

This Is Not a Torture or an Engine
by
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CHARACTERS:

AYLA: An everygoddess.

MATTHIUS: A vague Prometheus.

DORA: A vague Pandora.

SMITH: An everyman, and Dora's older brother.

CHORUS:

ONE/DARK MAN: Male

TWO/RECEPTIONIST: Female

THREE: Male

TIME: The very recent past. Several days ago at most.

PLACE: A home, a cave, an obscenely large office, and the high road and the low road that connect them.

A NOTE ON FORMAT: This play is written to read like a musical score. Each block of text is written as if on a musical staff - what lines up vertically is said simultaneously. Character names of those who lead the scene are bolded, while those providing the background ambient noise are not.

*There is not a torture or an engine wherewithal Zeus
can induce me to declare these things, till he has
loosed me from these cruel shackles. So let him hurl
his smoky lightning flame, and throw in turmoil all
things in the world with white-winged snowflakes and
deep bellowing thunder beneath the earth: me he shall
not bend by all this to tell him who is fated to drive
him from his tyranny.*

- From *Prometheus Bound* by Aeschylus

(An ancient cave. All is dark. Strifes live and breed in here. In a moment, Matthius will enter with a jar and a lit lighter, held high. He locates the source of the noise, and sneaks up behind it.)

ONE: Abdominal cramps. Abscess,

THREE:

TWO: *(Cough. Cough. Sneeze. Some coughs. A moan and a groan. Sneezes.*

ONE: pulmonary. Anemia. Bell Palsy. Botulism. Cancer of the skin, thyroid, or

THREE: Symptoms: Headache. Fatigue. Fever. Irritation of the skin, Dehydration.

TWO: *Wheezes. Maybe some more coughing. Sounds of being sick. A nose being blown.*

ONE: tonsil. Chickenpox. Chilblains. Cholera, Dementia, Dengue Fever. Diabetes,

THREE: Vomiting. Cough. Shortness of breath. Chest pain, back pain,

TWO: *The sounds of someone in pain, trying to sleep. Counting sheep maybe? More*

ONE: types One and Two. Dyptheria. Evans Syndrome. Factor Ten Deficiency. Fever, fibroid.

THREE: joint pain, pain in general. Increased thirst, Decrease in appetite.

TWO: *coughing. Some moaning and groaning thrown in, but not too much. Some heaved sighs.*

ONE: Fibrosis, Gangrene, Gingivitis, Hepatitis, Infectious mononucleosis, Jock itch. Kidney

THREE: Smelly discharge. Bleeding, Bruising, Hair loss. Varicose veins,

TWO: *A sniffle. Throwing up, in all its grossness--being sick isn't glamorous. More*

ONE: stones. Lymphoma. Malaria, Nosebleed, Obesity, Polio. Quadriplegia, Rabies, Scabies,

THREE: Insomnia, Malnutrition, Blindness, Depression. Cysts, Scabs. Dry eyes,

TWO: *coughing, it's getting worse. Some worse moans and groans. Be sounding really pretty*

ONE: Typhoid, ulcer, vaginal prolapse, warts, Xanthomatosis, yellow fever, and-)

THREE: Bed sores, Blood clot, Hearing loss, weak pulse, yawning excessively, and-)

TWO: *badly sick at this point, so much so that we're starting to seriously worry when-*

(And in one swift motion, Matthius sweeps all of Sickness into the jar. The Chorus becomes the sound of sickness in the jar)

(Clicks of a lighter, a flame. It illuminates one chair, center. Voices in the dark.)

ONE: This is a story you know: This is a story
TWO: Prometheus steals And is punished for it.
THREE: Gives fire to man

ONE: you know Out fly the strifes of mankind. Greed,
TWO: Pandora opens a box. Pandora opens a jar. Sickness,
THREE: a jar, actually. Old age,

ONE: Insanity, This is a story you know:
TWO: Passion, This is a story you know:
THREE: Labor, Hope. This is a story you know:

(Ayla takes her place on the chair. Clicks of a Roulette wheel spinning, and the numbers pass as illuminated figures and faces until the ball drops, and we land on Dora.)

ONE: Implementation of protective services to designated charge effective immediately.
TWO: Implementation of protective services to designated charge effective immediately.
THREE: Implementation of protective services to designated charge effective immediately.

ONE: Compensation level Four. Duration of assignment: Eighteen months. Contract
TWO: Compensation level Four. Duration of assignment: Eighteen months. Contract
THREE: Compensation level Four. Duration of assignment: Eighteen months. Contract

ONE: provided beneath seat cushion. Sign, return, and report for duty.
TWO: provided beneath seat cushion. Sign, return, and report for duty.
THREE: provided beneath seat cushion. Sign, return, and report for duty.

(AYLA retrieves her contract, and signs. As pen hits paper, the flame stretches and bends, becoming the high road, by the light of which we see DORA and SMITH at home. Smith packs a briefcase full of small wax figures. Dora does her homework. Ayla watches from the high road.)

DORA: Smith? Am I stupid? They told me I'm mentally retarded and that I'm

SMITH: Yeah? No.

TWO: (*Singing*) "If it's a crime then I'm guilty.

DORA: incapable of making my own decisions and that I should never get married and have

SMITH:

TWO: Guilty of loving you. (*Short instrumental solo.....*)

DORA: children because I won't be able to take care of them. At school

SMITH: Who told you that?

TWO:.....

DORA: they did. It's true, isn't it?

SMITH: No it's not true. It's not entirely true Dora, that's

TWO:.....)(*Singing*) "What can I do? What can I say?"

DORA: But what part IS true?

SMITH: a terrible way to put it I can't believe they told you that.

TWO: After I've taken the blame?

DORA: Smith? Smith. Oh.

SMITH: Things are just a little harder for you. That doesn't

TWO: You say 'you're through, you'll go your way' but I'll always feel just

DORA: Oh.

SMITH: mean you can't do them. You just need help sometimes thinking things through.

TWO: the same. Maybe I'm right, maybe I'm wrong, loving

DORA: Oh okay.

SMITH: That's all.

TWO: you dear like I do. If it's a crime then I'm guilty. Guilty of--

THREE: (Click-Shhhhhhhhhhh-

DORA: Smith? Can you help me with this?

SMITH: Yeah?

TWO: (Bring bring! Bring bri-) Hello? Heeeeeeeeya how's it going?

THREE: -Boom boom boom. Badoo boom. Boom boom boom boom. Badoo boom. Boom boom boom

DORA: I need to bring a recipe to class tomorrow, and I can't

SMITH: What are you working on?

TWO: Uh huh.

THREE: boom. Badoo boom. Boom boom boom boom. Badoo boom. Boom boom boom. Badoo

DORA: decide what to bring. In your books. That's where you find

SMITH: Where are you looking?

TWO: Uh-huh What's that? Speak up, it's loud in here.

THREE: boom. Boom boom boom boom. Badoo boom. Boom boom boom boom. Badoo boom. Boom

DORA: everything, right?

SMITH: Sure. Usually. Books can be helpful. For a recipe, we should look

TWO: Yeah, yeah. About six weeks now.

THREE: boom boom boom. Badoo boom. Boom boom boom boom. Badoo boom. Badoo boom. Badoo

DORA: Okay. Okay. Smith?

SMITH: in a cookbook. Try this one. Yeah?

TWO: Uh huh. What? Hold on. TURN THAT FUCKIN SHIT DOOOOWN!

THREE: boom boom boom. Badoo boom. Boom boom boom boom. Badoo boom. Boom boom boom-)

DORA: I still can't decide. Um. Apples.

SMITH: Well, what's your favorite food? Okay. So maybe we

TWO: Sorry. What were you sayin? Oh yeah.

THREE:

DORA: I don't like them baked because they get mushy.
SMITH: could find a recipe for apple pie, or
TWO: He told me-
THREE: *(Thunk thunk thunk thunk thunk.)*

DORA: Just regular apples.
SMITH: Well, there aren't really recipes for regular
TWO: He told me they decided not to.
THREE: *(Crash!)* Shit. Fuckin, *(Clunk. Clunk clunk clunk.)*

DORA: Why does it have to be something I like?
SMITH: apples. What's something else you like? It doesn't. I
TWO: Yea, well, since when.
THREE: *(Thunk!)*

DORA:
SMITH: just thought that might make it easier to decide. To think of something you like. It
TWO: Uh huh. Uh huh. Uh huh.
THREE:

DORA:
SMITH: narrows down the options, and when you're having a hard time making a decision, it
TWO:
THREE: *(Creak, Slam!)*

DORA: Oh. Okay. What do I like?
SMITH: helps to narrow down your options. A lot of things.
TWO: No, you just be real clear to him.
THREE: *(Thunk thunk thunk thunk thunk thunk thunk thunk thunk thunk)*

DORA: I don't
SMITH: You like pineapples, and tortillas. Broccoli soup, french bread, desserts,
TWO: Right now! Start right now!
THREE: *(Slam!)*

DORA: like cake though. Yeah. That's
SMITH: Here are some cookie recipes. I know you like cookies.
TWO:
THREE: George! Hey!

DORA: true. Do they have peanut butter chocolate chip?
SMITH: Chocolate chip? Um...Yes! Right here.
TWO: Uh huh. Uh huh. Yeah. Yeah.
THREE: Long time no see!

DORA: Those kind are good. Yeah.
SMITH: Do you want to bring this recipe in? Are you supposed to
TWO: Uh huh. Uh huh.
THREE: Just running to the store.

DORA: Yeah. Yeah.
SMITH: copy it out? You'll need some paper then.
TWO: Said what? *(Burst of laughter)* Who told you that?
THREE: Need anything? All right.

(Smith brings Dora paper and a pencil.)

DORA: Thank you Smith.
SMITH: You're welcome. You'll be okay if I
TWO: She did, huh? Well I'm gonna have to talk to her about
THREE: All right. You too, man.

DORA: Yeah. Okay.
SMITH: go work for a little while? Call me if you need me. I'll be back soon.
TWO: that. Okay. Okay.
THREE: *(Sound of old car door opening, and slamming shut. Old car starting, and*

DORA: Okay. Love you.
SMITH: Love you.
TWO: You too. Bye now.
THREE: *driving off.)*

(An ancient cave. All is dark. Strifes live and breed in here. In a moment, Matthus will enter with a jar and lit lighter, held high. He locates the source of the noise, and sneaks up behind it.)

ONE: Psychoses: Senile dementia, uncomplicated. Vascular dementia. Unspecified senile
THREE: Former Treatment of Insanity - While men believed that madness meant
TWO: Psychotropic Medications, Generic: Haloperidol, Chlorpromazine,
ONE: psychotic condition. Delirium temens. Drug psychoses. Manic disorder, single episode.
THREE: possession by a demon, it is not difficult, perhaps, to account for the brutal
TWO: Loxapine, Thioridazine, Thiothizene, Pimozide, Fluphenazine, Haloperidol,
ONE: Manic disorder, recurrent episode. Bipolar affective disorder, mixed. Paranoid states.
THREE: treatment shown to those possessed; but the reader will be amazed by the details of
TWO: Mesoridazine, Trifluoperazine, Chlorpromazine, Perphenazine, Clozapine, Zirasidone,
ONE: Autism, current or active. Anxiety state. Hysteria. Agoraphobia with panic. Social
THREE: the scientific devices, happily of a past age, planned for the cure of the unsound.
TWO: Risperidone, Quetiapine, Olanzapine. Psychotropic Medications, Brand Name: Haldol,
ONE: phobia. Dysthymic disorder. Fatigue, psychogenic. Voyeurism. Sexual masochism or
THREE: One of these was to entice the sufferer to walk across a floor, which, suddenly
TWO: Largactil, Loxtane, Mellaril, Moban, Navane, Orap, Permitil, Prolixin, Serenace,
ONE: sadism. Nymphomania. Bruxism. Jet lag. Somnambulism. Post-traumatic stress disorder.
THREE: giving way, dropped him into a bath where he half drowned. Another was to let the
TWO: Serentil, Stelazine, Thorazine, Trilafon, Clozaril, Geodon, Risperdal, Serpqel,
ONE: Psychotic factors associated with diseases classified elsewhere-
THREE: patient down a well, in which the water, made gradually to rise, (*)
TWO : Zyprexa. Possible side effects: Nausea, insomnia, paranoia-

(if needed for Three to finish on time with One and Two, continue with the following for as long as needed)*

(THREE: frightened them with the prospect of an awful death. Within the memory of men still living, the patients of Bethlehem Hospital (Bedlam), chained to the wall like wild beasts, were shown to the public on certain days of the week at the charge of twopence a visitor; and here were to be found in their cells, crouching on straw, women with nothing but a blanket for clothing.)

(And in one swift motion, Matthius sweeps all of Insanity into the jar. The Chorus becomes the sound of insanity in the jar)

(Smith on the street, briefcase in hand. He walks the neighborhood.)

SMITH: *(Knock knock)* Hi. Good- Good evening, I'm- I'm here to show
ONE: All right! All right! What do you want?
TWO: Get the door! Who is it? What do they want? Shut the door,

SMITH: you- You have a nice evening. *(Knock knock)* Hi. Good
ONE: We don't need one. Goodbye. Some salesman. Get the door!
TWO: it's freezing out! Who was it? *(Slam!)* All right! All-

SMITH: evening. I'm here to- Okay. Okay.
ONE: Who is it? Tell whoever it is we don't want any.
TWO: right! Whatever it is we don't want any and that's that. Understand?

SMITH: Yeah, no, no, I- Yeah. You too. *(Knock knock.)* Good evening, do
ONE: Shut the door it's freezing! *(Slam!)* Oh! Hello.
TWO: You have a good evening. *(Sings something alluring*

SMITH: you have a moment? I just wanted to show you-
ONE: I have plenty of time. Won't you come in? Have a drink? It's
TWO: *and slightly sensual, but not overtly so. Ideally it's upbeat as well, like it's*

SMITH: No! Thank you. No thank you but you have a good- evening. *(Knock*
ONE: cold out. Please! I insist. You sure? All right, your loss.
TWO: *on the radio, or maybe it's a record playing softly in the other room.) (Slam!)*

SMITH: knock) Hello ma'am I'm sorry to disturb you, do you have a moment? Great.
ONE: (Sounds of cats meowing. Lots and lots of cats all around. This woman
TWO: Hello? Oh a visitor. Lovely.

SMITH: Great. Have you seen these before?
ONE: is the epitome of the Neighborhood Cat Lady, and has a consistent twenty-odd
TWO: Yes, I have a moment. What, the little sculpture

SMITH: Exactly. Now let me just Oh. Oh okay.
ONE: cats in residence. The more this sounds like twenty-odd cats, the better. A
TWO: things? I already have a few in the house, I don't need any more. But

SMITH: Thank you. I will. You have a nice one.
ONE: variety of meowing and hissing and purring tones would be ideal.)
TWO: Those ones are very nice. Good luck, stay warm. Good night now. (Slam!)

SMITH: (knocks) (No answer. Knocks again) (knocks) (knocks)
ONE: Oh no. Salesman. Pretend we're not here. Quiet!
TWO: (loud shushing sounds with some intermingled giggling. More shhhhs, giggles,

SMITH: (Knocks, Knocks, Knocks. Knocks! Knocks! KNOCKS!!)
ONE: Pretend we aren't here. Can't you hold it!? Shut up! He could be dangerous!
TWO: and a few beats of silence. A loud burst of laughter, a loud SHHH! followed by total

SMITH: (KICKS THE DOOR!) FUCK YOU AND YOUR CUSTOM
ONE:
TWO: silence.) (A scream)

SMITH: FUCKING DOORMAT TOO!
ONE: Go Away! Go away or I'm calling the cops!
TWO: (A scream) Dad! DAD!

(Smith turns and throws his briefcase as far as he can. Ayla drops from the high road to catch it.)

AYLA: Interesting sales pitch. Does it usually work?
SMITH: I'm so sorry! I didn't see you there.
ONE: *(Zoom!)* *(Zoom! Zoom zoom!)*
THREE: *(Zoom!)* *(Zoom! Zoom zoom!)*

AYLA: Someone is always listening. It's just we
SMITH: I didn't know anyone was listening.
ONE: *(Honk!)* *(Honk, honk!)*
THREE: *(Honk!)* *(Honk, honk!)*

AYLA: may be really far away. If you yell loud enough, we'll hear you.
SMITH: Oh.
ONE: *(Zoom!)* *(Honk!)*
THREE: *(Squeal of car breaks)*

AYLA: What's in there? Then why bother selling it?
SMITH: Nothing. They're nothing.
ONE: *(Zoom)* *(Zoom zoom!)*
THREE: *(Slam!)* *(Sound of a car door opening.)*

AYLA: Do they? Would I?
SMITH: People like them? Sometimes. No, they're just these stupid little wax
ONE: *(Zoom! Zoom zoom!)*
THREE: *(Slam!)* *(Zoom! Zoom zoom!)*

AYLA: Show me your favorite one.
SMITH: figures I make that, I don't know, maybe you would.
ONE: *(Hoooooonk!)*
THREE: *(Sounds of a motorcycle speeding past and shifting)*

AYLA: Or are they all stupid?
SMITH: My favorite?
ONE: *(Zoom!)*
THREE: *(Zoom!)*

(Smith opens his briefcase and takes out a small wax figurine. He hands it to Ayla.)

AYLA: I can see that. You're good with your hands.
SMITH: It's a mouse. Thank you.
ONE: (*Honk!*) (*Honk honk!*)
THREE: (*Honk!*) (*Honk honk!*)

AYLA: You don't like mice though.
SMITH: It's just the last one I made. My favorite is always the
ONE:
THREE: (*Squeal of car breaks.*)

AYLA: It's beautiful. Do you?
SMITH: last one I made. What makes you say I don't like mice?
ONE: (*sound of a siren speeding past*)
THREE:

AYLA: They're pests. No one does. It's beautiful.
SMITH: No. I don't. But what made you say that?
ONE: (*Honk!*)
THREE: (*Honk!*)

AYLA: How much? Thank you Smith.
SMITH: Keep it. No, as a gift. I never, Who are you?
ONE: (*Zoom zoom!*)
THREE: (*Zoom!*)

AYLA: Ayla. Ayla, yes. We prefer Deity. Actually. Yes Smith.
SMITH: You're!?! The Goddess. You're Ayla.
ONE: (*Motorcycle*)
THREE:

AYLA:
SMITH: I don't believe you.
ONE: *shifting*
THREE: (*Honk! honk ho-*)

AYLA

You live at home with your younger sister Dora, Smith, Southside, Section 4.
You walk the streets selling for six to eight hours a day, yesterday you made four sales,
the day before you made eight and today you made zero.
On Wednesday nights you eat cornbread and stew, your favorite radio station is 89.1 because
your grandfather used to host a talk show they sometimes air recordings of that you never
want to miss because he and your father had the same voice.
You set your alarm for 6:55 in the morning, you snooze three times before getting out of
bed, and eat steel cut oats for breakfast which you put on the stove, leave to take your
shower, and then eat.
You have never owned a bicycle
though you do know how to ride one, and the scar on your
left knee is from tripping down the front steps of school on your last day.

AYLA: I am who I am, Smith.
SMITH: That's just information. Show me. Show me something only a
ONE: (Honk!) (honk honk!) (honk!)
THREE: (nk!) (Zoom!)

AYLA: Deity.
SMITH: God could show me. And then I'll believe you.
ONE: (Sound of a siren passing by, turning the corner, and fading away.)
THREE: (Zoom zoom!) (Zoom!)

(She takes a lighter from her pocket, clicks
it and holds the flame. Smith stares.)

AYLA: Shit. If you'll excuse me I must run, I'm being invoked.
SMITH: Wow. It's beautiful.
DORA: Help? Please!

(And in one swift motion Ayla has jumped the
high road to Dora, at home.)

AYLA: What is it? Ayla.
DORA: Who are you.
TWO: (Thunk. Thunk thunk thunk. Creeeeeeaaaaaak, Slam!)
THREE: (Click!) (Shhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh)

DORA: Butter. Chocolate chip cookies. Ingredients: One slash two cups
TWO: (Clink.) (Clink.) (Clink.)
THREE: just go with what seems best for now. ideas? just sing it! oh, and keep it

DORA: butter. Softened. One slash two cups creamy peanut butter.
TWO: (Clink.) (Clink.)
THREE: going till the end of this little scene here. thanks.)

DORA: One slash- Why does it have to be creamy? I think I would
TWO: (Clink.) (Clink.)
THREE:

DORA: make it with crunchy because then you would have piece of peanuts too.
TWO: (Clink.)
THREE:

DORA: I like the pieces of peanuts. I really like peanuts. The roasted kind in
TWO: (Sound of water running.....)
THREE:

DORA: bags. Yeah. That makes me want a bag of peanuts, but I can't wait for
TWO:)
THREE:

DORA: Smith to get home to take me because then it will be closed. I should just
TWO: (Clink.) (Clink.) (Clink.)
THREE:

DORA: go get some but, Mmmm. By myself is probably not a good idea.
TWO: (Crash!) Shit. (Clink.) (Clink.) (Clink.)
THREE:

DORA: Yeah, I'm not stupid. Alone at night, not a good idea. Ayla?
TWO: (Sound of water running.....)
THREE:

DORA: Ayla! Could you come walk me to the store that's on the corner please!
TWO: (Think think think think think.) (Creak-Slam.)
THREE:

(Ayla flips her lighter on, and the noise ends. Smith hears it, but does not see it.)

AYLA: Smith. Smith..... Hello.
SMITH: Hello? Hello. I hear you.
DORA: Ayla! Question! Ayla?

(Ayla flips her lighter off. All is dark. The cave of strifes again. Matthius holds his lighter high. Dora speaks from home.)

TWO: One. Two. Three. Four. Five. Six. Seven. Eight. Nine. Ten. Eleven. Twelve.
ONE: I want that. And I want that. And I want that. And I want that, and I
DORA: Ayla, do you not hear me?

TWO: Thirteen. Fourteen. Fifteen.
ONE: want that, and that, and that and-
DORA: Question.

(Ayla flips her lighter on, and everything stops. She holds the flame. She is closer to Smith than before.)

SMITH

I hear you.

(Ayla flips her lighter off. All is dark. The cave of strifes again.)

TWO: Sixteen. Seventeen. Eighteen. Nineteen. Twenty. Twenty-one. Twenty-two. Twenty-three.
ONE: that, and that. I want that. And I want that too, and that, and that, and three of
DORA: This is for real, isn't it. Ayla?

TWO: Twenty-four. Twenty-five. Twenty-
ONE: those, and seven of those, I want-
DORA: You really aren't coming?

(Ayla flips her lighter on, it all stops. Holding the flame, she's even closer than before.)

SMITH

I hear you.

(Lighter off. All is dark. The cave.)

TWO: six. Twenty-seven. Twenty-eight. Twenty-nine. Thirty. Thirty-one. Thirty-two. Thirty-
ONE: twelve of those, and nineteen of those, and seventy-five of those, and a million and-
DORA: Well, Smith? Anyone?

(And in one swift motion, Matthius sweeps all of Greed into his jar, Ayla flips her lighter on, and it is silent. She holds the flame. Se is practically on top of Smith.)

SMITH

I hea-

(Ayla brings him to her, and he is enveloped.)

DORA

Anyone?
Fine then.

(Dora opens the door, and steps outside.)

ONE: *(a wolf whistle)* Hey. Hey missy. What's your name, come here a
TWO: *(sings the taunting 'nyah nyah' song of school playgrounds)*
THREE: *(two wolf whistles)* *(a wolf whistle)*

ONE: minute won't you? You want some fun? Yeah? Yeah? You wanna have fun?
TWO: *(two wolf whistles)* *(a wolf whistle)* Hey. Hey missy.
THREE: Hey. Hey missy. What's your name, come here a minute won't you?

ONE: Come on uptown with us, we're all going uptown tonight, that's where
TWO: What's your name, come here a minute won't you? You want some fun?
THREE: You want some fun? Yeah? Yeah? You wanna have fun? Come on

ONE: it's at. *(two wolf whistles)* Hey.
TWO: Yeah? Yeah? You wanna have fun? Come on uptown with us, we're
THREE: uptown with us, we're all going uptown tonight, that's where it's at. *(wolf*

ONE: Hey missy. What's your name, come-
TWO: all going uptown tonight, that's-
THREE: *whistle)* *(two wolf whistles)*

DORA

GO! AWAY!

(She slams the door and they are gone.)

(Ayla with Smith on the low road. She flips the lighter on, and holds the flame. Smith watches, amazed.)

SMITH: What is it? It's beautiful. What is it? Could I,
AYLA: Fire. Here.
ONE: This is a story you know, you
TWO: This is a story you know. A story.
THREE: This is a story you know.

(She hands Smith the lighter. It goes out.)

SMITH: Oh God! I'm so sorry! I didn't-

AYLA: Shhhhhhhhhhhhhhh.....Here. See? Like this.

ONE: know this story. This, this is a familiar story. We all know this story.

TWO: You know this. This, this story is familiar. Story of

THREE: Story you know. This, is all too familiar.

(She flips it on again.)

SMITH: Like,

AYLA:

ONE: Story of the first time. See? You can see it in his eyes. Hooked.

TWO: getting hooked. See? He's hooked. Watch. You can see it in his eyes.

THREE: See? He's hooked. Watch. His eyes. Hooked.

(Sparks. Sparks. Sparks. He flips it on.)

SMITH: Wow. It's beautiful.

AYLA:

ONE: This is a story you know, you know

TWO: This is a story you know. A story.

THREE: This is a story you know.

SMITH:

AYLA:

ONE: this story. This, this is a familiar story. He's hooked.

TWO: you know this. This, this story is familiar. This is how it

THREE: Story you know. This, is all too familiar. And so

SMITH: Wow. It's beautiful. Could I?

AYLA: Would you like to take some with you? I'll need wax.

ONE: Never gonna live without it now. That's how it works.

TWO: begins. This is how it starts, you can see it in his eyes.

THREE: And so it begins. Never gonna live without it now. See his eyes?

(Smith opens his briefcase, gives her a piece of wax. Ayla pulls a loose thread from her clothing, and fashions him a small candle. She lights it, and hands it to Smith.)

A gift.

AYLA

Yes. Thank you

SMITH

Think of me as you watch it?

AYLA

Thank you.
Yes.
I will.

SMITH

(And she is gone. Smith returns home. All is quiet, the lights are out. He places the candle on the table, sits down, and stares at the flame.)

(On the high road, Ayla finds Matthius examining his jar of strifes. Chorus One, Two and Three become the sound of sickness, insanity, and greed trapped inside. It can be heard the entire scene.)

So what's the secret?

AYLA

Secret?

MATTHIUS

AYLA
Getting in and out of that place without drowning in those,
whatever you've got in there.

MATTHIUS
No secret.

*(Matthius pulls out his lighter. He
lights it, and holds the flame.)*

AYLA
That's it?

MATTHIUS
That's it.

AYLA
You've got to be kidding me, darling.

MATTHIUS
They're scared of it. See?

*(He holds the lighter up to the jar. The
strifes get louder. He flips the lighter
off, and they're softer again.)*

AYLA
If it was that simple,

MATTHIUS
Seems to be.

AYLA
why on earth didn't we try getting rid of them ages ago?

(The strifes get louder.)

They're trying to get out, I think. MATTHIUS

It sounds terrible. AYLA

Yes, well. Greed, Insanity and Sickness fighting for space, I wouldn't expect music. MATTHIUS

Still, It sounds awfully terrible. AYLA

(The strifes quiet down again.)

I don't think it's working. MATTHIUS

No? What makes you say that? AYLA

I saw greed today. In a Man. MATTHIUS

And you're surprised? AYLA

Yes I'm surprised! MATTHIUS

But darling- AYLA

Because I have greed in here!
It's- MATTHIUS

(The strifes in the jar become louder for a moment.)

MATTHIUS

You can hear it, right?

AYLA

Yes, but darling-

MATTHIUS

If Greed is in here, what the heck is it still doing running around out there?

AYLA

Do you think maybe you could have, just missed some?

MATTHIUS

No. I'm sure. It's all here.

AYLA

Is it possible that-

MATTHIUS

No! I've told you!

AYLA

I was going to suggest something entirely different, but if you don't want to hear it,

MATTHIUS

I do.

AYLA

Fine. Don't yell at me.

MATTHIUS

Allright. I won't.

(Beat.)

Are you going to tell me or not!
MATTHIUS

No. Talked to like that, I don't think I will.
AYLA

Fine. Back to work for me then.
MATTHIUS

(Beat.)

How's Dora?
MATTIUS

Fine.
AYLA

(Beat.)

You should see if they have to be destroyed, Matthius. It could just be containment isn't enough.
AYLA

Destroyed.
MATTHIUS

I think so
AYLA

How.
MATTHIUS

I don't know. I think you'd have to ask.
AYLA

MATTHIUS

Ask who?

Oh.

I had hoped I was done with all that.

(Smith at home, still staring and staring at the flame. Dora enters.)

DORA: What's that?

SMITH:

ONE: *(Creak)* *(Slam! Thunk thunk thunk thunk thunk thunk thunk thunk)*

THREE: *(Muffled intermittent snores through the wall)*

DORA: What is that?

SMITH: Shit, you scared me Dora. What are you doing up? Fire. Don't touch

ONE: *(Slam!)*

THREE: *(Snore)* *(Snore)*

DORA: From who? I guess so. It's melting your

SMITH: it, it's a special gift. Isn't it pretty?

ONE: *(Sound of a car starting, failing)*

THREE: *(Snore)*

DORA: wax. What does it do? Oh. Well that's

SMITH: I know. Nothing. It's just beautiful. And warm.

ONE: *(Sound of car starting)*

THREE: *(Snore)*

DORA: boring. I thought you might have had big important things to do, and that's why

SMITH:

ONE: *(and pulling away)*

THREE: *(Snore)*

DORA: you didn't come back when I called you earlier but that isn't big or important so I

SMITH:

ONE:
THREE:

DORA: don't know what you were thinking.

SMITH: You called? I didn't hear you call.

ONE:

THREE: (Snore) (Snore)

DORA:

SMITH: You know I always come back when I hear you, I'm sorry Dora I just, I didn't hear

ONE: (Siren zooming by

THREE: (Snore)

DORA: I had a question.

SMITH: you. Did you need something, is everything alright? What about?

ONE: *a few blocks away, then turning a corner and fading away)*

THREE: (Snore)

DORA: Never mind, because I figured it out by myself and I'm tired now, okay? So goodnight.

THREE: (Snore)

(Dora leaves. Smith is left to stare at the flame of his candle. He stares, and stares. Matthius and Ayla watch him from the high road. Matthius holds the jar.)

(Chorus One, Two, and Three make the sound of the strifes in the jar through the following scene. It has morphed since the last scene, and not for the better.)

MATTHIUS

What have you done to him?

AYLA

Done? I haven't *done* anything, I've-

MATTHIUS

Look at him! What have you done!

AYLA

Matthius, darling, I-

MATTHIUS

Do not play this game with me Ayla. Tell me straight. What did you do.

AYLA

Nothing.

Nothing much, really.

Don't look at me like that Matthius I only lit him a candle!

MATTHIUS

Only.

AYLA

Yes!

MATTHIUS

You only gave a flame to a man who has never before seen so much as a spark!

AYLA

It's just a little flame. It'll go out.

MATTHIUS

Yes, and when he comes back for more will you give him fire, or lure him forever with the hope of another little flame?

(Not yet morning. Smith grabs the candle, his briefcase, and leaves.)

(A dark place. Men of power congregate here.)

DARK MAN: One for three, two for five. I don't offer that for most.
 TWO: It's yours if you take it quick. Here. Here. It's yours.
 THREE: I'll take it. Deal. Deal. I'll take it.

(Smith enters, with candle held for all to see.)

SMITH: Please forgive my intrusion and allow
 DARK MAN: This is a real steal I'm giving you. Take it. I don't offer
 TWO: I'll throw in a bonus, you take it now. It's yours.
 THREE: I want a guarantee. I want your word it's good.

SMITH: me to interrupt you only briefly, for as quickly as I can I will leave you to go
 DARK MAN: that to most. This is the This is
 TWO: if you if you If you take it now.
 THREE: Otherwise, how do I know it's not How do I know it's

SMITH: about your business. What you see here is not an illusion. It is called Fire.
 DARK MAN: the real thing, it's This is the real You want
 TWO: I give you my word it's Here. Here, it's
 THREE: Deal, deal, I'll I'll take

SMITH

A gift from the Gods, given to me only last night by Ayla herself.
 No other Man but myself and now you here have seen it.
 I do not have the skills or resources to plumb it's secrets myself, so I bring it here,
 where I trust one of you will be able to use the heat and light it produces to change the
 face of the future of our kind.
 What success it brings you is yours alone.
 I ask for no piece of that after today.
 Let the luckiest among you leave with a fist full of fire.
 I sell to anyone.

(Slowly at first, then a full-on crescendo.)

DORA: Hm. Mmhm. Mm. Hm?
SMITH: let's go. Do you want to be late? Come on. Get up. It's nice out.
TWO: (*Sound of kettle whistli-*) (*Clink!*)
THREE: (*Click!*) (*Thunk thunk thunk thunk thunk.*)

DORA: I'm sure. Hm.
SMITH: The sun is shining, If you get up now I have a present for you.
TWO: (*Clink clink clink!*)
THREE: (*Click-Shhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh*) and traffic together every ten

DORA: Hm.
SMITH: Don't you want to know what it is? I'll give you a hint. Rhymes with rookie.
TWO: (*Creak-slam!*) (*Thunk thunk thunk thunk thunk*) (*Clink!*)
THREE: minutes. All freeways northbound running smoothly, with a minor collision slowing
DORA: Cookie! What kind?
SMITH: I thought that might wake you up. Come on in the kitchen and
TWO: (*Clink clink clink!*)
THREE: things down Southbound through the tunnels, expect ten minute delays. We've got

DORA:
SMITH: find out.
TWO: (*Clink*)
THREE: low fog (*Shhhhhhhhhhhhh*)

(Matthius enters the reception area for the Office of Ultimate Authority. It is expansive.)

MATTHIUS: Hi, I'd like to file a request for informational
RECEPTIONIST:
ONE: Hello, office of Ultimate Authority, can you please hold?
THREE: (*Bring bring!*) (*ka-chunk!*) (*Bring bring!*)

MATTHIUS: knowledge.
RECEPTIONIST: Take a number and we'll be with you shortly.
ONE: Office of Ultimate Authority, please hold.
THREE: (*Bring!*)

(He takes a number, and sits.)

MATTHIUS:

RECEPTIONIST: Now serving number A734 at desk number One.

ONE: Office of Ultimate Authority, can you please hold?

THREE: *(Bring bring!)* *(Ka-chunk, ka-chunk, ka-chunk, ka-chunk,*

(Matthius stands, walks to her desk.)

MATTHIUS: I'd like to file a request for informational knowledge. I'm not

RECEPTIONIST: Yes? Department?

ONE: Thank you for holding, your call is important to us. All representatives

THREE: *ka-chunk)* *(Bring! Bring bring!)*

MATTHIUS: really sure.

RECEPTIONIST: Informational requests have to be made departmentally, unless you'd

ONE: are now busy, please continue to hold.

THREE: Desk One, there's a call for you on line three. Desk

MATTHIUS:

RECEPTIONIST: like to make a Direct Request to Ultimate Authority, in which case you would

ONE: Hello, Office of Ultimate Authority, please hold.

THREE: one, line three. *(Bring!)*

MATTHIUS:

RECEPTIONIST: need to bring in an Authorization for Direct Request signed by any Tier One

ONE: Thank you for waiting, how may I direct your call?

THREE: *(Bring bring! Bring!)*

MATTHIUS: I am a Tier One Deity. Matthius. Titan.

RECEPTIONIST: Deity listed here. Name? Heritage? First or

ONE: I'm sorry, he just stepped out of the office, shall I

THREE: *(High pitched sound of an old scanner scanning)*

MATTHIUS: Second.
RECEPTIONIST: second generation? Sign here. And here. Name and date here.
ONE: forward you to his voice mail? Thank you for calling.
THREE: (Ka-chunk, ka-chunk, ka-chunk, ka-chunk, ka-chunk, ka-chunk, ka-chunk)

MATTHIUS:
RECEPTIONIST: Thank you. Fill out and sign this Direct Request form, as well as Terms of
ONE: Thank you for holding. Office of Ultimate
THREE: ka-chunk, ka-chunk, ka-chunk) (Bring!)

MATTHIUS:
RECEPTIONIST: Use, Knowledge Liability Waiver, and Knowledge Of and Agreement To Adhere to
ONE: Authority, please hold. We know your time is valuable, thank
THREE: (Bring bring bring!)

MATTHIUS: Probably.
RECEPTIONIST: Code A-452-B9. Does your inquiry pertain to The Unknown? Then you'd best
ONE: you for holding. To hear our menu in English, press one.
THREE: (Bring bring!) (Bring bring!)

MATTHIUS:
RECEPTIONIST: read and sign this to indicate that you've received our projected accuracy for
ONE: Para escuchar los opciones en Español, oprima numero dos.
THREE: (Bring!)

MATTHIUS:
RECEPTIONIST: Knowledge of the Unknown in the coming epoch. Here's a pen, a clipboard, bring
ONE: Office of Ultimate Authority, how may I direct your call?
THREE: (Bring bring bring!) (Bring bring!)

MATTHIUS: Thanks.
RECEPTIONIST: them up when you're done.
ONE: Please continue to hold.
THREE: (Bring!)

(Dora and Smith waiting for the bus
on the low road.)