

STIGMATA

A Play



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CHARACTERS

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MARIANNE CLEVE	---	A teen-age girl.
DURL CLEVE	---	Marianne's Father.
SISTER SALLY	---	A survivalist nun
SPECK	---	A homeless vampire
UTILITY PLAYER #1	---	A man.*
UTILITY PLAYER #2	---	A woman*
UTILITY PLAYER #3	---	A woman*

*Utility Players enact various small roles throughout the play.

SCENES

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The action of the play occurs in the Our Lady of Suffering Virgins Trailer Court on the day of Armageddon. There are two acts; four scenes.

THE STAGE

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Against the rear of the stage is a backdrop of sheer cloth painted as the sky with tiny holes punched in it. Lights behind the cloth serve to brightly illuminate these “stars” in the evening scenes.

STAGE RIGHT is one of the trailers. The downstage wall of the trailer is the home of DURL and MARIANNE CLEVE. They are packing boxes littering the set; and what furnishings there are can best be described as Early American White Trash.

STAGE LEFT is the immense bow of a wooden ark. This ark is the home and obsession of SISTER SALLY, who manages the trailer court. There is a hatch near the bottom that SISTER SALLY Uses as a front door.

At the rear, near a Corner of the stage is a double crosswalk-sign intersection situated on the edge of an unseen street corner. During the course of the play it flashes from WALK to DON'T WALK with dulling regularity.

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Broken Gopher Ink is: Kyle J. Bunch, Michael K. White and Matt Lubich

ACT ONE

SCENE 1: (The stage is dark except for the flashing crosswalk-sign. We hear footsteps as the sky backdrop begins showing signs of a sunrise. We see two people; SISTER SALLY and SPECK. SISTER SALLY has her back to us, sitting in a lawn chair next to the entrance of her ark, dressed in her best nun's finery.

She is turned away because she is watching SPECK, who is at the double crosswalk, trying desperately to predict which WALK signal will appear. He is very impatient to cross the street and instead of just stopping and waiting, he is locked in a frenzied back and forth race. His timing is just off, so his frustration is becoming monumental.)

SPECK

Fuck..

(The pace quickens and SPECK is becoming more and more apoplectic. Suddenly, he catches the light and is about to dash out into the street.)

SISTER SALLY

Hey you!...Today is the day!

SPECK

Fuck!

(Her voice makes him hesitate and he misses it. He doesn't even bother to notice SISTER SALLY, but resumes his furious attempts to cross the street.)

SPECK

Fuck!

SISTER SALLY

(Looking up into the sky)

Today is the end of the world.

(This makes SPECK miss another WALK signal. He stamps his foot like a child.)

SPECK

FUCK!

(The lights begin to change. They dim on the action of SPECK and SISTER SALLY and come up on the interior of the CLEVE trailer. We see MARIANNE sitting on the sofa with a computer printout in front of her. She is talking on the telephone.)

MARIANNE

Don't you say, "fuck" to me, you bad, bad boy. I'm going to hang up on you now, for being so bad. Put it right on the receiver.

(She slams down the phone, fills her mouth with potato chips and randomly switches channels on her television. Sighing, she runs down a number on the printout sheet and dials the phone.)

MARIANNE

(Sultry)

Hi Gilligan... this is... uh... Marianne.. (She shrugs) I have a special juicy cream pie for you today..

(DURL, MARIANNE's father, walks through the room.)

MARIANNE

(Cupping the phone)

Morning daddy.

(DURL just grunts and goes over to the kitchen table, lighting a cigarette and pouring a cup of coffee. He gives MARIANNE a sharp, disapproving glance and she sees it. She cups the phone.)

MARIANNE

(Hopefully)

Do you want some breakfast daddy?

DURL

Just some coffee. (MARIANNE whispers into the phone.) Do you have to do that right this second?

(MARIANNE hangs up the phone.)

MARIANNE

I got my quota.

(She is guilty.)

DURL

The last dang thing I need first thing in the morning while I'm trying to wake up is to listen to you talk nasty trash to strangers and retards.

MARIANNE

They're not all like that. (A curt look from DURL.) It pays good money. We can use it, you know.

DURL

You wait until I go to work.

(MARIANNE gets up off the couch and begins wandering aimlessly around the trailer.)

MARIANNE

Well, you told me to get a job for summer.

DURL

I'm not saying you shouldn't work.

MARIANNE

I could get a job wrapping Frisbees at the Frisbee factory, but I hear someone got their arm caught in the shrink-wrap and they had to amputate it. I suppose you want me to take those kinds of risks. You don't care.

DURL

Why can't you just wait until I leave?

MARIANNE

I have to have someone to talk to around here

DURL

Why not talk to me in the mornings?

(MARIANNE walks over and plops down in a chair across from DURL, staring at him.)

DURL

(Wilting under her scrutiny)

I know you hate it here. But maybe, baby this'll help get us somewhere nicer in the long run.

MARIANNE

That'll be the day. (Pause) Now I'm doing it.

DURL

What?

MARIANNE

I'm talking in Buddy Holly song titles, like you.

(DURL's face darkens.)

DURL

What's that supposed to mean?

MARIANNE

(Quickly changing the subject)

Daddy, why'd we have to move here? I mean, I come home from school last week and everything's all packed up and you say we're moving just like that. (Pause) Nobody asked me if I wanted to move. Especially here.

DURL

I did it for you, honey. In case...something happens.

MARIANNE

I don't understand that.

DURL

I..I can't explain it to you so you'd understand right now darlin'. You gotta understand, there are some things I just gotta put my foot down about. I can't have all this jangle talk around here and arguing with me and all. We can't lose this place in the trailer park. We're here for a very serious reason, but I just can't tell you why. There are some things worth believing in and if you believed in me, you'd trust me.

MARIANNE

I'd believe in you more if you gave me something to go on.

(A hurt look from DURL.)

MARIANNE

I mean, I don't know anyone around here. This is going to be the most boring summer vacation of my life.

DURL

Every day it's getting closer.

MARIANNE

I know, I know. Rolling faster than a roller coaster.

DURL

I got to get to work.

MARIANNE

I bet if mama abducted me when I was two, I bet you probably wouldn't have looked for me.

DURL

(Pained)

That's not true. It hurts, I know, but your mother rejected both of us Marianne. Not just me. I looked for her, but I could never find her. I gave up everything I ever had. I had to quit my promising entertainment career to take care of you.

MARIANNE

(Sneering)

A Buddy Holly impersonator! (Pause) Daddy, I want a real summer vacation. I don't want to spend it here in Dogpatch trailer jail, full of psycho religious weirdos.

(DURL is still smarting from the Buddy Holly crack.)

DURL

Listen; what I did went beyond mimicry, young lady! I took the story of Buddy Holly and I added my own creative influence. When I rose from the charred plane wreckage stage set and asked, "What if Buddy Holly had missed that flight?" my performance went beyond simple lip synch. (Sighs) But I guess it doesn't matter anymore.

MARIANNE

You know, today is the day Sister Sally says the world is going to end.

DURL

You stay away from her..and that ark..at least when I'm not here. Now, I don't think the world is going to end, but..I do feel kind of safe living next to that thing.but keep away from there.

MARIANNE

Okay! It just scares me. And none of my old friends will visit me because they think I'm all weirded out living here. That isn't why you moved us here is it? You've been worrying about the world ending haven't you daddy.

DURL

(Unconvincingly)

Now Marianne, you're letting your imagination run away with you. I just got up and I don't want to think about the end of the world. I'm sure there are some teenagers around here. Why don't you just go up and talk to one of them. I'll bet you could make friends real easy if you tried.

MARIANNE

Who'd want to be friends with me? I'm nothing special. It's easy for, you, you can be someone else. Everyone thinks you're cute and harmless. Well, I don't have anyone to idolize..I'm sure Buddy Holly would have ended up as a butcher for King Soopers.

DURL

(Hurt)

I don't expect you to understand the sacrifices I've made for rock and roll and my family..

MARIANNE

He was just a singer daddy.

DURL

(Insulted; getting up)

I got to get to work. (Pause) It's going to be hot today.

MARIANNE

(Pouting)

I hope it rains.

(Both DURL and MARIANNE are sulking now. Wordlessly, DURL collects his lunch bag and leaves.

The lights go down on the inside of the trailer and come up on the outside following DURL to the crosswalk.

We see SISTER SALLY, still sitting with her back to us. DURL hesitates when he sees her, and then strides to the crosswalk, with his back to her, patiently waiting for his WALK signal. We sense that DURL is deliberately ignoring SISTER SALLY and that it is very difficult for him to do so. The WALK signal rescues him and he steps into the darkness. SISTER SALLY suddenly calls after him; her voice is very hard and ominous.)

SISTER SALLY

Don't get caught unprepared..

(DURL is gone. SISTER SALLY looks after him. The lights change again, darkening everything except a small patch of the stage opposite SISTER SALLY and in front of the darkened trailer.

We see YOUNG SISTER SALLY, (U.P. #2) busily sawing wood. She is only in the beginning stages of building her ark. Her mother calls her from off stage.)

VOICE

(O.S.)

Sally, you come in now. The rains are going to start. It's time to pray baby. Come on in now! I hear the thunder. Jesus! Jesus! I see the forked flashes of lightning!

(On the contrary, we hear birds chirping. Despite the VOICE's protestations, it seems to be a sunny day.)

YOUNG SISTER SALLY

I'll be in, in a second mama. I just want to complete the door for the ark's gangway.

(A YOUNG MAN (U.P. #1) wanders over from the other side of the crosswalk. YOUNG SISTER SALLY seems less than impressed with his presence.)

YOUNG SISTER SALLY

What do you want? Nobody asked you to come by here.

(The YOUNG MAN shrugs.)

MAN

We were, uh, thinking of, uh, getting some pizza tonight and, uh, I figured maybe you might like to join us for once.

YOUNG SISTER SALLY

They don't like me. Your friends think I'm stupid. And ugly. You think I don't know, but I do.

YOUNG MAN

That's not true. At least I don't think you're ugly Sally. You're alright..maybe even kind of pretty..

(He is embarrassed.)

YOUNG SISTER SALLY

(Grimly)

Pretty won't cut it in a world where your face can turn to slush and melt off your bones in a microsecond. All you and your friends want is girls who..who..you know, show themselves. Well, I have no need for that. There are plenty of girls with large mammaries. I've strapped mine down with terry cloth, because they get in the way. Want to see?

YOUNG MAN

Sure..

YOUNG SISTER SALLY

Fat chance. You have no conception of the bigger picture. Look around you..

(The YOUNG MAN looks around, but his mind is still fixated on YOUNG SISTER SALLY's breasts. She is growing impatient.)

YOUNG SISTER SALLY

Do you really want to grow old in this world? Repeating mistakes of the past?

(She doesn't wait for him to answer.)

YOUNG SISTER SALLY

Why do you keep coming over here? What do you really want from me? Do you want me to show you my naked body? Is that what you want?

YOUNG MAN

God Sally, all I wanted was to see if you wanted to get some pizza. You always do this to me. I come over here wanting to talk to you, and you end up making me all tight and uncomfortable. I don't know what I want, okay? I don't even know why I come over here.

(YOUNG SISTER SALLY stops her work. She faces the YOUNG MAN.)

YOUNG SISTER SALLY

Have you ever heard the saying, "The son shall inherit the sins of his father?"

YOUNG MAN

No.

YOUNG SISTER SALLY

What it means is that you're responsible for what your father did. Everything bad he did, you'll suffer for it. And everything bad that your grandfather did is still a sin of your father. So you'll suffer for that too. There must be fifteen generations since the last great Flood and that means you're going to have to pay fifteen times more than they did in order for you to be forgiven. And you just go on, wasting precious time feeling good about yourself. Time is running out, and the only ones who see what's coming and prepare for it are the ones who will live. I've been set a task to build this ark by the Lord God Almighty. It's sad to see you waste what's left of your life trying to play games other people have set out for you. Instead, you could be doing something to prepare for the bleakness..

(The YOUNG MAN shrugs.)

YOUNG MAN

I take guitar lessons.

YOUNG SISTER SALLY

How will you escape the wailing and gnashing of teeth? How will you escape being consumed by a great plague of locusts that will consume our land?

YOUNG MAN

I don't know.

(There is an awkward silence.)

YOUNG MAN

I just want to be liked. Is there something wrong with that? So what if a flood washes me away tomorrow? At least I'd be popular today.

(YOUNG SISTER SALLY gives him a look of venomous pity.)

YOUNG MAN

Well, if you don't want a pizza..I..could help you with your bomb shelter..

YOUNG SISTER SALLY

It isn't a bomb shelter. It's an ark. Fifty cubits high and seventy cubits wide. It's the only hope of the human race. I'm making this ark for the next generation to spring from. You see, every thousand years or so God gets sick and tired of people like you with all your petty thoughts and shallow ambitions and so he purges the likes of you from existence.

YOUNG MAN

Okay, so when does all this purging stuff take place?

YOUNG SISTER SALLY

June fifth, eighteen years from now.

YOUNG MAN

(Brightly)

Well, you could afford to take a night off then. There's plenty of time.

(YOUNG SISTER SALLY's mother yells from off stage again.)

VOICE

(O.S.)

The rolling thunder! Sally! The thunder and lightning!

YOUNG MAN

Thunder? I don't hear any thunder.

YOUNG SISTER SALLY

Then listen to your heart.

(The lights change on the court again, returning to the crosswalk where SPECK sits on the curb, watching the WALK sign flash. SISTER SALLY's lawn chair is empty. We linger for a moment on SPECK as he listens to the busy traffic sounds.)

SPECK

(Desolately)

Fuck.

(The light shifts to the CLEVE trailer. MARIANNE looks around the room in boredom. She refers to her printout sheet and picks up the phone. As she begins to dial, there is a commotion from outside. Suddenly there is a desperate knocking at the trailer door. MARIANNE hesitates, as though afraid. She picks up a large, nearby screwdriver, brandishing it as she opens the door.

SPECK suddenly rushes in and for a moment we are uncomfortable thinking he might do MARIANNE some harm. But he is obviously being chased, and MARIANNE can take care of herself, as evidenced by the way she knocks him down and holds the screwdriver to his face.)

MARIANNE

Ha! Caught ya! Come to have your way!

SPECK

Thank God! Thanks for letting me in..there's this huge dog chasing me..You gonna stab me? Because if you're going to stab me, I'll go back outside..

MARIANNE

(Menacingly)

What is it you want?

SPECK

I just wanted to cross the street..! didn't hear it coming up on me.. and then there it was, this big dog, moving its mouth but there were no sounds coming out..

MARIANNE

That's the dangerous part about living in this trailer park. You never hear the dogs coming.

(SPECK tries to get up, but MARIANNE forces him back down with her screwdriver.)

MARIANNE

It's a rule Sister Sally made.

SPECK

What is?

MARIANNE

If you want to have a dog around here you have to get its vocal cords cut. She calls it debarking the dogs. Are you new here or what?

SPECK

I just wanted to cross the street, but I couldn't. The nun said she'd give me odd jobs on that big ship. She said I could do stuff like cut the grass and help her varnish the boat..

(MARIANNE motions SPECK to get up and she follows him out, screwdriver poised, through the door of the trailer and into the court.

The light fades on the interior and comes up on the exterior. MARIANNE now has SPECK safely out of her trailer.)

SPECK

(Awkwardly trying to make conversation)

What school do you go to.?

MARIANNE

It's summer, stupid. I don't go to school.

(SPECK gives up trying to make conversation with MARIANNE, and shuffles over to the crosswalk. He waits for it to change, but it doesn't. Hesitantly he steps over to the opposite one, but just misses it. The lights seem to diabolically change with his movements. Finally, he gives up and

begins sadly pushing an old lawnmower over the sparse grass of the trailer court.)

SPECK

(To a suspiciously curious MARIANNE)

So is this nun some kind of nut or what?

MARIANNE

She hired you didn't she? (Pause) I'm going to a private school back east. My dad's very rich you see. I doubt if I'll ever get another chance to meet many people here. I'm going to be leaving soon for a tour of Eastern Europe. That's where my mother is now. She's the ambassador there..

SPECK

(Who could care less)

Is that so.

MARIANNE

Maybe since you're going to be working here ! could show you around. You know, introduce you to all the tenants in the park.. I haven't been here long myself but..

SPECK

Introduce me? What for?

(MARIANNE's voice grows conspiratorial.)

MARIANNE

It's just that Sister Sally is a little weird. That ship she's building is like an ark. She thinks the world's going to end today. She's been constructing it for seventeen years just for today. But then again, if she's so sure today is the day, then how come she hired you to cut the grass? I mean, if the world's going to end, why mow the lawn, right?

SPECK

If the lawn needs to be cut, it needs to be cut

(MARIANNE doesn't see SISTER SALLY standing on the gangway of her ark, but SPECK does.)

MARIANNE

Everyone around here is afraid of her. I guess because nuns are supposed to be so tough. This one kid told me that she was fired from catholic school for being too mean..

(MARIANNE turns and is virtually face to face with SISTER SALLY. She is terror stricken. She and SISTER SALLY glance at each other and for a moment; there is silence.)

SISTER SALLY

Hello Marianne. Are we having a busy summer?

(MARIANNE can't speak. The lights dim.)

SCENE 2: (The stage is lit strangely, indicating a flashback. The light shines through the sky-backdrop, giving the appearance of a star lit night. YOUNG SISTER SALLY and the YOUNG MAN are lying on the ground, looking up at the stars.)

YOUNG SISTER SALLY

Those stars are so far away and we're so...here.

YOUNG MAN

You know sometimes I can see stars in the daytime. I've never told anyone that. But now, they look like tiny pinholes in a big black blanket..it's like the light of heaven shining through the fabric of the night..

YOUNG SISTER SALLY

(Impatiently)

I should be working on the gangway of the ark..

YOUNG MAN

Just wait a minute! You have to let it happen. Just look out at them for a second and they'll start to get inside of you. They never leave you when that happens. And you're never alone.

YOUNG SISTER SALLY

Alone? Have you ever thought of how alone we really are? How utterly and absolutely singled out we are? What are there, a thousand galaxies? And in each of those, ten thousand or so stars? How many thousands does He have to search through before He gets to you and me? It's so fragile here; we could all disappear like a flea on the back of a dog, and nobody would notice.

YOUNG MAN

The dog would.

YOUNG SISTER SALLY

It's all so pointless..

YOUNG MAN

God Sally, you can even make a night looking at the stars depressing.

YOUNG SISTER SALLY

I just can't help feeling I should be working on the ark instead of laying here thinking of the blackness.

YOUNG MAN

You see blackness. I see stars. If everything's so useless, why build an ark in the first place?

YOUNG SISTER SALLY

(Curtly)

I don't want to talk about this anymore. (Pause) I won't give in, even if there is no worldly point. I don't necessarily want to do it. I have to.

(There is an awkward pause.)

YOUNG MAN

You threw the flowers I gave you into the mulch pit.

YOUNG SISTER SALLY

I'm not allowed presents from boys.

YOUNG MAN

But Sally, you're twenty-seven.

(Another pause.)

YOUNG SISTER SALLY

I've been thinking. I might not be able to do it alone..

YOUNG MAN

Do what?

YOUNG SISTER SALLY

I used to think I could do it by myself, but..it might take two..I wouldn't be able to save the world and push heathens away from the ark with my barge pole at the same time. It wouldn't be that hard of a job.

YOUNG MAN

What about animals?

YOUNG SISTER SALLY

God realizes that animals are a mistake. There won't be any this time. I'd still need a male though...for other uses.

YOUNG MAN

You'd let me do all that?

YOUNG SISTER SALLY

I won't promise you. My mate has to be choosed strongest. We have to repopulate the earth, so he would have to be a good breeder..

(The YOUNG MAN moves over to YOUNG SISTER SALLY and kisses her.)

YOUNG SISTER SALLY

(Mad)

What'd you do that for?

YOUNG MAN

I thought you wanted me to I with all this mating talk and..

YOUNG SISTER SALLY

(Looking up)

Now I've lost the stars.

(Indeed, the stars have faded, and we hear the distant rumble of thunder. Lights come up on the outside porch/steps of the CLEVE trailer. MARIANNE is reading from a supermarket tabloid. The phone is resting beside her, its cord stretched to the limit. MARIANNE casually glances up at the faint sound of thunder. SPECK is lazily mowing the lawn and a WORKER, (U.P. #1) is standing somewhat apprehensively in front of MARIANNE.)

MARIANNE

Hey Speck, listen to this..Dwarf beats wife to death with flashlight. Thirty-two year old Todd "Tiny" Sniflet was charged with first-degree murder at his Sistalie, Florida home, for the bludgeon murder of his

Eleven-year-old wife, Lulreen..(To the WORKER) C'mon, money up front.

(The WORKER digs into his pocket and hands MARIANNE a five-dollar bill. MARIANNE opens up her blouse, facing away from the audience, and bears her breasts for the WORKER. who stares uncomfortably. MARIANNE nonchalantly continues her reading. SPECK listens to her attentively as he mows the lawn.)

MARIANNE

(Reading)

“Sniflet, well known in the community as the night watchman at the local sewage plant apparently discovered his baby bride in the romantic embraces of Virgil Coons, the meat market’s delivery boy. Zoot McPheeters, the owner of Sistalie Gophers, a semi-professional baseball team, said Sniflet has a place in his line-up whenever his current legal problems are settled. “He’s just the kind of long ball hitter we’re looking for, “McPheeters remarked..”

(She abruptly closes her blouse.)

MARIANNE

Alright, that’s enough for five dollars.

WORKER

How much to touch.

MARIANNE

What are you, some kind of psycho?

(She brandishes her trusty screwdriver.)

MARIANNE

Get out of here.

(The WORKER leaves.)

MARIANNE

What does he think I am? Some kind of slut? Don't you have anything inside to do? I've got phone calls to make and I want to worm on my tan in privacy.

SPECK

Go inside and make 'em. The outdoors is free. (Under his breath) I never pay for that kind of thing.

MARIANNE

I heard that!

(An awkward pause.)

MARIANNE

It's too hot to go inside. My ear sticks to the phone.

SPECK

r heard thunder. (Pause) Don't you feel kind of weird, doing what you do, you know, for money?

MARIANNE

Why should I?

SPECK

Well, you know, talking all day to strange men about sex.

MARIANNE

They want to talk to someone. It gets them off, and I get nine and a half dollars per call. I keep my own hours and I can be anyone I want to be.

SPECK

(Shaking his head)

Love is strange.

MARIANNE

Oh, it isn't love.

(She looks condescendingly at SPECK.)

MARIANNE

But it's the closest some of us will ever come to it. (Pause) Where'd you live before you tried to cross the street?

SPECK

Oh, there was this place.

MARIANNE

I wish we still lived where we used to live.

SPECK

You mean your villa in Rome.

MARIANNE

What?

SPECK

That place you were telling me this morning where you used to live.

MARIANNE

(Defensively)

So why'd you leave your other place then?

SPECK

It got flooded with tree watering and all. I lived in this sort of dugout see..

MARIANNE

You lived in a dugout?

SPECK

Between baseball games. At least until last night. Then I decided to cross the street in search of a warm sewer vent, but here I am so..

(He shrugs.)

SPECK

It's just temporary. You know what a vampire is?

MARIANNE

Like it sucks your blood and stuff, right?

SPECK

Well, I'm a vampire. These are hard times for vampires and I have the Plague of blood eaters, but my vampirism makes me immortal so you see my stigma is suffering and everlasting life without a home..

MARIANNE

I knew you were a psycho

SPECK

Don't worry, I'm not contagious unless you have open wounds or I bite you on the neck..

(MARIANNE brandishes her screwdriver.)

MARIANNE

It isn't wood, but I can jam it in your heart if I have to.

SPECK

Fair enough. (Pause) You know, I'm the embodiment of evil. But the thing is, I don't feel very evil. I guess it always happens that way.

MARIANNE

You don't seem all that evil to me. You're a lousy lawn mower though.

(SPECK shrugs and resumes his work. MARIANNE goes back to her tabloid.)

MARIANNE

Hey! Here's a woman who bleeds from her palms! You could get together with her.. it'd be a perfect match.

SPECK

No thanks. Not very sanitary. (Looking strangely at MARIANNE) Besides, I find the napes of women's necks strangely attractive. Palms don't do much for me..

MARIANNE

How many people will have known you were a vampire when you're gone?

SPECK

But vampires are immortal.

MARIANNE

Well I don't believe in vampires.

SPECK

(gesturing at her tabloid)

Well I don't believe in miracles.

(pause)

MARIANNE

So like, are you constantly hungry for blood and guts and stuff?

SPECK

No, only when I'm on one of my ravenous blood frenzies. I need plasmatic provocation.
(Just then DURL enters through the crosswalk wearing a blood-spattered
butcher's smock. He is singing softly to himself.)

DURL

Peggy Sue..pretty..pretty..pretty..Peggy Sue.

(He sees MARIANNE and SPECK.)

DURL

Hey honey I got something for you! (To SPECK) Who the fuck are you?

MARIANNE

He's a vampire Sister Sally hired to pull weeds and stuff to prepare for the apocalypse
tonight.

SPECK

She wants this trailer court real clean, I guess. For the end of the world, I mean. I guess
there's prizes..

MARIANNE

What have you got for me?

DURL

All right, now don't break a guitar string. I'm going to work the double shift tonight so I decided to come home for lunch.

(He pulls a large jar out of a sack and hands it to MARIANNE.)

MARIANNE

Ooh, a little bald baby cow..

DURL

That's a cow fetus. It's not for eating, just for enjoyment. How was your morning baby?

MARIANNE

I was bored... again. Just like I'll be tomorrow.

DURL

Did you make me my lunch?

MARIANNE

It's the pizza in the microwave.

DURL

Pizza? I don't want any pizza. If you were so bored why couldn't you make me something real?

MARIANNE

I was busy on the phone.

SPECK

(hungrily)

Pizza? What kind?

(MARIANNE sighs and goes into the trailer to get the pizza for SPECK.

DURL sits on the steps of the trailer and wipes his brow.)

DURL

(to SPECK)

So you're a vampire huh?

SPECK

Yeah, I guess so.

DURL

You ever see a werewolf then?

SPECK

Werewolves are just silly superstitious folklore. But I did see Jesus once. Inside a Safeway buying light bulbs and motor oil.

(DURL ponders this.)

DURL

Well, I guess the Savior needs motor oil like everyone else.

SPECK

What's with this nun and her boat? She really think the world's going to end today? Why today? Why not yesterday or tomorrow?

DURL

Think you'd be cutting grass if she wasn't sure? She's been saying it's so for a long time..

(He looks at the trailer to make sure MARIANNE can't hear.)

DURL

..And I've known her for a long time. Down the line, she used to say, it would happen on this date. The world would be neat and straight, ready to be blown away.

SPECK

So you believe it?

(DURL shrugs.)

DURL

The day isn't over yet. (Pause) So how come you're not...

SPECK

...begging and leeching off society like my useless vagrant friends?

DURL

Yeah.

SPECK

I just came to cross the street.

DURL

(Nodding)

Oh. She caught you.

SPECK

(Looking apprehensively at the crosswalk)

I ain't afraid of no nun..

DURL

Well, she's had this vision, this notion, eighteen years ago that the world was going to end on this date. You know how it is when someone seems so sure. They just roll right over you. I mean, I've never been sure about anything in my life, but it's so easy for her to be dead certain about this. She knew this day would come. I only hope God doesn't disappoint her. She's so confident she could make God unsure of himself.

SPECK

I don't believe in God. He's too convenient to be true. But I do believe in Santa.

DURL

That's good, everyone should believe in Santa.

(MARIANNE comes out with a small scorched pizza that she hands to SPECK.)

SPECK

Much obliged

(He turns and dumps it onto the ground. MARIANNE doesn't see because she's gone back to her tabloid.)

DURL

I better go inside and eat something if I want to get back for the two o'clock rendering. Someone left the meat locker open last night and it smells like an outhouse. Looks like a pack of dogs..or maybe even a vampire got in there..

(MARIANNE eyes SPECK warily.)

DURL

..but we can mark it down, grind it into hot dogs and sell it. You gonna be okay baby?

MARIANNE

What do you care? Nobody ever listens to me. You get to cut up cows; me I'm stuck here talking to the undead.

DURL

I'm sorry you're bored honey, but..

MARIANNE

There's just nothing to do around here except eat and watch television and call up weirdos and talk sex..

SPECK

Yeah, it's a tough life alright

DURL

Well, it sounds like you got your day all planned out. I'm going to eat

(DURL goes into the trailer for some lunch.)

SPECK

Your dad's nice.

MARIANNE

(Covering up)

He just tells people he's a butcher a King Soopers. They say Howard Hughes used to tell people he worked in a roller rink..

SPECK

Whatever he does, he seems nice. Anyway I figure you're one up on me.
My dad's dead.

MARIANNE

He's not so great. He's never around and even when he is, he never listens to me. Like the other day I was telling him this idea I had for..

SPECK

(Obviously not paying attention)

I wonder if she's going to want me pull weeds too..I'm sorry were you saying something?

MARIANNE

Forget it. (Pause) I was just reading about this woman in Omaha who bleeds from her palms. They call it stigmata. What does that mean?

SPECK

It's the physical manifestations of the wounds of Christ. She bleeds from the palms because that's where they nailed Jesus to the cross.

MARIANNE

Gross!

SPECK

It's usually real religious people who get it. They bring it on in some kind of hypnotic frenzy..

(SPECK is leaning nonchalantly on the ark. We see a shadow on the gangway.)

MARIANNE

It says people from as far as Las Vegas went to Omaha just to touch her. They even built her a little shrine and everything..See? There's a picture even, but it's probably' faked! Nobody could just bleed through their palms!

(SISTER SALLY enters.)

SISTER SALLY

Jesus bled Marianne. He bled for all of us who are too scared to do it for ourselves. (Pause) Speck, I thought I told you to move the water sprinklers. The Immaculate Virgin picnic tables are soaked and warping. I will not greet the Lord with warped wood.

SPECK

I'm new here remember? Besides, the Lord made wood, don't you think He knows that it warps?

SISTER SALLY

(Through clenched teeth)

He didn't give it to us to warp though, did he? (To MARIANNE, ever so sweetly.) What is this about the holy occurrence of Stigmata?

MARIANNE

(Halting)

There's a story in the International Star-News about this Irish woman in Omaha who has blood coming out of the palms of her hands.. but it's .faked...this newspaper isn't..

SISTER SALLY

Stigmata is a proven miracle. There are many who would find it an honor to bleed for Jesus.

MARIANNE

It says here that sometimes, the line of people stretches all the way to the interstate..does it hurt Sister?

SISTER SALLY

One often has to endure discomfort in the name of God. Pain is of this world however, and nothing compared to the agony of eternal damnation, with metal pinchers on your nipples and hot coals in your shoes. You'd do good to believe a little more and prepare yourself for glory instead of clearing a path to damnation.

MARIANNE

I'll believe it when I see it. Like Bigfoot.

SISTER SALLY

(To SPECK)

Go and move that water. I'm deducting this time from your check at the end of the day.

(SPECK lingers.)

SPECK

I wanted to ask about that. Seeing as how the world is ending and all, do you think I could get paid in advance?

SISTER SALLY

Do it !

SPECK

Yes ma'am.

(SPECK exits. SISTER SALLY walks over and sits on the steps of the trailer with MARIANNE.)

SISTER SALLY

(Stroking MARIANNE's hair)

You're such a pretty girl, Marianne. Why do you have such hate in your heart?

MARIANNE

(Brushing her hand away)

Maybe I like being a bitch.

SISTER SALLY

No, I don't think so. I think you really want people to like you. They would, if you'd just let them. Jesus told us to accept our faults and promote our redeeming features.

MARIANNE

(Picking up the phone)

I got calls to make.

SISTER SALLY

I know what kind of calls you make. It's quite alright with me if you want to burn for eternity, but it isn't alright with Jesus.

MARIANNE

Look, I've seen how you run this place, but that doesn't give you permission to come here and threaten me. You're not my mother!

(MARIANNE. angry. snatches up the phone and begins dialing. DURL comes outside, stopping cold when he sees SISTER SALLY.)

DURL

Where's Speck?

SISTER SALLY

He has work to do .

DURL

(Noticing MARIANNE on the phone)

You say it's today, then I'm here. Simple as that. For Marianne, understand?

SISTER SALLY

She might just as well run around the city or listen to rock and roll music..

DURL

There's nothing wrong with rock and roll.

SISTER SALLY

Negro rhythms and shiny suits have been known to blind more than one man-from the true lighted path.

DURL

Or maybe they showed him the way. How about that?

(MARIANNE, long since having abandoned her phone call, watches this exchange, strangely awestruck.)

SISTER SALLY

Oh, I'm sure the time will come, when Marianne will want to have a little chat with me. They all do eventually.

(SISTER SALLY starts to leave.)

DURL

Sally.. I think we'll need to talk tomorrow.

(She smiles at them both.)

SISTER SALLY

There will be no tomorrow.

(She is gone. DURL seems to be repressing a barely hidden rage; he paces the trailer court.)

MARIANNE

What was that all about? I've never seen anyone talk that way to Sister Sally..

DURL

Just never you mind! And you be careful about getting alone with that woman in the future. I know she thinks you're the one..

MARIANNE

(After a pause)

Do you really have to go back to work daddy?

DURL

We need the money. I can get time and a half working this extra shift.

MARIANNE

But we never see each other anymore. I'm here all alone, with nobody to talk to. I'd feel like a freak, except I'm surrounded by them. You know, I'm tired of nobody listening to me except for the guys on the phone. Nobody even knows I'm alive. I have ideas and opinions but nobody ever listens!

DURL

Well I'm listening now. What's your opinion?

MARIANNE

(Caught off guard)

Well.. I just can't come up with something just like that! I'm talking in general. You never listen to me.

DURL

(Distracted)

What? I'm sorry baby, I wasn't listening.

MARIANNE

That's just what I'm talking about! What do I have to do to get a little attention from you? From anyone?

DURL

Give me a break Marianne. The world might be ending today and I've got a lot on my mind. Now, I pay attention Marianne... you know I do.

MARIANNE

No you don't.

DURL

Look, I'm going to be late.

(DURL gets up.)

DURL

Why don't you make some more of your phone calls. That'll make you feel better..

MARIANNE

That's what I need to do, pay someone to talk to me.

DURL

Don't be so melodramatic..(Kisses her head) I got to go,

(DURL is gone. MARIANNE sits on the steps, totally frustrated. She picks up the tabloid paper and flips idly through it. Suddenly, she stands up, as if having made a sudden decision. She picks up the phone and dials quickly.)

MARIANNE

Information? Could you give me the number of KKKK TV News? Uh-huh, thank you.

(She jots it down and hangs up the phone. Gingerly, she turns pages in her tabloid until she finds what she is after. She ponders it a moment, then slowly fondles her screwdriver as the lights fade.)

ACT TWO

SCENE 1: (Later that same afternoon. The stage is more dimly lit. The CLEVE trailer is covered with crude signs which proclaim; "Stigmata This Way, " and "Questions Answered & Problems solved." The backdrop is illuminated with dim spotlights and in their path are eerie silhouettes of people patiently standing in line. The door to the CLEVE trailer is open, but we can't see inside.)

MAN

(Voice only, from inside trailer)

Thank you for seeing me. I'm bald as you can see. Nobody pays attention to me because of my hairless state. I'm fat too but I can come back later for that. Mainly the thing now is hair..

(Two neighbor women, (U.P.s # 2 & 3) enter with their laundry. A clothesline is strung across the trailer court, anchored to the bow of the ark.

The MAN, (U.P. #1) emerges from the trailer with blood smeared on his forehead, but he seems quite content as he goes off. We hear a faint clap of thunder in the distance as the women hang their wash.)

U.P. #2

What's Stigmata?

U.P. #3

It's a game like bingo. (Laughs) Naw, I know it has something to do with blood and religion and crosses..(Conspiratorially) I was outside when it happened. I heard the screams.

U.P. #2

Have you seen her yet?

U.P. #3

Well, I was in making Herk a head cheese omelet when it started. Sister Sally was right there too, really yelling at her. I think she's a little jealous. Then this television crew showed up and..

U.P. #2

Just imagine a religious miracle right here in our trailer park. On judgment day too.

U.P. #3

Miracle my eye. That's not any bingo game she's playing in there. That girl doesn't have stigmata any more than you or me.

(U.P. #2 cuts her hand on a jagged piece of laundry and holds it up.)

U.P. #2

My hand's bleeding

U.P. #3

Yeah, my palms itch just thinking about it.

U.P. #2

If you don't think she really has, then where did all that blood come from?

U.P. #3

Use your head. Her father's a butcher ain't he?

U.P. #2

Speaking of which, you know what I heard? From the new lawn man?

U.P. #3

I'm not interested in your gossiping.

U.P. #2

I heard SISTER Sally has a little...crush on him.

U.P. #3

Who? The lawn man?

U.P. #2

No, the butcher!

U.P. #3

Shhl Watch what you're saying! You'll get us all into trouble if she hears you saying things like that.

(Both WOMEN cower because SISTER SALLY has suddenly walked on. She is carrying wire cutters. She hesitates, looks into the sky as if watching for something, then walks directly to the clothesline and cuts it down from the ark side.)

SISTER SALLY

(Cordially)

Ladies..

(SISTER SALLY walks off. MARIANNE emerges from the CLEVE trailer to pick up a newspaper on the porch. Her hands are heavily bandaged. She unrolls it there to reveal a huge headline; LOCAL GIRL BLEEDS SPONTANEOUSLY FROM PALMS. The two WOMEN stare dumbly at her. She goes inside the trailer. The light accompanies her and fades on everything else.)

MARIANNE

Some women just snickered at me.

DURL

(In his butcher's smock)

Now honey, you're going to have to get used to people staring and saying things. You're special now.

(MARIANNE smiles.)

MARIANNE

I'm sorry you had to come home from work daddy. I know we need the money.

DURL

You're more important than money. I don't mind at all. Your face and palms will be plastered on every paper and t.v. screen for a hundred miles.

MARIANNE

But the line of people; they don't listen to me. They just want me to bleed on them.
Somebody keeps calling and asking for Bloody Marianne.

DURL

It's probably just kids. I was thinking maybe we should take you to some kind of doctor.

MARIANNE

You mean a head doctor.

DURL

No..no. But it might help if, you know, you had someone to talk to.

(There is a knock at the door. DURL answers it. AMBER MATHERS and her CAMERAMAN (U.P. s # 1&2) try to push their way in.)

AMBER MATHERS

(U.P. #2)

We're in the home of little Maryland Cleve, the local girl who was suddenly and inexplicably stricken with stigmata this morning. And to make the story even more incredible, across the way, an ex-nun has spent the past seventeen years building an ark, claiming that the world as we know it is due to end some time today. Is this stigmata a sign that we're to be spared?

(The two keep trying to push their way in while DURL still blocks the door.)

MARIANNE

My name's Marianne, not Maryland.

AMBER MATHERS

We are being physically threatened by Burl Cleve, the shadowy father figure to the girl. Mr. Cleve, I'm Amber Mathers with Channel 5 Eyewitness Action News Team. The public has a right to know what's going on here. Just what is going on here?

MARIANNE

M-a-r-i -a-n-n-e. Marianne.

AMBER MATHERS

(To DURL)

And how do you feel about your daughter's sudden name change? What is she trying to hide sir? (Into camera) In Case you've joined us late, we're talking with Burl Cleve, the svengali-like entrepreneur trying to capitalize on his daughter's affliction. So far we have been refused permission to speak with the teenage stigmatist herself.

(AMBER calls over DURL' s shoulder to MARIANNE, who is still on the couch.)

AMBER MATHERS

Maryland! Tell us, are you being kept against your will?

MARIANNE

It's okay daddy. I'll talk to them.

(AMBER and her CAMERAMAN move right up to MARIANNE, shoving the camera and microphone into her face.)

AMBER MATHERS

Tell me Maryland, what does it feel like to be a religious freak of nature'?

MARIANNE

I don't know. It just happened so fast. I was sitting on the couch watching Dance Fever when I got this funny feeling..

AMBER MATHERS

(Into camera)

There you have it folks, a young girl, stricken by the video images and jungle rhythms of rock and roll. This is Amber Mathers, KKKK Channel 5 Eyewitness Action News Team.

(They quit filming.)

CAMERAMAN

Damn! I forgot to get a shot of the blood. Say Marianne, can you squirt a little out for me?

MARIANNE

It doesn't work that way. I can't control it

AMBER MATHERS

Well the video isn't rolling, why don't you just poke yourself or pray or whatever you do to start it okay? .I need this shot. Hey I know, you got any red food coloring?

DURL

You get the heck out of here! You can't come into my home and cheapen a beautiful spiritual and obviously holy event! My Marianne is a saint! Like Jane of Arc!

AMBER MATHERS

C'mon Duke, let's get out of here. Some people have no courtesy.

(They storm out.)

DURL

I'm sorry I had to swear like that honey..

MARIANNE

You never stuck up for me like that before.

DURL

Sure I have. You've just never seen it before. (They hug) Marianne this is real isn't it? My baby really is a religious miracle isn't she?

(For a moment, MARIANNE is silent. She looks like she might crack. She takes a long, loving look at DURL, and lies.)

MARIANNE

A little too real .

DURL

I knew it all the time !

MARIANNE

Shouldn't you be getting back to the store?

DURL

Aw, I took a few days off. I can't leave my little miracle in her condition. From the day you were born I knew you were something real special. When I used to sing you to sleep at night, your mama used to tell me to turn the guitar amplifier down, but I knew you understood. Your favorite song was "True Love Ways." (He sings a bit of it) When you were born your mother said you were a little sinner and would never get forgiveness in the eyes of the Lord. But I knew you'd come through. You're divine now. I always knew you were something special, even if I wasn't. The world isn't going to end today. You're proof of that.

MARIANNE

(Taking his hand)

You were something special daddy. You were the best Buddy Holly impersonator in the world. You were the only Buddy Holly impersonator in the world. That makes you special, and someday people will realize how good you are.

DURL

That'll be the day.

(He pats her knee.)

DURL

What are we talking about me for? Is there anything I can get you?

MARIANNE

I could use some more surgical gauze for my palms.

DURL

(Getting up)

I'll run to the store right now. You gonna be okay all alone?

MARIANNE

Sure. I kind of want to be alone anyway.

DURL

Now I know we need the money and! appreciate the work you've done, but let's not soil your divinity by talking on the phone while I'm gone..

(DURL leaves. MARIANNE just sits there, staring at her hands. From beneath the couch cushion. she removes the screwdriver. Unwrapping her bandages, she holds the screwdriver in a way that makes us all uncomfortable.

There is a frantic knocking at the door. MARIANNE hides the screwdriver and answers it. SPECK rushes in, breathing heavily.)

SPECK

(To outside)

Bad dog! Bad! Sorry kid but that goddamn dog was chasing me again..

MARIANNE

Yeah sure. You heard about all the blood and you came running. Well you could just forget it. I don't donate to lost causes.

SPECK

(Nobly)

I don't want any of your blood.

MARIANNE

Are you accusing me of faking then?

SPECK

Oh, I believe you're bleeding alright. I've read the papers.

MARIANNE

No one's going to believe a useless bum vampire..

SPECK

(Hurt)

You know, you aren't the only one with feelings around here. Sister Sally says that feelings should be outgrown or worn out like old clothes. She says they cloud the prism of the Lord. That's how she puts it. But I don't believe her. If we didn't have feelings, we'd be like the chiggers in my dugout. They don't care about each other either. They just

divide me up any way they can. And when I see Jesus finally, I want him to see everything in me. Even those sins the good Sister is so careful about hiding.

(MARIANNE holds up her bare, bleeding palm.)

MARIANNE

This do anything for you?

SPECK

(With dignity)

A slight stirring, but I'd never take advantage of our friendship by making you my blood slave.

MARIANNE

If you're such a vampire how come you're out in the sunlight?

SPECK

You've seen too many Bela Lugosi movies. We, the undead, like space aliens, are within every aspect of society, able to seem as normal as you. Captains of industry, professional athletes, evangelists, vagrants..

MARIANNE

Why are you telling me all this?

SPECK

I want you to know that you're not the only one touched by fate. Or screwdrivers.

MARIANNE

(Changing the subject)

What about Sister Sally? Does she know you're a vampire?

SPECK

Well, she's sure worried about me being on the ark and all. But I became what I am by choice. After my diagnosis, I decided to join the covenant of the immortal undead. Now I am beyond physical powers. I can't wait to see the faces of my kids thirty years from now when they're turning to dust and I'll be marching down through history. I'll have the knowledge of a dozen men and the strength of a hundred..

(SPECK has a coughing fit. MARIANNE seems concerned.)

MARIANNE

Are you alright? Do you need anything?

SPECK

No I'll be alright. This usually doesn't last more than a few weeks. I haven't been feeling as good..I may actually have to drink some.. blood.

MARIANNE

Gross.

(She gets up and exits, returning swiftly with something in her hands that she gives to SPECK.)

MARIANNE

This is all the money I've made so far from my phone calls and stuff. I want you to see a doctor.

SPECK

Vampires don't x-ray well.

MARIANNE

I mean it! Take it!

SPECK

You're going to need this money. You're going to need it for your escape.

(There is a long, dangerous pause.)

MARIANNE

How did you know?

SPECK

Well, it's pretty obvious. You're on the street awhile, you learn how to tell people what they want to hear. Everyone wants to believe in miracles.

MARIANNE

I don't know what I've done Speck. I figured if I pretended I had this stigmata thing people...my dad would pay attention to me. Now nobody'll leave me alone and they look at me like I'm some kind of freak. But I can't ever admit to actually faking it. Then everyone'll hate me. You understand don't you?

SPECK

You're a liar and a cheat.

MARIANNE

You won't tell anyone though?

SPECK

(He gets up and goes to the door to leave.)

SPECK

I'm still a vampire though.

(He leaves. MARIANNE stands pensively, her hand on the wall. When she removes her hand, as the lights fade, we see the bloody palm print it makes.

The lights dim on the interior of the trailer and come up in a flashback tone on the trailer court. YOUNG SISTER SALLY is standing in the center of the stage, holding her face. Blood is on her hands. She is being loudly taunted and pelted by rocks from children, offstage. She lets them taunt her, she continues her work on the ark as best she can. We hear her mother's voice.)

VOICE

(O.S.)

You children leave my baby alone! Sally honey? Are you alright?

SALLY

(Bleeding from a head wound)

Yes mother. Just let them hit me. Jesus will punish them all the more when the time comes.

VOICE

The time is coming. Our suffering will end soon. We must hurry to greet Him..

(The YOUNG MAN we have seen before walks up. They kiss uncomfortably and conspiratorially. They are not as happy as they would like to be.)

YOUNG MAN

So when do you leave?

YOUNG SISTER SALLY

Tonight.

YOUNG MAN

I'm sorry I got you into this Sally. I never thought that sitting under the stars would get us into this much trouble.

YOUNG SISTER SALLY

She would have found some other reason to send me to the convent. She wanted to send me to a hospital first.

YOUNG MAN

Just because we made love? Sally, you're old enough to be on your own, you're almost thirty. I'm not ashamed..

YOUNG SISTER SALLY

I am. I can't betray my parents. I can't betray my faith.

YOUNG MAN

Who's asking you to? Just try living your own life.

YOUNG SISTER SALLY

Why should I? It's easy for you. You've got a singing career.

YOUNG MAN

I'm going to make it big too. Then I'll come and get you..(Pause) I better go. I guess I'll have to call you Sister from now on.

(He inches away and off the lighted set.)

YOUNG SISTER SALLY

Goodbye Durl.

(YOUNG SISTER SALLY takes one last look at her ark, touches it, and then walks off.

The center stage lighting dims until just the stars show. SISTER SALLY and SPECK walk out and sit down. The lights come up to resemble twilight. Both of them have cans of food and are eating out of them.)

SISTER SALLY

I selected this brand because of its correct balance of the right animal proteins for maximum nutrition. They can stand up to a ten-G force too without radiation contamination. Just in case.

SPECK

That's how I always select my meats.

SISTER SALLY

You ever look at the stars Speck? They're..kind of pretty don't you think?

SPECK

No sister. All I do is look at the stars and wonder why their light never reaches me

SISTER SALLY

There are ways to get God's approval you know. God knows how sick you are. He hurts as much as you do. He doesn't want it this way, but sometimes sickness is one of his ways to pull us back to the path of righteousness. A way to show us that we aren't being truthful. (Pause) You know she is faking, don't you.

SPECK

I don't know what you're talking about. I'm just a stupid bum, remember?

SISTER SALLY

No one's too stupid to be forgiven. And I am talking about forgiveness. The only way. The path of salvation is narrow and surrounded by wild mountains and guarded by bears and gorillas..(Pause) She's mocking God's holy plan Speck. Giving people the false belief

that they will be spared tonight, that this stigmata, her blood, somehow cleanses them of their sins. I know the world will end today. You see Speck, I have faith.

SPECK

God has too much to think about to bother with me. I don't know.

SISTER SALLY

Faith isn't something you can know. It's only something you can feel. And if you don't, you can't blame Him for punishing you. Because that's all Jesus asks. Find what's right and believe in it. Eternal damnation

if you make the wrong choice and glorious salvation if you believe. Ignore a thousand other paths, and just choose the right one. You know she's wrong for what she's doing and because you know, you're an accomplice. And you'll burn so much harder..

SPECK

But faster.

SISTER SALLY

The world is broken into two parts. The world we understand and that we can't do anything about. But you can do something about this. And by doing it you can save the girl and redeem yourself.

SPECK

You know, you have a really great rap Sister. Top notch. Too bad I've been around. I don't have faith in anything I can't see.

SISTER SALLY

Look at the stare Speck! Do you understand them? No, we have faith that they won't fall on us. Why do we take for granted something which is obviously miraculous? Because we see it everyday? Does that make it any less of a miracle? Why can't we say, "it could happen, it will happen?" Because the scope of our faith passes unnoticed without proper guidance and penance.

SPECK

I just wanted to cross the street.

SISTER SALLY

You could resume human form once more. Look at yourself now and ask the stars if it is possible. Even a contract with Lucifer can be broken as long as it is God who breaks it.

(SPECK gets up, tossing his tin can away and walks off, distracted. DURL suddenly appears with the bandages MARIANNE sent him for. He seems surprised to see SISTER SALLY.)

SISTER SALLY
(Sweetly)

Working late tonight Durl? Don't worry. I'll take Care of our little religious miracle while you're gone.

DURL

After tonight, if we're still here, I'm going to take Marianne away to Arkansas or someplace where you'll never find her..

SISTER SALLY
But after tonight. Just to be sure. You're a weak man Durl, full of grandiose dreams based on a dead hero. You have the one power missing that empowers everything; the confidence of God.

DURL
You don't know His will, my baby is proof of that.

SISTER SALLY
I won't discuss that.

DURL
I helped you build this ark. We have a right aboard it. We deserve to be saved as much as you do if the apocalypse comes tonight.

SISTER SALLY
Maybe you do Durl. But her? That's a dirty little girl you've raised.

DURL
I'm to blame for a lot. But I'd rather she blame me than find out the truth. What would you know about it anyway? We were happy. What would you know about happiness? Sitting in this run down trailer park for fifteen years lording over everyone. God sure didn't give you this power but you're still alone. The only respite you have is when useless husks of humanity wander into that crosswalk you rigged.

(DURL storms into the trailer and slams the door. After a few beats
MARIANNE peeks out the door and finds herself almost face to face with
SISTER SALLY.)

MARIANNE

What are you looking at?

SISTER SALLY

A very frightened girl.

MARIANNE

(With false bravado)

I'm not afraid of anything. Least of all a survivalist, nun.

SISTER SALLY

I don't expect you to fear me, Marianne. But you are afraid. You're afraid that what you claim is really coming true. That you are marked now because of the lies you have told.

(MARIANNE shrugs.)

SISTER SALLY

The anonymity that you hated so much yesterday seems like a cool, restful place now, doesn't it Marianne? (Pause) We get as much attention as we can safely handle. When we undeservedly grab more, we are punished. The only problem is that attention is habit forming. An addiction. People will expect things from you now. You will always have to be special at all times. Only at this moment, could you ask for your forgiveness and accept your penance. The punishment you receive in humiliation, is nothing compared to spending the rest of your life trying to make a lie the truth.

MARIANNE

You'd just love it if this weren't true wouldn't you! Well prove it! Bring all your Gods and Jesuses and stuff I don't care. You spent your whole life doing what I did in one day! You try and prove I'm not special!

(MARIANNE suddenly stops and smiles.)

MARIANNE

That's it isn't it. You wish you were me, don't you?

SISTER SALLY

(Angry from that last remark)

You and I are closer than you think Marianne. Maybe I do wish I were you. But I think, more importantly, I wish that you were not the way that you are

MARIANNE

Why not? You didn't make me this way. My mother did.

SISTER SALLY

(After a pause)

If your stigmata is true, then you bleed for all of us. 'whether by your own hand or by the hand of God. Your Sins are shared.

(The lights dim, leaving only pin points of light on the backdrop, and the silhouette of SISTER SALLY on her porch, racing MARIANNE's silhouette in hers.

The lights slowly black out.)

SCENE 2: (That evening. Inside the trailer, MARIANNE is wearing a white dress, while a TV. TECHNICIAN, (U.P. #2) does her make-up and combs her hair. A large camera has been set up in the middle of the trailer court. A PRODUCTION ASSISTANT, (U.P. #3) carrying a clipboard, is running around setting things up and generally bustling.)

TECHNICIAN

(As She primps MARIANNE)

Got to make you pretty. It's not every night that you go on live television. Did you know that Link Nissan is viewed by more people in one night than Jesus was ever seen in his whole lifetime?

MARIANNE

Jesus didn't have as good a press agent.

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT

The night he did the expose on the weeping gargoyle statues we got a fifty-five percent share of the prime time audience. You shoulda seen the mail. Little Wetting Wilmer, the gargoyle doll sold out in three weeks.

TECHNICIAN

And remember, we're live. So don't say anything spontaneous.

(SPECK enters and watches in a detached way.)

MARIANNE

Where've you been? I'm going to be on Link Nissan's journalistic vindicator hour!

SPECK

I been around..talking to the sister..trying to cross the street.

TECHNICIAN

..Yeah but when we did the Amish sex clubs, then we really started to break big.

SPECK

Marianne, I have to talk to you.

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT

We better get out in the sound truck now..it's almost six.

TECHNICIAN

You haven't edited that tape of the little Cuban girl?

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT

What, you mean the one who is reincarnated Elvis? I thought Link passed on that. He told me he didn't want to travel all that way to hear "Blue Suede Shoes" pounded out on bongo drums.

TECHNICIAN

Well, we still have to cut a hole in the floor for the girl to stand in so Link' 11 be taller than this bleeding bean pole here..

(They exit. SPECK shuffles uncomfortably.)

SPECK

You have to tell them you faked.

(MARIANNE looks taken aback and panic stricken.)

MARIANNE

You want me to give all this up? This is television! It's the only real thing that's happened to me and you sure aren't going to blow it for me.

SPECK

(Quietly)

I decided that I'm not going to be a vampire anymore.

MARIANNE

(Sarcastic)

Someone drive a steak and seafood platter through your heart?

SPECK

I've given it up to do what's right. They'll know. And even if they don't find out, He'll know.

MARIANNE

No, He understands. Like I thought you did. These people offered me ten thousand dollars, Speck. We can get cable! Nobody's going to find out. People want to believe that I have stigmata. Anyway, who's it hurting? I'm terrified that I'm going to wake up, and all of this is going to be a dream; that I'm going to go back to being invisible. Would I be on national television tonight if I were just Marianne Cleve? Look, I started this, r might as well ride it out and get all I can from it. Ten thousand dollars! Just for pretending that miracles do happen! People need that in their lives. In my life, I needed it most of all. It just hurt all of the time.

SPECK

Sooner or later, this is going to hurt more. What happens if they find out? Then you've hurt yourself and the real people who do believe in you. I know how it feels to want to be noticed. But you didn't do anything, except mutilate yourself. What about those people who really do believe you?

MARIANNE

I thought that all that mattered was you had to have faith. It doesn't matter how or where you get it. You're the only one who knows, Speck. The only way anyone will know is if you say something. Do you hate me?

SPECK

No, the sister and I just feel..

MARIANNE

So that's where this comes from! She's been filling your head with all kinds of rosy pictures about salvation. You've given up immortality, and for what? Success is survival, Speck.

SPECK

I. should be telling you that .

(THE PRODUCTION ASSISTANT and TECHNICIAN enter, talking.)

TECHNICIAN

He's here! Now remember Marianne, always stand on his left side. That way we can get his profile. Don't ever make Link look directly into the camera; he's got this problem with his eyes. But don't stare at him, like you're looking at it. He's touchy..

(LINK NISSAN, (U.P. #1) enters, dressed in a flashy suit.)

LINK

Look no longer ladies, the Linker's here! Ha haw haw!

(They all scuttle and squeal.)

TECHNICIAN

Link, this is Marianne Cleve, the bleeding girl.

(MARIANNE walks over to him, extending her bandaged hand.)

LINK

Whoa there! Don't want to get any of whatever you got on me! Nothing personal, little bleeder, but running from the palms would be death for my ratings. In this business a zit means reading hog prices on AM radio. So let me get this straight, that nun says today's the day for the big shittrain, and then you started bleeding from the palms, so everything is okay in the world again, right'?

TECHNICIAN

We're on the air in fifteen minutes Link.

MARIANNE

I guess so.

LINK

Fantastic! Now you promise me little lady that you're going to bleed for me don't you? This is television, the big visual. The more you can ooze the better.

MARIANNE

I'll try.

(An uncomfortable look passes between MARIANNE and SPECK.
DURL enters in full Buddy Holly regalia! carrying a guitar. He is drunk.)

MARIANNE

Daddy!

LINK

Who let Steve Allen in here?

DURL

Hello Mr. Link, I'm Durl D. Cleve from Austin Texas, and I'm the little miracle's daddy and the best goddang Buddy Holly tributarian on the earth. I'd like to begin with a number that I hope you'll like, it's called, "Wishing.."

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT

Twelve minutes Link.

DURL

For my next number the Crickets and I would like to..

MARIANNE

Daddy you've been drinking!

DURL

And I've been crying, waiting and hoping that she'll come back..

(SISTER SALLY enters, in her best dress DURL wilts in her hard gaze.)

SISTER SALLY

I love your show with the kids Mr. Linkletter.

LINK

Alright, is this the nun who says the world's going to end? Fantastic! We'll have the battle of the Miracles right here! God, I love television.

SISTER SALLY

(To MARIANNE)

It isn't too late to repent before the world ends Marianne. I'd hate to have to explain my actions if I were you, on television in front of fifty million doomed souls.

(She lifts her habit to show MARIANNE she has the screwdriver that MARIANNE's used to stab herself in the palms with. SISTER SALLY smirks.)

SISTER SALLY

I will do it, too.

MARIANNE

You've always had it in for me! You'd do anything so I wouldn't be popular! Go ahead, it's my word against a..against a..

SISTER SALLY

Against a nun's?

(MARIANNE turns to SPECK. She is livid.)

MARIANNE

You traitor! I hate you!

(She is on him and the U.P.'s have to pull her off.)

LINK

Hold on there! Save the hysterics for the broadcast! Hey, is she bleeding now? Can we roll early?

(DURL strums his guitar sadly.)

DURL

I'm talking about the fact that I've wasted my whole life, and tonight, in one glorious moment, I'm gonna get it all back. Mr. Link, I'd like to do a song called, "Not Fade Away," then, with your indulgence, I'd like to set myself on fire..

TECHNICIAN

Holy Neilson! Eight minutes to air Link!

MARIANNE

(To SPECK)

I thought you were my FRIEND!

SPECK

Neither one of us can live a lie. .I wanted to be saved, but I'm beginning to realize that I can't be..you have to be!

MARIANNE

I'm not taking advice from someone who lives in a dugout!

LINK

Dugout? You live in a dugout? Fabulous!

SPECK

I'm sorry Marianne..the Sister is right.

SISTER SALLY

Come with me from this and pray before it is too late. Soon the end will be here and we must face the Lord together. The world is ending.

MARIANNE

The world isn't ending! It'll be midnight in the east pretty soon. You've outlived your own purpose! What are you going to do now?

SPECK

Hey that's right! (To SISTER) It's past midnight in Europe! You said the world was gonna end! I believed you!

SISTER SALLY

Silence!

SPECK

Wait a minute Sister. I wasn't sticking around here because you were supposedly some savior of humanity. I stuck around because I wanted to. Believe me, I've never done anything I didn't want to do. I kind of get the feeling the world isn't going to end after all tonight.

SISTER SALLY

(Terrified)

Blasphemer !

SPECK

So what if it doesn't? Let's cry about all the drowning masses of humanity that aren't floating under the ark's porthole. Oh, you'll get up tomorrow morning and it'll smell like it always has. Like morning. A fine morning. So you don't catch any whiffs of rotting flesh, what a disappointment! The trees have leaves on them! People will still be around. You might as well learn to cope with them, since you've spent most of your life learning to cope without them.

LINK

(To DURL)

Do you know "Wichita Lineman?"

MARIANNE

You're ruining it for me! My only chance!

SISTER SALLY

(Determined)

I'm not listening to a Godless vagrant. I've had my vision, unwavering for almost twenty years. That kind of certainty cannot be wrong. You don't understand the kind of confidence you're dealing with.

SPECK

Neither do you. Hey, we're all misunderstood. How can you save humanity if you're not even a part of it?

SISTER SALLY

You chose your life purposely. Having nothing, worrying about nothing. I was chosen for my mission.

TECHNICIAN

Four minutes everyone!

LINK

Where's my hole? I have to have you all stand in a hole so I'll look tall.

MARIANNE

(To SISTER SALLY)

You can't take my stigmata away from me. God gave it to me. Maybe not in the usual way, but he gave it to me just the same. (Bitterly) I have faith in it.

SISTER SALLY

There are miracles, and then there are miracles. Faith is the same way. You're coming with me now, to repent and we will face Armageddon together..

MARIANNE

Why should I face that with you?

SISTER SALLY

Believe me, I wish you were so much flotsam and jetsam as the rest of humanity, but I owe it to you after having left when you were so little..

DURL

Sally!

(A WOMAN, (U.P. #3) bursts in, after having slipped away earlier, no longer part of the television crew. In her arms, she carries a baby.)

MARIANNE

(Uncomprehending)

What? What does this mean? Am I still going on?

TECHNICIAN

One minute!

WOMAN

(U.P. #3)

Marianne! Marianne! I have to talk to you!

(She battles her way over to MARIANNE, extending her bundle.)

WOMAN

You have to touch my baby..

(MARIANNE peers apprehensively into the blanket, touching the baby, then pulling her hand back.)

MARIANNE

It's cold..it isn't breathing.

WOMAN

I know, she stopped breathing last night. She doesn't even move when I hit her anymore. But you can make her alive again. You can work the miracle..all you have to do is touch her with your holy blood..

MARIANNE

It isn't breathing! For God's sake lady, get it to a hospital!

WOMAN

Just touch her! I saw you on television and I trust you!

TECHNICIAN

Five..four..three..two..one..

LINK

Hold those bleeding' palms up high now honey..

(The WOMAN shakes her dead baby, trying to coax it back to life. MARIANNE can only watch; horrified. A red light comes on, but MARIANNE just stands alone staring into the camera with everyone watching her.)

DURL

(Raucously)

Rock and Roll!

(MARIANNE pauses uncomfortably. SISTER SALLY holds up the screwdriver. MARIANNE doesn't know what to do. She looks from SISTER SALLY, to LINK, to SPECK and DURL. The silence is broken only by the dimming lights and a thunderclap.

Blackout. Sounds of the storm.

After a pause, where we hear the thunderstorm die down, the lights come up, illuminating the outside, ark side of the stage. It is day, but the rumble of thunder still lingers.

We see a woman sitting in the lawn chair with her back to us, watching a man, U.P. #1, trying to get across the crosswalk.)

MAN

(After having crossed the street)

Are you the nun who's building the ark?

WOMAN IN CHAIR

No. She's gone.

MAN

Well, where did she go?

WOMAN IN CHAIR

I don't know. Woke up one morning and she was gone. Careful grave you're standing on!
Show some respect for the dead!

MAN

(Nervously)

A grave? This area isn't zoned..

WOMAN IN CHAIR

Don't look at me, I didn't bury him. He wandered in one day, couldn't cross the street.
Poor thing. He had a chance to save himself, but he didn't have enough faith to be
immortal. You'd think that when given that kind of choice; life or death, one would
choose life. But..he just couldn't cross the street you know. That was years ago. This
trailer park used to be famous you know. I used to be famous.

(The MAN shifts his weight nervously.)

MAN

All I know is that as of six years ago a nun was manager of this trailer court, building an
illegal, uninspected structure which I can see is still standing. This structure has been a
city eye sore for twenty years now and the city council has voted for its demolition. I'm
here to serve the papers to someone. Now, if the nun's gone..

WOMAN IN CHAIR

She is. Woke up one morning; it was the day after the day she said the world was going
to end. She built this ark you know. But the world didn't end. That was a long time ago,
but check your records. She was crazy, but she wasn't stupid. She filed all the proper
papers twenty years ago, I'm sure.

MAN

We'll see about that. I have an order to start tearing it down in thirty days

WOMAN IN CHAIR

Oh you won't have to tear it down. I'll be using it when the time comes.

MAN
(Uncomfortably)

Yeah, well..

(We hear DURL's voice coming from the inside of the ark.)

DURL
(Voice, O.S.)

Marianne, was that thunder I heard? Was it honey? Was it thunder?

(The WOMAN IN THE CHAIR turns around, and of course, it is MARIANNE. Her hands are heavily bandaged and her face is streaked with tears of blood.)

MARIANNE

Yes, it is daddy. But we're prepared,

(The MAN backs away uncomfortably when he sees clearly MARIANNE's affliction, and goes to the crosswalk and waits impatiently for a WALK signal. He walks from one DON'T WALK sign to the other, hoping in vain to catch one, and growing more and more frustrated that he can't.)

MAN

Damn!

MARIANNE

Today is the day.

(MARIANNE is laughing. It begins to rain.)

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