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BODHISATTVA BY LAGOON

(The play may be performed either by a single actor or by separate actors portraying the individual characters.)

WOMAN

Lotta trouble today.
Things were settling down, yeah,
to a nice quiet smooth kind of calm
down here by the water,
what I call my lake,
even if it is the color
of the green pea soup
my mother used to make.
The calm went all to hell
with the trouble that come this morning.
I ain't the one that found it.
No sir, I was nowhere near that
floating body,
nowhere near it.
But they come asking me all manner of questions,
suggesting I might of somehow
had something to do with what they found.
And I just told them straight up,
the wages of sin...
I don't know nothing,
nothing--
and I don't want to know nothing.
They said we know you saw more
than you're letting on,
and that much is true.
That is true.

GUY

I told him right out.
When it came to boosting grub
he was useless as an extra tit on a cow.
"That's me" he said. "Udderly useless."
Udderly useless.

You could never stay mad at the guy.
 His problem was he's too pretty.
 Walk in a store with him
 and right off the bat
 they'd be shadowing us.
 One time he got caught at a check-out
 with tofu dogs stashed down his pants.
 Tofu dogs!
 Now I ask you,
 was it really worth the trouble?
 I had to fake like I was having a seizure
 so he could skip out
 'fore they called the fuzz.
 We hooked up later
 and he gave me one of those
 fuckin' tofu dogs
 -- wasn't half bad --
 and he pulled out this other thing
 he got away with--
 a frisbee.
 A stupid fuckin' frisbee.
 But it was the color of grass.
 So I say,
 "Who the fuck steals a green frisbee
 for fuck sake?
 You'll lose it soon as it hits the ground."
 He says "It's not green. It's loden."
 "Who the fuck cares," I said.
 "You're still gonna lose it."
 That's the thing about him.
 he never thinks a--
 never thought ahead.
 As a con? Udderly useless.

GIRL

O-o-o-ou, he was one crazy fucker man,
 one cra-zee fucker.
 Hell-bent on having a good ole time
 no matter how bad things seemed to get.
 He'd come by and say,
 "Girl, you get your ass in gear,
 we're goin' dancing."
 And I'd say "Ah shit man,
 I'm too wasted. Come back tomorrow."
 And he said "Nuh-unh-unh.
 That's a day never ever ever comes.

The moon's out tonight and
 I gotta see you dancing your dance
 down by the lagoon
 out in the moonlight."
 Then he said, "Let's get dolled up."
 And he brought out some nail polish.
 Emerald topaz.
 And he took my hand
 and he painted my nails
 and then he blew on them
 to get them dry.
 His breath felt warm, so warm,
 like my hand was being kissed
 by an angel from God.

QUEEN

I'm not going to be living out here forever.
 No, really!
 I'm only passing through.
 Queens and foliage do not mix.
 I mean, look at these plants.
 Where's the shimmer?
 He's the one who got me out here.
 I was on the streets at the time.
 It's a long story, but the point is
 these vouchers didn't come through
 and the people I supposedly could count on...
 Then I met him at my storage locker,
 we got to talking and he told me he had this spot.
 Out here, he said,
 at least the ground's covered with vines and leaves
 to make a cushion under the tent.
 A tent--
 something I hadn't seen the inside of
 since I got kicked out of the Boy Scouts for...
 Well that's another story.
 You get the picture.
 He called it our little campground,
 pretended we were on some grand tour
 of the national monuments.
 --Well I guess.
 It's a bizarre place to live,
 but I had pretty much run out of options.

WOMAN

I told those cops.
 I don't know nothing about no body.
 It's not even on my side of the water.
 Can't they figure that much out?
 They just kept sayin' they're gonna run me in.
 Go ahead, I told 'em. You go right ahead.
 I wouldn't mind a night passed
 in a warm room
 on a real mattress in a real bed,
 even if it's thin as a slice of Sally Ann ham.
 Just bein' off of the ground...
 off the ground...
 They told me beat it
 and don't be getting any ideas
 about coming back to settle in
 cause this place is off limits.
 The park's closed at night.
 Like that ain't a joke and a half.
 One of them cops, the bald one,
 he told me "Really, Mama, it ain't safe here."
 Tell me something I don't know, Kojak.
 Now that they zipped up the bag
 and carried him off to find his maker,
 they won't be coming round here no more.
 Maybe a body can get some peace.

GUY

He could be a sick fuck sometimes
 and I told him so,
 right to his face.
 Here's the deal.
 There's a little scene that happens out here
 every afternoon.
 A bunch of cars drive up.
 All these single guys get out,
 good shape, nice clothes.
 They go for a walk here in the bushes.
 I don't like it
 But--hey--live and let live.
 I go find myself a log to lie on,
 somewhere far from the trails,
 some tree that came down in a storm.
 I wait till they do what they gotta do.
 But not him.

No, sir.
 He went looking for it.
 Wanted in on the action.
 I warned him.
 Told him it's unnatural.
 He said, "Man,
 it's the most natural thing in the world."
 Said we're all monkeys who come from the forest.
 I told him these guys are trouble.
 He said, yeah, that's what he wanted.
 That's when I told him he's a sick fuck.
 But he just laughed.

GIRL

To him, living out here like this,
 it wasn't a jungle, man.
 It was the Garden of Eden.
 One day he came and found me
 down where I was panhandling.
 Like he was meeting me after work or something,
 just to walk me back to this dump.
 I was bummed, man,
 I mean, who wouldn't be?
 Scrounging all day for a few lousy quarters?
 I wanted to be somewhere else--
 wished I was anywhere else.
 When we got to the park
 we walked by this hill
 and it was a wash of wildflowers.
 The colors, man, the purple, and gold,
 in the middle of all those bushes,
 it just made your eyes pop.
 He started picking them and
 made this chain of flowers
 and put it around my head.
 Told me I was one of the blessed ones.
 That's when I found out
 he thought about some day being a monk.
 He talked about the color of the poppies,
 how it wasn't really gold, it was saffron.
 How he'd get to dress up in robes that color.
 It's the only time I heard him say anything
 about the future.
 The only time he let on
 there might be somewhere else
 he wanted to be, too.

QUEEN

He was just a kid,
 barely in the spring of his years.
 That's why I called him Sprout.
 He never realized how much you get away with
 when you're young like that.
 Didn't know how often
 you're dodging bullets.
 How you live in a state of grace
 with all that life erupting inside you,
 a volcano pulsing and bursting
 to force its way out.
 He didn't need to be living out here.
 I told him he should turn a few tricks
 to come up with some scratch,
 pull in the greenbacks like normal people do.
 He tried it he said
 but couldn't take the look in their eyes
 when it came time to collect.
 "So don't look," I told him. "Don't look."
 "How would you get inside them?" he asked.
 Why would you want to, I'd like to know?

WOMAN

And it is prophesied:
 A mighty rain shall pour forth,
 the skies shall open
 and the Earth shall be cleansed
 the wicked washed away
 and the garden shall be whole once more.
 The most humble shall become exalted
 and the righteous shall flourish
 again in the land. *(Pause)*
 And the innocent who dwell among the evil
 likewise shall they be washed away.

GUY

He mighta felt his time was up.
 'Cause last month for no reason at all
 he dragged me down to some place,
 community center, something.
 They have some deal cooked up
 where they give away cameras.
 All you gotta do is take pictures.
 Nothing special,
 just pictures of where you live,

who you know,
shit like that.
No posing or nothing,
just everyday stuff.
What a waste of film, I thought.
And to me, it didn't feel right
getting a camera for nothing
without having to boost it.

WOMAN

I was sitting reading the scripture
when this young man came up to me.
He was eating sunflower seeds
and he asked if I wanted some.
I seen him around with those nasty boys
so I said I got no need to be taking food
from a sinner.
He asked does faith play a role in my life?
I held up my good book.
He pointed up at this big old tree
and said,
"You see the vine wrapped around that trunk?"
"Course I do."
"Well I'm that vine," he said,
"and that tree?
That tree is lifting me out of the mud
up to the light,
up where the birds fly high."
Then he put down the bag of seeds and walked away.
But I saw him sneak a look over his shoulder
to see if I was watching
and he waved at me.

QUEEN

"Are you ashamed of me?" I asked him?
It's the only time I saw him flustered.
I didn't bring it up at the time it happened,
which was not long after
we first made our acquaintance.
We were on one of our evening promenades,
taking in the sights out on the street.
Just talking, you know,
getting to know each other,
feeling each other out.
One of his friends runs into us.
Literally runs into us.

We're just walking down the street
and he comes barreling out of a store
guzzling a drink of some kind
--you know--oblivious.
Slams right into us.
He's someone I'd seen around.
Kinda cute, kinda dumb.
Always an appealing combination.
He'd kind of avoided me in the past, I thought.
What's his problem?
But there we were
right in each other's face.
I elbowed Sprout.
"Introduce your friend."
And he did.
Then we continued on
but I could tell he kind of blushed,
embarrassed that the oblivious guy
saw the two of us together.
A few days later,
when we were fighting about something
I brought it up.
He denied it, but I called him on it.
'Cause it's one thing a queen can just feel,
like a waitress knows a tipper,
like a hooker knows a cop,
like a cheerleader knows the score.
He copped to it,
said it's only because he didn't know me yet,
that he felt like he was
introducing his mother.
At least I didn't remind him of his father.
He said he felt ashamed,
that he'd never treat me
that way again.
Or anyone else.
Promise.
He'd always think the best.
I like the way contrition
can turn someone into a little cherub.
So I blew out the candle
and let him make it up to me.

GIRL

He gave me this bracelet.
Told me these are prayer beads.
Then he showed me how to sit quiet
to calm my nerves
and just take some time
to think about my life.
He said think of it like taking a step
outside yourself
so when you come back,
you're really, really there.
We did it together
maybe a couple of times a week.
He said, "If you start looking around,
you'll find all kinds of other people who do this--
all over the place--
so you'll never have to feel alone."
I hope he's right about that
'cause I feel awful lonesome right now.

GUY

So he made me sign up for the camera
and start taking pictures.
When I went and showed 'em what I did
I thought they'd take the damn thing back,
but, they didn't...
They're gonna put 'em in a show. *(Pause)*
The shot I'm really glad I got
is the one I took of him.
The sucker's all blurry
'cause he never stood still
long enough for me to take the fuckin' shot.
He was playing with that stupid frisbee,
jumping like he had wings and could fly.
So it's all just a wash of color,
but his long hair's snapping in the wind
and you can tell he's laughin'
and it looks like him
just the way he was, mostly.

QUEEN

There's no point in even saying it
but it's just not fair.
He goes off to find a little pleasure--
or give a little pleasure--
and for no reason at all
ends up floating face down
in some scum-filled pond.
This world makes no sense.
And this queen ends up alone
in a tent in the park.
I ask you:
Does such a world make sense?

WOMAN

(Eats some sunflower seeds)
I saw that green flying saucer toy
floating in the lake.
That's when I knew...
If I had any tears left in me
I might want to cry for that boy.
I got to believe there's a reason,
some reason such a sad thing could take place.
But I can't find one.
I can't find no reason on God's green Earth
why a boy like that should be taken away.
They already got enough angels in heaven.
Don't they?
It's us down here,
us who needs them the most.

*(She eats some sunflower seeds and scatters
some for the birds. Lights fade to black.)*