

MARTIAL ARTS

A play by

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Translated by

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We are young, we must be happy and not part ways.
Why should we care about the wars our parents undertook?

- Erich Maria Remarque
Time to Live and Time to Die

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Martial Arts was commissioned for the Russian Season at the Towson University Department of Theatre Arts, developed with the Center for International Theatre Development.

I dedicate this play to Stanley Tookie Williams, founder of the Crips, convicted and reclaimed. On the decree of Arnold Schwarzenegger, the Governor of the State of California, Stan was executed in 2005. He wrote books for kids.

- Yury Strike Klavdiev

CHARACTERS

BOY, eleven years old
BOY 2, eleven years old
MAN, father of Boy
WOMAN, mother of Boy
ABU, big time drug wholesalers, black
JOHN, big time drug wholesalers, black
GRANDMOTHER, of Boy
GIRL, eleven years old
BLACK GUY
COP

SETTING

Suburb of a provincial city in Russia.
A tough, cinder block and concrete neighborhood.

NOTE: A single punctuation mark as a line of dialogue represents a reaction.

1.

(Backyard of a four-story brick apartment building. The grass is thigh-high and a rusted-out car body rests nearby, all useful parts removed long ago. A bus stop.

BOY and BOY 2 enter)

BOY

--Look, they meant to do it that way, so that nobody catches on.

BOY 2

So... why can we understand them?

BOY

Because the trolls obey us and only us.

BOY 2

All of 'em?

BOY

All of 'em. Cause we don't piss 'em off.

BOY 2

And other people do piss them off?

BOY

They piss them off a lot, and told 'em that, too.

BOY 2

So... where do we get the dirt?

BOY

From underneath a dead body. That's the best.

BOY 2

Oh.

BOY

Yeah.

BOY 2

But what about other dirt, won't 'not-under-a-dead-body-dirt' work?

BOY
Not for this.

BOY 2
Shit.

BOY
Yeah.

(Pause)

BOY 2
Well. You wanna hit the cemetery?

BOY
It's Sunday!

BOY 2
What, you think they get days off? What if somebody dies on Christmas?

BOY
They don't bury them the same day they die.

BOY 2
(remembering)
That's right. It takes three days. (beat) And what if somebody kicks the bucket on a Sunday?

BOY
Good point.

BOY 2
You got your bus pass?

BOY
My folks didn't buy it yet.

BOY 2
I've got my monthly. So we need six rubles.

BOY
At least. Ten's better.

BOY 2
Go fuck yourself on a local for ten. If we take an express it's twenty.

BOY
Well, we ain't taking the express. We need four rubles.

BOY 2
Why?

BOY
We need cigarettes too. Four.

BOY 2
?

BOY
Four is the Queen's favorite number. If we buy them as singles, four is exactly what we'll get in change, see? What are you looking at fuck-nuts? We can both get a ride *and* buy cigarettes.

BOY 2
(pause, an idea)
We could bum cigarettes.

BOY
Nice. Bumming's free. I'll go first.

BOY 2
Right here? Are you nuckin' futs?

BOY
What the hell?
(acts out the following)
We go up to the guy and I'm kinda like, "gimme a cigarette." And he forks over a butt, the bus comes, the doors open, we jump on and--BOOM!--we look like bad-asses, waving and smoking as the bus drives away, but we never have to light the smokes!

BOY 2
Shut the fuck up. How much coin you got?

BOY
Three. One big and two small.

BOY 2
Well, I got five. You can owe me.

BOY

My mom'll pony up tomorrow. No shit. She gives me five rubles every day.

BOY 2

What about today?

BOY

Today? Today I pissed her off.

BOY 2

Let's shove off. At three my old lady comes looking for me.

2.

(The apartment where BOY lives. A large room with a TV in the corner. A couch on one wall, two beds on other walls. A floor lamp next to the coffee table. Two armchairs bookend a table. Bookshelves. A door leads to the bathroom. An entrance to the kitchen. A sliding door opens onto a tiny balcony.

A MAN sits in one armchair doing a crossword. WOMAN sits on the couch sewing curtain rings on the curtains)

MAN

Short-necked bittern.

WOMAN

How many letters?

MAN

Nine.

WOMAN

We know any other letters?

MAN

If I guessed pilgrim right, then the first one is "p".

WOMAN

Pond heron.

(MAN writes the word in)

MAN

Who is the Grand Prince of Kiev? Last letter is "r".

WOMAN

How many?

MAN

Eight.

WOMAN

Vladimir.

MAN

Fuck me! I knew that!

(He writes it in)

You know, they all have names, but some have names you'd expect them to have...

WOMAN

What do you mean?

MAN

Vladimir.

WOMAN

(understanding)

Aaaaahhhh.

MAN

Igor...

WOMAN

Well, yes...

MAN

Boris...

WOMAN

What about Mikhail?

MAN

Archangel Mikhail hauled Satan out of the Heavens.

WOMAN

Well, he did do that to the communists...

MAN

Exactly.

WOMAN

Well, yeah.

(Pause.

WOMAN switches on the TV)

MAN

I know a guy got killed like that. Just sittin' at home watchin' TV.

WOMAN

Was it radiation? I saw a show about it. They said that during Brezhnev's years they were working on a way to shoot radiation from the television. Probably bullshit. Assholes still wanna take Brezhnev down a notch.

MAN

What are you talking about?! Radiation? It was eight years ago and we went to the these chicks' country house. For a birthday party. We're all big sports fans and there was this big game that night. And later that night, on some other channel: *Natural Born Killers*.

Me and a buddy stayed up for the movie. We'd seen it before—

WOMAN

Get to the point, will you? (beat) What are you smoking? Are you high?

MAN

This is a great story! I mean, we took the TV out there just for-- Shit who was playing?

WOMAN

You think we could just pinch a little?

MAN

Just for us?

WOMAN

Yeah.

MAN

Now?

WOMAN

It'll be gone in thirty. They're on their way.

(MAN goes to the kitchen and opens the refrigerator)

WOMAN

In the freezer!

MAN

I know.

(Freezer opens. A baggie crinkles. A bag opens. Powder sprinkles. MAN brings a baggie out and shows it to the woman)

WOMAN

That's enough.

MAN

We better take another teaspoon.

WOMAN

What's that weigh?

MAN

Never thought about it.

WOMAN

Don't forget to swap it out.

MAN

Where's the baby laxative?

WOMAN

First aid kit, bottom shelf. The scoop's in the cabinet.

(Lid opens. Powder is scooped. Powder is poured)

MAN

All done.

WOMAN

Where's the gun?

MAN

In the blue folder.

WOMAN

The one with the flowers?

(MAN enters with the bag)

MAN

No. The plain blue folder, there..

WOMAN

Got it.

(The MAN walks the room, mixing the baby laxative into the bag with the drugs. He holds it up to the light to make sure it's evenly mixed)

MAN

Golden.

WOMAN

Let me see. Yeah, looks good to me.

(The MAN returns the bag to the freezer, closes the door and returns to the living room)

WOMAN

So what about this friend of yours? The one who was killed?

MAN

Right, so, we get to the place in the country and we got tanked fast, planning to sober up by game time. Well, we got fucking Dionysian. Going on and on. Cause this guy, this guy, he was a professional drinker, he could watch TV shit canned! And me, well, I was a super-professional drinker, cause I didn't give a shit about the game or the movie, I went there to get bungfu, not for bullshit TV!

WOMAN

Another bender...

MAN

No. Listen, I ain't talking about the bender. After the game, everyone got drunk again...

WOMAN

...And...

MAN

And fell asleep. Except Mikhail and me.

WOMAN

Mikhail again.

MAN

Yeah, well, we didn't sleep, cause we were lit, Mikhail got inter-galactically drunk and me, I ate ten spoonfuls of hemp porridge. Puffed me up like-

WOMAN

Like now?

MAN

No. Now. I'm nervous now. That's different.

WOMAN

You always ramble on about corpses when you're nervous.

MAN

Can I finish?

WOMAN

They won't weigh it will they?

MAN

The powder?

WOMAN

Yes.

MAN

I don't know.

WOMAN

They've never done it before.

MAN

Never.

WOMAN

But they might.

MAN

Sure.

WOMAN

Are we ok?

MAN

No worries. I checked it.

WOMAN

And what you sprinkled in plus the last...

MAN

Two teaspoons. Two teaspoons of that baby shit stuff.

WOMAN

Is that enough? Should we do one more just in case?

MAN

What if they weigh it and it's heavy?

WOMAN

It could be heavy?

MAN

Well, I don't know. They're probably told how much it weighs.

WOMAN

We got a half-kilo, right?

MAN

Yes.

WOMAN

And if there's a half-kilo and five grams, then they'll-

MAN

Fuck if I know! If there's less than a half-kilo, they'll definitely-

WOMAN

Ok. Ok. Finish your story.

MAN

Right. Shit. Yeah. So, we're watching *Natural Born Killers* and a storm kicks up. I was almost out, just listening, dozing. Tommy Lee Jones, y'know Scagnetti, is giving them a tour of the prison. As they walk, Scagnetti tells them how his mother was killed by a maniac with a rifle... And then... Something sputters... It goes dark... I open my eyes and this white ball is hanging over the TV. About the size of a tennis ball. Far as I could tell, it didn't come from inside the TV...

WOMAN

Did it burn a hole in the TV?

MAN

No, but there were... There were a few holes melted. The ball went from hanging over the TV to floating. Floating all over the room. It might've been spinning. I mean, what the hell do I know. I couldn't take my eyes off of it, it was bright—so bright... It shot around, a question mark in the air, like this... shooting from the TV to right in front of us: Mikhail and me... We froze. Stopped breathing. It flies. Then stops, hovers, and then, like a snake...HA! It darts over to Dimon ...

WOMAN

Dimon who?

MAN

Dimon was ripped.

WOMAN

Uh-huh.

MAN

(demonstrating)

It hopped over to him. Like that. Right in front of his nose, it stops. And right then, right then, Dimon inhales. (imitates) And it's over.

WOMAN

He died?

MAN

What did I say?

WOMAN

Oh. Yeah.

MAN

He died.

WOMAN

Wow. What a way to go.

MAN

Absolutely.

WOMAN

You're sure everything is fine?

MAN

Absolutely.

WOMAN

Absolutely?

MAN

Absolutely, everything is fine.

WOMAN

Would you stop saying absolutely?

MAN

I'm nervous.

WOMAN

Me too. Turn on the TV.

MAN

All right.

(MAN and WOMAN watch TV)

WOMAN

If they don't weigh it, we're fine.

MAN

If they weigh-- I shoot.

WOMAN

If they weigh-- You shoot.

MAN

Absolutely.

(Doorbell. MAN opens the door. WOMAN stands up, and takes the blue folder from a shelf, removes the small revolver, and returns the folder. She sits on the sofa, covers the revolver with the curtains, and returns to sewing.

MAN enters with ABU, drug kingpin, and JOHN, his second. JOHN carries a briefcase. They go to the kitchen)

ABU

Hello.

WOMAN

Good afternoon.

JOHN

Hi, sweetheart.

WOMAN

Hey.

(In the kitchen, the refrigerator opens and closes. MAN, ABU and JOHN enter the living room.

At the table, JOHN opens the briefcase and removes a set of scales.

MAN removes the blue folder. Opens it. No revolver.

ABU sees MAN looking into the blue folder and shoots MAN.

WOMAN shoots at ABU.

ABU falls and shoots at MAN.

WOMAN shoots at ABU. ABU's gun flies.

JOHN searches for ABU's gun on the floor.

WOMAN shoots JOHN.

JOHN finds the gun.

WOMAN shoots at JOHN. Click. A misfire.

WOMAN and JOHN shoot each other.

Time passes.

Evening comes.

Doorbell rings. Doorbell rings again. Again.

The door opens and BOY enters the apartment. He stands at the door for a moment. BOY sneaks into the kitchen and returns with a knife.

BOY steps around the bodies. He picks up the phone off the coffee table with both hands. He finds a clean place to stand. BOY dials 911 and closes his eyes tight)

BOY

Hello. My parents have been killed. I came home to the apartment. They're on the floor, shot. And two other guys, too. It's true. I am *not* kidding.

(BOY cries)

BOY

Come. Please. Pleeaaaasseee coooommme. Twenty-two. Twenty-two Victory Street. Apartment eight-- eighteen.

(Dark. Night)

3.

(The door of the apartment opens. BOY and GRANDMOTHER enter, leaving the door open. The apartment is empty. A rolled up carpet with bloodstains lies under the window. GRANDMOTHER covers a large dark stain on the back of the sofa with her raincoat.

BOY opens the lower section of the closet. He pulls out a bag of toy soldiers, a toy truck, and

a plastic gun. BOY puts all this in a plastic bag.

GRANDMOTHER sits on the bed and cries)

GRANDMOTHER

(sobbing)

Take...time. Take your...take your time. We've got lots of...time. We've got lots of time now.

(BOY opens the drawer on the large bedside table.

GIRL enters the apartment)

GIRL

Hello.

BOY

Hi.

GIRL

Why is your door open?

BOY

We won't be here long.

GIRL

You're moving?

BOY

I don't know. I'm going somewhere else for now.

GIRL

So...who's moving in here?

BOY

They'll probably rent it.

GIRL

Why?

BOY

You don't know?

GIRL

We just moved in today.

BOY

And this is the first place you stumble into? Some luck.

GIRL

Why?

BOY

Cause someone shot my mom. Yesterday. Here. And bad too.

GIRL

Yeah?

BOY

Yeah.

GIRL

What are people supposed to say to you when you're parents've been killed?

BOY

You say you feel sorry for them.

GIRL

I feel sorry for them.

BOY

Thank you.

GIRL

Do you wanna meet up tomorrow?

BOY

Are you leaving?

GIRL

I have to help carry boxes upstairs. I only stopped by for a minute.

BOY

Oh. What about tomorrow? Or I can help you carry boxes now.

GRANDMOTHER

No. It's time for her to go home. You can see each other tomorrow.

GIRL

Okay, tomorrow. Good-bye.

BOY

Bye.

(GIRL exits. BOY pulls some textbooks out from the nightstand. He hides them in his bag)

BOY

Grandma. I'm done.

(GRANDMOTHER stands and picks up her raincoat. BOY helps her to put it on. THEY exit)

4.

(Next day. BOY enters the apartment alone. He takes off his shoes at the door, leaving on his fur-lined trench coat and hat. He takes the coat off and lays it over the armchair.

BOY opens the nightstand and removes more textbooks, the covers are splattered with blood. BOY reaches under his shirt and produces one of the books he took the night before—blood splatters on it as well. He lays the books on the floor, bloody side up, and begins to rearrange them, as if working a puzzle. His phone rings)

BOY

Yes.

GIRL

Hello.

BOY

Hey.

GIRL

Where are you right now?

BOY

At home. Right under you.

GIRL

You're here?

BOY

I'm home.

GIRL

I'll come down. Should I come down?

BOY

I've got a cool surprise. Re-donk-u-lous.

GIRL

I'll be right down.

BOY

I'll be waiting.

(BOY plays with the books.

Doorbell. BOY lets the GIRL into the apartment)

GIRL

What are you doing here?

BOY

Do you remember the first time we met?

GIRL

Do I remember the first time we met?

BOY

Yes.

GIRL

Of course.

BOY

I was sitting here, pulling out books.

GIRL

Okay.

BOY

Look.

(BOY steps aside)

GIRL

Holy crap.

BOY

See?

GIRL

Were they on the floor?

BOY

Exactly.

(Beat. Expectant)

They were in here.

(BOY opens the bedside chest)

GIRL

And where was your Mom?

BOY

Over there. On the sofa.

GIRL

So, she crawled all the way over here?

BOY

But look! Look!

GIRL

What?

BOY

There's no blood on the floor.

GIRL

None?

BOY

If she crawled, she'd drip. All over the floor. See?

GIRL

But there's nothing?

BOY

Nothing. She mopped it up.

GIRL

Mopped?

BOY
You sure do echo a lot.

GIRL
Echo?

BOY
Why?

GIRL
Because I don't understand why she crawled over to touch
your books.

BOY
She didn't touch them. It was an accident. She even
mopped it up so they wouldn't know she'd moved off the
couch.

GIRL
Are you sure?

(BOY opens the balcony door, brings in a ski pole
and closes the balcony door.

BOY pokes the ski pole under the sofa and
retrieves a cleaning cloth. He puts the pole
into the corner.

BOY opens the wadded up cloth in the light, the
cloth is covered with bloodstains)

BOY
(strong)
I know. For sure.

GIRL
She definitely stood up.

BOY
Yeah, she put something in my books.

GIRL
What?

BOY
Look.

(GIRL peeks into the chest)

GIRL
What's that? Money?

BOY
Dunno. I haven't opened it.

GIRL
Why?

BOY
Well, I cried first, then I thought about it, but—

GIRL
Duh. So, are you going to open it now?

BOY
I don't know. I guess I should.

GIRL
You should. It's your inheritance.

BOY
Will you pull it out?

GIRL
You don't want to?

BOY
If you don't want to—I can. But I want you to.

GIRL
(honored)
Well, thank you.

(GIRL pulls the black-plastic-wrapped bag out of the nightstand. She gives it to the boy and looks down at her blood-covered hands.

BOY takes the bag from GIRL and wipes it on his T-shirt, where it leaves a reddish brown stain.

Pause. BOY stands for a time)

BOY

Fine. Now I'm unwrapping it.

(He does)

GIRL

This is all your Mom left you?

BOY

I guess nothing else is worth anything.

GIRL

What do mean?

(Beat)

BOY

Two years ago, all the guys grew up. They started wearing watches. I got into Mom and Dad's stuff to find a watch for me, and Mom tells me-- Dad only has one watch.

(Beat)

Well, he's got an alarm clock too, but the thing about that is that if you don't wind it up all the time it lies.

(Beat)

Anyhow, my Mom never even got fake pearls, only a chain and her wedding ring.

GIRL

What about your Dad?

BOY

I just told you--he's got the watch.

GIRL

That's it?

BOY

No one else in the family had one...

GIRL

This is all they had. They left this for you. What now?

BOY

What?

GIRL

What are you going to do?

BOY

It can chill right there, for now.

GIRL

And later?

BOY

I'll sell it, I guess. When I grow up. Or I'll take it to the police.

GIRL

Do the police pay for plunder?

BOY

No. They don't pay-- Why'd you call this plunder?

GIRL

Did your parents make it?

BOY

No. I'd know. For sure. When someone makes moonshine, you can tell.

(BOY weaves a bit)

And when someone picks up empties from recycling bins, you know he's poor. So I think if they were making drugs, I'd know. Really. Come on.

GIRL

Who scavenges bottles in our part of the building?

BOY

Well, there's those goons downstairs. Ivan Mihailovich and his psycho-chick.

GIRL

Is she the morning squealer?

BOY

Yeah. And he mutters. Mom said they've been fucked up so long they see pink spiders.

GIRL

And who makes moonshine?

BOY

Granny Vaja Konstantinova used to, but they busted her for fencing stolen gold. Nowadays, I don't know. They say the police blew up her still, but...

GIRL

Well, this is quite the...place.

BOY

So, this proves that if they were making drugs, I'd know it. And, no, it's not theirs, but it's not grift either.

GIRL

You're sure?

BOY

My mom wouldn't leave me a snatch-and-grab inheritance.

GIRL

Oh, sure she wouldn't.

BOY

No, I'm serious. She wouldn't. Cause that's a sin.

(A noise at the door)

5.

GIRL

Who's that?

BOY

My guess is it ain't my Granny! (beat) Quick now!
Demons!

(BOY and GIRL pull a chair over to the bookshelves and climb up to open the doors of a narrow storage area close to the ceiling. GIRL climbs up first. BOY follows, pushing the chair away with his foot. They are huddled and quiet.

The door opens. BLACK GUY and POLICE SERGANT enter)

BLACK GUY

Why you stumblin'? Ain't like you pickin' a lock.

POLICEMAN

This ain't my place. I never held this key before.

BLACK GUY
(not listening)

Sure.

(looking around)
Where... Where, where, where, where...

POLICEMAN
My dick if I know where that junkie put it. She coulda poked it anywhere, you know?

BLACK GUY
An addict on the edge of dying like a dog.

POLICEMAN
Yeah, good idea, try and get inside her head.

BLACK GUY
Where was she?

POLICEMAN
Here. On the sofa.

(BLACK GUY pulls the sofa away from the wall.
Nothing. He takes his coat off)

GIRL
(signs silently to the boy)
"Are they friends?"

BOY
(signs back)
"I don't know."

(POLICEMAN motions to the gun in BLACK GUY'S
belt)

POLICEMAN
I see you're packing.

(BLACK GUY moves the gun around to the front of
his belt)

BLACK GUY

Just in case I run out of money.

POLICEMAN

So, Mr. Q. Public, I should take you downtown?

(POLICEMAN grins. BLACK GUY grins and lifts the sofa)

BLACK GUY

Go ahead. Arrest me, Dick Tracy. Look. Anything under there?

POLICEMAN

(Looking)

No. What's the cleaning rag doing there?

BLACK GUY

Where?

POLICEMAN

Here.

(BLACK GUY drops the sofa)

BLACK GUY

Was it there before?

POLICEMAN

No.

BLACK GUY

Could've been the family cleaning up. In Africa they would sell all the personal...effects. Magicians buy the trinkets of the dead men...

POLICEMAN

That's some kind of inheritance. (Laughs)

(BLACK GUY twirls the cleaning cloth)

BLACK GUY

This particular inheritance would bring good money back home.

POLICEMAN

Why's that?

BLACK GUY

Blood. See the blood? Someone wiped up blood with this.

POLICEMAN

Under the rug?

(POLICEMAN picks up a corner and peers under the rug from one side. BLACK GUY does the same from the other side. There's nothing under the rug, but bloodstains seeped into the back of the rug near the nightstand.

POLICEMAN looks at the nightstand and opens it—
blood covered books fall out)

BLACK GUY

Bingo!

POLICEMAN

Fuck-a-duck! There's no fucking thing in here either, fuck...

BLACK GUY

Looks like we gotta case of "find the rat."

POLICEMAN

Whaddyou mean rat?

BLACK GUY

It's a child's game. Anyone can see that.

POLICEMAN

Look, think what you want, but for the past two days, none of our boys were here.

BLACK GUY

Not even you?

POLICEMAN

Why the hell would I come here? We said we're comin' today...

BLACK GUY

But the family. You said...

POLICEMAN

Yeah, I think so. Someone took away the bodies, right?
They're going in the ground today.

BLACK GUY

Well, let's go.

POLICEMAN

Are you fucking nuts?

BLACK GUY

What do you suggest? We hide here?

POLICEMAN

You're a real lump of clay, aren't ya? Full of shit.

BLACK GUY

Full of shit?

POLICEMAN

So you think...what? The two of us—*whoop!*—jump in the car and go. With no warrants, with nothing. We say, "Hey there grieving family, you go on over to that funeral, hang out, mourn, and then go to a restaurant, we're going to tear your house apart." Look, it ain't gonna happen.

BLACK GUY

Not even close.

POLICEMAN

What then? Break down a door? Call the fuckin' cops? We should call the loony bin about you instead.

BLACK GUY

You'll pressure them and they'll talk.

POLICEMAN

Me? You're nuts.

BLACK GUY

Who? Me? If I do it, it's a crime!

POLICEMAN

Moron!

BLACK GUY

You have an idea?

POLICEMAN

Get the hell out of here! If it's here—it's here, if it's not—it's not! End of story!

BLACK GUY

For you! I have to tell Jamal about it! Then that's the end of my motherfuckin' story!

POLICEMAN

That's not my problem.

BLACK GUY

Not your fucking problem? Let's go get this family! Jamal gave me until this evening cause he thinks I took the shit!

POLICEMAN

Then you're already dead.

BLACK GUY

Yeah! Tell me about this family.

POLICEMAN

Just some old woman. One of their mothers.

BLACK GUY

And you think she took it?

POLICEMAN

Fuck knows 'bout retirees these days...could've been her. With the chump-change they get, you'd sell not just dust, but your own fucking guts. Then again, who'd need the organs after fifteen years of chasin' dragons.

BLACK GUY

Let's go to her place.

POLICEMAN

And what if it's not her?

BLACK GUY

You give her a little heat and we'll know.

POLICEMAN

You a whack job? If I go over there, all I can do is sit in the car and wait.

BLACK GUY

You won't come in with me?

POLICEMAN

Fuck no. Where you from again, friend?

BLACK GUY

Somalia.

POLICEMAN

How could I forget. That may fly in Somalia, where cops and drug dealers tap grandma for horse, but this is the real world. You go and do what you need to do. I'll wait in the car.

BLACK GUY

Wasn't there a boy?

POLICEMAN

Yeah.

BLACK GUY

What if he took it?

POLICEMAN

The kid? He's a fucking zombie after all...this. Why'd he take it? Where would he take it? He's just a kid. He wouldn't even know what he had.

BLACK GUY

How old?

POLICEMAN

Somethin' like ten.

BLACK GUY

Then he knows. Trust me.

GIRL

(signs to boy)

"Why aren't you at the funeral?"

BOY

(signs back)

"I wanted to see you."

(GIRL kisses BOY on cheek)

POLICEMAN

Doesn't matter, he's with his grandma anyway, poor kid...

BLACK GUY

That's it. Let's go. What's their address?

POLICEMAN

Seriously? You wanna go over there?

BLACK GUY

Just fucking imagine, for a moment, that your goddamn drug Czar knows about the package. Imagine that your drug czar told you to bring him this package. BRING IT TO HIM PERSONALLY, UNDERSTAND?!? Personally, or he'll cut your balls off, your kids balls and your wife's fucking balls, got it? And you've got two hours before you're supposed to call him. You'd go!

POLICEMAN

Give me your piece, first. Huh? Fine, you got no code.

BLACK GUY

You should go, now that I've asked you to go!

POLICEMAN

What did you tell me over the phone? You told me: your guys were going to such and such apartment. I should take a package over. You get the package—I get a thousand bucks burning a hole in my pocket. Isn't that what you told me?

BLACK GUY

It is.

POLICEMAN

So I came here. Nothing. You ask me to bring you here. I brought you.

BLACK GUY

After three damn days!

POLICEMAN

As soon as I could. The boy and his grandma were here yesterday. The day before, crime scene worked here all night. And now what are you asking? For me to go help you rough up a grandma?

BLACK GUY

We'll just ask questions.

POLICEMAN

You won't be questioning anyone, understand? I ain't one of your dealers, got it? That's narc squad business. As for your problem—I've got an idea. I'll put you in jail.

(Pause)

BLACK GUY

Fucking great.

POLICEMAN

Listen. If you're in jail, Jamal can't touch you. I get you a cell phone, you call your guys, friends, brothers, I don't give a fuck. They go to grandma, rough her up, rape her, I don't care. They bring you the dust, you split, go to Jamal, everyone is happy.

BLACK GUY

It must be here somewhere. Shit...

(BLACK GUY goes to the kitchen: the clattering of cans and boxes, slamming drawers, oven opening, microwave bell ringing.)

POLICEMAN

(smiling)

Make a cup of tea why don't ya!

BLACK GUY

You big-black-Jesus-H-Christ-on-a-cross-motherfucker!

(curses in Arabic)

Neek Hallak!

(and Swahili)

Sharmutha!

(BLACK GUY throws a plate at the wall. Two gunshots from the kitchen. A crash, cabinet doors slamming, a pan lid rolls through the door.)

Silence.

Something pouring. Powder pouring.

GIRL cries helplessly. Whimpers. Sighs)

GIRL

They'll kill us.

(BOY tries to stop GIRL's mouth with his hands.
A quiet noise.

BLACK GUY glides from the kitchen, a lion, gun in
hand pointing at the storage area.

POLICEMAN roars with laughter)

BLACK GUY
(whispers)

Shut up!

POLICEMAN
Fucking Rambo-in-Russia! Oh, shit, I'll... (laughs)

(BLACK GUY hoists himself up to the storage area
and cracks the door. Two handfuls of heroin hit
him in the face. BLACK GUY lets go, crashes from
the chair and hits the floor, sniffing from the
powder. BLACK GUY shoots twice at the storage
area from the floor and misses.

POLICEMAN jumps up and grips his holster)

POLICEMAN
Have you gone apeshit, monkeyboy?

(BLACK GUY shoots POLICEMAN twice. BLACK GUY
takes the gun from the dying POLICEMAN's holster
and finishes him off.

BLACK GUY carefully aims and shoots the attic
story three more times.

BOY and GIRL pray.

The bullets don't hit them.)

6.

BLACK GUY
Hey, are you alive up there?

GIRL

(signs)
"Will he kill us?"

(BOY puts his right hand on the elbow of the left arm and flips her off without lifting his finger)

BOY
(whispers)
I don't know what to do.

GIRL
(whispers)
Me either.

(BLACK GUY pulls the clip out of his gun and examines it)

BLACK GUY
You are small. Right? You must be small... If you were big I would have killed you... or wounded you...
(aims the gun)
And you are whispering, which means there's two of you.

(BLACK GUY aims and shoots at the area untouched by the earlier shots.

BOY and GIRL crawl to the sides of the area.

BLACK GUY misses)

BLACK GUY
Just!
(He shoots)
Throw down!
(He shoots)
The powder!
(He shoots)
And I leave. If you're smart, you won't mention the cop.
You didn't see shit.

(BLACK GUY tries to open the storage area doors, but they are now locked. He stands under the storage area, examining the bullet holes. He pokes his finger in the holes.

BOY pushes a straw through a hole and spits in BLACK GUY's eye. BLACK GUY screams and shoots into the hiding place twice, missing twice.

The gun clicks.

BLACK GUY takes the butt of his gun and bangs on the storage area. He chips away at the bullet holes and they grow, breaking.

BLACK GUY stops and goes to the kitchen.
(Fumbling, a clanking of drawers)

BOY
Quick, let's jump!

(BOY and GIRL jump down and hide.)

BLACK GUY returns with a knife and a cleaver. Holding the knife in his teeth, he chops at the bottom of the storage area with the cleaver, shattering boards. When the hole is wide enough, he hoists himself up into it, knife clenched in his teeth. He grabs the bag of heroin. He takes the knife from his mouth)

BLACK GUY
I see you got your asses out of here. Fuckin' kids are smart...

(BLACK GUY moves to crawl out. He is stuck. He turns, trying to twist his body out of the hole. The sharp wood pierces his body.)

BLACK GUY hisses, his face twisting. He moves in the other direction, but it gets worse. BLACK GUY grits his teeth and strains to pull himself through the jagged hole. Nothing. The wood digs in deeper. He screams and stops moving, hanging silently.

BOY and GIRL emerge and stand by the dangling legs)

7.

(A thin, but steady stream of blood runs from BLACK GUY's leg)

BOY
(trying to be funny)
You afraid?

GIRL
Yes. Of this and that. (she gestures to the dead
POLICEMAN)

BOY
Don't be. I sat with my Mom and Dad for three hours
waiting for the cops. They don't move. They don't speak.
They just lie there, that's it. I opened the door, in case
he gets out, but he's stuck worse than Winnie-the-Pooh in
the honey tree.

(BOY pulls on BLACK GUY's leg.

BLACK GUY moans and comes to his senses)

GIRL
Don't hurt him...

BOY
He wasn't hurt when he tried to kill us.

GIRL
Doesn't matter. It makes you the same as him. And if you...
I won't be your friend.

BOY
Ok. No, you're right... so what should I do?

GIRL
I dunno. Call the police?

(BLACK GUY's legs twitch. He screams from pain)

BOY
Hush, hush! No one's gonna rat you out to the cops.
Relax.

GIRL
You aren't gonna call?

BOY

Why should I? He came here with the cops. You want more like him here? What would we do then? Yeah, sure, they may do nothing now, but they'll come find me... at night. Calling the cops is the last thing we want to do.

GIRL

So, what? You're going to keep him here?

(BOY picks up Policeman's gun and pulls out the clip. BOY snaps the clip back into place. He goes to the Policeman's body, picks up Black Guy's revolver, flips open the cylinder, empty casings fall to the floor.

BOY puts both guns on the table, side by side)

BOY

No bullets.

(BOY covers the Policeman with a blanket from the sofa)

Now he won't frighten you.

GIRL

Thank you. I didn't used to be afraid of anything, but at camp, Sushka and me conjured up a troll...

BOY

Wow! You conjure trolls too?

GIRL

Absolutely! Girls invented fortune-telling and conjuring...

BOY

I wasn't arguing... Is the troll the only thing you've summoned?

GIRL

I don't know how to conjure. Sushka did it. She was the only one who knew how to call the troll.

BOY

We've conjured a hundred trolls, and once we summoned it using... holy cow!

GIRL

What?

BOY
Very cool.

GIRL
Why?

BOY
Cause I figured it out.

GIRL
What?

BOY
What kind of inheritance I got.

GIRL
What kind is that?

BOY
Well, Mom-- She could leave me whatever... Right?

GIRL
Yes.

BOY
But she left me this.

GIRL
So?

BOY
She wanted to destroy it herself, but couldn't. Now it's up to me.

BLACK GUY
(hoarse)
Oh, Jesus...

GIRL
What'd he say?

BLACK GUY
Don't be stupid...

BOY
And you're real smart hanging there...

(BOY pushes Black Guy's leg.

BLACK GUY screams)

BOY

See?

GIRL

What's he saying?

BOY

You're ready to listen to the enemy and I haven't even finished him off yet?

GIRL

But he's alive and trying to talk.

BOY

All right, yeah, fine. No problem. But I know what I'm doing. Some awesome, super-hot-shit I came up with.

GIRL

Then you go first.

BOY

Right here and now, we're going to summon the Queen of Spades and give this guy to her. That way you can see what she is.

8.

GIRL

And what is she?

BLACK GUY

Hey, little fucker, you bring anyone in here and I'll fucking pull your fucking guts out.

BOY

Shut the fuck up.

GIRL

If you don't stop swearing, I'm going to go away.. forever.

BOY

Don't go. I have to get the dirt from the grave.

(BOY goes to the kitchen. GIRL follows.)

BLACK GUY tries to pull himself out of the hole. Boards crack. BLACK GUY screams and hangs motionless. Boards crack.

BOY and GIRL return from kitchen. BOY wears yellow rubber gloves and carries a bundle)

BOY

Don't ever touch it with your bare hands. If you do, you die.

GIRL

Then how did you get it? With a shovel?

BOY

What shovel? Mishka scooped it up. I watched.

GIRL

And what happened?

BOY

Well, that's it. He's all laid up. Broke a leg on the way back from the cemetery.

GIRL

You didn't know about touching it?

BOY

Of course not. That how I found out. Now, we pour it in a circle...

GIRL

Should I sweep up? Mom yells at me when I track in dirt...

BOY

No, um, it's ok when you've got gloves on, so I'll do it. See, you pour a circle.

(BOY pours a circle.)

BLACK GUY's knees bend involuntarily. He screams)

BLACK GUY

(prays in Arabic and Swahili)

Allahumma In-nee-a toobu ilaylca minha la ar-ji-u ilayhaa abada. Mungu atanilinda ubaya wenu hautanifika.

(Boards crack under BLACK GUY's struggling weight)

BOY
Get the deck of cards from the nightstand, there, to the right of the chessboard!

GIRL
Where?!

BOY
To the right!

(Boards break. BLACK GUY screams)

GIRL
Here!

BOY
That's the card! Put it here!

(Drops of BLACK GUY's blood fall on the card.
BOY pours dirt over them)

BOY
That's it! Get into the closet!

(BOY and GIRL hide in the closet. Boards break. BLACK GUY falls to the floor, followed by a pile of rubbish and canned pickles from the storage area.

BOY cracks the closet door)

BOY
(shouting)
QUEENOFSPADESCOME QUEENOFSPADESCOME QUEENOFSPADESCOME!!

(BOY closes the closet door.

From the mirror in the corner of the room the QUEEN OF SPADES appears. She passes the closet.

She passes the blanket-draped corpse of the
POLICEMAN. It disappears and the blanket falls
to the floor.

QUEEN OF SPADES stops in front of BLACK GUY.

BLACK GUY is injured and cannot stand.

QUEEN OF SPADES moves her hand and raises the
heroin up from the floor into the air. The
powder covers BLACK GUY from view. When the
cloud of powder fades, BLACK GUY is gone.

QUEEN OF SPADES crouches on all fours and licks
all the heroin off the floor.

QUEEN OF SPADES leaves through the mirror.

BOY and GIRL emerge from the closet)

BOY
That was so fucking cool!

GIRL
She only kills evil, right?

BOY
She is from Evil. So what's Evil here, she takes back over
to her side.

GIRL
Why did she take the powder?

BOY
It's from that side too.

GIRL
So, we did the right thing?

BOY
We did what we should've I guess.

GIRL
Then—let's go. I wanna show you what I drew on the back
wall of our building.

BOY

Which wall is that?

(BOY and GIRL exit.

End of Play)