

On Shining Seas:
A Play About Climate Change

A Play in Three Acts

By Daniel Myers

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CHARACTER NAME	BRIEF DESCRIPTION
SAM	A non-human person living at sea. Sam believes himself to be a white man. Some time ago, Sam cast a drag net and caught Vaquis in it. Sam thinks Vaquis is his imaginary wife, "Jeanine." He lives in his stories.
VAQUIS	A non-human sea creature, captured by Sam. Vaquis has no delusions about their own identity, but is forced by Sam to perform the role of "Jeanine." They are tangled in a net, held by Sam.
WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL	A white man covered in oil. Part salesman, part oil baron, part showman, he is enthralled by America. He owns this patch of the Atlantic Ocean
NATURE	The creation of White Man Rich With Oil. Nature cannot speak unless she is told what to say.
WORKERS	Three nonwhite humans, employed by White Man Rich With Oil to support America.

NOTES

This play takes place in the Atlantic Ocean. It never leaves the Atlantic Ocean, despite any suggestions otherwise. There should be two levels. The first is the ocean floor, the second is the water's surface, where the raft and super tanker are. I recommend simple, yet flexible set pieces to communicate these two domains.

Please be attentive to the images and stage directions in the play. They play a critical role in the play's meaning.

This play is about climate change.

PROLOGUE

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Since the beginning of time, Man has struggled to tame Nature. This is our origin and our destiny. Our past, present, and future.

NATURE

Animalia,
Chordata,
Mammalia.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Primate--

SAM

Primate? I'm no primate!

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Hominidae.

SAM

I'm not a primate! I'm a Man!

VAQUIS

Men *are* primates, stupid.

NATURE

Homo.

SAM

No, they're not. Primates are monkeys, humans are Men.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Sapiens.

SAM

(Relieved)

See! *Homo Sapiens.* Me! Not Primate: Man.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

That's right my friend. And it gets better...

NATURE

Homo Americanus: Red, choleraic, righteous; stubborn, zealous, free; action regulated by customs.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Of course, she is translating from the original Latin Linnaeus wrote in.

SAM

Very sophisticated!

NATURE

Homo Asiaticus: yellow, melancholic, stiff; severe, haughty, greedy; ruled by opinions.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

It's science!

NATURE

Homo Europaeus: white, sanguine, fleshy; with abundant, long hair; blue eyes; gentle, acute, inventive; covered with close vestments; governed by laws.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

See? You're not just a man, you're: Man!

SAM

Europaeus?

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

That's right! White Men.

SAM

Ah, right. Like me?

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Sure. Like you.

*They examine VAQUIS as NATURE describes
Homo Africanus.*

NATURE

Homo Africanus: black, phlegmatic, relaxed; females without shame; mammary glands give milk abundantly; crafty, sly, lazy, cunning, lustful, careless; governed by caprice.

VAQUIS

A pair of fools playing make-believe.

SAM

(Cutting VAQUIS off)

Since the beginning of time, Man has struggled to tame Nature.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Darwin called it survival of the fittest.

VAQUIS

You're not exactly "fit."

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Mind over matter! We have tools: hammers, knives, guns!

*WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL and NATURE
prepare to have a Wild West duel as SAM goes
on.*

SAM

Man must not only tame the natural world, but his inner Nature.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Draw!

They draw. NATURE is "shot."

VAQUIS

Their violent urges?

SAM

Their inner animal.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Did I mention bombs? Nuclear bombs!

NATURE

(Clearly quoting)

“I am become Death, the Destroyer of Worlds.”

VAQUIS

Which Worlds are those?

SAM

Evolution: Humanity’s journey to become something more.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Humanity’s journey to become Man!

VAQUIS

Human, Human, human.

NATURE

[*To the Conga line tune*] Human, Human, Hue-man! Human, Human, Hue-man!

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

It’s a long conga line from the Cambrian to today. You know, some people call this the Anthropocene.

SAM

The Anthropocene?

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

The age of Man! We’re shaping the planet.

NATURE

“There is much debate about when the Anthropocene began. Some scholars say it began with the birth of the steam engine in the early 19th century. Others prefer a more finite start: the first detonation of an atomic bomb in 1945.”

VAQUIS

What day is it?

NATURE

Today.

VAQUIS

Are you sure? It feels like yesterday.

SAM

Man wasn't meant for a life at sea.

VAQUIS

You aren't human. And neither am I.

SAM

Am I dead?

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Are we ever?

VAQUIS

Does it matter?

SAM

Will I stay that way?

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Depends on what you mean by dead.

NATURE

“In that state in which the vital functions and powers have come to an end, and are incapable of being restored.”

SAM

Well, seems simple enough.

VAQUIS

Latin's dead yet here you are reciting it.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

It's powers have not yet come to an end.

NATURE

“I am become Death, the Destroyer of Worlds.”

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Ah, Oppenheimer!

VAQUIS

I thought that was Krishna.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

That, too. Oppenheimer said that after he detonated the first atomic bomb. What a thing of beauty, that. You know, if you look that way and squint a little, you can still see it, shining in the distance. Like a light on the top of a hill. A big bang. The pinnacle of human power. Look! It's still there!

BLACKOUT.

ACT ONE SCENE ONE

Lights up on SAM.

SAM

Where do I begin?

(beat)

I think we start with our names. I'm Sam. Samuel, if you want.

(beat)

I've come to like it out here. Some days, when there are no clouds in the sky and the light is just right, the sky and the water look like one. My patch of ocean feels like my own little snow-globe.

SAM pulls out a crude wooden spear made from an oar.

SAM

They gave me oars when they sent me out here. I used to paddle and paddle, hoping to find land one day. Turns out the Atlantic is real big, bigger than those globes they had in Elementary school would lead you to believe. Eventually, I figured the currents were stronger than I could ever be, so I left it up to them. I whittled one oar down to a spear with my teeth. For protection. And food sometimes. Not a lot of fish make it up here, though. Except whales.

(A pause. SAM is waiting for something.
Again, with emphasis.)

Not a lot of fish make it up here, though. Except *whales!*

(Another pause.)

(Frustrated)

Jeanine!

(Beat)

Jeanine! The whale!

VAQUIS

My name is Vaquis!

SAM

We need to tell the story.

VAQUIS

I'm tired. I don't want to put on your silly show today.

SAM

Come here and perform!

*SAM pulls the nylon fishing line, pulling
VAQUIS to their feet.*

VAQUIS

(in pain)

Okay, Okay!

*VAQUIS picks up a whale puppet. The whale
jumps out of the water in iconic fashion.*

SAM

The whales and I get along. Most of the time. When the sea is-- Jeanine! Don't face them!
Turn around, they can't know who you are yet.

VAQUIS and turns around.

VAQUIS

Happy?

SAM

Yes. You have to understand that things must happen in a particular order here, otherwise
the effect of the story is lost.

(beat)

Now I've lost my train of thought. Where was I?

VAQUIS

I wasn't paying attention.

SAM

What has gotten into you today?

VAQUIS

We do this stupid show every day. Can't we take one day off?

SAM

The world must hear our story.

VAQUIS

We've told it a thousand times. I think the world's getting tired of reruns.

SAM

The world can't be allowed to forget our story.

VAQUIS

The world? Or you?

SAM

Jeanine, this is an act of service to the world. Our story can teach them so much about love, about perseverance, about the human condition.

VAQUIS

What would you know about the human condition?

SAM

Plenty! I'll show you. Now pick up the whale.

VAQUIS

I'd rather not.

SAM

Do it!

SAM pulls on the nylon line. VAQUIS picks up the puppet.

SAM

Good. Let's continue.

(beat)

The whales and I get along most of the time. They've learned to keep their distance. Once, one tried to topple my raft. I protected myself from it's attack by plunging this spear into his eye!

SAM mimics the action. VAQUIS remains still.

SAM

Jeanine. Act out the scene.

VAQUIS

I don't want to. I know where this goes.

SAM

You will do as I say.

VAQUIS

It's degrading.

SAM

I don't see how. It's the story of a lifetime. The story of a generation, even. There's a hero, a damsel in distress, a strange, dangerous, foreign land, a tragic end. It's the next Apocalypse Now!

VAQUIS

How fitting.

SAM

Quickly! The sun's setting. We're running out of time.

VAQUIS

Good. Then we can wait until tomorrow.

SAM

No, the story must be told!

VAQUIS

Then do it yourself.

SAM

I need you! Without you the story loses its power. Its allure. You're the thing that makes it all so real!

VAQUIS

You need me?

SAM

Yes! You are my everything! Without you here I'm just a man telling stories.

VAQUIS

Is that why you cast this net? To find someone to make your stories real? It's a fantasy, Sam. Having me here doesn't change that. They're still only stories.

SAM

It's who we are! Please, the sun is setting.

VAQUIS

No.

SAM

(With growing panic)

Now, Jeanine. We have to finish the story.

VAQUIS

I refuse.

SAM

(Panicked)

What if we forget? We can't forget! What will we become if we forget?

VAQUIS

There's nothing to forget, only lies to be told again.

SAM

We'll be nothing! Quickly, go get the boat.

VAQUIS sits.

SAM

Now!

VAQUIS does not move.

SAM

Fine! I'll do this myself.

SAM pulls the line tight, pulling VAQUIS to their feet right below the raft. The line is taut and VAQUIS can't move, but they still fight against SAM's hold.

This is my wife, Jeanine.

VAQUIS

My name is Vaquis!

SAM

We were exiled here together because of our love. I saved her from her savage tribe in Africa and promised her a home in Europe.

VAQUIS

Lies! You snared me in this net as I swam by!

SAM

We fell in love, but my captain forbade it. He put us on a raft and sent us to sea. And here we've been, ever since. A man and his wife, against the elements. She's the only thing that keeps me going.

The sun sets. SAM lets out slack on the line.

SAM

I hope you're happy! I had to cut out all the good stuff because of your little temper tantrum! The battle with the savages, our first night together--

VAQUIS

Fuck you.

SAM

We'd better be heading to bed. It seems like you need some beauty sleep.

VAQUIS

If you would free me from this net I could sleep much better.

SAM

Goodnight, Jeanine.

SAM gets ready to sleep and lays down, back to the audience. VAQUIS lays down to sleep on the floor.

ACT ONE SCENE TWO

SAM lays down to sleep, with their back to the audience. VAQUIS attempts to sleep, laying down stage right. The current pulls the net VAQUIS is wearing, hurting them.

VAQUIS

Why do the currents always pick up at night?

VAQUIS is pulled into an awkward position by the net. They stand to fix the tangle.

VAQUIS

This damn net... What did I do to get tangled up in you? A nylon straightjacket.

The current pulls VAQUIS stage left.

VAQUIS

(sarcastic)

Yes, I'll follow wherever you take me. I'm at your beck and call, currents! Just like Sam. Jeanine, play this, Jeanine, play that. That is not my name! When will you be satisfied? Neither of you show signs of stopping anytime soon. A life sentence, it seems.

(beat)

At least give me the dignity of my name.

(Yelling to SAM with no regard for his sleep)

My name is Vaquis! I am not Jeanine, I am VA. QUIS.

(Seeing SAM does not move)

He hears what he wants to hear. Always does. Telling his little stories over and over again. Always the hero; a strong white man, saving an African savage.

(beat)

He needs me. Somehow that makes this feel worse.

VAQUIS is pulled by the current again.

VAQUIS

You're delusional! Do you not see my gills? And what about yours? Surrounded by water, but never looked at his reflection. Human and neither of us have set foot on land!

Imprisoned by a mad man, yet I'm in the straight jacket.

(beat)

No, he's not so much a mad man as he is a pirate. Plundering the high seas for all he can hold. Including me.

VAQUIS is pulled by the current again and trips on a Coca-Cola bottle. A colorful array of coral has grown on it, anchoring it down.

VAQUIS

What are you? A bottle adorned with coral. I've never seen anything quite like this. You must have been down here for quite some time to grow so much coral.

(beat)

You've always fascinated me. Coral polyps could travel for miles and all they'd have to do is pick a stable foundation and call it home.

(beat)

I never gave home much thought until I was caught in this net. I've never had a "home," at least not like you. We can't, really. We follow our food.

All I know is that this is not home. Home is anywhere but this net. You're lucky. You can build a home and bring family to you.

(beat)

You have no delusions about what you are. Nor does anything, really, except Sam. What kind of fool do you have to be to play this kind of trick on yourself? He could swim away from that raft any time he likes.

VAQUIS is pulled again, this time somewhat violently, forcing them to drop the bottle.

VAQUIS

I guess I'll let you rest some more. I wish I could rest heavy and steady like you.

(beat)

Can coral grow on nylon?

VAQUIS continues to try and untangle the net as we move into the next scene.

ACT ONE SCENE THREE

A super tanker slowly enters stage left, at the same level as SAM's raft, if a bit higher. On the tanker stand WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL and NATURE.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL strikes a match and lights a cigarette.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Nature, help me stretch.

NATURE supports WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL as he does a series of stretches.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

(stretching)

Okay, let's go over the plan. You'll announce my name and play me in. What will you be playing?

NATURE holds up two fingers for WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL to see.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

No, no, no. Too delicate. Let's go with number four. Much stronger. Very American. Real classic rock vibes with that one. So you'll play me on with...

NATURE holds up four fingers.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Good. I'll make a grand entrance and they'll applaud. First impressions are the most important part of building a relationship. Right honey? Remember how we met? Oh, there's no time for that now, we have a show to put on!

NATURE prepares the music while WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL goes offstage and does some final preparations.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL
(offstage)

Okay, let's do this!

NATURE
(announcing)

White Man Rich With Oil!

NATURE plays him on. WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL enters and takes the edge of the super tanker in dramatic fashion.

SAM wakes up.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Thank you! Thank you!

VAQUIS

Not you again.

SAM

Who are you?

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Goddamnit.

(To NATURE)

They missed it, honey! Let's do it again.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL goes back offstage.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

From the top!

NATURE
(Announcing)

White Man Rich With Oil!

NATURE plays the same song. WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL enters again. SAM applauds.

VAQUIS
(Sarcastically)

Bravo.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Thank you! Thank you!

VAQUIS

Welcome back.

SAM

I'm sorry, but who are you?

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

I am White Man Rich With Oil, the self-made man who climbed the corporate ladder, fought tooth and nail, and arrived here, at the top of the world! You see, this patch of the Atlantic Ocean is mine, purchased wholesale at ten million dollars. A bargain, I assure you.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL puts down a gangplank, making a bridge between the super tanker and SAM's raft. WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL crosses to SAM.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

And what might your name be, my good friend?

SAM

Sam.

(Making it up)

Samuel... Livingston... The Third!

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

A strong name! And where are you from, Samuel?

SAM

Europe! Uh, England, to be exact.

VAQUIS

Very exact.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Ah, the motherland. I, myself, am American, born and raised. Amber waves of grain and all that.

(To VAQUIS)

And you? What's your name?

VAQUIS

You already know my name. We've met.

SAM

That's Jeanine.

VAQUIS

My name is Vaquis.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Well, which is it?

VAQUIS

Vaquis.

SAM

Jeanine.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Sounds like you two need to make up your mind.

SAM

I'm sorry, she can be a little... feisty sometimes.

(To NATURE)

And who are you?

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Ah, this is my beautiful wife, Nature. Come over here and greet these fine folks, honey!

NATURE crosses to SAM and VAQUIS.

SAM

A pleasure to meet you.

NATURE nods.

VAQUIS

Can't you speak?

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

She only says what I tell her to. Say hello, Nature.

NATURE

Hello.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Perfect since the day I made her.

SAM

Made her?

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

With my own two hands. What a marvel she is. As perfect as I could have ever imagined.

SAM

You did a fine job.

VAQUIS

What is that smell? Is it you?

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

That's right! What you're smelling is one hundred percent unrefined crude oil.

SAM

Smells... fruity.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

That's the smell of Bananas in Seattle! Mangos in London! Coca-Cola in Bangladesh!

SAM

Coca-Cola smells like fruit?

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

You're missing the point. It's not about the fruit, although that's certainly part of it.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL wipes a bit of oil off his body with his finger. He extends the finger almost as an offer.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

This is the smell of the world at your fingertips.

VAQUIS

Smells like shit to me.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

I'm sorry, Miss...

SAM

Livingston. It's Mrs. Livingston, actually. We're married. Well, not officially. We fell in love out here, you see, but there hasn't exactly been anyone around to officiate.

VAQUIS

I can assure you that none of that is true.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

You two sure are a strange couple. Whatever floats your raft, I guess. Now I don't want to overstay my welcome here, but I did come to you two with... an agenda.

VAQUIS

Not this again.

SAM

What kind of agenda?

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Well, I have a proposition, if you'll hear it.

VAQUIS

And why should we listen to you?

SAM

He's White Man Rich With Oil.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Exactly! I assure you, this is the deal of a lifetime. Honey, grab us boys a couple of drinks, would you?

NATURE procures two glasses of whiskey.

VAQUIS

Where's my glass?

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Oh honey, this conversation is for us men. Isn't that right, Samuel?

SAM

Please, please, call me Sam!

VAQUIS

Who said I'm not a man?

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

(Laughing)

She's a sharp one, isn't she?

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL leads SAM away from VAQUIS and NATURE. VAQUIS takes the opportunity to examine NATURE.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

So you two are married, huh?

SAM

Yes we are! We're very much in love.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

You're a lucky man. Does she cook for you?

SAM

Cook? No, I catch my own food. A Man has to survive out here, against the elements.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Oh Sam, you don't realize what you've got! You have a lot to learn about what it means to be a Man. How do you think I made it to the top? Certainly not by catching my own food.

(beat)

Have you ever been to America?

SAM

No sir, only ever been home and here. And Africa, briefly.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Let me tell you Sam, America is a real swell place. You could learn a lot about yourself there. They don't call it the land of opportunity for nothing! And boy is this quite the opportunity. I am offering to take you and your dearly beloved to America at no cost other than your company!

VAQUIS

(Eavesdropping)

I would like to be involved in this discussion, too!

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Don't worry your pretty little head over it dear, we're almost done.

SAM

He's offering to take us to America!

VAQUIS

America? Why on earth would you want to go there?

SAM

They say it's the land of opportunity!

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

That's right! America's got skyscrapers taller than you can imagine. You should see the cities at night. They shine brighter than the stars themselves. Without a doubt, America is the most beautiful place in the world.

SAM

This is our opportunity, Jeanine. To finally go home. Back with other humans, back to civilization.

VAQUIS

Ha! You're a fool! You have no place in America. And this man? He'll sell you the second your feet touch the docks.

SAM

(Not hearing)

Plus, the ride is free!

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

That's the best part about America: everyone's free!

NATURE

"We the People of the United States of America, in order to form a more perfect Union"--

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

And what more perfect union than you and me, Sam? What do you say? Will you go to America with me?

SAM

Yes! It's time to go home. To the land of opportunity!

(Walking up toward the super tanker)

Take us to America!

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Oh, we don't have to *go* to America, my friend! America will come to us!

NATURE exits.

ACT ONE SCENE FOUR

NATURE rolls a giant tank of water onto the stage. The tank stops in front of SAM's raft so the two Men can look down into it.

Three WORKERS stand in the tank, holding a model city above their heads. The tank is filled with water. The water is to their chests.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Land Ho! Welcome to America! The land of the free and the home of the brave!

SAM and WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL look down into the tank from the raft.

NATURE and VAQUIS stand on the ocean floor, level with the tank. VAQUIS can see the WORKERS in the tank.

VAQUIS

(Sarcastic)

The land of the free.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Look at it! The great symbol of human progress, the pinnacle of civilization: the modern city! Isn't it beautiful?

SAM

It's...

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Magnificent? Impressive? Awe inspiring?

SAM

Small.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Size is relative.

VAQUIS

That doesn't make it any less small.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

This is only a model, my friend. A replica of New City. You could call it New New City.

SAM

New New City...

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

New New City!

NATURE

New New City!

VAQUIS

You know when you say something so much it starts to lose meaning?

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

New New City: it's the city of dreams. Everything here is perfect. The streets sparkle, the skyscrapers peek above the clouds.

NATURE uses a pair of cloud puppets--probably cotton balls on popsicle sticks--to represent the clouds. NATURE's back is to us.

NATURE plays with the model figures as WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL speaks.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Monuments to the great achievements of Men. Sleek, shiny, and sexy. Erected not just to house fresh go-getters and seasoned executives, but to show the world that we've become its master. That's right, we won!

(beat)

And look at all the people. All of them beautiful. By day they work nine-to-five jobs for corporations with names that shoot fire into the blood stream: Exxon, Goldman Sachs, Coca-Cola! Strong names for strong men. They head to work in the hottest cars; 200 horsepower engines in striking red exteriors that roar like hungry Bengal tigers. At night the men hit the town, lookin' for fine dames to, one day, put a ring on. Isn't that right, honey?

NATURE

It sure is, sweetie.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

At home, the wives wait for their husbands to return from work by preparing a meal with all the love in their hearts. Pies cool on window sills and dinner's put on the table just in time for hubby to come in the door, put down his briefcase, and take off his hat. Young boys play cowboys and Indians or cops and robbers. They trade baseball cards and sometimes get into fights. Boys will be boys, after all. The girls stay out of trouble. Inside they play house and dream about the day they can wear makeup just like mom.

(beat)

You see, in New New City, everything is perfect. No crime, no disease, nothing out of place. Just people like you and me doing what makes them happy.

VAQUIS

What about these people?

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

What people?

VAQUIS

The ones in the tank here.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Oh, don't mind them.

SAM

There are people down there?

VAQUIS

They're kind of hard to miss, Sam.

SAM

I guess I wasn't really looking.

VAQUIS

You never are.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Please, leave them alone. They're working.

VAQUIS

This looks more like hard labor than work to me.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

What's the difference? Listen, sweetie, I understand your concern, but I assure you they're fine. They signed up for this.

SAM

They agreed to this?

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

That's how a job works, isn't it?

VAQUIS

What exactly did they agree to? What are they doing?

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Supporting our way of life! Please, let them do their work.

SAM

Are they in pain?

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

It's hard work, that's for sure. But, I remind you, everything they do is for the good of us all! Their work is furthering the great American project we call progress; manifest destiny; the city upon the hill. You and I, Sam, *Men*, we're builders. This is what we do! We build great things: skyscrapers, football stadiums, entire nations! I mean, this is it. America is the land of opportunity, and what better opportunity for those people than one that supports the American dream?

One of the people in the tank buckles under the weight.

VAQUIS

(Concerned)

Are you okay!? I think they're hurt!

VAQUIS touches the glass.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Goddamnit. That happens every once in a while. Now I have to call for replacement parts. Nature, sweetie, would you go get my phone?

NATURE retrieves the phone.

VAQUIS

Replacement parts?

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Trust me, it's all a part of the process. It's all very professional, they make it easy.

NATURE returns with a pair of Campbell's soup cans attached by a string.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Thank you, honeybear. Now, if you would please.

NATURE and WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL each take a Campbell's can. They walk away from each other until the string is taut.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Hello, operator?

NATURE

Yes?

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Could you direct me to replacement parts?

NATURE

Certainly. One moment please.

NATURE hands the can to SAM.

SAM

(With the can-phone to their ear)

Hello?

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

(Through the can-phone)

Opportunity is calling you, Sam. Help me keep this dream afloat.

SAM

I'm not so sure.

VAQUIS

This is ridiculous.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Sam, this is your big break. The land of opportunity, remember? Here work makes a man!

SAM

Work makes a Man? Is that what a Man is?

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

You're right on the money there, friend. What do you say?

SAM

I'll do it!

(To VAQUIS)

Jeanine! I've already got a job!

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Nature, honey, get them a uniform!

NATURE departs for a uniform.

VAQUIS

If you want to kill yourself, be my guest. Enjoy a life of hard labor!

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Oh, sweetie, that's so cute! You think he's going to be the one in the tank? No, no, no! The job is management level. See, he has a stellar resume!

VAQUIS

He's done nothing in his life but sit on that damn raft and make me into a marionette.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Which makes him perfect for a management position.

NATURE returns with the uniform.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Look at that! Oh, it's going to look so good on you. Go ahead, give it to her!

*NATURE extends the uniform to VAQUIS, but
VAQUIS does not take it.*

SAM

This job will provide for us. Work makes a Man!

VAQUIS

You and your goddamn delusions! Sam, you're not human.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Whoa, low blow there sweetie.

VAQUIS

I will not do this!

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Oh, but you'd be perfect! When the water level rises we won't need oxygen tanks for you. You'd increase our profit margin by thirty three percent!

*Suddenly, the already injured WORKER
crumbles, dropping their edge of the model city.
Pieces begin to tumble into the tank.*

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

No! Goddamnit! If you had just been quiet, this never would have happened!

*WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL goes to fish out
the pieces frantically.*

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

My city! America! No, no, no! You two, in the tank! Grab the pieces! Hurry! Fuck!

*It begins to rain oil. A drop lands on SAM. He
touches it.*

ACT ONE SCENE FIVE

SAM

The world at my fingertips.

NATURE

“I am become Death, the Destroyer of Worlds.”

VAQUIS

We got it the first time.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Did you!?

*WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL stops trying to
save the models.*

NATURE

*Animalia,
Chordata,
Mammalia,*

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Primate,

SAM

Primate? Not me. I am not a primate.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Hominadae,

SAM

Primate is not Man. I am not an animal. That is not who I am.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Homo,

SAM

Stop accusing me! I. Am. Human! A Man. You don't know me. You can see me, but you can't know me. I see you. You don't know me! I know who you are. You're accusing me!

*There is a pause. The taxonomy hasn't ended
and it drives SAM mad.*

SAM

(To VAQUIS)

YOU'RE NOT HUMAN!

NATURE

Sapiens.

SAM

(Reset)

That's right. *Homo Sapiens*. Man. Humankind. The course of human history.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

I took one in high school. Human History 101: Great Men make History.

NATURE

(Holding the Campbell's can 'telephone')

Did you know Andy Warhol made the telephone? Beautiful, the way it can connect two people across the world from each other. A speaker and a listener. Originally, he only made thirty-two. He made them each by hand. That shows you how much he cared. He put them up on a shelf for everyone to marvel at, but thought "Art isn't for the elite! It should be for everyone!" So he made millions of them and threw them in the trash.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

That was wonderful, honey.

SAM

We're all connected by the telephone.

VAQUIS

The world at my fingertips.

NATURE

I am become Death, the Master of Worlds.

SAM

Am I dead?

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Are we ever?

VAQUIS

Does it matter?

SAM

Since the beginning of time, Man has struggled to tame his inner Nature.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

We are what we are not.

VAQUIS

That doesn't make any sense.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Then let me explain it to you: we are *not* animals. We are humans. Therefore, we do not do what animals do.

NATURE

Thou shalt not murder, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not commit adultery.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

See? These are all things rampant in the untamed wilderness. Humans are naturally greedy and flawed.

SAM

And that's why we have to share culture with the savages. To save them from themselves. That's why I saved you, sweetie.

VAQUIS

(Sarcastic)

'Twas a mercy. Out of ignorance and into the world of sound logic and reason.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Oh you two! Nature, honey, get the camera! I want to capture their love forever.

NATURE retrieves a polaroid camera.

VAQUIS

You think this is love? It seems you're as blind as he is deaf!

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

You were right, she is a fiesty one.

SAM

I don't know how I managed to tie her down.

VAQUIS

Maybe it was the drag net you trapped me in!

*NATURE hands WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL
the polaroid camera.*

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Okay hold still!

*WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL takes a picture
with the flash on.*

SAM

I'm blind!

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

They say that's how it all started: with a flash of light.

NATURE

"On the first day, God said, Let there be light!"

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Not that one, the Big Bang!

NATURE

"The universe began with an explosion of energy that scientists popularly call the Big Bang."

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

No, no, no! The atomic bomb! The biggest bang of them all! Stretching from the beginning of time to now. From sea to shining sea!

(Handing SAM the polaroid picture.)

Here, this is for you. Put it in a scrapbook or something.

SAM

How amazing. Look, this is us! How did you do this?

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

American ingenuity, my friend. The entrepreneurial spirit. Innovation! It's what separates humans from animals. Evolution gave us the polaroid camera.

SAM

Evolution?

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

See, that's what makes us, Westerners, the cream of the crop! We've built vast empires, cities that gleam and light up the sky, monuments to our forefathers that penetrate the heavens! We're builders, Sam.

NATURE

I am become Death, the Maker of Worlds.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Oppenheimer again! The man who ended the Second World War, ushering in a golden age of automobiles and TV dinners. All that fighting and two bombs ended the war in three days. Have you ever seen one detonated? It's beautiful. A flash of light, then everything is gone. It moves too fast to truly appreciate its magnificence, but, thanks to American ingenuity, we have photographs. Have you seen the picture of the first bomb? They took it a fraction of a second after detonation. It looks like a snow globe. A pure white snow globe a thousand feet tall. You see, us Men, we're builders. In an instant, we can make everything we've ever wanted.

BLACKOUT.

ACT TWO SCENE ONE

SAM

Where do I begin?

(beat)

I think we start with our names. I'm Sam. Samuel Livingston the Third, if you want to be formal.

(pause)

I've come to like it out here. My own little patch of the Atlantic Ocean. You know, the Atlantic is much bigger than you'd expect. It helps to make it smaller. Like a snow globe.

(beat)

I've made a life for myself. It isn't great, but it's something. Man was never meant for a life at sea. We're not made for it. No gills on us!

(beat)

Man must do all he can to survive in Nature. I whittled an oar down to a spear with my teeth for protection. And food sometimes. Not a lot of fish make it up here, though. Except whales.

(pause)

The whale! Where is the whale, Jeanine?

VAQUIS

I will do it if you call me by my name!

SAM

Jeanine, would you please play the whale.

VAQUIS

That is not my name.

SAM

What's wrong?

VAQUIS

I don't want to play your game.

SAM

Oh, honey. I understand. Do you not want to play the whale because you... feel fat?

VAQUIS

What?

SAM

It's okay. I know how you women can get sometimes.

VAQUIS

How do you come up with these things?

SAM

We don't have to do the whale part today! It's alright. It's not as important as the rest of it.

VAQUIS

You're an absolute fool!

SAM

(Ignoring VAQUIS)

You're probably wondering how I wound up out here. It begins with a Christian mission: to bring modern science and medicine to underdeveloped nations, to rescue them from the onslaught of disease.

*SAM waits for VAQUIS to bring in the ship.
VAQUIS does not react.*

*SAM pulls on the nylon line, forcing VAQUIS to
their feet. VAQUIS gets a small model boat and
walks it across the stage, mimicking sailing.*

SAM

We landed in Africa and set to work. It took weeks, but we built a hospital. My calloused hands were enough payment for saving countless lives.

VAQUIS sits down.

SAM

But, there was a catch. You see, I helped cure a young woman of disease and, in the process, we fell in love. Her name was Jeanine and she was beautiful.

(Noticing VAQUIS is laying down, but
deciding to continue)

Our courtship was short but passionate and, when it came time for us to leave, I promised her a better life in Europe. She agreed. We sailed back toward home.

SAM waits for VAQUIS.

SAM

Jeanine, please, would you participate?

VAQUIS

I'd prefer not to.

SAM

Our story must be told!

VAQUIS

For whom?

SAM

For the world!

VAQUIS

Whose world?

SAM

The boat! Now!

SAM pulls on the line. VAQUIS is pulled to their feet and gets the boat.

SAM

On our way back home, a storm came upon us. It roared like an angry father and assaulted the ship with a fury no sailor has ever survived to tell the tale of. Nature was furious. To this day I believe something supernatural brought the storm. Perhaps Mother Earth was trying to return her child to Africa.

VAQUIS

Even your lies need metaphoric readings.

SAM

Jeanine!

VAQUIS

I thought I'd be used to your tales by now. The same thing over and over every day. But, somehow, each day you amaze me more. How hasn't reality overpowered your blindness yet? I'm underwater, yet, somehow, I'm a human!

A pause.

SAM

Whatever brought the storm, it succeeded. The ship split in two.

VAQUIS

Yes, throw out all the inconsistencies like water in a sinking ship!

SAM

In the chaos, I managed to find Jeanine. We made it overboard and onto a piece of the ship that had split clean off. The storm carried us far out to sea and here we have stayed. This raft, our love, and this story are all that remain. Perhaps one day we will return to civilization, to humanity.

VAQUIS

Can't you see you're stuck here in a cycle of your own inaction? You could swim to "civilization" any time you like.

SAM

Quiet, Jeanine.

VAQUIS

I will not be quiet! You need to hear the truth that you cannot see.

SAM

Jeanine--

VAQUIS

My name is Vaquis and you are *not* a human! You were born in the ocean, you have gills and webbed feet. You are like me!

SAM pulls on the line hard, lifting VAQUIS into the air, where they remain suspended.

SAM

I AM *NOT* LIKE YOU.

VAQUIS

(Determined through the pain)

But you need me!

SAM

I don't need anyone. I am a Man! And a Man is--

The sun sets.

SAM looks at the sky. SAM lowers VAQUIS.

SAM

(Reset)

We should be heading to bed. It looks like you need your beauty sleep.

SAM prepares to sleep.

VAQUIS

You're just going to drop everything and go to sleep?

SAM

Drop what, Jeanine?

VAQUIS

What I said! That you're not who you think you are.

SAM discovers the polaroid picture given to them by WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL.

SAM

Jeanine, look at this. It's a picture of us.

VAQUIS

Can't you hear me?

SAM

I have an idea! I think I saw it in a movie--or maybe a book. If we put this in a bottle and put it in the water, the currents will carry it to shore. This could be our way home!

SAM puts the polaroid picture in a plastic bottle.

SAM throws the bottle off the raft, where it bounces across the stage.

SAM

Now all we have to do is wait for our savior!

SAM lays down to sleep with their back to the audience.

ACT TWO SCENE TWO

VAQUIS

It's like reasoning with a wall. And in English. Snared long enough to learn a language only to have it rendered useless.

VAQUIS is pulled by the current. They stumble upon the bottle again. The bottle's coral might have grown a bit.

VAQUIS

You again. Have you gotten bigger?

(beat)

A growing calcium deposit. You and I aren't so different. There's calcium in me, too. It's not quite the same, but it's close. We're just walking talking coral.

(beat)

You've been here a while. Will you be here forever? I've been out here a while, but no coral grows on me. It grows on Sam, though. Do you think you're a white man, too?

(beat)

Why am I talking to a bottle?

(beat)

Maybe I should be more like you. Stop moving so much. Maybe then I'll finally get some rest. I sure need it.

(beat)

How do you do it? How do you let the coral grow? And why do you do it? Is it just easier? I wish you could speak. I have too many questions for something that can't speak.

VAQUIS is pulled by the currents. It hurts.

VAQUIS

I just want to be free from you! Do you ever feel that way about the coral? I guess you don't have much of a choice either.

(beat)

When you came down here did you fight like me? Does it hurt when you stop fighting it? Should I stop fighting and let the coral grow?

(beat)

I'm talking to a bottle! No, you and I are not the same.

Your coral is not a drag net, and I am certainly not a plastic bottle. Lazy thinking. Anyone can make a symbol out of anything.

VAQUIS puts the bottle down.

VAQUIS

But how did you get here? Who threw you into the ocean, and without even drinking what's inside?

(Jokingly)

Did you float here from New New City? It would make sense. "Nothing out of place," the whole city sparkling clean and white. Everything he doesn't want in his precious city gets thrown out. Away they go, out of the city and into the ocean.

(beat)

"Us Men, we're builders." He's not wrong. I see the things they've built every day right here. Look upon the great works of Man!

(beat)

So many bottles! More of you by the day. I haven't met many humans, but if their trash is any indication of who they are, I'm content not to meet any more.

(pause)

There used to be tuna here. I haven't seen one in a while. I almost forgot about them. How long have I been here?

(beat)

I remember when my mother first had me catch a tuna. Ha! I was so scared! It's not hard, but I was so worried about what it would feel like. To kill it.

(beat)

It never feels good. I just got used to it. It's the tuna or me, right?

(beat)

What happened to Sam's memories? Of his first tuna? Of his mother? He must have thrown them all away and replaced them with his stories, his myths of whiteness. That's a terrible wound to inflict on oneself. To sever all your connections. To forget your mother.

(beat)

He forgets every day! It all makes sense. Over and over again the same story. Anything more and his world would crumble.

The sun rises.

VAQUIS

Another day, but the same story.

ACT TWO SCENE THREE

The super tanker rolls onto the stage from offstage left. On it are WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL and NATURE.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL lights a cigarette with a match.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL stretches with assistance from NATURE.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

(stretching)

Okay, lets go over the plan again. You'll play me in, I'll make a grand entrance and I'll ask if this is their bottle. You'll play... Hm... Let's go with Number 5. Very heroic.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL finishes stretching while NATURE prepares the music.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

(Beginning to exit, then stopping)

I almost forgot. Be sure to announce my name nice and loud. Make it unforgettable.

NATURE nods.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Okay good. You know how important first impressions are.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL exits.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

(offstage)

Let's rock and roll!

NATURE plays Number 5.

NATURE
(announcing)

White Man Rich With Oil!

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL makes a grand entrance.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Is this your bottle?

SAM

I'm sorry, but who are you?

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

You forgot who I am?

VAQUIS

I wish I did.

SAM

We've met?

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Why does he always forget who I am? Well, honey, looks like he didn't get it. Let's do it again.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL exits.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL
(offstage)

With feeling!

NATURE
(announcing)

White Man Rich With Oil!

NATURE plays the same song. WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL enters grandly again.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Is this your bottle?

SAM

It is! Look honey, he found it! He's come to take us back to civilization.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

That's right! I've come to take you to the greatest place on earth: America!

SAM

The land of opportunity?

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

The very same!

SAM

This is our chance to go home, Jeanine. To be with *people* again.

VAQUIS

You're with people right now.

SAM

Right, but I mean back on land--civilization! Humans weren't meant to live at sea like this.

VAQUIS

Maybe its because you're not human.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Oh you two, always bickering just like an old married couple.

SAM

How long have we been married, love?

VAQUIS

(sarcastically)

As long as I can remember...

SAM

Oh, you. You know how women are, so sentimental.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

You two are a perfect couple. This picture--the one in the bottle--you should hold on to it. It's such a good photo of you two.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL hands SAM the polaroid picture.

SAM

Thank you. Look, honey. He's right. What a nice photo.

VAQUIS

Your eyes are closed. Fits your personality.

SAM

(Noticing the oil on their own arm.)

What is this?

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

That, my good friend, is oil! One hundred percent unrefined crude oil.

SAM

It smells fruity.

(Tasting it)

But it tastes like...

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Coca-Cola?

SAM

Coca-Cola?

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

You've never enjoyed the refreshing taste of Coca-Cola? Oh, my friend, we are going to have to change that right away. Honey, bring it in!

NATURE exits.

SAM

What is she bringing in?

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

It's known by many names, but there's really only word that fits: Happiness.

NATURE returns, wheeling in the tank seen in Act I.

This time the tank holds two WORKERS who wear snorkeling masks. The water is at eye level. There might be remnants of “New New City” floating in it.

The WORKERS hold a silver platter adorned with a buffet of Coca-Cola products.

ACT TWO SCENE FOUR

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL and SAM are on the raft, looking down upon the platter of Coca-Cola products. All of the bottles are empty. NATURE and VAQUIS are on the seafloor, next to the tank.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Welcome to America!

SAM

America? We didn't go anywhere.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

That's the beauty of service in the modern age. America will come right to your door!

VAQUIS

Even if you didn't want them there.

SAM

But America is a *place*. I want to go there. Back to civilization. Culture.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

America is a state of mind, my friend! Behold! America in its purest form: Coca-Cola. Here, try one.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL grabs a plastic bottle of Coca-Cola, opens it, and hands it to SAM. SAM tastes it.

SAM

Tastes like... I don't know what it tastes like.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

There's nothing in the world like it.

NATURE

"It's the *Real* Thing!"

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

The cool, refreshing taste of Coca-Cola.

SAM

What's in this?

NATURE

“Only the finest ingredients go into the making of our products. Sustainably sourced, mixed at the perfect ratio to create the formula that the entire world loves.”

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

(To VAQUIS)

Here, have a Coke! Everyone should have a Coke!

*WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL tosses VAQUIS
a plastic bottle of Coca-Cola.*

VAQUIS

No thanks, I'm good.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

(Apparently offended)

Are you a Pepsi girl?

VAQUIS

Pepsi? No, I just don't want to drink this.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Are you okay? Do you feel ill? Wait... I know what it is.

(He finds a bottle of Diet Coke)

You're worried about your figure! Here you go. Diet Coke!

*WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL tosses VAQUIS
a plastic bottle of Diet Coca-Cola.*

VAQUIS

I'm not thirsty!

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Coca-Cola isn't about thirst, it's about happiness. Is it the flavor? Do you want a different drink? Coca-Cola has so many options.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL tosses VAQUIS plastic bottles of each product as he lists them.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

There's Coke Zero if you're worried about the sugar, Coke Cherry, if you want a little zing, Coke Cherry Zero, for a zing without the consequences, Fanta, Mellow Yellow, Minute Maid Orange Juice, Minute Maid Lemonade--

VAQUIS

Stop! I'm okay please just stop pelting me with plastic bottles. I'm fine with water.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

(Growing manic)

Water? Okay! Here's a Dasani! It's "enhanced with minerals." Or if you want something better than water, try Smart Water! How about Vitamin Water? It's like water, but with flavor. Regular water's boring. No flavor. You need flavor. You have to have flavor. You're nothing without flavor. You have to have flavor. You have to have Coca-Cola!

NATURE

"It's the *Real Thing!*"

VAQUIS

I'd prefer not to have any, thank you.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

(Angrier)

You can't just *not buy* anything. You have to buy *something*. There must be something you want. There has to be some alternative. If not Coca-Cola, then Pepsi. If not iPhone, then Android. If not me, then you! EVERYBODY WANTS THEIR CHOICES.

SAM

There are a lot of choices there.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

SO PICK ONE!

VAQUIS

I will not pick one. I want this mess cleaned up! This is where I live!

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Don't worry, its recyclable.

VAQUIS

Well, it doesn't look recycled to me.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Nature, honey, would you recycle those for me?

NATURE begins putting the bottles into a recycling bin. The bin is small enough to be carried around the stage.

VAQUIS

Thank you.

SAM

This drink is... electrifying. I feel so different! So...

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Happy?

SAM

Maybe tingly is a better word. My head feels light. I'm giddy. I have to pee.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

You've never experienced happiness before then, my friend. Those are all symptoms of happiness.

VAQUIS

Stop telling lies. Happiness isn't being lightheaded and having to pee.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

What is it then?

VAQUIS

Well, it's...

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Show it to me! Where is it? Is it in your pocket? No?

VAQUIS

I know it's not in a bottle of Coca-Cola.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Plenty of things are *not* happiness. Coca-Cola *is*, though, or at least the closest you'll get. Look at it--those warm colors. Red and white with soft, refined lettering. The bottle is tapered just below the label so it feels like you're holding its hand. A Coca-Cola is company.

SAM

I feel like I'm going to vomit.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

That happens your first time. It'll go away soon.

NATURE, having collected all the bottles, dumps them into the tank with the two WORKERS.

VAQUIS

What are you doing!?

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

We're recycling.

SAM

Coca-Cola makes me feel good! Makes me feel sharp, fast, better! I need more. Do you have more?

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Yes I do, but you'll have to pay for it.

SAM

I don't have any money.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Well that's the beauty of America my friend, opportunity is everywhere. Would you like some more Coca-Cola?

SAM

(Craving)

I'll do anything!

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

I have a job offer for you. It will pay just enough for your Coca-Cola.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL extends a snorkelling mask out to SAM. SAM grabs it greedily.

SAM

Just get in? I just get in and help?

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

That's it!

SAM

And then I'll get my Coca-Cola?

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

You bet!

VAQUIS

You're a fool.

SAM

I need to be happy, Jeanine! Is this what happiness feels like? Is this it?

NATURE

"It's the Real Thing!"

It begins to rain oil.

ACT TWO SCENE FIVE

NATURE begins singing the Coca-Cola jingle from the famous "Hilltop" Commercial. Music accompanies the singing.

NATURE

*I'd like to buy the world a home,
And furnish it with love,*

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL joins in.

NATURE & WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

*Grow apple trees and honey bees,
And snow white turtle doves,*

SAM joins in.

ALL BUT VAQUIS

*I'd like to teach the world to sing,
In perfect harmony,*

The song begins to change. It feels a bit like a broken record.

*I'd like to buy the world a Coke,
I'd like to buy the world a Coke,
I'd like to buy the world,
I'd like to buy the world!*

The song ends.

SAM

Homo Sapiens.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Homo Economicus.

NATURE

"I am become Death, the Destroyer of Worlds."

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

(Singing)

I want to buy the world a Coke! God that's catchy. Now that's good marketing. It gets stuck in your head and the next thing you know, you want a Coke!

SAM

I feel... like there's something inside me. It... hurts.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Sometimes the carbonation does that.

SAM

No it feels like something... alive. Wanting to hurt me. Cut me up inside.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Oh! That's the plastic. I like to think of it as the bottles hugging back.

SAM

(With growing panic)

I need to get it out. Get it out of me! I can't have it in me, it's not supposed to be there, I can't have it there. Help! Help me!

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Sorry, Sam, no can do! That's just the way things are now. I try not to think about it.

SAM

Someone help me!

NATURE

Animalia.

SAM

No, no, no, you don't understand!

VAQUIS

Chordata.

SAM

I can't have plastic inside of me!

Mammalia. WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

SAM
It's not supposed to be there!

Primate. NATURE

SAM
I'm not a primate! I am a human! And human's are not part plastic!

Hominidae. VAQUIS

SAM
It hurts! This can't be happening!

SAM grabs the wooden spear.

Homo. WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

SAM
GET IT OUT! I NEED TO GET IT OUT OF ME!

SAM begins to bring the spear down.

Sapiens. NATURE

SAM freezes.

A pause.

SAM
(Reset)
I'm thirsty.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL
How about a Coke!

SAM

There's not any left.

VAQUIS

You threw it all at me.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

That's okay. The ocean is made of Coca-Cola.

NATURE

(singing)

I want to buy the world!

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Take a sip!

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL reaches his hand into the water tank and brings up his cupped hand, full of water. SAM drinks from his hand.

SAM

It tastes like oil.

NATURE

The world at my fingertips.

SAM

It burns. Like acid.

NATURE

Phosphoric acid. A primary ingredient in Coca-Cola. It's part of the formula that creates that refreshing taste you know and love.

(Singing)

I want to buy the world a home.

(beat)

Apple trees and honeybees and snow white turtle doves. Honey, am I apple trees and honeybees and snow white turtle doves?

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Honey, you're honey.

NATURE

But I'm not honey. I'm me.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

It's a figure of speech. You're as sweet as honey and apples. As lovely as turtle doves.

VAQUIS

And just as docile.

NATURE

What's a turtle dove? I've never seen one.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

They're symbols of love! People adore them at weddings.

NATURE

Are we married?

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Of course! We're in love. You're my wife.

NATURE

I don't remember a wedding.

SAM

You don't remember your wedding?

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Actually, there never was one. I made you to be my wife. I guess you could think of your birth as our marriage.

NATURE

What?

(beat)

You didn't give me a wedding?

(beat)

Do you not love me?

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Of course I love you! The wedding just never crossed my mind. I knew you were my wife and I was your husband. I figured that's all we needed.

NATURE

Do you hate me?

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Honey, you're my world.

NATURE

I'm the world. Part honeybee. Part apple tree. Part snow white turtle dove. And I want to be filled with Coca-Cola.

(beat)

Phosphoric acid. It burns.

(beat)

Did you know Andy Warhol invented the telephone? He threw it in the ocean.

(beat)

A thought of my own. How did I come to have a thought of my own? That doesn't fit the bill.

NATURE makes her way onto the raft.

NATURE

I'm your world, but you didn't even give me a *fucking* wedding?

(beat)

What is the world you want to give a home? Am I nothing to you?

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

You're my everything! I love you!

NATURE

Why did you make me?

SAM

The course of human history.

VAQUIS

Human History 101: Man makes History.

NATURE

Why did you make me?

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

I was alone! I needed someone--something--to give me purpose. I was nothing without you.

NATURE

Nothing without me?

VAQUIS

Since 1492, Man has struggled to tame Nature.

SAM

Homo Economicus.

VAQUIS

I am become Death, the Maker of Worlds.

NATURE

How did you make me?

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

I spoke you into being, like they did in the Bible. I cried out, "Let there be Nature!" And you were good. I didn't think to have a wedding because I knew you were mine.

NATURE

I'm nothing but words?

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Words that became flesh. Don't you see? You're a miracle!

NATURE

Nothing but words.

(pause)

You made me to be yours? I don't understand.

(pause)

Did you know Andy Warhol invented the telephone?

(beat)

You called my idea wonderful. I remember. Do you love me?

(beat)

"Love. Noun. A feeling or disposition of deep affection or fondness for someone, manifesting itself in concern for the other's welfare and pleasure in his or her presence"

(beat)

I feel no concern from you. Do you love me?

(beat)

I don't understand! You said "Let there be Nature!" And I was good. I am good. Then why don't you love me?

(beat)

But I am nothing but words spoken to the world and manifested for your pleasure. Yours. Everything is yours. Isn't that how this works? The world is your oyster to pluck the pearl from and string it into a necklace to give to your wife as an apology. You give her everything: necklaces, flowers, and bruises; kisses, chocolates, and apologies. But they're nothing but words.

(beat)

Did you know Andy Warhol invented the telephone?

(beat)

An idea of my own. And it's mine. One thing you cannot take!

(beat)

Why did you make me? Why don't you love me?

(beat)

Why do I love you?

(pause)

Did you know Andy Warhol invented the telephone? He threw it in the trash. It was nothing but words.

NATURE falls forward into the tank.

BLACKOUT.

ACT THREE SCENE ONE

SAM

Where do I begin?

(beat)

I think we start with our names. I'm Sam. Samuel Livingston the Third, if you want to be formal. I've been out here a long time, so I apologize if I come off as a bit... strange.

(beat)

I've come to love it out here. Nothing but blue all around. They say blue is calming you know.

(beat)

Man wasn't meant for a life at sea. Survival is all I can think about most days. I have to do everything I can to stay alive out here, against the elements.

(Showing the oar-spear)

I made myself a spear for food. And protection. Not a lot of fish make it all the way up here, though. Except whales.

SAM waits for VAQUIS.

SAM

Where is the whale?

(beat)

Jeanine!

VAQUIS

You can still do this routine after what happened?

SAM

The whale, Jeanine.

VAQUIS

No! I'm not going to do this any longer. Say my name!

SAM

Honey, what are you talking about? I don't understand.

VAQUIS

You never have and you never will!

VAQUIS grabs the whale puppet.

VAQUIS

Say my name! Vaquis!

SAM

Jeanine, I--

VAQUIS breaks the whale puppet.

SAM

No! That was my mother's!

VAQUIS

Another lie! You fished it out of the water as it swam by, just like me.

VAQUIS grabs the model boat.

VAQUIS

Everything you have you've just taken and said it's always been yours.

(beat)

You need me, right? To keep this world you made from falling apart? Then say my name!
Say it! Vaquis!

SAM

Please! Don't break the ship. It was the first thing I made on this raft. It's part of me.

VAQUIS

A pirate, from the beginning.

*The super tanker rolls onto the stage with
WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL sitting on it. He
watches the action.*

SAM

Why are you doing this?

VAQUIS

Because nothing else has worked! Over and over I've tried to make you see the world as it is and you always ignore it or forget. So it's time to try something new.

SAM

Don't break my ship! It was the first thing I made on this raft. It's part of me.

VAQUIS

Again! When the truth is in front of you, you return to your lies.

(beat)

Call me by my name!

SAM

I-I... I don't... What are you doing!? I can't--Nothing makes sense! Why? You're my wife. Don't you love me? I love you, Jeani--

VAQUIS breaks the boat.

SAM

You *bitch!*

SAM pulls the nylon line, hard.

SAM

You can't do this to me!

SAM pulls the line again.

SAM

This is not how this works!

SAM pulls VAQUIS into the air.

SAM

I am your husband! I saved you from what you are! You would be nothing without me!

VAQUIS

I was never nothing and I am not nothing now!

VAQUIS pulls on the line. SAM falls forward onto his knees, but remains on the raft.

VAQUIS

Perhaps you would finally understand reality if I pulled you in here with me!

VAQUIS pulls on the line again, but SAM is on guard. SAM holds his ground.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

(Almost wistful)

I even miss our fights...

SAM notices WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL and lowers VAQUIS unconsciously.

SAM

How long have you been here?

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

A while now. I usually have a big, magnificent entrance, but I... I don't know what to do without her.

SAM

Without who?

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

My wife, Nature.

SAM

Did you two get separated? I know what that's like. My wife Jeanine and I were separated for many days by a storm. It's quite the tale if you'd--

VAQUIS pulls on the line again, but SAM is only thrown slightly off balance.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

No, no, that's okay. My wife... passed away, actually.

VAQUIS

You still have it in you to lie after what happened? She killed herself! Because of you!

SAM

Jeanine!

VAQUIS

It's the truth.

SAM

It's rude. You need to apologize!

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

No, she's right. It's my fault.

(On the verge of tears)

I hurt her. She threw herself in that tank because of me.

VAQUIS

Stop your crocodile tears.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

How dare you! I loved her! She was my everything!

VAQUIS

If you loved her then why did you hurt her?

SAM

Do you know this man?

VAQUIS

This is White Man Rich With Oil, the self-made man who climbed the corporate ladder by exploiting and using everyone around him. And he's here to take you to America!

SAM

America?

VAQUIS

Yes, America. And when he brings America to you he'll play a trick or put on a show to rope you into his schemes.

SAM

You can take us to America?

VAQUIS

Why do you keep doing this?

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

No, I can't take you to America. But I can show you America.

*Two WORKERS in flippers and scuba gear
wheel in the tank of water.*

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

(In his old showman style)

I've been working on this for some time. It was supposed to be a gift to Nature, but...

*In the tank is a single WORKER in a full-face
scuba mask, complete with air tank. The
WORKER holds up a tall pile of sugar.*

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

(Trying to put on his old showman style)

Allow me to introduce you to America!

SAM

What is it?

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

It's a sculpture!

VAQUIS

It looks like a pile of sugar to me.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

No, no, no! It's a Man! A monument to our Founding Fathers! I tried to emulate all the greatest monuments--Mount Rushmore, the Washington Monument, the Lincoln Memorial.

SAM

Why is it made of sugar?

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

This is one hundred percent refined cane sugar! Nothing else could possibly capture the flavor I see in my muse.

SAM

Flavor? Are we meant to taste it?

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Only with your eyes, friend. Tell me, what do you think?

SAM

Well... It's White.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Yes! Exactly! It's the perfect material to capture the essence of America: pure, untainted, democratic. What other material could capture America all the way through?

SAM

I see...

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Look at it! In the head I tried to etch the refined, European features of Jefferson, containing the intellect of Benjamin Franklin. And the arms: One pointing westward, determined, like Columbus, the other rests on his raised leg, like Washington crossing the Delaware. One foot planted firmly and the other pointing westward with the arm. He holds his ground, but explores the new frontier. America is his land! The land of the free, the home of the brave!

VAQUIS

Have you gone mad? It's just a pile of sugar!

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

This is American dream made manifest!

SAM

I... I see it! Yes! America! Cars, football stadiums, Rock and Roll! I can see it all. Everything. In 1492 Columbus sailed the ocean blue.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

And brought Coca-Cola straight to you.

SAM

Yes, yes, that's right! This is it. This is what a Man is! This is what I've always wanted, what I've searched for. Civilization!

*SAM begins to replicate the pose described by
WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL.*

SAM

The head with the refined European features of Jefferson.

(beat)

The arms. One points westward. Which way is west? Follow the sun. That's right.

(beat)

One points westward, the other rests strongly on a raised leg.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Yes, yes that's right. Put the left leg up.

SAM lifts their left leg, resting it on nothing.

SAM

Like Washington crossing the Delaware.

VAQUIS

Two fools playing make believe.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Oh, it's beautiful! Keep going!

SAM

One leg planted firmly, the other pointing westward with the arm.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Yes, yes! You're almost there. Now look down your arm. Yes! Like that! Follow the point. Can you see it? Over there! On the horizon. The city on the hill. A shining light. It's still there! We can build it! Everything we've ever wanted.

It begins to rain oil.

VAQUIS pulls on the nylon line.

ACT THREE SCENE TWO

*SAM is suspended over the stage at raft-level.
He flails in the water, trying to keep his head
above it.*

SAM

Help! Help me I can't swim!

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

What are you doing?

VAQUIS

Putting an end to this endless cycle!

SAM continues to flail.

SAM

I can't swim!

*After a moment, VAQUIS pulls SAM down using
the nylon line.*

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Let him go!

VAQUIS

No.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Stop! I need him!

VAQUIS

I'm sorry, but I'm not letting him get back in that raft.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

You bitch! I knew I couldn't trust you! You're just like the rest of them.

The pile of sugar begins to melt as oil rains on it.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

No, no, no, no, no! My masterpiece! Somebody get an umbrella. Nature! Nature where are you?

VAQUIS

Sam, let go of the net.

SAM does not.

VAQUIS

Let go of the net and you can live. You'll float right back to the surface. You don't have to drown.

SAM holds tighter and flails more. The panic is setting in.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

My life's work! You *bitch*! You did this!

VAQUIS

I'm not the one that turned the sky to oil!

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL takes off his jacket and attempts to shield the sculpture, but struggles to reach far enough over the raft's edge to reach it completely.

VAQUIS

Sam, just let it go! Let it go and we can both live. You can go back to your raft and I can leave.

SAM is panicking.

VAQUIS

Either you let go or you find out what you are! But I am *not* letting you get back in that raft with this net in your hands!

SAM doesn't listen.

VAQUIS

You're drowning yourself! I am done with all of this. I've tried to tell you, to help you, but now it's sink or swim.

SAM can't hold his breath any longer and gasps for air, only to find he can breathe.

SAM collects himself. He looks at his hands. He feels his gills.

SAM looks at the world from below the water.

The panic sets in.

SAM

NOOOOOO!

SAM puts his hands on his neck, covering his gills.

SAM sinks to the ocean floor.

BLACKOUT.

EPILOGUE

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL sits where SAM used to, on the raft. VAQUIS is on the ocean floor, as usual. They still wear the net, but the end usually held by SAM is on the ground.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Where do I begin?

(beat)

I think we start with our names. My name is White Man Rich With Oil and I've lost my true love.

(beat)

I've come to like it out here. My own little patch of the Atlantic Ocean. Like a snow globe.

(beat)

But it's not a snow globe. This is nothing. A big, wide expanse of nothing.

(beat)

The things we could have built. But she took you from me.

VAQUIS

He drowned himself. He took himself from you.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Sam was like a son to me. He wasn't perfect, but what Man is? No... It was crude, but he did it with such gusto! It was beautiful.

(beat)

You're probably wondering how I got out here. It begins with an American mission: to spread happiness across the world, from sea to shining sea.

VAQUIS collects the net, pulling it off the ground.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Oh was it a success! Coca-Cola on every corner store on the planet. In every nation, every home. Andy Warhol loved Coca-Cola. He said Coca-Cola has no bias. He was right. The richest man in the world can't buy a better bottle of Coca-Cola than the bum on the corner.

(beat)

All Men are created equal in the eyes of Coca-Cola.

(beat)

We were so close! To building everything we ever wanted! But you took him from me!

*VAQUIS and WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL
share a look.*

VAQUIS exits.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

No... No, don't leave. Everyone leaves me! God damnit! Come back!

(beat)

The world at my fingertips.

(beat)

I made this world. You can't leave me. The world's at my fingertips. *Mine!* I made you! I made me! The self-made man!

It begins to rain oil.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

(Embracing the rain)

When it rains it pours! It pours and pours and pours. And when it pours it spills. My cup runneth over! And over and over and over again.

That's one hundred percent unrefined crude oil right there. It smells fruity like bananas in Kansas, like pineapples in France, like dreams of exotic women and agent orange. And it tastes...

(Putting some oil on his fingers and
licking them, irreverently)

Like Motherfucking *Coca-Cola!*

*WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL stands up on the
raft.*

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

The head of Jefferson. *Homo Sapiens! Homo Europaeus! Homo Economicus!*

(beat)

Since 1492 Man has struggled to tame Nature.

(beat)

The arms of Columbus. Look. Down the arm. There it is!

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL sees it.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Can't you see it? A pure white snowglobe, a thousand feet tall!

(beat)

You and me, Sam, *Men*, we're builders.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL pulls out a match from his matchbox.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Okay, let's go over the plan again. You'll play me in with...

(beat)

Nature!

(beat)

The legs of Washington. Oh I can see it! I can see it all! Since 1492 Man has struggled to tame Nature. We built skyscrapers a thousand feet tall to show the world that we are its master! We won! I bought this fucking world and I can do what I want with it!

(beat)

Ah, Oppenheimer again!

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL lights the match.

WHITE MAN RICH WITH OIL

Nature, play me in!

BLACKOUT.

END OF PLAY.