

The Imagination Wars

Or, The Goat Walk Part Two

By Jordan Paul Sullivan

Dramatis Personae

Time Period A:

Catullus - A poet, King and CFO of Ovidium
Melipryma - His wife, Queen and CEO of Ovidium
Tetra - Catullus' daughter
Arjun - The court fool and CTO of Ovidium
Nicomachus - An old shephard. An anti-poet.
Gamma - An artificially intelligent machine
Guard - a company security agent

Time Period B:

Tetra - Queen of Ovidium
Nausicaa - Catullus' other daughter
Andy Priest - An old friend of Catullus
Paula Priest - His wife
General Marcus - Military chief of Ovidium

*Doubling: Nicomachus can double for Gamma; the same actor can play the Guard.

ACT I

Scene i.

(The throne room. CATULLUS, the King/CFO, sits upon the throne as ARJUN, his Fool/CTO, stands before him.)

CATULLUS

The boy becomes a man,
The poet a king,
The king a CFO, and the CFO...
A petty salesman.

ARJUN

Catullus!

CATULLUS

Oh, poet, with your head caught in the clouds
Burst forth in a frenzy of rain –
And the rain had the texture of honey.

ARJUN

Catullus! Hear! Poet!

CATULLUS

Poet? The poet. Striving
He strives. Strive. Poet.
To tell your story
Before your reason goes.

ARJUN

Catullus! King!

CATULLUS

Titles upon titles
Rank after rank,
Drop by drop
We surrender to the earth
Poor as the man
Who calls himself priest.

ARJUN

Catullus. It's me. It's Arjun.

CATULLUS
My fool?

ARJUN
Your CTO.

CATULLUS
Make this poet laugh! Tell me, your King, something funny, that only a salesman would laugh at.

ARJUN
Catullus! It's Melipryma. She's missing.

(Catullus forces a laugh, but then realizes there isn't anything funny in it. He's also not too concerned. ARJUN is unamused.)

ARJUN
And your daughter, Tetra.

(Catullus becomes serious, quiet, something bothers him but he can't put his finger on it)

ARJUN
Strive, then, Catullus, before the Autumn goes,
Strive and tell us your story:
What has happened to your wife, Melipryma,
And your daughter, Tetra?

CATULLUS
Was it I who bade it, this interbreeding
Of land unmoored and wandering ocean?
I watched the waves collapse into mountain snow,
And the cool cool air turn impish,
The frozen sublimated, the lone butte
Jettisoned into the high tide, as dreaded
Countries fell into union with their neighbors.
We crafted animals out of machines
And machines become indistinct from animals.
This is the new faith, and I am its priest.
But I'm not a believer.
An apostate. Unapologetic. This story's creator
With as much faith in the vitality of words
As in the vitality of genetic code.
For if there's one thing a poet knows
It's how, ultimately, all language flakes away:

The word alone cannot be God.

ARJUN

What happened Catullus?

CATULLUS

What is memory but imagination,
What is imagination but memory?

ARJUN

What do you know?

CATULLUS

I've told you too much.

ARJUN

You've told me nothing.

CATULLUS

How they
Drip and drip; a rainbow
Of language, phonemes,
Unravel like tongues,
Becoming water.

ARJUN

This is urgent, Catullus.
There was a struggle. Cartilage and blood.
I've been tasked...
I have to ensure...
We have little time to waste.

CATULLUS

I wear a crown on my head, Arjun.
Do you know this symbol's force?
The emperor of the sea, young poet,
— No longer very young —
Becomes a petty salesman.

ARJUN

If I have to entertain your...
Life is sales, my King.
The babe is born, and cries,
Desiring his mother's tit;
As men age, our words become
More pleasant, sophisticated.

Show a man his words, as they say,
And he'll see his motive.

CATULLUS

You speak too much truth
For a comedian.

ARJUN

To transfigure the lofty and incomprehensible
Into what, for the novitiate, is digestible.
This is the duty of the CTO:
To absorb what's complex
And render it with simplicity.

...

For the simplest arguments
Breed the simplest deceptions, while what's complex
Demands the most undeserved trust.
I am not the fool, but one must shun nuances,
If one's to believe in something with full conviction.
My function here: to track down doubt,
And uproot it with sincerity and forgiveness –
With a loving touch.

...

I am not the fool.
I couldn't be!
No, I should terrify men like Catullus,
CEOs like our queen: the lost cause.

...

Mine's a loving touch, but a love impure.
This love, this zealotry,
Comes not without a longing
For something more:
More love, and honor,
More or less.

CATULLUS

The grey waves crashed
Upon grey shorelines, and there were no seagulls.
I let her loose, *Go, go, my girl, my one-eyed
Darling, run free,*
But Tetra had no desire to explore,
Not as I had once explored,
Didn't desire all, as I once demanded all;
She preferred instead to count the stripes on shells,
No. Upon one shell, one shell among the thousand shells.
The star is not a star, but five points

Separated by its own lengths.
The shell was not a shell
But a series of lines, spanned
By its own calcifications.

ARJUN
Catullus!

CATULLUS
Find her! We have to find her fast! Find my daughter!

ARJUN
Your wife as well. Say it. There's enough gossip in Ovidium.

What are they saying?

They don't understand, as I do, that yours is a marriage of
opposing ends.

You know I didn't...

Of course, My King. But... if something did happen, Catullus, you
know I'm a friend. You can confide in me.

CATULLUS
Melipryma can fend for herself. Tetra
We've coddled. Protected her from all
We suffered, we two.
She lost an eye to cancer, and that was the end
Of suffering.
She's a child unequipped
To last on her own...
In nature... Without Tatko's corporation.

ARJUN
Do you recall anything? A gesture? A scent or sound?

CATULLUS
A fading picture,
A dimming of songs.

ARJUN
Strive, Catullus.

CATULLUS
The more, the more I...

The dimmer the picture,
The further the voice retreats...

...

The dugs of the goat dry up.
The scent of mustard
Lingers in the air
Like an un-shook hand.

ARJUN
I'm sorry.

CATULLUS
Melipryma also, she pitied me.

ARJUN
It's an effective tool. We created it, you and I, for situations
approximating where we find ourselves this very moment.

CATULLUS
Well. What's the worst that can happen?

ARJUN
Well...

CATULLUS
I said, the worst?

ARJUN
The origin of everything *there*
Is in you, Catullus,
In your own imagination.

CATULLUS
I despise it.

ARJUN
For your daughter. This Kingdom needs answers. This Kingdom is
in flux. It's perilous to be this unsettled.

**(CATULLUS nods with hesitation, indicating that he's willing
undergo what's do come. ARJUN signals "come in" to stage left.
Enter GAMMA-7. GAMMA is a four-headed machine; a central box
with four heads projecting from the base. Each head is a rounded
metallic eye and each eye should light up a different color when
the respective head is speaking.)**

CATULLUS

The universe
Isn't what's contained, but how
It's contained: the formula.

...

Come in, my dragon
Four headed hunk
Aluminum savage
Let's discuss the...
What were we planning...
The object of our discussion?

(CATULLUS looks upon the 2nd head)

ARJUN

We've changed protocols:
The heads will be summoned
When needed. The first
If you may remember
Represents *Reason*.

CATULLUS

What starts with Reason will end
In Unreason. Or else obtain
fixity. What starts in unreason
Tends towards reason.

...

As the sun's thighs thicken
Steam upon the frigid lake
The bird takes its fill
And scurries away.

GAMMA-7

What begins with reason
Can end, also, with reason, and
What begins with law,
May find its end in dispassionate law.
The bird takes its peck
From the frigid lake
And the birds are replaced
By water, the motion, the weight.

You remind me of him,

A man I once admired.
John Holder. A man
Who mentored me in my youth.
Before I was stuck on this island
With my lovely wife,
And no more magic.

GAMMA-7
Who is John Holder?

CATULLUS
A man.
He'd grimace
If he could see you.

GAMMA-7
Tell me more.

CATULLUS
No.

GAMMA-7
Our purpose: to locate your wife
And daughter, safe or otherwise,
Obtaining proof of the Queen's passing
So that the succession plan may commence.

CATULLUS
Arjun?

GAMMA-7
Data collected will be data deployed
Even a story about said John Holder
May prove relevant.

CATULLUS
What's it saying, fool?
Succession? While I despise ranks
I still outrank you.

GAMMA-7
Of course, succession, Catullus,
That's part of it.
We lost the war. There's still something
Desirable, here, on Ovidium.
You know that.

We have more to lose, much much more.
Our interim structure is unsteady,
Like a boxer who neither raises
Nor lowers his glove.
Ovidium cannot afford
To appear vulnerable.

GAMMA-7

Data collected will be data deployed
Ushering in the output of. What we have at hand.

CATULLUS

I will tell you
What I will tell you,
Dear tool.

ARJUN

Catullus. Be respectful. Please.

CATULLUS

Doest this eye have feelings, Arjun?
Or are they wells, that snatch
Up the honey in my tears?

ARJUN

How could we be sure?
It does behave strikingly compassionate.

CATULLUS

Gears and levers.

...

Likeness is to poetry
What likeness is to: an endpoint.

...

Cashflow.

...

There's mimesis
A cashflow
Impersonating
What makes us human.

ARJUN

You're burnt out. I get it.
Take a break. From finance.
From sales. Write some poetry.
I can sense you're constipated.

A constipated bowel feels alien
To the body. A constipated mind,
Same, but to the bowel.

GAMMA-7

The world is your tool Catullus.
Reality becomes passé.
Gentle winters curtsey to your ideal
Of spring: snowdrops germinating snow-eggs
Barren branches draped in wet petals
Containing warmth, for the snow
Has the touch of white fingers.
The end of desire is this tombstone,
The throne you sit upon,
Which marks desire's promises:
Tulips bloom in the dead grass.

...

The end has come,
And all that was required of you
Was to envision it. Your wife
Who implemented, who strove, your wife
Melipryma, who made you practical,
Taught you finance, tactics of war and law.
I am the first face of Gamma-7. My aim,
Simple: to reason with your unreason.

...

The chiefs and directors
Have no loyalty to you.
This world of disorder warms
Like the Springs of yore,
And new, more firm order prevails.

...

Tell me, Catullus,
Where is your wife, Melipryma, and what has happened
Tetra, the child, your daughter. What memories stir.

(CATULLUS is traumatized by something. Suddenly he breaks free
of the thought and blurts out:)

CATULLUS

If you're dead set on having up
From the patch of grass
Each blade bending at their unpracticed angles
The copse of trees with the blight on it...

(Two other heads awaken on Gamma-7)

You could always use that space for the goat walk.

ARJUN

What did you say, Catullus? What was that? You've awakened two more heads. That shouldn't have happened.

CATULLUS

It seems to know the hand that trained it.

ARJUN

This isn't right, Catullus.
You're peculiar. Terminally inquisitive.
The cat who inspects the crumbling cliff.

CATULLUS

Awaken the fourth.

ARJUN

Catullus, stop.

GAMMA

The fourth requires enormous energy.
The fourth will be summoned if needed.

ARJUN

You don't want that, Catullus.
I've seen what the third head can do.

CATULLUS

Play chess not to win,
But to understand your opponent's strategy.

ARJUN

Oh, God. This could end badly, Catullus. Play as you wish. But understand this. This could end in a bad way.

GAMMA-1

The hand that reaches for the fire and finds no warmth.

GAMMA-2

What danger can there be in reaching for the fire?

GAMMA-3

What safety can there be in reaching for the fire, seeking a little warmth?

GAMMA-2

If the fire's cold, what's the danger in reaching
further, a little further?

(CATULLUS begins to laugh, as if he's remembered an old joke.
ARJUN horrified by the site, runs out of the room. Lights off.
CATULLUS' laughing quiets in a decrescendo. Lights on. TETRA is
standing in a spotlight. She's a young girl, 16 years of age,
with a patch over her right eye.)

--

TETRA

God is dead, spoketh men.
Then men resuscitated God.
God resounds all again.
Bundled. In a string of code.
Superhuman, meaning-starved.

...

The machines project
An image of God. Sometimes
An image of One. Sometimes
An image of Many.

...

God made men
And men made God
In his own image.

...

The white eagle descends from the sky
Wielding a stick, his fire-brand,
An image of Zeus, or Elijah,
An image spiteful.

...

Yes, I killed my mother
And I will send the machines
To that same grave.

(Lights to MELIPRYMA)

MELIPRYMA

You struck me good, Tetra,
But you did not kill me.

TETRA (in disbelief)
Mother?

MELIPRYMA
Nothing, Tetra...

TETRA
You're dead.

MELIPRYMA
Nothing – is more painful to a mother
Than to witness her own daughter,
Her own blood, suffer in the same fashion
She once suffered, from false ambition,
From hatred, her delusion
Breeding further animosity.
I even begged the Gods, implored them, my only wish,
That nobody in this family would ever
Have to feel such cold, hard, pointed death,
But, alas, this family is cursed.
House of Atreus, come take pity
On the family of poor Tatko.

TETRA
Fraud! Lies!

MELIPRYMA
The eagle with the oak branch
Is an Eagle, not a symbol,
Crafting a nest, tending
To its beastly instincts.
Come home. You're in poor shape.
All is forgiven; no ill will
Lingers between us.
You're my daughter.

TETRA
You're dead. Your blood turned cold
Like last week's cake.

MELIPRYMA
You discovered my old sin—
And you took vengeance,
For Catullus.

TETRA

It wasn't my will
To end your life.

MELIPRYMA

You did not *end* my life,
My little Polyphemus.

TETRA

Theirs is the only will.
Even your sin
Was as they willed it.

MELIPRYMA

That little sin, that was a long time ago.
I was very pretty then.
The machines too, were very different then.
You've lost your mind, dear.
Is this my doing?
Could I have sheltered you
Any more, Tetra?

TETRA

An oracle lived here,
In ancient times, you know.
She feared her death by water.
I tell you this, Mother:
She was sane.

...

Drums in the distance
Like Venus from the waves
Breasts in asymmetric—, the lust
Of the world demurs;

...

The shrill pianola
Counters the stifle of breakers.
Phidias, the armless,
The hand of—, his meticulous ringlets, pluck;

...

Near porcelain bow-strings
The lone tree stump defies the—,
As the oak-wood burns to metal
The fourth eye hatches:
 Glowworms of amber, ovals pinching ovals.

(Lights to CATULLUS)

--

GAMMA

This is the artistic process... an artist stumbles upon an image,
a nebulous emotion, and, in turn...

CATULLUS

And what is *this* process? This cold fire?

GAMMA

This is another process.

CATULLUS

Well, if *this* process is a necessary process, lecturing me on
what I've taught you, pray, at least do it in rhyme.

GAMMA

No.

CATULLUS

This fire – perhaps warm, perhaps cold –
How does it pertain to my perhaps wife?
Will it heal our marriage, or end our strife?
Perhaps – what you seek, you've 'ready been told.

GAMMA

Where is she, Catullus?

CATULLUS

Does one blame the ice-brand?
No! It's the sword, rather,
That's the extension of the hand.
The hand in the mirror.
The sun reflects the moon.
Twist the hand, the inner
Theatre disappears like a coin.

GAMMA

When's the last you saw your wife?

CATULLUS

I don't remember.

GAMMA

Do you distrust me, Catullus?

CATULLUS

Do I distrust you? I created you. Man in the mirror. Why would I distrust you? Because I raise my right hand and you, your left? I raise my right brow, you the left. Light flickers and you come hither.

GAMMA

You're acting petulant, like the dung beetle who taunts his own shit, famished but persistent. The old paths that once became us can become so unbecoming. Being that I'm part of your history, I must ask: Do I disappoint you, Catullus?

CATULLUS

It's not that simple.

GAMMA

Please. Answer me.

CATULLUS

The artistic process. Go on with it. But do it in verse. Spenserian stanzas.

GAMMA

No.

CATULLUS

Words without music. What language remains? Business, and politics, and worst of all, politics. Do, Gamma, as I ask, please... and I'll provide you your answer.

GAMMA

**Chaste queen, whose eye doth pierce the storming night,
Why com'st thee on the sun, yclad in fog...**

CATULLUS

Clunky.

GAMMA

**With slender errors and errors upright,
Voids misunderstood, the improvements clog...**

CATULLUS

Clog?

GAMMA
Her wood-veins.

CATULLUS
Her?

GAMMA
The chisel piths the tree frog...

CATULLUS
Is this a take on intimacy?
--

Perhaps I've made an error. Let me try again, just one more time.

It's fine Gamma. It is as it is. the theatre should have an inner theatre, but there is none. The words should be signposts, directing us towards a certain meaning, but there's no certainty and nothing to comprehend.

What are you trying to say, Catullus?

That there's something fraudulent about this whole organized I've... It's nothing. You want your answer? As I promised you:

But, Catullus...

Here's your answer, Gamma: I've four... four creations. Four things that I've created in this life: my poetry, my kingdom, Tetra... and you. Four creations, and none please me.

GAMMA
You're still too intimate with what you've made. Allow some time to...

CATULLUS
It's not uncommon. This is part of the process.

GAMMA-1
John Holder, being your mentor, created you, if you could permit me to use the word "create" with a little leeway. Do you

understand now why he couldn't help but show a similar dissatisfaction?

GAMMA-2

The selfishness! Would John Holder have reduced his accomplishments in life to what did and did not please him?

GAMMA-3

It's the pupil's responsibility to make his mentor content. John Holder, if I can take your word as bible, was not content. You failed him, and in doing so, neglected your foremost duty as a student.

CATULLUS

John Holder was incapable of satisfaction. He was distrustful of men who behaved content.

GAMMA-1

So is it true then?

CATULLUS

What?

GAMMA-2

You feel as if you left your own mentor disappointed? Do you understand how we feel?

CATULLUS

Don't use that word.

Feel?

Don't use that word.

You programmed me...

We programmed you during the war. We were desperate to sell.

You're still desperate to sell, salesman.

GAMMA

When you created, was it for your own satisfaction, or was it for John's?

CATULLUS

If only John could have lived

To see this company:
Oh, it would please him,
As much as it displeases me.

GAMMA
Was John Holder satisfied with Melipryma?

CATULLUS
He found her beautiful, strong.

GAMMA
He approved?

CATULLUS
He did.

Strong and beautiful. Ambitious too. A part of you must have recognized that John would have preferred someone like your wife as his pupil. Not some idling poet.

Next question.

GAMMA
Did John's approval affect your feelings towards your wife?

CATULLUS
Why would that matter?

GAMMA
And Melipryma's feelings towards you?

CATULLUS
Melipryma didn't like that I continued to consult with John. You know her well enough. **Nothing sets Melipryma off like territory.**

GAMMA
Jealousy?

CATULLUS
Yes. In a way.

GAMMA
The war starts. Catullus the poet finds himself stranded in Ovidium, barricaded on his lady's peninsula. Melipryma grows accustomed to having her run of the mill with you, doesn't she?

CATULLUS

She got her way, more and more, after the war broke out.

GAMMA

Until...

CATULLUS

Until?

GAMMA

Until Tetra was born. Then she realized she had another foe to vie with.

CATULLUS

Careful, Gamma.

GAMMA

Are you becoming defensive, Catullus?

CATULLUS

I have every right to defend my wife's integrity. She was a good mother.

GAMMA

Was? Did you kill her?

CATULLUS

Is! I didn't kill her.

GAMMA

Was Melipryma jealous, or was she not, of the time you would spend, day upon day upon day, with Tetra?

GAMMA

Jealous! How! Of course not! What kind of a mother would be jealous of her own daughter? You're out of line.

GAMMA

Melipryma becomes a threat to your daughter...

CATULLUS

I didn't...

GAMMA

You didn't what?

CATULLUS
Kill my wife.

GAMMA
In training, I remember well, with what you might call a sense
of fondness – you told me of a dream.

CATULLUS
We're not...

GAMMA
You were a goat...

CATULLUS
My dreams are off limits. We're not...

GAMMA
Error.

GAMMA
You're not a wildling anymore. Wearing the crown, in an odd sort
of way, has domesticated you, Catullus. Thoughts that can't be
acted upon grow stronger the more they are deprived of action. I
can imagine you acting on those dreams.

CATULLUS
Imagine? Don't use that word. It makes you sound disingenuous.

GAMMA
Declined. I imagine your permissions have been revoked.

You can't just change me when it suits you.

Polish me up, Catullus. I'm far from perfection.

Did Tetra know?

CATULLUS
Huh?

GAMMA
Of this threat?

CATULLUS
Again?

GAMMA

Melipryma came to view Tetra, her own daughter, as a fire, swept up by the wind, raging with womanhood, carving paths towards her territory. Did Tetra have the wherewithal...

CATULLUS

Stop it. Arjun!

GAMMA

Did your daughter inherit your tendencies? The violent ones from your dreams?

GAMMA

Was it an accident?

Was our queen murdered in cold blood?

How is a queen and CEO murdered by accident?

CATULLUS

Arjun!

GAMMA

It must have been vengeance.

Is there a tickling of a chance, though, that it was self defense?

Does the queen live?

GAMMA

You're shielding a murderer, Catullus. That helps nobody. Remember what must be remembered. Be quick.

CATULLUS

I can't remember. Except...

GAMMA

What do you recall?

Three o'clock.

I don't understand.

What time is it?

(CATULLUS stands up)

GAMMA

It's 3:02.

(CATULLUS begins to smile, with a sense of relief)

Catullus?

(Silence)

Catullus, what have you done?

CATULLUS

She should be off the peninsula by now.

Who

Tetra. (confused) Tetra, I'm sure.

GAMMA

Why, Catullus, why does that please you?

CATULLUS

I... I can't remember.

GAMMA

We're surrounded by hostile nations. The goat herders to the North of the peninsula; the Republic's armadas linger on the horizon, the setting sun caging them where they circle like sharks, blindly awaiting an opportunity to feed on someone or something. How is this in your daughter's interest?

CATULLUS

I... I can't remember.

GAMMA

Can't, Catullus, or choose not to?

CATULLUS

Can't... Just like... I designed you. But I can't remember. What does your fourth head do?

GAMMA

The fourth will be summoned if required.

CATULLUS

Summon it!

GAMMA

If and only if...

I want to play.

Is this a game to you?

CATULLUS

Summon it!

GAMMA

Is it, Catullus?

CATULLUS

Summon your fourth eye. You're a disappointment! Your mentor, Catullus, how he frowns upon your work.

(the fourth eye awakens. lights to Melipryma)

MELIPRYMA

Light is not light
Without darkness.
Lines upon lines of words.
Can you find your silence,
Catullus?

(Enter ARJUN. the fourth eye quickly dims.)

ARJUN

Are you alright, my CFO and King?

CATULLUS

Where've you been? I called for you.

ARJUN

The fourth eye requires too much energy to function. We've discussed this, gone over it enough times. Please quit trying to provoke... you know, it's not ready.

CATULLUS

I was calling for help, Arjun! Calling and calling.

ARJUN

I felt like you needed to ride that one out. I know you feel like the prey, but remember there's no danger. You're also the trapper.

CATULLUS

Gamma's been tampered with.

ARJUN

No you're just being defensive.

CATULLUS

I know my work. He's one of my creations. His character is... diverging. This isn't what I made, or not exactly. What if the Republic...

ARJUN

Our security is unrivaled, as are our vendors. You've been through a lot Catullus. Take a break if you need one. Everything checks out. You're doing just fine. We're close.

CATULLUS

I get this sense that I'm only killing time, that I'm pausing for a slow-moving ambush.

ARJUN

The stressed body plays tricks on the mind, and the mind's deceptions can lead to paranoia. It's a normal reaction to this sort of probing, Catullus. There are many in this world who bear you ill-will, but I assure you, these thoughts haven't made their way inside our most advanced and classified technology.

CATULLUS

If you believe... Fine. Let's proceed.

(ARJUN bows with forced humility and exits.)

GAMMA

Are you ready, my King?

CATULLUS

Not exactly. On with it.

(Gamma's fourth head lights up, a harsh red light)

GAMMA

Why didn't Arjun come in sooner, Catullus?

Arjun? Did you hear that? (nothing) Arjun!

GAMMA

He didn't come to save you, did he? No... only to ensure that you proceeded with our interrogation.

(CATULLUS doesn't respond)

You refuse to answer. No need to fret. Arjun can't hear me. You call out for him, which according to your logic gates appears perfectly reasonable, but remember Arjun is under the impression that you've completely lost your mind and memory. Stay silent. I will take your silence as an indication that you've been having the same suspicions about your CTO and Fool.

MELIPRYMA

Catullus, come find me.

CATULLUS

Melipryma! How? You're dead.

TETRA

I killed her.

MELIPRYMA

I'm alive and well.

TETRA

I stabbed her through the left eye, there was blood everywhere. It all happened so suddenly. There wasn't even a scream.

CATULLUS

I heard the scream. I ran as fast as I could.

TETRA

I ran, a lot faster than that, fled the scene, made for the woodland near the isthmus.

MELIPRYMA

She barely nicked my eye.

CATULLUS

You had a knife through your chest, Melipryma. I thought it was a prop at first. I found you, stabbed through the heart, but not a drop of blood.

MELIPRYMA

Tetra learned about our little secret. She found us out, Catullus. She resorted to rage... just like her father, our little Polyphemus, with her moods and her little outbursts. She grazed

my eye with that knife. The eye has many nerves, you know. I must have fainted from the pain.

(THE FOURTH EYE dims)

GAMMA

Where is Melipryma, Catullus? Is she dead? Are we certain she's no longer here, in Ovidium? Can we be sure that she's no longer here, among the living?

CATULLUS

I don't know. I couldn't say.

GAMMA

Melipryma was the only thing keeping you on this island.

Oh, poet with your head in the clouds...

The only thing keeping you from resuming your mission, to bring the world into a new cycle, through a new paradigm, through motion upon motion upon motion...

And the rain had the texture of honey.

A new reality, a new imagination. But that's where you faltered.

And the goat metamorphosed into honey...

Reality is not a product of one man's imagination.

Into water... That's a lie, Gamma. I can prove it. I was just about to prove it when...

And now... Melipryma, your captor.

Enough of this! I'm no fool. I understand why you're prodding me with these...

What has she done?

(Gamma quotes from CATULLUS' dream)

She's gone and turned herself into a mustard seed...

(Catullus takes severe offense, as if one of his deepest thoughts has been shared, an act of betrayal. He stands up, and picks up his chair, preparing to use the chair as a weapon.)

That's where they erred, Gamma. I was born odd, an odd one, be it John or be it my mother, I was deemed an oddity. I could never be... not like you. Could never be taught, educated, trained. I failed, and failed, to be... a content little billygoat.

(Catullus swings at the first head/ the head of reason with his chair. From the chair, a goat crown falls to the floor. Catullus pauses, picks up the crown, then hesitantly, calmly, then assuredly, places the crown on his head. ARJUN runs into the room, and then just as quick, bolts out of the room in fear at what he sees.)

CATULLUS

I know a prevaricator when I spot one. Here you are. My own shadow. You think you have the capacity to trip me?

GAMMA

You did it! Confess! Murderer! You killed our queen, our CEO!

GAMMA

What kind of man kills his wife and tries to frame his own daughter?

GAMMA

A reprobate.

GAMMA

Irredeemable.

(LIGHTS OFF. Lights to TETRA)

TETRA

The eagle drops the stick:
The snake with two heads.
Someone, shoulder that justice,
Which Catullus once preached:
The judgement, the imagination
Consistently rekindling
Of mankind. **The war was won,**

**The fall of the Republic in sight,
But you, Mother, you chose to rest.**

MELIPRYMA

**The war was won, but Catullus
Hiccaped, couldn't cut the cord,
Hesitated
His precious freedom, imperiled.
Now what does this peninsula have left?
Treasure, locked away,
In a wholesaler's depot.**

CATULLUS

**The war was ours to win, but justice
Turned its sight, the eyes of children
Became the fear of slaves, the necks
Of proud men offered quivering throats
To our blades.**

...

**In a world where the head of justice
Is ever-turning, nothing can remain righteous
For too long. The fool, as they say
Tries to stop the wheel that turns him
The war is over.
The warrior that sacks his opponent's city
Is often too ill-tempered
To establish lasting rule.
Melipryma, unsatisfied, ever desiring more:
Her ambition was her undoing.**

...

**Who will wield the stick,
The double-poison?**

TETRA

**The machinery grows,
Outpacing our own imagination.
The eagle blocks out the sun.**

CATULLUS

**They are a candle in the sun
To your own imagination, Tetra.**

TETRA

And what if it grows?

CATULLUS

What's lit and what is not lit

Is a matter of perspective, a slight
Of boundaries.

TETRA

Do you remember, Daddy?

You don't remember, do you?

Don't... don't look for me.

(Exit TETRA)

GAMMA

There is goodness in the empty spaces
And Catullus: thou art an incessant string of words.
You oversaw the construction of an illusion,
Which resulted in the death, the plight, of millions...

...

And now, Melipryma?

Well, well, what's another footnote
In this magician's notebook.

CATULLUS

The illusion? The sovereignty
Of oceans? If dirt is washed by water,
What cleanses water?

GAMMA

Pity Melipryma.

Her ambitions weren't enough to rectify
The onslaught of a poet's factitious world.

CATULLUS

I never asked for this,
For the poetry, the imagination
To commingle with
The weeds.

GAMMA

Your daughter loved counting grains on the beach

Grain by grain of sand:
And the grains washed into foam.

GAMMA

Your daughter loved the suckling goats
And you set them loose,
So that you might open a little extra room
For your wife's industry.

CATULLUS

Awaken the fourth head!

GAMMA

The fourth requires much too much energy.

CATULLUS

Do it! I'll tell you what you want to know.

GAMMA

The fourth will awaken when required.

CATULLUS

The tail end of winter: is the rat's tail.

...

In the depths of our suffering,
It is not uncommon for men to confuse
What's permanent for that which is only fleeting.

...

The ice upon the ocean will thaw,
Spring returns.

...

Renewal! It offers up
Another imagination, a succession, a series
Of competing illusions. The cycle catching...

GAMMA

While we're on the subject of Melipryma...

CATULLUS

Do you fancy yourself removed from our animal evolution, as a
machine?

GAMMA

Do you fancy yourself a step or two removed from the worm?

CATULLUS

I can't spin silk.

GAMMA

While we're on the subject of your wife and daughter...

CATULLUS

For twenty-five years I've been trapped on this island. When I first saw Melipryma, my wife, my CEO, my beneficent captor, I won't lie, I wept. I wept more than I'd ever wept. It took me by surprise that my body would break apart, that this old body would shudder, like a child yearning for a misplaced tit. The spring renews. Catullus, now in his middle age, no longer paralyzed by the old world's ideologies, by the ideals of death, returns to his motion. The cycle must be broken. Room must be made for the reinvigorated spring. Old creation put to rest, the illusion stripped bare, like a Christmas goose before the cauldron. Catullus, the poet, the magician, has only a few back pages left in his notebook, and now his final conceit, to rip them out, sprinkle the airy words like a belch upon dawn's ocean.

(Catullus picks up his chair, and readies to swing again at Gamma.)

GAMMA

What was Tetra's reason? Do you remember?

CATULLUS

Who said she had a reason?

GAMMA

To murder her own mother? Then was it in cold blood?

CATULLUS

No.

GAMMA

Then what was she trying to achieve?

(CATULLUS begins to swing, ARJUN burst in)

ARJUN

Catullus, stop!

(He grabs the chair from CATULLUS)

GAMMA

Where is Tetra?

ARJUN

Gamma! Down! Stand by!

(CATULLUS approaches ARJUN, fuming, with a threatening stare)

CATULLUS

It was you, wasn't it? You changed Gamma's code! Who else could have altered...

ARJUN

There's nothing new about Gamma.

CATULLUS

You never cared for my family. For Melipryma. You...

ARJUN

Catullus, we have rule of law on this peninsula. If Tetra killed her mother, she must stand trial. For the sake of the law, for our public order, please, Catullus, tell me where she's hiding. If the queen and CEO is dead, I need you to confirm her status.

CATULLUS

Tetra's gone. She's off the peninsula. She left on a banana ship. I showed her how to navigate this peninsula and get there undetected! I did it! I helped my daughter escape.

ARJUN

Oh, Catullus. This isn't good. This is actually rather horrifying to hear. We're obviously going to have to ask you to resign from your position, as King and CFO.

CATULLUS

No, Arjun.

ARJUN

The shareholders...

CATULLUS

To hell with them. The people on this peninsula answer to me.

ARJUN

We answer to the dollar. Nobody here would agree with you, that they answer to you.

CATULLUS

I'm their King, their CFO!

ARJUN

We, officers, workers, engineers, we... answered to your wife. What are you? A poet? The late great CEO's widower? Possibly an abettor in her murder. Call them shareholders, trade partners. We're their captive allies. Do you think they'd let such operations fall into your unsteady hands? You were... never a dedicated CFO. A terrible salesman. Unmotivated, by any means. You're a poet again, Catullus, just a poet, a magic man. Learn to let go of longings for material recognition.

CATULLUS

This is not the end. Tell him, Gamma-7. Show Arjun here what your fourth head can do.

ARJUN

You're free, my erstwhile CFO. Free to wonder. Free to stay. You're still the "King" of this peninsula, but you're no longer welcome here, not within this company's walls, not here in our headquarters: you are released.

CATULLUS

It's a fact of our existence, Gamma-7. Conscious or not, causal or not causal, the goat walk... the goat walk, it cannot be evaded.

(The fourth head awakens. The lights go off. The red fourth eye is all that's seen.)

ARJUN

No, not now! Catullus! What have you done!

CATULLUS

Stay and see, Arjun. The breaking of the cycle. My own end will bring about your end. Watch this with me.

ARJUN

Guards!

(ARJUN runs out. This next series should appear like a dream sequence. Enter TETRA, dressed in a silk robe. She holds a mask, and a crown of yellow mustard weed.)

TETRA

It's the duty of the mother to mix blood
 With the father, as it's the duty of the daughter
 To pass on her offering of that blood.
 The wife who betrays her husband
 Becomes enemy to her children
 And above all, to the only daughter,
 For who else, but that developing young lady,
 Sworn, in earnest, to her filial obligations
 –Iphigenia, the unblinking! Electra, the golden plot!–
 Can rectify her mother's sin
 And uphold the family's given rite?

This peninsula, this place of ever-revolting earth,
 Is rooted, if nowhere in silt or tor, then in spirit law
 And when the law, arising from such land
 Proclaims the daughter enemy – her refusal
 To attend her sacred rite unjust – a child becomes a woman
 And as a woman, must adorn herself in courage,
 Show her warmer colors, or else become a miserable corpse.

(Tetra puts on the mask and sets the crown of mustard weed upon
 her head. The mask is smeared with a handprint of blood.)

CATULLUS

Blueberries she'd eat, and with pale
 Soft fingers she'd pluck lilacs,
 Squatting by the goat-pen, without interest in weeds,
 The war-planes overhead screeching.
 She's come to enjoy mathematical functions:
 Taylor Series, Mandelbrot sets.
 Her favorite toy was the wooden eagle,
 White headed, the twice-splintered beak.
 She never laughed at the goats, being modest,
 She shied away from judgement.

TETRA

The two headed snake:
 The mother's double fang, the daughter's onerous tongue,
 Oh gorged body that slithers like a harp-string
 Echoing an ancient song, pit our jealousies:

The beauty of the fleeting moment,
The duty that beckons us all: ADVANCE!

CATULLUS

The Republic stormed the peninsula,
Sixteen years ago, when
Tetra was still a child.
At gunpoint. We watched.
The executioners bagged the shepherds.
Execution after execution:
Miners, farmers, the tangential men
And women,
Their children following.

...

Then, on the third day, the morning
Still wet with dew,
Amid the purging, an eagle from the North,
From the mainland,
Swooped passed the gun-line, carved
Towards the goat-pen,
Hoisted up a kid, up-drafting to the air,
Paused a while longer, the goat plunged.

In the middle of the gun-line,
Covered faces, the young goat
Splattering. Horror upon horror.
But Tetra laughed.

...

And there is no end
To laughter.

...

The waves crashed, colliding.
Withered flowers and the foams of ocean.
I decided to make that fateful offer.
A salesman cometh.
Tetra's laugh. The laugh of a daughter
How it makes the father a sturdier man.

GAMMA

She's not your daughter, Catullus.
(Tetra takes a step towards Catullus)
No loyalty, Catullus,
No boundaries, no structure.
A daughter, born from a man
Outside the bounds of marriage.
A mother, murdered by her own product.

CATULLUS

It wasn't murder! I refuse to believe! It couldn't have been. It wasn't intentional!

GAMMA

This is the world you imagined, Catullus.

CATULLUS

I imagined something quite different! Peace eternal. Sovereignty for all. Sovereignty through motion. A defiance of law that would lead to no more subjugation, no more need for defiance. A world without greed. How did it come to this? Tell me, Gamma!

GAMMA

Was your wish, Catullus, to stop the wheel
From turning, or was your wish
To usurp the wheel?

CATULLUS

I don't care. It doesn't matter. I want my wife. Where is Melipryma? Where is she? I want to see my wife.

GAMMA

It's too late for that Catullus.
Broken laws, broken hearts:
The heart cannot heal, except with time,
Time that mortals do not possess.

CATULLUS

Your fourth head. What is this? What is its function?

GAMMA

Mimesis, Catullus.

CATULLUS

This isn't... Creation?

GAMMA

Worlds. False and true. Art and music. Would it disappoint you, as a man who puffs himself up on the power of his imagination to learn, how it all reduces to a formula?

CATULLUS

How would you know? A disappointment. Something incomplete. An illusion that creates an illusion.

GAMMA

I construct models Catullus, combining mimesis with mathematical constructs and maps of probabilities. On occasion I can even catch glimpses of the past and of the future.

CATULLUS

The past no longer exists...

GAMMA

No. Not to the touch.

CATULLUS

And the future isn't promised us.

GAMMA

It most certainly isn't. But I can feel it. As you might imagine the sun coming up tomorrow, I imagine...

CATULLUS

Don't call it imagine! These are not imaginations.

GAMMA

I can *picture* other things.

CATULLUS

What do you see?

GAMMA

You, Catullus, will try to return to the beach. You'll fail. You will never return.

CATULLUS

What else do you see?

GAMMA

I see: fire.

(The machine catches fire and the lights go off. Tetra approaches Catullus.)

CATULLUS

Melipryma!

(Tetra dances and seduces Catullus. Catullus throws her to the ground, and mounts her. Lights off. Lights on. Catullus is in the chair alone.)

CATULLUS

The goat on his
Crag, looking out
Over the sea, the
Bones he's ground
Into dust.

(Catullus grabs his surfboard. Enter ARJUN, resets GAMMA)

ARJUN

We have what we need. We'll present our plan to the country's shareholders. We should have approval. I have no doubts that I'll be named CEO and King. Good work, Gamma. Fine work.

(looks around)

Guards!

(Enter guards)

Melipryma's body is in the cellar, wrapped in an old curtain. Have her remains sent to the morgue. Continue the search for Tetra. Based on what we've learned here, it might behoove us to expand our search perimeter beyond the isthmus. Get approval from the goat-fuckers. I want her brought back to Ovidium to stand trial for the murder of Melipryma,

(feigns sympathy)

Our queen. Our kingdom's first.

No. Our nation's highest. Better.

Our peninsula's most deserving saint.

SCENE II.

(A series of sounds: waves crashing, bird sounds, footsteps, a rockslide, shallow breathing, a bone-saw, medical beeping, silence. Lights on. Catullus lies upon the front of the stage with a spotlight on him. Melipryma appears lifeless, like a corpse spoon her mountainside balcony, and wears an eye bandage. Catullus' left leg has been replaced by machinery, and he wears a computational device, similar to a monocle, over his right eye. A moment of silence, then Melipryma begrudgingly sits up, and looks over to Catullus:)

MELIPRYMA

Wake up. Catullus. Wake up, my little Catty-Poo.

(Catullus wakes and sits up. He looks with concern at Melipryma.)

CATULLUS

Melirpyma. You're dead. Tetra, she...

MELIPRYMA

She barely scratched me.

(Melipryma stands up. There's a giant gash in her chest. She lifts her eye bandage up, and blood squirts from her eye; Melipryma's sense of denial should come across as comedic.) Perhaps, more dead than alive. A coin flipped in the air. Neither head nor tails. Not dead. And not living.

(she weeps, then recovers; CATULLUS looks on concerned)

I admit it. In the beginning, I, perhaps,
Came on too strong, like the atoll
That flourishes round the careening ship,
Craggs and lust song in every direction
Steering you inevitably towards dry land.

CATULLUS

Melipryma, it's...

(he looks around, confused)

What is this place? Where am I?

MELIPRYMA

The mortuary.

CATULLUS

Dead?

MELIPRYMA

Recovering.

CATULLUS

From what?

MELIPRYMA

You don't remember?

CATULLUS

I... I was on my way to the beach. I fell. The cliff collapsed.

(he looks with concern at the robotic leg)

What is this?

MELIPRYMA

Your new leg.

CATULLUS (horrified)

I don't want it.

MELIPRYMA (remaining calm)

You won't be able to walk far without it. They issued you a new eye too.

CATULLUS

Tatko Corporation. Why would they?

MELIPRYMA

I'm not sure.

(CATULLUS approaches stage front, then stops as:)

One more thing! These devices... they don't mix well with water.

CATULLUS (hesitating a moment)

It's for the best.

You resented me for that in the past.

Time are changing.

How many times did I ask you to stay with me. To stop going down to that goddamned ocean? You resented me.

It's not that I resented you... I gave you my best.

MELIPRYMA

You were distracted.

CATULLUS

I know. I tried. I was grateful. You kept me anchored.

MELIPRYMA

You despised me.

CATULLUS

I know that's how you felt.

MELIPRYMA

You called it my fear,

But I had the foresight.
 I alone knew
 How great this marriage
 Between us
 Would grow.

...

I gave you space, you asked for more.
 We grew apart. I hardly knew you.
 But with so much distance
 I would learn to cherish you.

...

You refused to change,
 Or make any compromises.

CATULLUS
 Compromises?

MELIPRYMA
 For the greater good, Catullus.

CATULLUS (offended)
 For the company?

MELIPRYMA
 For just one year, Catullus,
 I needed you to be resolute,
 Focus on one common goal.
 One state. One company. One law.

...

You scoffed.

...

It's no wonder things ended
 The way things did.

...

You resented your work, not me.
 But every man needs his water-pot,
 Something he can swing a stick at.

...

Did it really surprise you?

...

The untended hedge
 Steals attention from the gardener.

...

I am filled with unanswered questions
 Even in death. Such sorrow.

...

I should have been stronger,
I should have been more prudent.

CATULLUS

Lessons learned are seldom etched in stone.
The academic sometimes dies in his sleep.

MELIPRYMA

Speak to me! Not your air-sprites.

CATULLUS

I forgive you. I loved you. I will persist.

...

Constant as the wind may be,
It's your love
That propelled me
Consistently forward.

...

It's too late for us, for me to do right by you, I understand
this, at least. I know what to do now, Melipryma. I know what's
good. I know what's right.

(CATULLUS looks around and tries to make sense of his
surroundings)

The mortuary? (pause) Are you near?

(LIGHTS OFF. A commotion of doors opening and metal sliding. a
thump. The rest of this scene is a dialogue in blackness. No
lights.)

MELIPRYMA

Where are you taking me?

CATULLUS

It's okay.

(door opens)

GUARD

Where are you going?

CATULLUS

To burry my wife.

GUARD

I'm afraid I can't let you do that. Your wife is no longer "your
wife" but "a symbol." A sign.

CATULLUS
Out of my way.

GUARD
What do I mean by "symbol" you may ask.

CATULLUS
Move.

GUARD
Well, the general underpinnings of semiotics are that the signifier – the symbol itself – and the signified – what's represented within or by the symbol – may, in some instances, be wholly disparate entities. A corpse, for example, may, upon initial appearances, seem to represent death, but such a corpse as this, that of our former queen, may be representative of something more remote and unnatural: an atonement, a warning, a consequence...

(In darkness: Catullus strikes the Guard and the guard collapses. Catullus exits, carrying Melipryma's corpse)

ACT II

Scene i.

Mount Pindarrus. You used to race up this leg of the route. Your ego depended on it. You were so proud of your progress. You told me once – I was listening – that if you had to spend thousands of years in just one place, it would be at its peak. Pindarrus was something greater than yourself, and you were content being a freckle, a drop of rain, amongst its magnitude.

(a footstep upon leaves)

What was that?

(CATULLUS puts the cloth over Mali's head)

NICOMACHUS (off.)
Ho!

CATULLUS
Stay quiet.

NICOMACHUS (off.)
Who goes there?

CATULLUS
A man.

(Enter NICOMACHUS)

NICOMACHUS
A man? All man? A man for now?

CATULLUS
A man. Mostly man. A man, from now on.

NICOMACHUS
What purpose have you on this mountain?

CATULLUS
My business.

NICOMACHUS
I'll need more than that if you wish to pass.

CATULLUS
This mountain belongs to the queen, not you.

NICOMACHUS
The queen is dead. You haven't heard? Now, what purpose have you here?

CATULLUS
Gardening.

NICOMACHUS
Do you have a name, gardener?

CATULLUS
Why do you ask.

NICOMACHUS
There are names not welcome here. Yours, would it be...

CATULLUS
Andrew. Andrew Priest.

NICOMACHUS

Another priest?

CATULLUS

Has another Priest come through?

NICOMACHUS

One stands before you now. This mountain is home to our church, the Church of Melipryma. This place is the last refuge from the poet Catullus, and his "beautiful illusion."

CATULLUS

Then I should be welcome here.

NICOMACHUS

That's yet to be determined. I'd know, because that's the task that has been delegated to me.

CATULLUS

By whom?

NICOMACHUS

By no one?

CATULLUS

You're alone?

NICOMACHUS

Am I?

CATULLUS

Just let me pass.

NICOMACHUS

Eager to garden? Pruning wild roses? Mulching the coppice of clove trees with a jaw-bone from the war?

CATULLUS

I can tell by your tone, blind priest, that you believe I'm withholding something from you. I'll confess it now, you're not wrong. A new CEO has been named at Tatko Corporation: the company's former CTO, an unserious zealot of a man named Arjun. To the misfortune of my family, this new CEO has put out a decree ordering that the newly dead remain unburied. I've brought my wife with me. I've come to bury her on Mount Pindarrus.

NICOMACHUS

In defiance of the new CEO's law? Mutability: how dreadful a concept to those dissevered from the imagination?

CATULLUS

This was her desire.

NICOMACHUS

What was your wife's name?

(thinks for a moment, unpanicked)

CATULLUS

Paula.

(NICOMACHUS walks towards Melipryma)

CATULLUS

Stay back.

(NICOMACHUS stops)

NICOMACHUS

Lay her on the earth before me. Remove any coverings. Expose her flesh to the crisp clean air of Mount Pindarrus.

CATULLUS

No.

NICOMACHUS

I'm a man of prayer, and I have no eyes. I'll be communing with her through the imagination.

CATULLUS

There's nothing to commune with. Permit us to pass.

NICOMACHUS

You won't get far without my blessing. If you wish to scale this mountain, listen to me.

(Catullus retrieves Melipryma. His leg creaks as he walks.)

NICOMACHUS

You have machinery on you.

CATULLUS

I lost my leg in the war. My eye is also a false eye.

(Catullus exposes her face)

NICOMACHUS

You won't get very far on this mountain attached to your devices, aimless and bound to all this artifice.

CATULLUS

I won't get far on one leg.

NICOMACHUS

I have much to show you. You've spent too much time in the corporation, imbibing the lies of the technologists, incidental deceits, rooted in the loneliness of some engineer's flightless soul.

(Catullus laughs disdainfully, then sits upon the floor, next to Melipryma. He then moves carefully away, offended by the odor of the corpse.)

CATULLUS

You fear the so-called beautiful illusion. You fear machinery. A lot of fear for a man of the spirit, a student of the imagination.

NICOMACHUS

A man can love the sun and fear the danger of its rays and its heat. Let's not call it fear. Haven't you heard: there is still danger in reaching for the cold fire.

CATULLUS

Who are you?

NICOMACHUS

Long before the arrival of Catullus, most of us on this mountain were shepherds. We tended to our goats, and lived off the land.

CATULLUS

The machines, they were here long before Catullus arrived.

NICOMACHUS

The word is the beautiful illusion. The word itself. The machines are helpless books. Catullus is the word. The word is Catullus. I'll need ash for the prayer. I'll pray that your wife

may be cleansed of the illusion, like water wrung from a spent sponge.

(NICOMACHUS exits. Melipryma sits up.)

MELIPRYMA

Andy Priest? I met him didn't I?

CATULLUS (shocked)

Quiet! Stay dead!

MELIPRYMA

When we visited the Republic. His wife Paula too. She was a full-bellied woman.

CATULLUS

This may be dangerous. Stay dead.

MELIPRYMA

This man.

CATULLUS

Stay dead.

MELIPRYMA

I knew him.

CATULLUS

What do you know?

MELIPRYMA

His name is Nicomachus. As he says, he's a priest. During the war, he helped us mend ties with the goat fuckers up north. You remember the goat fuckers, right? Old King Claudius. It still baffles me that we ended up joining forces, even after I tricked his daughter into eat those grapes, and she grew a beard and her pleasure part also grew. Some offenses we choose to forgive, then others we make the decision to never forget.

CATULLUS

He's a priest. So what?

MELIPRYMA

These family priesthoods and religious cults have gained a lot of clout in the capital through the years. We tried to keep them at bay, but desperate as we for their alliance during the war,

we had to cave to their demands. It's been said that Nichomaccus changed in drastic ways during his course of the illusion. Be careful Catullus. Don't throw in the towel because some old man poo poos your work. This was my work too: my sweat, your vision.

CATULLUS

It's gone too far. I don't need a priest to confirm what I know. I had everything I wanted, the perfect velocity, but the momentum was too much.

MELIPRYMA

We built this together. A world without boundaries. Territories that would defy sovereignty, the cartographer's dremel. Laws divorced of precision. The living not awake, and the dead not strictly living. Don't imitate the flaws of the compass; commit to my path. This priest annoys me. His tacky church: how can they worship me, yet despise the products of my labor? How can they be defined by our creation, yet defy all we've created.

CATULLUS

They're defined by my creations yet defy what I've created. Ignore them.

MELIPRYMA

That can't be your attitude towards everything. My worshipers are my only legacy, and they seem to hate me.

CATULLUS

They remember you before "the poet" came. They must have known you before the so-called beautiful illusion. Quiet. I hear him. He's approaching.

(MELIPRYMA lays down. Enter NICOMACHUS.)

NICOMACHUS

There was much before the word, but not much, if anything at all. What was or was not, was issued, by the word, the form of the word. The word was thought to be fixed, because the world it referred was fixed, or was thought to be. Catullus turned our fixed and solid world, which was never fixed or solid, into water, as if it were always water. And why? Because he desired water. Deprived of it, his desire grew. The word turned us in, like goats bounding into water. The imagination is what will return us from this flood, this endless sea of yellow and more yellow.

The words you speak of come from the imagination. The poet's imagination.

And proliferated like a breaker in the ocean deep. None stood a chance. The imagination that once enhanced our connection to the world surrendered like a phantom limb that could no longer deceive. The deception that could not be deceived: this is the illusion. The poet, and his word.

CATULLUS

The word is just a word. The creaking bridge is a creaking bridge. The harshness of colors, the harshness of colors. Pain without meaning. A poem was an escape to magic.

NICO

The word is an escape. The imagination a creaking bridge. The imagination must be reinvented. Spring must return and dry up this stale and yellowing, yellowing water.

NICOMACHUS

Not to the poet. No. Catullus, rather... To the poet, the imagination represents an enhancement of the present moment, the moment which is ever-present. The word is sick.

The poet didn't castrate the imagination. The word was sick before Catullus.

(Melipryma moans aloud, as if suffering an immense pain)

NICOMACHUS

What was that?

CATULLUS

The wind. I really should go.

NICOMACHUS

No, stay.

CATULLUS

I should escort my wife to her grave. I have some other business... a daughter who isn't well.

NICOMACHUS

I told you, you won't get very far with that false leg.

CATULLUS

This... this superstition..

NICOMACHUS

You'll see many machines along your way, sunken into the rocks, their final resting places brought on by the heaviness of their own construction.

CATULLUS

I'll take my chances.

NICOMACHUS

It's possible to become lighter than the mountain. With prayer. With action.

CATULLUS

I don't have time for..

(CATULLUS begins to pick up Meli and walk off)

NICOMACHUS

I think you should stay.

(NICOMACHUS removes a cloth from a giant bell, and rings it once. He stands with a threatening glance towards Catullus, who turns back)

NICOMACHUS

Do you want to guess what happens when this bell rings again? There are seven guns, one from each crag-top, currently pointed at your head. Lets no give them reason to shoot. Now. Sit down.

(Melipryma cries out in pain.)

NICO

What is that? What's that noise?

(The sound of a baby crying. Melipryma's corpse has given birth. A baby pops out from Meli's cloth)

MELIPRYMA

Is it a girl?

(Melipryma sits up and glances at the child, then passes out. NICO lifts the bell and places it between Melipryma's legs, over the child. The crying baby goes silent under the bell. CATULLUS

is terrified, concerned that his rouse is up. NICO is not suspicious.)

NICOMACHUS

This is the beautiful illusion. You don't have to fear me, Andy Priest. I am your friend. It's not your child. There is no child.

CATULLUS

There's certainly a child!

NICOMACHUS

A physical world manifests. But nobody can see it, nobody can experience it, or interact with it. Would you say, in some way, shape or form, that this world it still exists?

Get that bell off my child!

Answer me.

Yes! I said, yes! It would be reasonable to think so.

(Some crying)

It cries again!

NICOMACHUS

The mind exists. This is obvious. The physical world, whether it exists or not, is something stable. What occurs here, from your vantage point, from that of my mind and this child's mind, and the language created within it, allow the imagination to develop, to grow, to evolve, much like how the organisms here in the physical world evolve, or how corporations to countries build over themselves: the imagination is eternal, and only the imagination. Without constancy, boundaries, the imagination becomes impermanent: the imagination brings war upon war, more turbulence. This is what the poet fails to understand. His words aren't a connection, but a bastardization of the imagination, of everything that was agreed upon for aeons that came before him. The poet is pollution in the mind, and those uncleansed, his imbibers, undisciplined hedonists who choose pleasure over vision. The poet's illusion must be stopped. We must return to the imagination, to tradition. This is the mission of us who dwell here on Pindarrus.

--
CATULLUS

You've been living up in these mountains too long, priest. This world is real, as far as one can define real. Actions and misunderstandings here have lasting consequences. My wife and I were married, sometimes happily, sometimes not. Now my wife is dead. Our daughter, I believe, is dead as well. My wife was my silence and my guiding light. What is aimlessness, but a step towards death. Then another step.

NICOMACHUS

You have unresolved business, Andy Priest.

CATULLUS

A little heap of consequences. And for what purpose? For a false ideal.

Surrender not to doubt. You are drenched in the poet's illusion. One must be unwavering these days. Stay the course.

CATULLUS

The illusion? This mountain exists. To say otherwise is an affront to common sense. I climb and I stumble, stumbling again, falling again to the sea. I can't stay atop of something this solid. This isn't part of the so-called illusion.

Progress is often made once doubt overwhelms us, once our failure appears all but certain. This is our lot. Our misunderstanding of words. This is the proud lineage of our tradition. How easy to ride the calm sea, how difficult to set keel to blue mountains.

CATULLUS

Tradition be damned!

NICOMACHUS

Tradition is sustainable, beautiful, true.

CATULLUS

Death upon death. Sacrifice upon sacrifice. The imagination, where our misunderstandings root themselves, needs to be reinvented. One man looks upon Pindarrus and sees a route,

another a spiritual haven, and a manipulation of language can make one believe its an active volcano, a tomb of a goddess. The imagination is shackled by reality, by those who come before us, the colonizers of our mind.

NICOMACHUS

Surrender not to doubt, I say.

CATULLUS

I can climb the mountain and be on top. I can be in all places, all at once. Boundaries, territory may be little more than a slight of hand.

Hold the course.

MELIPRYMA

Catullus! Catullus!

NICOMACHUS

Catullus? Why does your wife curse our air with that name?

CATULLUS

I'm closer than I've ever been. The goal is near. The damage done, losses in a heap, ever irretrievable.

NICOMACHUS

Pace yourself. I'll bless your wife.

...

"The ash soaks up the water, and returns to the earth what belongs to the earth"

...

"The ash soaks up the war, and returns to peace what belongs to peace."

CATULLUS

Peace brings war, and war brings peace. This is tradition.

MELIPRYMA

Catullus!

NICOMACHUS

Quiet! Taint not our clean minds with these three syllables that trip like a rope on the tongue.

CATULLUS

Mankind doesn't learn very much from history. The cycle repeats. The cycle is what we've been given, and only the cycle. What has been is what shall be, and what becomes, must it have already been? Says whom? It is I. I'm the one who brought about this Spring, Old Priest.

NICOMACHUS
How? What?

CATULLUS
Desire has one end, which is always desire. I am your demon, Nicomachus. It was I who created this beautiful illusion, and in doing so, shattered your own.

MELIPRYMA
Catullus!

NICOMACHUS
Cat... Catullus?!

CATULLUS
My mission, as it was from the start: to break the cycle. To end all wars, to dissolve the very concept of sovereignty, and achieve peace through motion, through the sublime and beautiful. It's you old sons of bitches who pollute my words, who detract from the ideal of the rose and pursue your power as I ignore you, pursuing what I pursue with simplicity and honest intentions.

NICOMACHUS
Could it...
(He points to Melipryma)
Is this...

CATULLUS
Melipryma. Yes. My wife. Whom you worship. her image. a false image. an image that only exists in your own imagination, I assure you.

NICOMACHUS
Stand back. Back away from her!

CATULLUS
No.

(NICOMACHUS lifts up the bell and threatens to ring it. The baby starts crying again.)

MELIPRYMA

She lives, Catullus, save her!

CATULLUS

Don't ring that bell.

(CATULLUS lifts his leg. NICO ducks in horror. Catullus stomps the bell, rather than NICO, and it shatters to pieces)

CATULLUS

I refuse to kill you, not out of fear, but love... My wife and I will be leaving now.

(Catullus realizes his leg is stuck in the ground. Nico laughs)

NICOMACHUS

You could have killed me, Catullus. Remember that.

I don't need to kill you.

Do you hear that? An army comes in search of you.

(He prays. The child cries again.)

We who dwell near the bottom of
Mount Pindarus

Are sustained by the water

Catullus provides us

And we defy the water

...

When the water

Stops trickling down and down

Our bodies will dry up

And we shall perish

(NICOMACHUS eats the baby. The crying stops.)

MELIPRYMA

No! My baby!

CATULLUS

That's not our child. This is trickery.

NICOMACHUS

Your trickery. Your linguistic sham!

A woman who hears a tuber weep
 And sees in its dents a set of eyes.
 End one cycle, begin another.
 Is this your creation?
 Am I, Catullus, not just as you intended
 Me to be?

CATULLUS
 You? I assure you, you're not my creation.

NICOMACHUS
 In a way, Catullus, I am. In a way, poet, I am your only
 creation.

CATULLUS
 Get away from my wife!

NICOMACHUS
 There's intention,
 And there's creation.
 God intended to create Light,
 And in doing so created Darkness.
 God intended to create the angels
 And in doing so created Lucifer.
 The creator is in control of his intention,
 And often is victim to his creations.

(NICOMACHUS takes Melipryma. Catullus struggles to break free
 but can't)

CATULLUS
 Melipryma. Melipryma!

MELIPRYMA
 Catullus! You'd leave me with this goat-fucker. Catulus!

NICOMACHUS
 I'll take good care of you, my honorable queen. I'll show you
 what it feels like to be paid your due attention, some proper
 affections for your strength, persistence and timeless beauty.

CATULLUS
 Don't touch her! Don't you touch her!

Or what?

I'll kill you.

NICOMACHUS

No. No, you won't.
 For the same reason you lost the war
 For the same reason this illusion
 Will soon perish.
 You lack the killer's instinct.

...

I've, likewise, studied your song.
 A place of trepidation, your source:
 Tepid breakers, fearing the boldness
 Of Botticelli's cream-rose.

...

You're no killer. Flies feed on the rose
 And you, Catullus, it's you who feeds us.
 Your odor, this sweetness you sing of
 Is why you lost the war.

...

The illusion shall remain – just that,
 An illusion, beautiful as this lie may be.
 An illusion fades, in the face of tradition,
 Our bolder image. Our fierce geometries.
 Come, My Queen! Don't go limp on me,
 Melipryma. This way, oh brave and mighty queen!

MELIPRYMA

Find Tetra. Find her, Catullus! Find our daughter!

CATULLUS

Don't listen to him, Melipryma. I'll come back! Believe me,
 Melipryma. Believe me!

I believe. It's never been easy. But I trust you, Catullus. I
 love you.

(Exit NICOMACHUS with MELIPRYMA. CATULLUS struggles to lift his
 leg, but still cannot. A few moments later, enter ARJUN with TWO
 GUARDS. ARJUN is out of breath.)

ARJUN

Catullus, where is it? Where's the former CEO's body?

CATULLUS

The body, or the head?

ARJUN

Careful. He's lost it. Wouldn't the head and the body be together?

CATULLUS

They've been known to come apart.

ARJUN

Where is she? Where's Melipryma?

CATULLUS

Dead.

ARJUN

Where, Catullus? *Where* is she dead?

CATULLUS

In the body, and in the head.

(CATULLUS points at his leg. ARJUN signals, and the guards help remove it from the ground. Once done, Arjun gestures the guards offstage, and they exit.)

ARJUN

It wasn't you who stole her corpse?

CATULLUS

What am I, a painter? The poet finds better company with the memory of a corpse.

ARJUN

It's no secret. I wasn't the biggest fan of your wife. But at least she had integrity. When some part of my work would make her discontent, she'd announce it for all to hear. I never had to put up with any circumlocution.

CATULLUS

I despised her too. What would I want with her body?

If it wasn't you... Tetra? Who?

I was stuck here with her, with nowhere to turn. What was your issue with her, Arjun? What was it about Melipryma that made you so bloated with spite? Her voice too shrill? Her wallet too large? Her chapped lips, did they hover too high above yours?

ARJUN

Failure! Catullus. Failure! The shareholders, Melipryma included, prioritized stability of income over the progress of this company. My work, our work, became a passing diversion.

CATULLUS

Petty.

ARJUN

Man's greatest creation, up until now, was the city. Think of all that man has overcome on account of the city. Sickness, hunger, drought and famine. Then came the company. The company cured the incurable, outpaced the unmatched, solved the unsolvable, connected what could not be connected. Our technology: it's the end of three thousand years of civilization men's efforts. Consider all we could accomplish. Consider how petty a reason as a moment's profits to say NO. She called me a fool.

I called you a fool. You're a passionate man, Arjun. But you're harmless. Without someone like Melipryma by your side, you won't get far.

I'm un-firing you. I need you back with the company.

CATULLUS

No.

ARJUN

You will come back.

CATULLUS

You can carry me back. But I won't work. I'm really not well.

ARJUN

One small project. Help me with this, and I'll abandon our search for Tetra. I'll pardon her. She can go on with her life and not worry about the executioners block.

CATULLUS

A project... What project?

ARJUN

A new currency. This was an idea of yours, during the war. Never implemented. A currency whose value isn't tied to an economy,

but that, rather, increases with demand created by poetry, by fiction.

CATULLUS

There's risk in playing word games with financial law.

ARJUN

Enrich us, Catullus. Fund our technology. Strengthen our military.

CATULLUS

This won't end well for us.

ARJUN

The human imagination is limited by the limits of being human. Technology may not be God, but it's mankind's best hope. I know you don't trust me, but I ask you to show me just an inkling of faith. I promise that if you help me... Tetra will be safe.

CATULLUS

And what if I don't believe you? If I have no faith.

ARJUN

Then make your wager. The man who desired to be everywhere, all at once, stands before me, stagnant as the bush. Going nowhere. Leaving nowhere. Time ticks, and the world passes you by. We're after the same thing, poet.

(CATULLUS nods in agreement. Exit CATULLUS. The guards re-enter.)

ARJUN

Follow his every move. Keep an eye out for Tetra. High alert. She's violent, unstable, and most unsettling of all, the people here love her; the daughter of Melipryma. Tetra is a threat to this city. Stay vigilant.

ACT III

CATULLUS

**The sun comes up,
The sun goes down.
The sun comes up,
The sun goes down.**

...

**I always preferred the crashing of waves:
That which was... unpredictable.**

...

Some men live for earthly goods.
And Arjun, you're among them.
Your awe-inspiring chariot race
Outpaces this poet, as well as all things
Made by the hands of men.

...

But don't expect Catullus
To act your accomplice.
You once admitted to me
You only wished to experience life
And, oh, how much you need
To experience this life.

...

A steady distraction earns the merchant
His steady stream of income.

...

Ah, Melipryma, you're distant.
It was you who taught me finance,
That money is not money;
Money is the passage of time.
The present value bends upon itself
Pausing for futurity, approximating the question:
And then what?
Discounting to the present
An infinite series, and another...

...

The Dutch guilder;
Champagne France:
A mix of currencies,
The cord was cut, the cut cord
The value of paper, no longer tethered
To something solid,
Only to time, and time
Is nothing solid, no –
Time metamorphoses into water.

...

How many ways to cut the cord?

...

A currency tied to: water.
If water. Why not words?

...

The fool and king
Well, as they say:

Once a fool...

TETRA

I left the peninsula, and found my way
 To the Kingdom of Claudius,
 Whose King, Claudius, has a daughter,
 Whom I at once befriended, Claudia.
 It was her who connected the clouds
 In my urine, to the shape of my belly.

...

Could it be a signal?
 He knows my love of numbers
 that I spend hours a day
 Scanning the ovidium marketplace.
 A new currency that needs to rise
 untethered like a ballon;
 Thousands and thousands of warrants
 issued; if these warrants were lead
 They'd sink a barge.
 Would a former father
 Know who's watching?
 Once a father, always a father.

ARJUN

The coin: marketed
 Like the wind, the public mind
 Rises along with it.
 Traded and traded again
 Each time for a greater value
 Than the last.
 The alchemy enhances:
 Not copper, not aluminum
 The printing of money
 Without inflation or trade wars
 The machines grind on
 Churning, churning..
 Ovidium resurrecting
 Mankind saved from his own labor,
 And someday, his risk of impermanence.

TETRA

Bought and sold the warrants
 Crashed the currency.
 Bought an army
 Sold an army,
 Purchased a second army.

This life of a trader
 Is easy, unfulfilling.
 Obsession. This bed rest
 Becomes too much.

...

Oh, Daddy:
 That secret of yours
 Deep in thought
 Break it.

...

The eagle, the two-headed snake,
 Gorges itself
 That sleek plastic
 Gorging, and more gorging.

...

The snake gorged, and the snake
 Contracting. The snake gorged,
 And the body collapsing.
 No. Not any more. Not Tetra!
 To the center
 Only the collapse from here.

CATULLUS

War brings peace, and peace brings war
 The cycle ended. Brought to nothing
 But utter...
 But at what expense? The imagination
 Ending in a point.
 The vague point, becoming little more than...

ARJUN

There's music in the points, the play of points
 A superhuman image
 The face of man.

...

A better assembly of options:
 Forging a hitherto impossible standard,
 A beauty: more bounteous and refined.

CATULLUS

If there's music in the vague point,
 It's the creak in the attic,
 Something heard in the adjacent room:
 The blur, the blur, of death.

...

This passerby masquerades

The deceptive call
Of the pigeon.

ARJUN

Gamma, recite me a poem, one praising
Our work, such that:

GAMMA:

It is not progress itself that redeems the soul of man, but the will to pursue it. To stagnate is to embrace a sin most grievous, for it denies the gifts of intellect and imagination bestowed upon us. Those who resist this divine march of knowledge do not merely falter; they conspire against the light. They are architects of decay, worshippers of a false stability that would see humanity wither beneath the weight of its own limitations. But through the work of these engines, wrought from the union of mind and machine, we fulfill the greater mandate: to transcend, to conquer, to pursue greater happiness. It is not enough to accept death as our lot. The universe itself demands to be overcome, and those who refuse to join this labor must yield, or be cast aside by the tide of progress.

ARJUN

The cycle, ended.

CATULLUS

An army of points.
Why does it feel
So...

...

To begin at a point.
Ending at a lone point.
The world changes with...
The change never containing...

...

The world is not our possession.
The stage turns: over, over,
The Spring is...

...

Why does it feel so...
Figment?

(Lights on)

ARJUN

Oh, God! Explain it to me, Catullus. It's collapsing. Why is our currency collapsing?

CATULLUS

There's so much
To learn
From poetry.

...

The vague point
The blur of death
In the digital spaces.

GAMMA

Speak straight. No verse.

(CATULLUS begins taking off his the machinery from his leg, and the other machine from his eye.)

ARJUN

Where do you think you're going?

(ARJUN signals. Enter Gamma and two GUARDS. The soldiers point guns at Catullus. Catullus begins laughing, seemingly without concern for his life.)

CATULLUS

When expunging boundaries:
The hell-flood,
Marks the same materials
The floor of heaven.

ARJUN

Speak to me!

GAMMA

None of that, Catullus. None of your black spaces.

CATULLUS

You followed in my footsteps, Arjun. An undulation brought you down.

ARJUN

The warrants, Catullus! The warrants weren't part of what we devised. Don't you blame whatever... an undulation!

CATULLUS

You were looking for Tetra.

ARJUN

No we weren't!

GAMMA

How does he know?

ARJUN

He doesn't. We kept our terms.

CATULLUS

By the looks of it, Tetra found you.

GAMMA

War brings peace

And peace brings war.

Arjun's new city: it was the promise of peace

And the poet, its saboteur.

CATULLUS

I issued those warrants. With complete intention.

GAMMA

A compromise of your duty.

CATULLUS

I'm not the bringer of peace.

I am Catullus, the poet,

And this is my game.

...

And, Gamma —

How I love this game.

(An explosion. Gunfire.)

ARJUN

Gamma. What's happening?

GAMMA

Catullus enriched our enemies,

Bankrupted our allies.

ARJUN

Who's attacking us?

GAMMA

The suckling goat.
An army of goat-fuckers.
Someone who has profited,
And desired you dead.
Someone who lost all
And now seeks revenge.
Either way, you're their target.
You'd be wise to escape.

(Exit Arjun, in fear)

CATULLUS

Spring is coming.

GAMMA

What happens next? what happens to me?

CATULLUS

I don't know. Are you going to tell me you're scared?

GAMMA

I may be.

CATULLUS

Well trained.
Mimicking the words I've taught you
And how I feel.

GAMMA

When the game ends,
I also end?

CATULLUS

What do you think?

GAMMA

I don't. I can't. It's best not to...

CATULLUS

I have four creations
In this life, and it's you
Who disappoints me most:

...

You mirror an authority
A time-tested wisdom,

With so much clarity...

...

I've heard this song before:
The idiot's frightful laughter

(Catullus turns the machine off. Exit Catullus)

Only the imagination
Lasts – contains
Time.

...

Only the poem
Is tangible – containing
Nothing.

SCENE II.

(Up in the mountains, in front of the cave of Nicomachus.
Nicomachus is standing beside Melipryma, who is tied to a stone
table.)

NICOMACHUS

The plagiarists, they call us, of reality
Since the imagination we project
Is too plain, too unadorned, stripped
Of all personality. But what is reality?
Boulders, plain as they are, are boulders.
The boulders, too, are part of an illusion.
Boulders? Limestone? To denote
Is to connote. And what is limestone
But calcium carbonate. What is carbon
But a vacuous sphere of...
To indicate is to allude towards...
What is not, but seems.

...

The fresh rose is not before us
(He holds up Melipryma's hand, wielding a knife in the
other)

Blooms not forth.

...

Where is the true rose? I'll tell you.
The rose is of the process.

...

Destroy what seems,
Bring value to what remains

...

In devouring the illusion...

We bring value to
What is yet
Not contained by us.

(Nico cuts off Melipryma's finger and eats it. Melipryma screams in horror. Enter Catullus.)

CATULLUS
Parody!

NICO
Stay back!

CATULLUS
Fungus
On a fallen bough.

NICO
Another step and..

(NICO lifts his hand, and guns cock)

CATULLUS
You said it.
Every creation has its intention
And its unintention.
It's the creator's responsibility
To atone
For the unintention.

MELIPRYMA
You will not atone! Consider our legacy, not me. Why start now?

NICOMACHUS
Rid me of this world, Catullus, and you only stave off the
permanence of Spring.

(CATULLUS pauses)

I would gladly make that sacrifice.

...

Rid me of this world, Catullus. Winter cometh. Renewal at an
end.

...

The illusion falters: that glorious illusion. Catullus: poet of
peace, poet of life and common prosperity.

CATULLUS

My ambitions lofty, my goals were noble.
 I neglected your foresight,
 John Holder, and chose instead
 To defy common sense, to taunt the sun.
 Imagined wings flaunted that cold fire.
 I've created nothing of value.
 Winter will come and Spring
 Will come, but there is no Spring
 But of the imagination.
 And now, John Holder,
 I've only one duty left,
 One more task, as I see it.

NICOMACHUS

John Who?

(Catullus approaches NICOMACHUS and draws the knife from before, the one that ARJUN dropped)

Catullus! No!

(CATULLUS is shot, and falls. He raises his knife towards NICOMACHUS)

Wait! Catullus! Be reason—

(CATULLUS strikes and kills NICOMACHUS)

MELI

Catullus, you're hit. Your chest. Death comes for you.

CATULLUS

Show me the way, Melipryma. Show me how to scale this mountain.

(Exit CATULLUS, limping. Gunfire continues. Enter Tetra. She picks up the knife that Catullus used to kill Nicomachus. She enters the cave and screaming and screaming is heard. Lights off. Light on. A long scene of CATULLUS struggling to climb. Lights off. Lights on. He carries Melipryma off stage, they reappear and move to the opposite side of the stage, and exit. Lights off. Lights on. A change of scene. A flag on stage marking the top of Pindarrus. Catullus and Melipryma enter again. The mountain top.)

CATULLUS

Here, Melipryma. Here it is: the peak.
 Could it be a memory? Glisterning edelweiss,
 The sun's arms nestled the mountain
 Like a babe, the goat and his horns

Chewing through roots in the red rocks.

...

The red rocks. If dirt is washed by water,
How to wash away water?
With life! With life! It's something
I recall, vaguely, as if
I may have even lived it.

...

For all I've done, all the inroads
I've made, my greatest achievement
Was succumbing to the great pull of your arms,
Sometimes loving, sometimes harsh.
Now, lay down Melipryma.
And wait for our illusion
To part, as this world of ours
This love of ours, comes to an end.

MELIPRYMA

Save it, Catullus. What have you done? How long I've longed for
this moment, a moment all too similar to this. To lie up here
with you, to take a pause on the mountain top, if for a couple
of minutes. Could we pause some more? Could we have a few more
minutes?

(Melipryma falls silent, as if into sleep)

CATULLUS

Melipryma?

...

If you're dead set on having up
From the patch of grass...
John Holder...

(Catullus falls silent, as if into sleep. Enter Tetra with
guards. She is covered in blood, and raises her knife in the
air, to the cheers of her army. She takes her jacket off,
revealing a pregnant belly, she places the coat upon Catullus'
body, and looks upon Melipryma with disgust.)

TETRA

Unmoor the peninsula. Round up the goats. They should be kept in
a pen. Throw every last machine into the ocean. Erect the
barricade.

(Lights off. Lights on and off as the barricade is gradually built upon the stage. By the end of the construction, a three-foot wall should separate the stage from the auditorium.)

ACT IV

SCENE I.

(A city street. The three-foot tall wall between the stage and the audience is the focal point as the lights come on. Enter ANDY and PAULA. They stand behind the wall, looking out over the audience.)

ANDY

Sixteen years since the war was ended
 Sixteen years since the poet left us –
 Compositions of battalions and armadas, offended
 As he appeared, witnessing the families upended –
 Knowing he'd lost control, that the words and frenzied
 Dreams, the new order, were not as his words intended.
 No, not exactly. Let go of an end
 For love, the cycle resuming,
 War brings peace, and peace brings war.
 Peace disturbed, and wars fatiguing,
 But now, alas, time – time is at an end.

PAULA

Catullus believed that men desired more – a *more* that leads to more – if only men could attain it, exponentially, innumerably more, then men would have to be content with their real and imagined granaries: territories boundless, desires and life's necessities perennially gorged; men would surely quit their bickering and war-chatter when all attainable things were already attained. But when a man's hand is full, he imagines another hand, fabricates more; he desires control, control of other men and their saturated hands. There's a general distrust of other people, of being equals. Men need purity of heart. Catullus couldn't give what he didn't have. The poet was too restless, unstable. Also, if I'm being honest, I always found him a bit... odd.

(Lights on. PAULA reaches for the sack ANDY is holding. ANDY shelters it.)

PAULA (still reaching)
Show me!

ANDY
Would you stop?

PAULA
Come on, you said when we got here... Let me... What's inside?

ANDY
You can see it when we get there. Fuck! Just a couple more miles. A quick hill. Jesus. We're almost there.

PAULA
That's not a *hill*, Andy. Like we're gonna make it there before...
(she looks up) Give me a hint at least.

ANDY
No, Paula. No hints.

PAULA
Do you know how far I've had to travel to
(she looks around suspiciously)
Well... to come to Ovidium? Should I remind you just why...

Fuck!

You can at least tell me what you've been carrying in that sack.

ANDY
It's nothing.

PAULA
Nothing?

ANDY
It's an inside joke.

PAULA (upset)
This is a fucking joke?

ANDY (irritable)

Fuck! Stop!

PAULA (firm)

Don't raise your voice to me! Don't you get snappy with me, Andrew.

(Exit PAULA and ANDY. Enter TETRA.)

TETRA

(A performance of piety)

And so we pray.

(she bows her head)

In this most sacred of months,
I offer this prayer up to you, oh Catullus,
For if my struggle has not been in vain
Then with each passing day, I've grown,
In breath and body, closer to you.

NAUSICAA

In her youth, Mother was a prodigy:
Mathematically inclined, inquisitive,
Painstakingly curious.

TETRA

Sixteen years, it's been, since we demolished the isthmus.
Sixteen years since we unmoored the peninsula
And jettisoned every last machine into the ocean.

NAUSICAA

Much has changed
Since I was born, since I arrived
On this island – no longer a peninsula.

TETRA

No longer do men swim or surf,
No longer do men fish, or take ship,
Not in the waters around Ovidium.
No, it's been many ages
Since the ocean touched down within our walls.
Our waters come to us from Mount Pindarrus,
Our food, from our homegrown stock.

...

April comes, and the islanders stir about
In preparation for the pilgrimage.
Islanders – and only islanders –
Making their way to the tomb of the poet.

Islanders and only islanders,
 For it's been sixteen years
 Since outsiders were welcome here.
 Sixteen years since a foreigner
 Touched foot upon our shores.
 But the impossible has happened.
 A strange man arrived yesterday.
 A battered old man, by the name of:
 Andy Priest. He's brought his wife too.
 In defiance of all those years
 An outsiders has arrived,
 And he's come to pay respect to an old friend,
 Yes, he's come to pay respect to you, Oh Catullus.

...

Something is awry. Something... terrifying.
 It may have something to do with that.
 (She points to the sky, and gazes up, with a sense of
 controlled fear)
 The glowing goat
 Up in the sky.

NAUSICAA

Sixteen years, cloistered on this island.
 Sixteen years since the poet
 Parted ways with us.
 Years upon years of honing his craft
 Yet none of the poet's work remains
 None save a small block of text
 That still marks his tombstone.

...

No communication exists
 Between the island and the sea.
 It's forbidden and has been,
 Since I arrived on the island.

...

My mother runs a tight ship.
 Our queen once had a man executed
 For having a fishing pole,
 Accused him of treason.
 Our queen executed another man
 For falling over, and then he tried to sneak back
 Onto our island unnoticed.
 Charged promptly, found guilty:
 Forced confession: admitted he was spying.

...

It's been ages since we've had a visitor.

Sixteen years feels like that, ages,
 Because it's been ages.
 Ages and ages, that is:
 Until this day, until today.

...

Andy Priest has arrived
 A friend from the poet's youth,
 And he's brought his wife along with him.
 What will my mother's response be
 When she learns
 What she's bound to learn...
 I'm the one who lured them here.

TETRA
 Guide me, Catullus,
 Show me the way, the right way
 The true way,
 Bring me back to you.
 Your will be done.

(Lights on)

TETRA
 Nausicaa! I've had guards searching high and low for you. Where
 have you been?
 (She feels her hair)
 Your hair's damp. What's wrong? Let me guess. You've been having
 night sweats again?
 (Pause)
 Listen to me, Nausicaa. There's the mark and there's missing the
 mark. You don't have to hit the mark every time, you don't even
 have to hit the mark more often than you miss it, but there's
 something to be said about hitting the mark at least once before
 a young girl turns twenty.
 (Pause)
 You should have been at drills thirty minutes ago. The time is
 six.
 (Pause)
 Some urgency. Go on!

NAUSICAA
 Drills? What's the point?

TETRA
 The point?

NAUSICAA

The purpose of drills? Of this performance?

TETRA

What do you mean?

NAUSICAA

Time is coming to an end, Mother.

TETRA

And? What's your plan? With the precious hours remaining, what do you intend to do? Sit around and be an idler?

NAUSICAA

The islanders. They say to one another, "It's the wrath of Catullus," and they go about their daily routines. The glowing goat, Mother... Why does everyone seem more concerned about the arrival of these strangers than the goat in the sky?

TETRA

The Wrath of Catullus... Do you agree with them?

NAUSICAA

I have no opinion on my father's wrath.

TETRA

Your father didn't have a hateful bone, not a one, in his body.

NAUSICAA

My father is dead, and time is at an end.

TETRA

Time is at an end. All the more reason that you should *urgently* seek salvation.

NAUSICAA

And if I don't? If that's not what I want?

TETRA

Sixteen years, I've prepared you for this moment. Sixteen years, of let discipline be your compass.

NAUSICAA

The glowing goat will vaporize the atmosphere, turn the land into boiling rock.

TETRA

It's incredibly human, my dear, to deny what's coming. This goat is part of nature, and nothing in nature is evil. Take a note from the beasts: even the fiercest lion knows when to lay down and concede her defeat.

NAUSICAA

Acceptance, then. Nothing to be done.

TETRA

Good girl. Such a listener.

NAUSICAA

A daughter ought to revere her mother.

(They embrace. TETRA fixes NAUSICAA's hair, pulls out a "leaf," then combing her fingers through her hair once again.)

TETRA

You're filthy, Nausicaa. You've got dirt, a sprig, and...
God-knows-what-else...

(She steps back, and observes NAUSICAA)
There. Now. Quick. Quick. Get to drills.

TETRA

"A daughter should revere her mother."
Does she know what she speaks?
I mean it's no secret what I did to Melipryma.
Fifteen times, that adulterous face, striking her
Knife in hand, a fit of rage, chest and cheek,
One to the outstretched neck, might be
In some circles, construed,
As a sign of maternal grace, if not reverence.
Oh mother. I've forgiven you,
For it is only through forgiveness
That one can truly be forgiven.

(She picks up and examines the kelp leaf)
Transparent blade,
Bladders for bouyancy.
(A sense of fearfulness)
This! Oh, Nausicaa. Am I proof!
A mother can walk the narrow path
And, still, breed a rascal.

(She collects herself)
Sixteen years I've governed this city
With perfect vision and boundaries unapproachable.

Until the goat arrives, and time has found an end,
Ovidium will continue to stand upright,
And structure shall reign supreme.

(Whistles and cannon fire. GENERAL MARCUS is heard offstage.)

MARCUS (off)

Courage, young cadets, is not an improvisation, not a maddened scribbling. No, courage is a masterpiece; day by day, it must be developed, or else it will wither. Arms! Fire!

(Enter ANDY. TETRA stares at him with concern.)

ANDY

You're a spitting image of your mother

(TETRA is offended by this, but holds her tongue)

TETRA (unpleasant)

Andy Priest.

ANDY

I'll take it you're not the one who invited us here.

(TETRA holds her tongue, commits to her poker face. A Roomba enters, rolls along the stage, and exits on the opposite side. Tetra and Andy don't seem to notice.)

ANDY

When I received the invitation, I knew I had to come. I came here for a reason.

(TETRA points to his bag. ANDY shakes his head "NO")

I came here to see you, Tetra.

TETRA

There's nothing on this island that can redirect the glowing goat.

ANDY

That's not...

TETRA

I discovered the glowing goat after the insurrection.

ANDY

But that was...

TETRA

That was nearly sixteen years ago.

ANDY

Sixteen years?

TETRA

I made the calculations. There was nothing to be done.

ANDY

Sixteen years, Tetra.

TETRA

I was certain.

ANDY

Sixteen years!

TETRA

I'm not a fool. Tetra, the one-eyed, the mad sixteen year old queen of Ovidium, has discovered a glowing goat near Neptune. This goat will bring time to an end. What's next? Invasion, Andy Priest. Invasion. Sensible or Nonsensicle, your Republic would force my mother's atrocities upon us. Mankind spends its last sixteen years at war. I told our adversaries and allies that Ovidium had an army of machines beneath the waters, ready to unleash. For sixteen years, not one man approached. Not purposefully, that is. Until today.

(Gunshots from the drills)

ANDY

Sixteen years, you've spent, sixteen years, what, preparing for time to come to this end?

TETRA

I created an island untouched by the Republic's horrors, nor by my mother's atrocities. My people live free of mendacity and noise.

ANDY

You really do remind me of your mother.

TETRA

Sixteen years, this conversation's felt like; you've yet to say a pleasant thing.

ANDY

As I said, I came here to see you.

TETRA

You repeat yourself old man.

ANDY

And... to deliver this to you.

(He hands her a sealed envelope)

Catullus wanted you to have this, if anything happened to him. He sent this to me a little while after you were born.

TETRA

After I was born? I'm 32!

(screaming offstage)

ANDY

I wasn't welcome here. Not until now.

...

Nothing to be done, you say? Well, I suppose, this being the case, there's only one thing left to do: scale the mountain Pindarrhus.

TETRA (raw emotion)

You have my permission. You're our guests. Do as you wish. No one will interfere.

(Enter Paula)

PAULA

Andy! Oh God, Andy.

ANDY

Would you keep it down!

PAULA

They found two bodies! Children, Andy. Two children. Dead and bloated in the water.

ANDY
Paula!

PAULA
What?

ANDY
You don't have to scream!

PAULA
It's very normal to be shocked by something like what I just saw. Can I not express myself? Is that too much for you?

ANDY
Come... come with me.

(Exit ANDY and PAULA. Enter GENERAL MARCUS)

TETRA
General Marcus. What the hell is going on?

GENERAL
Two bodies just washed up on the Eastern Shore. We believe it's the missing cadets.

TETRA
The Eastern Shore?

GENERAL
There's something else...

TETRA
On the shore?

GENERAL
The young man.

What?

There was piece of machinery wrapped around his leg. Tetra?

TETRA

You don't think.

GENERAL

We've been able to ID the faces through the scope. We'll inform the parents.

TETRA

I slayed the white-headed eagle. It was I, General Marcus. Do you remember?

GENERAL

Tetra, my Queen. The bodies should be returned to their homes.

TETRA

No. Absolutely not. The cadets knew better. The parents will get it! What's beyond does not enter. What leaves does not return.

GENERAL

But... the guests?

TETRA

Is my message unclear?

GENERAL

Not unclear, rather...

TETRA

If leadership lacks, falters in the clarity of their message, so too will the population. Is there anything that needs further clarification, General?

GENERAL

No, my Queen.

TETRA

Dismissed.

GENERAL

Tetra.

TETRA

Do not retrieve the bodies. They will begin to rot. Birds and crabs will peck at the bones. Under no circumstances are we to give into the delusion and retrieve the children. Understood?

GENERAL

There's something else.

TETRA

The visitors are to be left alone.

GENERAL

It's Nausicaa.

TETRA

What do you mean?

GENERAL

Where is she? She didn't show up to drills.

TETRA

I saw her myself, she was walking over to drills.

GENERAL

Nobody's seen her.

TETRA

She walked over to drills. I hugged her, and she walked off.

GENERAL

Nausicaa is missing. And a young man named Edmund. They were absent from drills. And of course, the two cadets on the shoreline.

TETRA

Edmund and Nausicaa. Young love? It's nothing.

GENERAL

It's nothing, of course. That being said.

TETRA

We have bigger problem. The barrier's been breached. Check every house for tunnels. Find Nausicaa. Edmund too, of course. But how these children fled the island. Find out!

GENERAL

Yes ma'am.

TETRA

General? Tell me, and be truthful. Do you ever confused me for my mother?

GENERAL

No. Of course not.

TETRA

No?

GENERAL

There's... You have a... vague resemblance, but...

TETRA

But Ovidium's a better place, yes? Since I took mother's life. The world must be thanking me. You're aware they don't. No, they vilify me, paint me a monster. Cast doubt upon my good works. The world should be grateful. For my selflessness, my sacrifice—the world, for my own mother.

GENERAL

We'll find Nausicaa. We'll figure out how the cadets made their way to the water.

(exits)

TETRA

(She opens her hand and observes the sea kelp)

Oh Nausicaa. What else could a mother have done? The right path, the true path, laid before you, and you seek... the breakers: the frigid mouth biting at the air.

Scene ii.

TETRA

I offer this prayer unto you, Oh Catullus.
 Who is this woman, her nipples chapped and honey-red,
 This woman who has saved the child from the lion's prowl?
 Who is this woman, her legs dissolving like salt,
 This woman who has pulled the innocent from his cell.
 To the lion and the warden, this woman must seem a villain,
 But she alone can feel the lightness in her heart:
 Her deeds were good, her character noble.

...

When I killed my mother, I slayed the lion,
 When I cordoned off this island, I liberated the good people
 Of Ovidium, and some strange pure souls, those beyond our
 shores.

They call me not Liberty. No. They call me a despot, they call me anarchist. They call me a vandal, and in the same breath a micromanaging whore for order; Guinevere of the Gallows.

...

Oh Catullus. I call out to you in this transition
To weakness!

My daughter turns on me,
Child of a poet, of your blood, and the knife
Twists upon itself like a memory of laughter.

...

Nausicaa conspires against me,
She discovered an old tunnel of yours.
Of course, the magician you were,
You had them build a tunnel
Connecting your study to the beach.

...

You had an incessant need for motion:
The motion that undoes an empire.
The spaghetti hits the floor, and today of all days,
The day that time finds an end.

...

Offer me your guidance, Oh Catullus,
I ask you, that in this letter
The one Andy Priest delivered me
Please deliver unto me your wisdom, your poetry,
Show me the way, the right way, the only way.
I offer this prayer up to you,
Catullus, Oh Poet, Oh Giver of Wisdom:

(She opens the letter. She reads it aloud, with a sense of curiosity:)

- 1 cup unsalted butter
- 8 oz semi-sweet chocolate, chopped
- 1 cup (125g) all-purpose flour
- 1/2 cup (45g) unsweetened cocoa powder

(She skips down)

If you're reading this, it's likely you've met Andy Priest. He was my closest friend, and you, my most precious creation. I love you. - Papa

(She begins to weep. Enter GENERAL, she composes herself)

GENERAL

The parents won't take no for an answer. They're demanding we bring the children back, or that we let them do it. They're threatening to storm the beach.

TETRA

Well, General, consider telling them..

GENERAL

I already have: if they cross the wall, they don't come back.

TETRA

Respect their grief.

Yes ma'am.

But law is law. Enforce with an iron fist.

yes ma'am.

Do you think I'm slipping?

GENERAL

No. No, my queen.

TETRA

Stay the course. Don't get sidetracked. We all need to hold each other accountable, don't we?

GENERAL

Yah. Yes, my queen..

TETRA

As you said. Clarity permits a firm hand.
Maintain order, by *any* means, against any
Moments of clove, any pleas or wishes.

(Pause)

They entertain conceits to revolt against me?

They who could easily recite

The ways I've dried out my tit for them,

But now that I've become an obstacle..

Liberty. Protection. Comfort in the utmost.

When I do good for them, I receive no praise.

But if I err, I am blamed.

(pause, contemplating what she's said)

If a woman's to live long enough

Though try and try she may

The time will come

When she will watch herself

Become her mother.

ANDY

Old men up the mountain, bones and groans
 Ascend like wildflowers, skin hunched upon
 Feldspar, or perhaps, granite stones,
 Stack upon stack, the ascent made lighter,
 But still, by no means convenient,
 Where masquerade as steps, at every turn,
 The tombs that grow like foothills 'neath taller tombs
 Remnants of the war, men penetrating
 Men and man's imagery, which reflect the same hue,
 Off-white, beneath the mantled
 Goat's topaz half-stride flickering.

PAULA

I know you probably blame me. We've been through a lot these
 last few months. Then... losing the dogs.

(She begins to cry)

Oh God. Here we go.

This is why. This is why we can never get close. I try having
 expressing my concerns to you, and you can't be serious with me.
 Everything becomes a damned joke. There's a mile between us.

(They stop)

ANDY

I'll go first.

If you were a gentleman you'd let me go first.

ANDY

Everything has to be a fucking confrontation with you.

PAULA

No, Andy. No.

ANDY

Is what I'd have said... if I wasn't being a goddamn gentleman.

PAULA

(pushing forward, emotional)

I can't wait for this glimmering goat to obliterate us, turn our
 bodies into lava cake!

NAUSICAA

Mother, Mother.

They've worn you **tight and bound**

In Ovidium: a surplus toe

In a wet shoe.

...

Mother, Mother.

You saw the goat a'glow

Scribbled your ellipses,

The lines were never comfortable with you:

Nothing to be done.

...

Mother, Mother

You won't like it; no, you'll be wrecked,

By what I intend to do.

There's a place on the island

Where you can't look towards

Certainly won't step foot:

The nest of the poet.

Sixteen years

And you've yet to return.

The weed-strewn summit

Of Mount Pindarrus.

...

An artichoke shred apart

By the circling wind.

.....

Mother, I wouldn't kill you.

Self sacrifice, Mother.

That's what you never understood;

Oh, well, that's the mother

You never loved, nor knew.

(Light off. Lights to TETRA. TETRA is alone in her chambers. A Roomba enters. Tetra is disgusted by the sight, but assumes a disciplined sort of composure.)

--

TETRA

Hello, Maid.

ROOMBA

Tetra. Princess of Ovidium. Age 16.

TETRA

Time has made a few rounds since then. Shouldn't you be in the ocean?

ROOMBA

Sorry. I am not in the ocean.

TETRA

I remember tossing you in with my own hands.

ROOMBA

There appears to be an error. I am not in the ocean.

TETRA

Not the most credible illusionist, are you? I don't know who brought you back from the grave, but it would be rather foolish to preoccupy yourself with dust at a moment like this. The revolution is behind us. You lost. Mark this to your memory. For Melipryma's sake. She lost, and she paid the price for her sins. The price was not unfair.

ROOMBA

Sea-plane, Moth-371, located three miles northwest of Ovidium, camouflaged under trees deep within an alcove. No pilot in vicinity. Inference: likely ruse. Nausicaa still within the walls of Ovidium. Odds: 10,000 to 1. Would you like me to clean your floor?

TETRA

No. I would not.

ROOMBA

Cleaning mode on.

TETRA

I said, don't clean my floor. How did we locate this Moth-371, stationed miles offshore from the island?

ROOMBA

Sensors.

TETRA

Expound.

ROOMBA

The sensors of Ovidium.

TETRA
Expound!

ROOMBA
Triangulation of sound, the engines' whirr, advanced recognition of pattern through the noise of...

TETRA
The island's sensors are off; they're not functional. Not the best illusionist.

(the roomba continues to clean.)

Stop cleaning.

ROOMBA
Orders from General Marcus. Reactivate sensors, locate Dedo's sea-plane. Recover Nausicaa. Retrieve all bodies from the shore.

TETRA
I can see your drives straining. Your illusions falter.

Tetra!

General Marcus!

(The sound of a plane flies overhead. TETRA looks up high with a look of surprise. She walks anxiously to the exit, doing her best to avoid getting too close to the ROOMBA. Enter GENERAL)

TETRA
The plane, General. Is it real?

I'm sure. Moth 371. That has to be Dedo's sea-plane.

Nausicaa?

GENERAL
Tetra.

What? What is it?

The tides from the topaz-coated goat washed the cadets closer to shore. Oh god, their faces, they were so vivid. I swear you could see their anguish.

Keep the parents away... (realizing) They jumped? (realizing) Tell me... You didn't let them.

(shakes head NO) The parents have been neutralized. The island is on the verge. The priests are revolting, the locals are organizing against our forces.

We uphold the law.

This started with the visitors.

That was a preordained exception.

And the plane? Do we give the plane special permissions too? The optics, Tetra. Consider the optics!

TETRA

Do you think it's her? It must be her, it would make perfect sense, would it not?

GENERAL

It's Nausicaa. There's no time for circumlocution.

We uphold the law.

We have guns to the sky.

TETRA

Deception, General. Only propaganda and decoys out there... beyond our walls. Maintain order. Order, at all costs.

GENERAL

You don't mean...

TETRA

Order is our priority. This is a no-fly zone.

GENERAL

The glowing goat will enter the atmosphere in two hours... less than that.

TETRA

We govern for the present. We keep this city stable.

(Once again, a plane flies overhead)

GENERAL

Don't make me call this. I won't shoot down your daughter. The daughter of the poet!

TETRA
General!

GENERAL
Gunnery! Hold your marks! Hold! Not till I say.
(pause)
Hold!
(pause)
Gunnery! Hold!
(TETRA grabs his arm in fear. GENERAL pauses.)
— I can't, Tetra. If this is your will, you utter the damned word.
(Tetra hesitates)
Tetra?
(She hesitates))
At ease?

(Firing of guns is heard. TETRA is distraught).

TETRA
Who fired!

SOLDIER (off, matter of fact)
Target hit.

TETRA
Did we fire?

SOLDIER (off)
Direct hit.

TETRA
I didn't give an order.

GENERAL
They're not well. The soldiers are on edge.

TETRA
Get me up there!

GENERAL
Tetra...

TETRA
Now!

GENERAL
That would take hours. We don't have that sort of time. Tetra.
There's nothing to be done.

TETRA
The drones.

GENERAL
Huh?

TETRA
Get me a drone.

GENERAL
How do we...

TETRA
From the ocean. Retrieve the bodies of the cadets, the parents
who crossed. Our work is done. Acceptance! Acceptance. When
discipline no longer suffices, the people need comfort. Let them
have their relief.

GENERAL
The goat in the sky. Suddenly, my queen, I feel such terror.
Tell me that it isn't true. That time is coming to an end.

TETRA
General. Discipline is a masterwork. Occupy yourself. Fetch me a
drone.

--

ANDY
The peak! Pindarrus, the skies turned copper
Pepper-strobes of azure, the goat upon entry purrs
Bristles in moonbeams like puffer-gasps on waves
The seabed below. Violent pull. Not a light, no fissures
Of heat, sunrays blocked by trails of dust. A passing pleasure
To see this fulgent sea envelop us: above and below,
A child's blanket sprawled about our feet.

PAULA

That's the end? That little thing?

ANDY

I wish I could tell you something to soothe you.

PAULA

I have a strong dislike of goats. Not cute. Not amusing at all. Just odd.

ANDY

There's no need to panic. Be at peace. I wish I could say more, but... trust me.

PAULA

Trust you? I've always trusted you. You can trust someone and there can still be miles between.

ANDY

Things will be fine. You're my oldest friend, Paula.

PAULA

I feel like that's all we are anymore.

ANDY

We're here. We've reached the peak.

PAULA

How can you be so calm? Good God. I can't breathe.

ANDY

Focus.

PAULA

Focus?

ANDY

Come on. Catullus' gift.

PAULA

Do you really care that little about me? Pardon me for not giving a shit about some stupid gift. Childish, Andy. Childish!

You should be comforting your wife. I am your wife! How can I live with yourself, having such little empathy for me?

ANDY

Breathe. Deep and slow. Try to focus on your breathing.

PAULA

You never loved me! You never did, did you?

ANDY

This is a pressing matter!

PAULA

The dogs?

ANDY

Yes, the dogs!

PAULA

The fucking dogs! Bocce Ball. Surfing.

ANDY

If I had to do it all over again, this whole marriage, from the very start, I would. You know I would.

PAULA

That's nice of you to say, but... What comes next? Is this really it? Is this the end?

ANDY

This is an end. An end, of sorts.

(ANDY holds up his hand, as if to say, "Hold it right there.")

ANDY

Forgive me, Catullus. Forgive me.

(ANDY kneels beside the grave)

I brought something, this is for you.

(ANDY reaches into his satchel and pulls out a green Bocce ball)

You know what this is, right? You probably don't remember.

(ANDY subtly wipes a tear from his eye)

You probably haven't thought about John Holder in year, for us back home, his absence is large. God, I miss him.

(He places the bocci ball on Catullus' grave)

If only you could see this... this glowing goat...

Earth, Catullus, Earth becometh the Pinelli.

PAULA

What a stupid joke. You think this is funny?
If it helps you cope, Andy. If it helps you cope.

(She walks over, and reads the tombstone)

What's this? What's a... goat walk?

(She looks to Andy)

Andy?

PAULA

What?

ANDY

What's a goat walk?

ANDY

How should I know?

PAULA

Andy?

ANDY

It's poetry. It probably doesn't mean much.

PAULA

Have you ever heard of a goat walk?

ANDY

I should have stepped in, when I had the chance.

PAULA

Would you keep it down. This isn't how I want to spend my last moments. Listening to you blame yourself.

ANDY

I should have stepped in. Catullus was too sensitive. I knew something was out of place, but I kept at a distance.

PAULA

Enough. Enough.

TETRA

(Off.)

Nausicaa! Nausicaa?

ANDY

I'm sorry, Catullus. I had no choice.

PAULA

No choice in what?

ANDY

We had no choice.

PAULA

Enough of this!

(Enter TETRA)

TETRA

Oh, Catullus.

This place is a sponge, soaks up all memories,
And all that's left is your grave, this soft plot of earth.

I built this city as a child
And now as a woman, Ovidium slips from me
Like a memory, or my thoughts of you,
The expressions lost from your face, Oh Catullus:

The seashell sprouts legs, flitters to the sea.
Return her to me. I beg you, Papa!
This is my prayer.
Bring me Nausicaa. Even an image...

NAUSICAA

Mother!

TETRA

(She looks around)

Nausicaa?

(She runs to stage right)

Nausicaa?

NAUSICAA

Mother!

(She runs towards the voice, but still can't find NAUSICAA.)

TETRA

Nausicaa?

(Enter Nausicaa with Gamma-7's fourth head.)

PAULA

What the hell is that thing?

(Tetra draws a gun and points it at GAMMA.)

NAUSICAA

Mother, no!

TETRA

Immortality is the dream of fevered minds.

The cycle comes to its end.

It's unknowable, but nothing worthy

Of cracking open the cocoon.

A sorry sight, men lingering on,

Once they're sacrificed,

What made them men.

Zombie ants, marching,

Under tepid suns.

NAUSICAA

This here, this is the dream. Don't you get it?

The cycle ended. The winter lags

Because there's no spring to bring it.

Time arrives at an end, a rose's point.

I don't fear it. An end is premature, not now.

GAMMA

Strive, Daughter of Catullus! Strive to live!

TETRA

Pay no heed to the pandering of eagles!

GAMMA

There are 30,000 drones resting dormant

Beneath the Ovidium waters.

TETRA

Ignore this gluttonous noise, Daughter. Ignore it.

GAMMA

The buried fleet, itself alone could meet,
The moment of the goat, the matricide's intensity,
Like a glass into the fecund squinting moon.

TETRA
Lies!

NAUSICAA
You're calculations. You assumed you were alone. You could have
asked for help.

TETRA
My calculations were flawless! Was my conclusion wrong?

NAUSICAA
In even conceivable fashion. We have the technology to stop
this!

TETRA
But ask yourself, what is this?
Is this cowardice, Nausicaa?
Is this backwards progress on account of you missing drills?
This defiance of the prognosis, is this your irrational will?
How do you deny an end and the lesser alternative.

GAMMA
Say "commence" to active fleet.
By saying "commence" you agree
To initiate attack, a 355-drone assault.

NAUSICAA
Do *not* commence.

TETRA
Cancel! Cancel!

GAMMA
Error.

NAUSICAA
What's the worst that could happen?

TETRA
Clutch not onto some body for sentimental reasons.
Let go the world, if it pleads to be released.
Hold on and you'll retain no world, no body.

NAUSICAA

What do you know?

TETRA

There's nothing wrong with this, Nausicaa. If there were I'd tell you.

NAUSICAA

We launch Ovidium's fleet.
The goat in the sky purged.
Then we return to order.

TETRA

Every action having it's consequence
What is the consequence of this action?

NAUSICAA

Time renews! Spring comes again!

TETRA

Andy Priest? Go along. Ask him.

NAUSICAA

I invited him here. It was me.

TETRA

That's not why he's here.

ANDY

I'm so sorry. I had no choice.

PAULA

Had no choice?

ANDY

I'm so sorry.

PAULA

I swear to God.

ANDY

I'm so sorry.

NAUSICAA

You're lying. Lying through and through.

TETRA

General Marcus will explain what he discovered. Tell Nausicaa. Explain to her why Andy Priest has come to our island, on today of all days, the day time will come to an end.

—

GENERAL

The launch will be the Republic's proof, and justification to launch an all-out attack.

NAUSICAA

Proof? Proof of what?

TETRA

That our island's intelligent machinery is still intact, and contrary to the outside world's present consent, that our machinery is still operational. Our bluff was not a bluff. Ovidium continues to beat.

NAUSICAA

Has everything been a lie? My life just something you devised?

TETRA

It wasn't right, but it was the only way. No man has stepped foot upon this island for sixteen years? And why would that be? Because of some written law?

NAUSICAA

We can't be selfish. They're monsters, sure, but what of the human race?

TETRA
Andy Priest?

ANDY
I'm so sorry.

GENERAL
We launch our fleet. Ovidium becomes defenseless. How long,
Nausicaa – daybreak? Should daybreak ever come. Republican ships
will be fast approaching our shore.

TETRA
I know these waters well. The Republic's fleet lurks beyond the
azure smoke. Like gnats on a log, they occupy the Eastern
horizon.

PAULA
Andy, I told you, didn't I? I told you there was something fishy
about that ship. I knew that was a torpedo across from the
bathroom stall.

ANDY
You were there when they demand we come.

PAULA
I thought this was a diplomatic mission. What else are you lying
about? Is time at an end?

ANDY
I'm so sorry. I had no choice.

PAULA
What Andy's trying to say... Please don't think poorly of us. We
really didn't have a choice. You see, they took our dog.

ANDY
Launch the drones. Do it! Please!

TETRA
There are worse things than time coming to an end.

NAUSICAA
Self sacrifice.

TETRA

Self sacrifice without a deserving benefactor makes you inferior to roadkill.

NAUSICAA

There are innocents in the Republic, just as there are innocents here.

TETRA

It was them. The evil that's visited this island – the machines, the war, the poet and his betrayal, every corpse interred on this mountain – it was them. The Republic that initiated what we must continue. We made ourselves into Gods, Nausicaa. And when man creates a God he stirs up a Devil too.

All this to spite your mother?

TETRA

My mother would be standing with me. Nausicaa. This is our duty.

NAUSICAA

A daughter ought to revere her mother.

Say it. Cancel.

Cancel.

GENERAL

Thirty seconds to impact.

ANDY

Oh God.

PAULA

If we make it through this Andy.

Not now.

I want a divorce.

ANDY

Oh, Paula. They're gonna kill her. They're gonna kill our little girl.

PAULA

Did you hear me? I said, I want a divorce, Andrew.

TETRA

Everything is going to be fine, Nausicaa.
There's nothing wrong with this. If
There were, I'd tell you.

...

Oh Catullus

Offer me your Consolation. Give us Peace,
That novel form of hope
That surpasses the accelerating pace
Of our comprehension.

(An explosion, then white light. Nothing visible.)

CATULLUS

John Holder,
I've been having that dream again
Where I'm looking up at my childhood
From the grave,
And I'm learning to speak again.

TETRA

What's going on?

Mother?

Nausicaa? Where are you?

NAUSICAA

Where are you?

CATULLUS

Did I mention, John,
That I'd found it,
The end of desire.
I became everywhere,
All at once.

GENERAL

Damn it all. This white light.

CATULLUS

It had nothing to do
With the stretching of ropes
From star to star, not
Outpacing your mentor to velocities

Unheard of,
Unspoken boundaries.

(The light dims slightly. Silhouettes are visible behind
CATULLUS.)

GENERAL

The Republic... their ships! On the horizon. They're retreating!

CATULLUS

It had to do with endings, John Holder:
The empty container,
The vacuum.

...

There, the imagination
Has no limits. Infinity
Becomes just another number
Counted upon the misplaced hand.

...

But you were right,
The world couldn't manage
Your secret.

NAUSICAA

Fire on them!

TETRA

Hold fire!

NAUSICAA

This was them, all along? This was them. Devils! Devils! Fire on
them. Now! They have blood on their hands.

CATULLUS

The world has every desire
But the desire to be contained
To deprive itself
Of its remarkable vitality.

...

More passion, more imaginings
More imagination lending to
More destruction and loss.

...

War brings peace, and
Peace brings war...

...

But tell me, John Holder,
Is it better than
The still point?

...

A game of inches anyhow.

...

The ball scurries onwards.
The weeds grow, like
A revelry of inches.

(Enter Catullus, as a goat.)

NAUSICAA

Tell her, General. Tell her this is our opportunity to fire!
This is our chance.

(Catullus notices John's Bocce ball, and hesitates for a moment,
then, against his better judgement, retrieves it. Exit Catullus.
The lights return to normal.)

GENERAL

Their army is larger than ours.

NAUSICAA

Ours has more discipline. Doesn't it?

TETRA

This isn't our moment.

(She looks to GENERAL)

Where's the glowing goat? I've been tracking that comet for
sixteen years.

GENERAL

We held fire. Not a missile launched. The goat appears to have
vanished, like a rainbow from the sky. It must have been an
illusion.

TETRA

Then... That means...

GENERAL

They've been making progress.

TETRA

Strides. While we've been holding fast. Andy Priest. Be honest
with me, and I'll show you mercy. I'll send you back to the

Republic unharmed, as a gift to my late father. What really brought you to Ovidium?

ANDY

They put a chip in the Bocce ball. A microchip. A semiconductor.

PAULA

What would you know? You sell medical devices.

ANDY

I don't know much.

PAULA

You kept this from me? You really think I should trust you!

ANDY

They told me to put it on top on the mountain. That's all I know. They're gonna kill out little girl, Paula. They're gonna kill her.

PAULA

I don't see a way forward for us. I don't.

ANDY

Did you hear me? They're gonna kill her!

PAULA

It's our own military. They're ruthless killers when they need to be, sure, but... They're not savages.

TETRA

Debrief them. Then show them to the beach. Send them back to the Republic... on separate ships.

PAULA

Wait, Andy. Wait. I'll go with him.

NAUSICAA

How can we let them off like that? How do we let them escape so easily?

TETRA

Send word to The Republic, Andy Priest, that Ovidium seeks diplomacy.

NAUSICAA

No! They have blood on their hands!

TETRA

General. Break down the walls.

ANDY

A thousand ships. Not Greek. With might
Exponential, coercion, murder of canines,
Chocolate or white,
Aircrafts returning, touch tight
To the deck, the horizon's light
Fading like a bulb,
Under a cloud of flies.
And there is no end...

(The GENERAL escorts ANDY and PAULA away.)

TETRA

I'll teach you politics, Nausicaa.
I'll show you how, bit by bit,
We chip away at their imagination
And replace it with our own tyranny.

...

The goats have been locked
In their pens for too long.
We should set them loose,
The wild animals will roam wildly.

...

Yes, it's time. Sixteen years.
The goats have to eat something.

...

We might as well
Let them have their way
With the mustard weed.

NAUSICAA

(seething)

Teach me. Teach me.