDENING, SICKENING!

METTE

YOU'VE KEPT CLOVIS HACKING,
YOU BASTARD, HACKING
WHILE THE SAVAGE IS POSTURING
--A BOHEMIAN TACTIC, BULLYING.

Knocking on door.

Fade out METTE.

PAUL, fearing it is the landlord, slowly opens the door.
THEO VAN GOGH enters.

PAUL
Clovis, Clovis, it's Theo Van Gogh!

CLOVIS
Not the landlord, Daddy? Not Death?
(shivering)
Not the landlord? Not Death?

PAUL
(holds CLOVIS to warm him)
Shhh.

THEO
I've brought blankets, steaks, spinach, oranges, pears, camembert.

PAUL
God bless you, Theo. How many paintings did you sell?

THEO holds up one finger, to PAUL'S dismay.

PAUL (cont'd)
(to CLOVIS)
Eat, dear. Now you're going to get well.

THEO
Bid starvation farewell.

PAUL'S hands shake as he cuts CLOVIS'S steak.

THEO (cont'd)
Let me slice your steak, Paul. It's cold. Your hands shake. Take my gloves.

PAUL
Thank you, Theo. Thank you, my friend.

THEO
I have a proposition, Paul, to get you out of this icy hell. You're going to sell your paintings to *me*. In return, I'm going to send you money – where it's warm.

SONG: THE DEAL

THEO

YOUR PENURY WILL SEEM SMALL, TEMPORARY
 NEXT TO MY BROTHER VINCENT'S MOMENTARY
 INSANITY, HIS MOOD SWINGS, WRINGING HIS HANDS,
 PACING, DRINKING, HIS GENIUS SUFFERING.
 RIGHT NOW HE'S THE LONELIEST MAN IN FRANCE,
 TYING A ROPE TO HOLD UP HIS PANTS.

HE PLEADS WITH ME TO SEND MONEY – WHICH I DO.
 NOW HE PLEADS WITH ME TO SEND YOU TO HIM TOO.
 WAIT! YOU LOVE EACH OTHER'S WORK, ARE GOOD FRIENDS.
 YOU'LL PAINT TOGETHER NIGHT AND DAY, DAY AND NIGHT,
 INSPIRE EACH OTHER, SOMETIMES FIGHT WHILE I SPEND
 LOVE AND TIME AND ENERGY ON BOTH OF YOU,

HE BELIEVES YOU TWO MUST START A COLONY
 WITH OTHER PAINTERS AS YOU DID IN BRITTANY
 WHICH I BELIEVE WILL CHANGE ART HISTORY.
 YOUR WORK IS GREAT, PAUL, BUT ALONE HARD TO SELL.
 AS A MOVEMENT YOU'LL FORM A FIERCE CARTEL.
 AND, YES, YOU TWO WILL BE IMMORTAL.

But for now you need to be secure, admired.

PAUL

You are kind, but shhh, Clovis is getting tired.

THEO

VINCENT NEEDS YOU TO PROTECT HIM FROM EPILEPSY,
 MANIC DEPRESSION, TRAGEDY.
 ARE YOU LISTENING TO ME? I'M IN AWE OF YOU.
 THIS IS YOUR FIRST PACKET OF MONEY.
 THIS IS FOR YOUR WORK, IT'S NOT CHARITY.
 YOU NEED IT MORE THAN IMMORTALITY.

PAUL

Sh,sh, Clovis is dreaming of his infancy.

PAUL (cont'd)

SLEEP, CLOVIS, SLEEP,
CHILD WITH MY FATHER'S NAME.
SLIP DOWN THE BLUE MARBLE
CLIFFS OF YOUR DREAM
WHERE EVERYTHING IS WHAT IT SEEMS
WHERE EVERYTHING NOW IS WHAT IT SEEMS.

MOMMA DREAMS OF A GOLDEN HORIZON,
GOLDEN SAND IN HER DAMN FAIRYLAND,
A PURSE IN HER CASTRATING UPPER HAND.
SHE HAS TRIED TO KILL WITH INDIFFERENCE.
SHE IS NO WIFE, SHE IS BARELY A MOTHER.
SHE LIVES IN BLACK AND WHITE – SHADOWS, NOT COLOR.

SLEEP, CLOVIS, SLEEP,
CHILD WITH MY FATHER'S NAME,
SLIP DOWN THE BLUE MARBLE
CLIFFS OF YOUR DREAMS
WHERE ALL THIS IS WHAT IT SEEMS:
STEAKS, ORANGES, PEARS, CROSSANTS, CAMEMBERT.
SOON YOU'LL BE STRONG AGAIN IN FRESH AIR.

(to THEO)

I'LL TAKE YOUR BUSINESS AND FAMILY SCHEME,
THE HARMONY OF MONEY.
VINCENT AND I WILL CREATE A RHAPSODY
OF SUNFLOWERS, OLIVE TREES .

YOU'VE FREED ME OF GUILT, TERROR AND SHAME.
I'M SENDING MY PET BACK TO HIS MOTHER.

(to CLOVIS)

DREAM OF HER, DREAM OF YOUR HOME AND YOUR BED
WHERE YOU'LL SLEEP LIKE TONIGHT – CONTENTED, WELL-FED.

END OF ACT I