

Oh prisoners, get up out a' your homemade beds,
 Oh prisoners, get up out a' your homemade beds.

And now the day and night are just the same
 And now the light and dark don't have no name
 And you just lay in bed without no game
 And you just lay there sleepin' without no fame

But when you do awaken from your deep sleep
 The bed will disappear and you won't even weep,
 You'll walk right outside without no name,
 You'll walk right outside from where you came.

(DANA gets up slowly and yawns, then exits quietly.)

So prisoners, get up out a' your homemade beds,
 Oh prisoners, get up out a' your homemade heads.

(The song finishes, the band stops, PETER turns off the radio as DRAKE continues pacing, PETER gets up slowly and crosses to the door, he slams the door shut and turns to DRAKE; DRAKE freezes in place staring at PETER, who crosses to DRAKE and stands over him for a while, tapping the club in his palm, then suddenly raises the club to hit DRAKE; there is a loud knock at the door, the LIGHTS BLACK OUT.)

COWBOY MOUTH

Characters

CAVALE: a chick who looks like a crow, dressed in raggedy black.

SLIM: a cat who looks like a coyote, dressed in scruffy red.
 They are both beat to shit.

LOBSTER MAN

Cowboy Mouth was first performed at the Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh, on April 12, 1971. It was directed by Gordon Stewart, with the following cast:

SLIM:	Donald Sumpter
CAVALE:	Brenda Smiley
LOBSTER MAN:	Derek Wilson

It was subsequently given its American premiere in a special performance at the American Place Theatre, New York, on April 29, 1971, as an afterpiece to Mr. Shepard's *Back Bog Beast Bait*. This performance was directed by Robert Glaudini, with the following cast:

SLIM:	Sam Shepard
CAVALE:	Parti Smith
LOBSTER MAN:	Robert Glaudini

SCENE: *A fucked-up bed center stage. Raymond, a dead crow, on the floor. Scattered all around on the floor is miscellaneous debris: hubcaps, an old tire, raggedy costumes, a boxful of ribbons, lots of letters, a pink telephone, a bottle of Nescafé, a hot plate. Seedy wallpaper with pictures of cowboys peeling off the wall. Photographs of Hank Williams and Jimmie Rodgers. Stuffed dolls, crucifixes. License plates from southern states nailed to the wall. Travel poster of Panama. A funky set of drums to one side of the stage. An electric guitar and amplifier on the other side. Rum, beer, white lightning, Sears catalogue.*

CAVALE *has kidnapped SLIM off the streets with an old .45. (She wants to make him into a rock-and-roll star, but they fall in love. We find them after one too many mornings. They're both mean as snakes. SLIM is charging around screaming words; CAVALE is rummaging through junk, yelling with a cracked throat. The lights come up on them in this state.)*

SLIM: Wolves, serpents, lizards, gizzards, bad bladders, typhoons, tarantulas, whipsnakes, bad karma, Rio Bravo, Sister Morphine, go fuck yourself!

CAVALE: Fucking dark in here. Fucking old black dog. You fucking. Where's Raymond? Where's Raymond, goddammit? Shit. Raymond, Raymond, where's my crow, old black tooth?

SLIM: Your Raymond! My wife! My kid! Kidnapped in the twentieth century! Kidnapped off the street! Hot off the press! Don't make no sense! I ain't no star! Not me! Not me, boy! Not me! Not yer old dad! Not yer old scalawag! This is me! Fucked! Fucked up! What a ratpile heap a dogshit situation!

CAVALE: Shit, man . . . Raymond, come on, baby, where are you? Come on, honey, is your beak hurt? Raymond? Raymond, don't be scared, honey, come on, he's an old snake, a water moccasin, a buffalo, an old crow . . . No, I'm jes' fooling. Raymond! Fuck them, fuck you.

(SLIM goes to the drums and starts beating the shit out of them, yelling at the top of his voice through a microphone.)

SLIM: (*wailing*)

You cheated, you lied, you said that you loved me.
 You cheated, you lied, you said that you need me.
 Oh what can I do but just keep on loving you?
 Ooooooooooooooooooh what can I do but just keep on loving you?*

Fuck it.

(*He stops. CAVALE finds Raymond the dead crow and talks to him.*)

CAVALE: Oh, here's my baby. Here's my little crow. He's no crow, I was jes' fooling. We're the crows, me and you, Raymond. (*she sings him something like the theme from Lilith*)

SLIM: Will you stop fucking around with that dead crow? It makes me sick! It's morbid and black and dark and dirty! It makes me sick! Can't you see what's happening here? Here we are stuck in some border town, some El Paso town, and you're fucking around with a dead crow. I should just leave and go back to my family. My little family. My little baby. I should, shouldn't I? Shouldn't I!

CAVALE: Fuck you. Fuck you. Fuck, fuck. Can't you see what's happening here? A dream I'm playing. I love Raymond, I love you, Raymond. You don't talk about yesterday stuff. Yeah, you fucking coyote, Slim, always howling after yesterday. Raymond don't squawk 'bout his ole nests, do you, baby? He sleeps on my belly 'cause my belly's today. Yesterday yesterday, that's you, sulking shitface—Mr. Yesterday.

SLIM: Tell me about Johnny Ace.

CAVALE: I already told you about Johnny Ace.

SLIM: I know, but I want to hear it again. Okay?

CAVALE: Okay. C'mere though.

(SLIM goes to her and curls up in her lap.)

*"You Cheated, You Lied." Copyright © 1961 by Patricia Music Publishing Corporation. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

CAVALE: Johnny Ace. Johnny Ace. Johnny Ace was cool. He was real cool, baby. Just like you. And he came East from Texas and no black guy had a hit record and no rock-and-roll boy had a hit record. And in rode Johnny Ace, from a moving train, pledging his love. That was his best song, man. What a great fucking song. And all the girls would cry when he sang. He sang all them pretty hallads. And one day when all the girls were waiting, when everybody paid their fare to see Johnny Ace on stage in person singing sad and dressed in black, Johnny Ace took out his revolver, rolled the barrel like his 45 record, played Russian Roulette like his last hit record, and lost. *Johnny Ace blew his brains out*, all the people jump and shout. All the people jump and shout *Johnny Ace blew his brains out*.

SLIM: You think that takes balls, I suppose. Do you?

CAVALE: Oh man. You're always saying that shit. Why don't you just play? Just play, it don't mean nothing, it's just a neat story. Fuck. You always wreck everything. Jus' like when I told ya' about Villon. You never just listen, you always got to place stuff. And hey, fuck you, you asked me to tell you it. I ain't telling you no more stories. (*she gets teary and nervous*)

SLIM: Aw, come on, baby. Baby crow. Don't crow, baby crow. I'm sorry. I love ya'. I love ya' to tell me stories. It's like listenin' to the streets. Ya' know? Like listenin' to summer sounds. Like it could be the dead of winter but some kind of sound like just a bunch of people laughing makes it sound like summer. That's why I love your stories. I'm sorry, baby.

CAVALE: Baby. Baby. Baby. Slim, I hurt my foot. (*she lifts up her foot. It's wrapped in a piece of ragged scarf*) Raymond bit it. Johnny Ace bit it, Villon bit it, a tarantula bit it. Summer bit it. Kiss it, will ya', Slim?

(SLIM bends down and licks her foot all over. He growls like a coyote and howls.)

SLIM: It's them damn steel plates they put on yer foot when you was a punk. They called ya' splayfoot, no 'count. I know. I know 'bout them jealous creeps. Lookin' at my crow like a freak. I'll kill 'em! I'll tear out their throats! I kiss your foot. I lick your toes. I suck your pinkie 'cause I love ya'. How's that for openers?

CAVALE: Slim, don't tease me.

(*Pause.*)

SLIM: How's about a little lobster? Could ya' go for a little lobster with drawn butter?

CAVALE: I guess.

SLIM: You don't dig lobster?

CAVALE: Sure.

SLIM: Who do we call for lobster?

CAVALE: Call the lobster man.

(SLIM goes to the phone and dials. Someone answers.)

SLIM: Listen, is this the lobster man? Good. Send us up some lobster with drawn butter and two scrambled eggs and four toasted bialys with cream cheese and some Pepsi-Cola and a bottle of tequila with plenty of lemon. You got that? Good. *(he hangs up)*

CAVALE: I'm not that hungry.

SLIM: Tell me about Nerval.

(He holds her close and they dance while she talks; an old waltz or a fox-trot.)

CAVALE: Nerval. Hey, Slim, really he's "de" Nerval, but we'll can that "de" stuff 'cause it's too fancy. Hey, Slim, tomorrow can we go into town and you buy me something fancy? I don't got nothing fancy. Oh, Slim, ya' know what I want? Tap dance shoes. Red ones, red ones with pretty ribbons. Could we do that, huh, baby?

SLIM: We'll do that right now. Right now we'll do that!

(He stands up and pulls her to her feet. They take an imaginary walk to the shoe store. CAVALE limps along, SLIM helps her. They walk through the room as though it were the city.)

SLIM: Now ya' gotta look sharp. Ya' know what I mean. No limpin'. Try not to limp.

CAVALE: I can't help it, Slim.

SLIM: I know, I know. Just get it together. It won't be far now. Just a little ways. Up past Ridge Avenue, down through Ashland, we'll slide through Mulberry, and bingo! We'll be there.

CAVALE: It won't take long, will it, Slim?

SLIM: We'll be there before you can spit in a hornet's eye. In fact! In fact! In fact, you know what?

CAVALE: What?

SLIM: We're here.

CAVALE: Already?

SLIM: Yeah. Now just take yer pick. There's all them pretty dancin' shoes in the window there. Just take yer pick.

CAVALE: I want the red ones, Slim. The red ones with the ribbons.

SLIM: Okay, now I'm gonna' break the window, so stand back.

CAVALE: But we got money.

SLIM: A good thief never hesitates.

(He smashes the window and steals the shoes. They run away to another part of the room and sit down exhausted. SLIM puts a beat-to-shit pair of high-topped sneakers on CAVALE.)

SLIM: Now, madam, if you'll just slip your foot into these, we'll see how they suit you.

(She tries them on. She takes a walk in them and looks them over.)

CAVALE: Oh, Slim, they're beautiful.

SLIM: Good. Now will you tell me about Nerval or "de" Nerval or whatever the fuck his name is?

CAVALE: Can the "de," baby. He's Nerval to me. He had a fucked-up foot too. Poor baby. Always banging into walls. Always dreaming when he's walkin'. *(she spins around and tells the story singsong)* It hurts just to think about. Singing, I try to sing it out. Dead in winter. Two calico shirts. They cut the rope, that rope that cut him down. It hurts just to think about or how I'll do without him.

SLIM: Cut the shit, baby. You never knew that guy; he's a million years old. Just tell the story.

CAVALE: I do so, I do know him, Slim. He hung himself on my birthday. *My birthday.* And some lady tole my mom I was made from a hanged man. Poor bastard. And, Slim, he had a crow too. Just like Raymond. I read this dream book Baudelaire writ, and he said Nerval came to him half-crow, half—half—half-ass. Nah. I'm just teasing. I'm sotry, Nerval. Slim, I don't wanna' tell this story. It's stupid. I'm sick of telling about people killing themselves, it makes me jealous.

SLIM: Okay! Okay! Then don't tell me a story! Don't never tell me a story! Don't never tell me another fucking story! See if I care! Nobody gives a rat's ass anyway! I'm gonna' play rock-and-roll! I'm gonna' play some mean, shitkickin' rock-and-roll!

(He goes to the electric guitar and starts playing loud rock with a lot of feedback. He sings "Have No Fear.")

SLIM: Have no fear
 The worst is here
 The worst has come
 So don't run
 Let it come
 Let it go
 Let it rock and roll
 The worst has come.

Have no fear
 The best is here
 The best has come
 So don't run
 Let it come
 Let it go
 Let it rock and roll
 The best has come

Every night I sit by my window
 Watchin' all the dump trucks go by
 Have no fear
 The worst is here
 The worst has come
 So don't run
 Let it come
 Let it go
 Let it rock and roll
 The worst has come

(CAVALE *plays dead on the floor with Raymond on her stomach. After a while SLIM stops. CAVALE stays "dead."*)

SLIM: Hey! Is that the lobster man? Hey! Cavale, did somebody knock? Cavale!

(CAVALE *stays "dead" on the floor.*)

SLIM: Stupid broad.

(SLIM *goes to the door and opens it. The LOBSTER MAN enters. He's dressed like a lobster and carries all the food they ordered.*)

SLIM: Oh, you must be the lobster man. Just drop everything in the middle of the floor.

(The LOBSTER MAN *grunts, then goes center stage and drops all the food in a heap.*)

SLIM: Great. Thanks a lot. Just charge that to my office number. Gramercy 6-5489. Here's a little something for yourself.

(*He tips the LOBSTER MAN. The LOBSTER MAN grunts and exits. CAVALE'S still playing dead.*)

SLIM: The lobster man came. Cavale? You can stop playing dead now. We can eat. Cavale? Well, I'm going to eat, I don't know about you but I'm going to eat. (*he sits on the floor and digs into the food*)

CAVALE: I'm dead, baby. Dead as dogshit. Dead and never baptized. Dead. Slaughtered. Without the Christian aid of water. Water makes me cringe.

SLIM: Cut the mystical horseshit and come eat.

CAVALE: (*runs to the food and starts overacting disgustingly*) Oh, man, look at all this neat shit. Have some cream pie, Raymond honey. Slosh up that shit, blackie baby. Shove a little sausage in that ole cracked beak. Here's tuna in yer eye.

SLIM: I'm gonna' roast that fucking crow.

(*She tells the story of Raymond as they slop around in the food.*)

CAVALE: Hey, man. Watch that shit. Raymond's real sensitive. It's bad enough you don't let him in bed with us anymore.

SLIM: Gimme that sausage. Well, goddammit, it's sick. Fucking dead crow sucking me off in the morning. You went too far with that one, baby. There's nothing in my contract says I gotta have a rotting stuffed blackbird for a groupie.

CAVALE: Hey, shut up, will ya'? Raymond's been a real chum. All them nights in that fuckin' hospital, all them electric shocks. All those hours they stole my dreams, all those people in white face masks saying I was crazy. Only ole Raymond stuck by me. Never gave me any shit. And the dirty fuckers broke his beak. Poor beak.

(CAVALE *bandages Raymond's beak with an old piece of lace.*)

SLIM: Poor beak, poor beak, poor beak. All I ever had was a dog. A dog. Like any good American boy. I had a dog. A live dog. A cattle dog. The reason I got him was 'cause he was a fuckup. He used to chase the cows out of the pasture instead a' bringin' 'em for milking. He was a fuckup.

CAVALE: What was his name?

SLIM: Blaze. Blaze Storm. Named after the stripper.

(CAVALE sings something like "Put the Blame on Mame" in stripper style and picks up the Sears catalogue.)

CAVALE: Hey, Slim, I wanna electric dishwasher.

SLIM: We don't have any dishes.

CAVALE: But I want one. I don't have any housewife shit. I want some stuff ladies have.

SLIM: You don't want that shit, you're not the type. Look, tomorrow I'll take you into town and buy you a nice calico shirt. Just like your pal Nerval. How's that, my little rabbit?

CAVALE: Fuck Nerval. I wanna dishwasher. I wanna stovepipe and a scrambled-egg maker. Here, Slim, we can get it all in the catalogue. All the stuff you always miss when you get like Mr. Yesterday. Then you'd be gladder, Slim. We could even get Raymond a little cradle. And a rattle. And booties. And a black baby lamb with a bell in its tail.

SLIM: I don't need no black baby lamb with a bell in its tail and I ain't gettin' no cradle for no dead crow. I have a baby! My own baby! With its own cradle! You've stolen me away from my baby's cradle! You've put a curse on me! I have a wife and a life of my own! Why don't you let me go! I ain't no rock-and-roll star. That's your fantasy. You've kept me cooped up here for how long has it been now? I've lost track of the time. A long time. A long fucking time. And I'm still not a star! How do you account for that?

CAVALE: I don't know. I never promised nothin'.

SLIM: But you led me on. You tempted me into sin.

CAVALE: Oh, fuck off.

SLIM: Well, it's true. What am I doing here? I don't know who I am anymore. My wife's left me. She's gone to Brooklyn with the kid and left me. And here I am stuck with you.

CAVALE: You can go if you want.

SLIM: I don't want! I do want! I don't want! I want you!

CAVALE: Then stay.

SLIM: I want her too.

CAVALE: Then go.

SLIM: Good-bye!

(SLIM gets up and stomps over to the drums. He starts bashing them violently. CAVALE goes through a million changes. Plays dead. Rebels. Puts on a bunch of feathers and shit to look alluring. Rebels. Motions like she's gonna bash the amps with a hammer. Hides in a corner.

Then, shaping up, she grabs her .45. SLIM is still slamming. She yells over the drums.)

CAVALE: Look, you jive motherfucker, I'm still packing this pistol. I'm still the criminal. I'll fill you with—I'll—Hey, listen to me.

I'm threatening your life. You're supposed to be scared. Look, baby, kidnapping is a federal offense. It means I'm a desperate . . .

SLIM: (still slamming the drums) It's "offense," not "affense."

CAVALE: What? Hey, what do ya' mean?

SLIM: (stops drumming and sorta slumps over) I mean your grammar stinks. I mean you talk funny. I mean—

CAVALE: Shit. Goddammit. How could you? How can you bust up my being a hard bitch with that shit? What a lousy thing. You know I'm sensitive about my talking. Shit. Just when I was really getting mean and violent. Murderous. Just like François Villon. You fuck it up. You wreck everything.

SLIM: Cavales?

CAVALE: Yeah?

SLIM: How come we're so unhappy?

CAVALE: Must be the time of year.

SLIM: Yeah. It's that time of year, all right. That must be it. Maybe we could change it.

CAVALE: What?

SLIM: The time of year. Let's change the time of year to Indian summer. That's my favorite time of year. What's your favorite time of year?

CAVALE: Fall.

SLIM: Okay, we'll change the time of year to fall. Okay?

CAVALE: Okay.

SLIM: Okay, now it's fall. Are you happy?

CAVALE: Yeah.

SLIM: Good. Now tell me a story.

CAVALE: Stop asking me that. I can't tell no stories unless I'm inspired. Who wants to listen to something uninspired?

SLIM: Okay, then tell me what it means to be a rock-and-roll star.

Tell me that. I'm supposed to be a rock-and-roll star. You're going to make me into a rock-and-roll star, right?

CAVALE: Right.

SLIM: So tell me what it means, so I'll have something to go by.

CAVALE: Well, it's hard, Slim. I'll try to tell you but you gotta stay quiet. You gotta let me fish around for the right way to tell ya'. I always felt the rhythm of what it means but I never translated it

to words. Here, hold Raymond. Come on. It's like, well, the highest form of anything is sainthood. A marvelous thief like Villon or Genet . . . they were saints 'cause they raised thievery to its highest state of grace. Ole George Carter, black and bear to shit on some dock singing "Rising River Blues" . . . he was one. He sang like an ole broke-down music box. Some say Jesse James was one . . . and me . . . I dream of being one. But I can't. I mean I can't be the saint people dream of now. People want a street angel. They want a saint but with a cowboy mouth. Somebody to get off on when they can't get off on themselves. I think that's what Mick Jagger is trying to do . . . what Bob Dylan seemed to be for a while. A sort of god in our image . . . ya' know? Mick Jagger came close but he got too conscious. For a while he gave me hope . . . but he misses. He's not whole. Hey Slim . . . am I losing ya'? I mean, just tell me if I'm getting draggy. It's just hard and it's real important.

SLIM: No, baby, it's beautiful.

CAVALE: Well, I want it to be perfect, 'cause it's the only religion I got. It's like . . . well, in the old days people had Jesus and those guys to embrace . . . they created a god with all their belief energies . . . and when they didn't dig themselves they could lose themselves in the Lord. But it's too hard now. We're earthy people, and the old saints just don't make it, and the old God is just too far away. He don't represent our pain no more. His words don't shake through us no more. Any great motherfucker rock-'n'-roll song can raise me higher than all of Revelations. We created rock-'n'-roll from our own image, it's our child . . . a child that's gotta burst in the mouth of a savior. . . . Mick Jagger would love to be thar savior but it ain't him. It's like . . . the rock-'n'-roll star in his highest state of grace will be the new savior . . . rocking to Bethlehem to be horn. Ya' know what I mean, Slim?

SLIM: Well, fuck it, man. I ain't no savior.

CAVALE: But you've got it. You've got the magic. You could do it. You could be it.

SLIM: How?

CAVALE: You gotta collect it. You gotta reach out and grab all the little broken, busted-up pieces of people's frustration. That stuff in them that's lookin' for a way out or a way in. You know what I mean? The stuff in them that makes them wanna' see God's face. And then you gotta take all that into yourself and pour it hack out. Give it hack to them bigger than life. You gotta be

unselfish, Slim. Like God was selfish, He kept Himself hid. He wasn't a performer. You're a performer, man. You gotta be like a rock-and-roll Jesus with a cowboy mouth.

SLIM: You fucking cunt!

(He jumps up and starts tearing the place apart, throwing things against the walls and screaming his head off.)

SLIM: You stupid fucking cunt! Two years ago or one year ago! If it was then! If this was happening to me then, I could've done it! I could've done it! But not now! Not fucking now! I got another life! I can't do it now! It's too late! You can't bring somebody's dream up to the surface like that! It ain't fair! It ain't fucking fair! I know I could do it, but you're not supposed to tempt me! You're twisting me up! You're tearing me inside out! Get out of my house! Get the fuck out of my house!

CAVALE: This ain't your house. This is my house.

SLIM: It's nobody's house. Nobody's house.

(He collapses, exhausted from his violence. CAVALE goes to him as if to soothe him, then realizes it's her dream being busted and not his. She starts yelling at him while he just lies there wiped out.)

CAVALE: You're fucking right—nobody's house. A little nobody with a big fucking dream. Her only dream. My only dream. I spread my dreams at your feet, everything I believe in, and you tread all over them with your simpy horseshit. Fuck you. Fuck you. Poor, poor haby. I take your world and shake it. Well, you took my fantasy and shit on it. I was doing the streets looking for a man with nothing so I could give him everything. Everything it takes to make the world reel like a drunkard. But you have less than nothing, baby, you have part of a thing. And it's settled. And if it's settled I can't do nothing to alter it. I can't do shit. I can't give you nothing. I can't. I can't. You won't let me.

SLIM: Come here.

(He pulls her to him. They hug each other. A pause. They lie on the bed.)

SLIM: Listen to the traffic. It sounds like a river. I love rivers. I love the way they just go wherever they want. If they get too full they just overflow and flow wherever they want. They make up their own paths. New Paths. I tried to make a dam once in a river. It was just a little river. I put a whole hunch a' rocks and sticks and shit in that river. I even put a tree in that river, but I couldn't get it to stop. I kept coming back day after day putting

more and more rocks and mud and sticks in to try to stop it. Then one day I stopped it. I dammed it up. Just a little trickle coming out and a big pool started to form. I was really proud. I'd stopped a river. So I went back home and got in bed and thought about what a neat thing I'd done. Then it started to rain. It rained really hard. All night long it rained. The next morning I ran down to the river, and my dam was all busted to shit. That river was raging like a brush fire. Just gushing all over the place. Gushing up over the sides and raging right into the woods. I never built another dam again.

CAVALE: You're so neat. You're such a neat guy. I wish I woulda' known you when I was little. Not real little. But at the age when you start finding out stuff. When I was cracking rocks apart and looking at their sparkles inside. When I first put my finger inside me and felt wonderment. I would've took you to this real neat hideout I had where I made a waterfall with tires and shit, and my own hut. We could've taken all our clothes off, and I'd look at your dinger, and you could show me how far you could piss. I bet you would've protected me. People were always giving me shit. Ya' know what? Once I was in a play. I was real glad I was in a play 'cause I thought they were just for pretty people, and I had my dumb eyepatch and those metal plate shoes to correct my duck foot. It was *The Ugly Duckling*, and I really dug that 'cause of the happy ending and shit. And I got to be the ugly duckling and I had to wear some old tattered black cloth and get shit flung at me, but I didn't mind 'cause at the end I'd be that pretty swan and all. But you know what they did, Slim? At the end of the play I had to kneel on the stage and cover my head with a black shawl and this real pretty blonde-haired girl dressed in a white ballet dress rose up behind me as the swan. It was really shitty, man. I never got to be the fucking swan. I paid all the dues and up rose ballerina Cathy like the North Star. And afterwards all the parents could talk about was how pretty she looked. Boy, I ran to my hideout and cried and cried. The lousy fucks. I wish you were around then. I bet you would've protected me.

SLIM: Poor baby. *(pause)* Well, what're we gonna' do now?

CAVALE: We could howl at the moon.

SLIM: Okay. Ready?

(They both let out howls, then laugh and fall on the floor. They play the coyote and the crow game on their hands and knees. SLIM talks in an old cracked, lecherous voice.)

SLIM: Now, the coyote is mean. He's lean and low-down. He don't fool around with no scraggly crows. When he sees hisself somethin' he likes, he chomps it down.

(He growls and goes after CAVALE. She scurries away.)

CAVALE: Little crow didn't do nothin'. Jes' out here peckin' in the desert. Checkin' out the sand for little corn grains. Jes' a little somepin' to nibble.

SLIM: Coyote gettin' hungry 'bout now. He ain't seen a chicken for he don't know how long. Crow look pretty good at this point. He don't care if it be fat and saucy. Just a little somepin' ta tear the wings off of.

CAVALE: Without no wings little crow bait have a hard time singin'. Starts to run all crazy through the night.

SLIM: Coyote he howl and chomp down on that crow now. Tear into that crow now!

(He jumps on CAVALE and tears into her. They roll around on the floor for a while, then stop.)

SLIM: Now coyote full. He ate up his tidbit. Now he roll on his back and make a big belch and fart and scratch his back against some cactus bush.

CAVALE: Little crow feel pretty good inside coyote belly. Not bad she says for a day on the range. Not had at all. Though she may never see daylight again. Not bad at all.

(A pause.)

SLIM: Now what'll we do?

CAVALE: I don't know.

SLIM: We could call back the lobster man just for laughs.

CAVALE: Okay. Let me do it, okay?

SLIM: Sure.

CAVALE: Goody. *(she runs to the telephone and picks it up)* Hello. Is this the lobster man? It is? Could you come back over here again? We need some cheering up. You would? Oh great! Thanks a lot. Bye. *(she hangs up)* He's coming right over.

SLIM: Good.

CAVALE: Let's play a trick on him when he comes, okay?

SLIM: Like what?

CAVALE: I don't know.

SLIM: What could we do?

CAVALE: Too bad he isn't a tuna fish. We could have a great big giant can and put him in it.

SLIM: Let's just talk to him when he comes.

CAVALE: What about?

SLIM: About what it's like to be a lobster man. It must be pretty weird, you know. Weirder than being us.

CAVALE: We're not weird, man. He's weird, but we're not weird.

SLIM: We could ask what the bottom of the ocean is like.

CAVALE: We could put him in a movie.

SLIM: What movie?

CAVALE: *Three Coins in the Fountain. The Prophet.*

SLIM: *The Swimmer.*

CAVALE: *You're Just My Little Chicken of the Sea.*

SLIM: No, we gotta be nice to him. He's had a hard life.

CAVALE: How do you know?

SLIM: You can tell by his claws. He's got barnacles on his claws.

CAVALE: That means he's a wily old devil. He's outfoxed all the fishermen for years and years. He's never been caught.

SLIM: That's why he's so big. Lobsters never get that big.

CAVALE: He'll never be boiled, that one.

SLIM: We could boil him.

CAVALE: I thought you wanted to be nice to him.

SLIM: Did you ever hear a lobster scream when they hit the boiling water? It's awful. It's like a peacock fucking.

CAVALE: We can't boil him. We don't have any dishes.

SLIM: I could stab him with my switchblade. *(he pulls out a giant switchblade and stabs it into the floor)*

CAVALE: Now, dear, don't get violent. Our company's arriving any minute now.

SLIM: I could cut through that hard shell and tear his heart out. I could eat his heart. You know that's what warriors used to do. Primitive warriors. They'd kill their opponent and then tear his heart out and eat it. Only if they fought bravely, though. Because then they believed they'd captured the opponent's strength.

CAVALE: What kind of strength does a lobster have?

SLIM: Ancient strength. Strength of the ages. Ancient sea-green strength. That's why I love lobster so much. They're very prehistoric.

CAVALE: But this one's a monster.

SLIM: You'd say the same thing about a Tyrannosaurus if he came in the door. I suppose you'd call him a monster too.

(Loud banging on the door.)

CAVALE: Jiggers, it's the lobster man! Quick, put away that knife. We don't want to scare him off.

(SLIM folds up his knife and puts it away.)

CAVALE: Okay. Ready?

SLIM: Ready.

(More loud banging.)

CAVALE: Coming!

(She goes to the door and opens it. LOBSTER MAN enters.)

CAVALE: Oh, Mr. Lobster Man. We're so happy to see you. We were just talking about you. Won't you come in?

(LOBSTER MAN saunters to center stage and grunts. He looks ill at ease in the situation.)

SLIM: Have a seat.

(LOBSTER MAN sits on the bed and stares out at the audience. SLIM and CAVALE move around him.)

CAVALE: How long have you been a lobster?

(LOBSTER MAN grunts.)

SLIM: What'd he say?

CAVALE: He doesn't speak too clear. Could you try to speak up so we can understand you?

(LOBSTER MAN grunts.)

SLIM: Listen, the little lady here and I were discussing how we'd like to get to know you on a more intimate level. You know what I mean? I mean it's a drag to have servants just bringin' ya' shit up the stairs and throwin' it down in the middle of the floor and then leavin' and you never get a chance to know them on a more intimate level. You know what I mean?

(LOBSTER MAN grunts.)

CAVALE: Yeah, you must be a very interesting person, and we don't even know you. That's not fair. We'd like to know your darkest nightmares, your most beautiful dreams, your wildest fantasies, your hopes, your aspirations. Stuff like that.

SLIM: What about it?

(LOBSTER MAN *grunts*.)

CAVALE: I think we oughta try a different tactic.

SLIM: Like what?

CAVALE: Like just ignoring him for a while. Pretend like he's not here. I mean, how would you feel if you walked into a situation like this?

SLIM: I never would.

CAVALE: I know, but just pretend you did. Let's just ignore him for a while.

SLIM: The whole point in bringing him over was so that we'd have something to do.

CAVALE: I know, but it ain't workin' out.

SLIM: So what're we gonna' do then?

CAVALE: Let's go down to the deli and leave him here alone.

SLIM: He might rip us off.

CAVALE: So what? We don't need this shit.

SLIM: What about my drums? My guitar?

CAVALE: What about them? Man, you knock me out. You just gave it to me on the line. And like the Chinese say, sweetie, fuck the dream, you fuck the drum. Let the lobster man be the new Johnny Ace. It's the Aquarian Age. Ya' know it was predicted that when Christ came back he'd come as a monster. And the lobster man ain't no James Dean. . . . Hey, honey, hit some hot licks on the Fender. We're going out for a little shrimp cocktail.

SLIM: "Now what rough beast slouches toward Bethlehem to be born?" So now you want *him* to take *my* place. Is that it? You think this creep is gonna' take me over! Is that it! You're gonna' pour your magic gris-gris into this fool! Well, I'm gonna' cut his ass wide open!

(*He pulls out his switchblade again and starts to threaten the LOBSTER MAN.*)

CAVALE: Slim! Cut the shit! He's only a poor old lobster. Leave him alone.

SLIM: (*to LOBSTER MAN*) Pretty sneaky. Pretty fuckin' sneaky. Squirmin' yer way into our lives. Pretendin' dumb. We know you can talk. We know you understand what's goin' on. You've got the silver. You've got the gold. Out with it! Out with it, Lobster Man, or the sun won't shine on your slimy shell.

CAVALE: No, don't, Slim. Leave him alone. He didn't do nothin'. Leave my savior alone.

SLIM: Your savior? Your savior! He's supposed to be your savior? Okay, we'll just see what kinda' stuff he's made of then. We'll just play him a little music and see what makes him tick. All right, Lobster Man, this is your big chance.

(*SLIM goes to the guitar and starts playing the old C-A minor-F-G chords as CAVALE soothes the LOBSTER MAN.*)

CAVALE: All right now, this won't hurt. Don't be afraid. I'll be right back. Okay?

(*CAVALE gets up and goes to the microphone. She begins to talk the song "Loose Ends" as SLIM plays behind her. He comes in on the choruses, singing. During the song, the LOBSTER MAN gets up from the bed and comes downstage. As the song unfolds he begins to break open and crack, revealing the rock-and-roll savior inside the shell, dressed in black.*)

CAVALE: I'm at loose ends

I don't know what to do

Always dreaming big dreams

Half dreams

Wanting him and loving you

To tell the truth I don't know which way to turn

Give me something to hold on to

Something I can learn

Oh come right here

Come right here when you feel alone

And no one speaks for you

You can do it on your own

Show me the way to it

You know I need a friend

A song to pull me from the hole I'm in

Give me something low-down

Give me something high

Pulling in the power of dark or light

To destroy to the left

Create on the right

Oh come right here

Come right here it's such a simple song

It'll cure all your misery

*It won't move you wrong
So open up your mouth don't think about a thing
Feel the movement in you and sing*

Sing sing sing sing

(CAVALE sings this part.)

Oh I was at loose ends
Not knowing what to do
I needed to open up
So I turned to you

(She talks.)

Help me to do it
I was always dreaming too high
Help me pull my star down from the sky
Down on the ground
Where I can feel it
Where I can touch it
Where I can be it

Oh I don't want to give up
I believe a light still shines
It shines for everyone
It's yours
It's mine
Oh come right here

(CAVALE talks the chorus, SLIM sings. They alternate lines.)

*Come right here you know you're not alone
If you got no savior you can do it on your own
Open up your heart don't think about a thing
Feel the movement in you and sing*

(By the end of the song the LOBSTER MAN is completely out of his shell and stands center stage as the rock-and-roll savior. He stares out at the audience. SLIM sets down his guitar and goes to the gun. He picks up the gun and goes to the LOBSTER MAN. He holds out the gun for the LOBSTER MAN to take. The LOBSTER MAN takes the gun very slowly. SLIM smiles at the LOBSTER MAN, then crosses to the door. He pauses a moment and turns to look at CAVALE. They stare at each other for a moment. Then SLIM exits through the door. CAVALE turns to the LOBSTER MAN and gives her speech very simply and softly, sitting on the edge of the stage. As she

talks, the LOBSTER MAN spins the chamber of the gun, almost in rhythm with the speech. All through this he stares at the audience.)

CAVALE: Nerval. He had visions. He cried like a coyote. He carried a crow. He walked through the Boulevard Noir inhuman like a triangle. He had a pet lobster on a pink ribbon. He told it his dreams, his visions, all the great secrets to the end of the world. And he hung himself on my birthday. Screaming like a coyote. The moon was cold and full and his visions and the crow and the lobster went on *cavale*. That's where I found my name. Cavale. On my birthday. It means escape.

(As CAVALE finishes, the LOBSTER MAN slowly raises the pistol to his head and squeezes the trigger. A loud click as the hammer strikes an empty chamber. The lights slowly fade to black.)

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To Jessica