

# ENDPAPERS

By

Jo Brisbane

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## **ENDPAPERS**

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ACT 1  
SCENE 1

*SETTING: A dim room inside an abandoned roadside attraction. A fragment of an old highway sign, missing an "H" and reading "ome of the Future", leans on a wall. Electricity flickers on and off, illuminating a room full of graffiti and broken, abandoned electronics spilling out of dented metal housings. A clean worktable and two chairs are seen, adjacent to a shuttered window and a large trunk containing radio equipment.*

*AT RISE: The figures of TIFF and FLUFF are huddled below the worktable, heads down, clasping their knees. Both are wearing some form of an isolation hood, like a soundproof "ostrich" pillow. An irritating low hum is heard and felt, followed by the garbled squelches of a passing propaganda truck. The sounds fade into the distance as the room's lighting stabilizes. Tiff and Fluff remove their padded nap masks, revealing deep facial and neck scars from an acid attack. They slowly begin to speak.*

**TIFF.** It's over, Fluff.

**FLUFF.** That one hurt more than last time. Just like Mother and Father warned us. They're using higher and higher decibels on that bullhorn. And lower and lower hertz on that PA system, I can tell.

**TIFF.** And they're right on time again. They like a tight timetable. They ran their trains right on time. When there were trains. *(Tiff and Fluff move about the shabby room, choosing and packing up electronic equipment, binoculars, tool belts, water canteens, dust masks and the like.)*

**FLUFF.** Those sounds. They did something to my insides that time. Worse than ever.

**TIFF.** That's what they want. Never thought they'd use something as simple as radio waves to bring us to heel. They're taming us down, just like house pets in the olden times.

**FLUFF.** Haven't seen a live dog or cat in months.

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**TIFF.** Oh, I'm sure they disappeared those creatures many months ago. Poor things were already doomed. Gave people too much joy. Defended humans to their own detriment. Too docile and trusting. Very happy eating out of cans and boxes. Lost all their feral instincts. They fed them to the armies, don't you remember?

**FLUFF.** Hard to remember so many things. Oh well, back to work now Tiff. Get the Sky Champion out of the trunk. And let's work on the microphone. That beautiful Astatic. Father loved that mike, polished chrome and all. What a thing of power over people. The microphone, the megaphone. We'll be up and broadcasting in just a day or two, soon as we're on the road.

**TIFF.** I feel so close to Mother and Father whenever we work on the old Hallicrafter short-wave, you know? Glad they left all their gear in such excellent shape. We should have everything we need now. Soldering set up, oscilloscope, electric power along the roads, at least most of the time.

**FLUFF.** Remember how Mother and Father told us that if you figured out electronics and physics, you could control the world, that controlling them was the ultimate resistance. Power equals Resistance times Current.

**TIFF.** Yes. Power equals Force times Velocity. Energy equals Power times Time. Now where's that box of spare tubes? We need to wipe down all the contact points. So where are they, the Tung-sols, 6F6s?

**FLUFF.** They're right there, right by the spool of coaxial.

**TIFF.** Oh yeah there they are.

**FLUFF.** What wonderful stuff we used to manufacture. I love looking at these old vacuum tubes. Mother loved them too, she just marveled at the engineering of it all. She said they looked like little glass spaceships. See, here's the forward control room. All glass. See, here's the booster rockets, these prongs right here.

**TIFF.** That's a nice memory, Fluff. I miss them too. They died for the right cause, right Fluff? I mean, well they actually looked happy when the goon squad came that day and hauled them to the street. Looked blissful even when they got pistol-whipped and frog-marched through town.

**FLUFF.** I hated those government goons, spitting on them, calling them traitors, screaming at them, how they were non-conforming, non-binary, non-breeding, irreligious, apolitical, khaki-colored freaks.

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**TIFF.** Our parents resisted everything, right? Repression around every corner, that's what they said. Border repression, repression of sexual expression, repression of artistic expression, repression of research, repression of new thoughts, repression of newly discovered ancient discoveries. So exhausting, trying to follow their compass.

**FLUFF.** Wipe every form of every "ism" away. Away away away, they said.

**TIFF.** Maybe, just maybe, repression of repression is ultimately a salvation, in that repression forces revolution, causes small explosions that fire other explosions, in a chain of explosions.

**FLUFF.** Yes, yes, yes. Carry out our parents' truth. We rebuild this radio, and we rebuild the entire underground resistance. Start small with just a few repeaters, then connect to the old network of short-wave radios out there. Radio waves penetrate everywhere, if you can just generate them. The trick is, we need to build this to be extremely portable. Like, stuff it all in a shopping cart and roam the streets. Set up on the rooftops, a different place every night. Tap into the electric grid as we go. I love a long hike.

**TIFF.** I'd like to see the looks on the faces of the state goons when they can't figure out where the signal's coming from! I am going to sing on that microphone.

**FLUFF.** People went to prison for singing, remember that? The great bonfires of songs on paper?

**TIFF.** They smashed up all the instruments too. Beautiful delicate powerful musical instruments. Banned and broken and burnt in massive piles.

**FLUFF.** Yes. I am grateful that Mother and Father taught us music. Ah, music. Wish they could see us now, almost ready to launch our own low power radio station. Ok, how's this for a radio station name. Lo Po FM Vox Pop. Vox Pop. Way down low where the weird sounds are. That's our slogan, right there! Vox Pop brings the people the low down on the way down low.

**TIFF.** Vox Pop. Can we tack on Vox Dei? Makes it a better maxim. Oh, better not. Church, state, wall. Gotta come at the future with a clean brain, right Fluff?

**FLUFF.** Right. Vox Pop is plenty enough, Tiff. Elegant and enough. There are probably people out there wandering around with some shreds of Latin still in their heads.

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**TIFF.** Mother loved Latin, remember? But no one listened to Mother. She thought we only needed three languages on earth. Latin, Morse Code, and the Kalahari click clicks. Three tongues only might have cut through all the yelling, crying, screaming and talking heads, the babble of all of us, so desperate to jabber that we could never really hear one another.

**FLUFF.** That broadcast blather, thick as a brick it was. Just like that numbing rot grinding out of that propaganda truck. Their evil new slogans and twists on the truth, shoved at people in the streets every day. And always in those infernal cadences.

**TIFF.** Well everyone, you just wait. After we get our Lo Po FM Vox Pop up and running, then we'll send the good words out on those glorious radio waves. Wave after wave after unstoppable wave. Words about how to dismantle all the archys and all the ocracys there ever were! But at the beginning, this new beginning, we'll only have a very small range in the FM band, only about two block's worth. Then we'll work on the long range DXing. Maybe we'll be able to talk again with Antarctica, the Sub Sahara, Cape of Good Hope, Cape Horn. Don't get overly excited about the long range quite yet Fluff. The weather has to be in our favor for the long-range radio waves. There's still so much debris in the atmosphere. We'll need a good skip, under clear skies, with a bounce off a high cloud.

**FLUFF.** We can really do this, Tiff! For Mother and Father and for all the people. Wipe out all the archys and ocracys! All over the world. Free. Free. Free of theocracy, monarchy, patriarchy. It will all end. No work farms, no factory farms. Even the animals, if there are any more still alive out there, they go free. Free! Ollie, ollie, oligarchy. Ollie ollie oxen free!

**TIFF.** Fluff, you can't take that too far. Why, we may not even be able to be together under extreme rules like that. Couldn't have a, well what would we be, I guess a biarchy? A diarchy?

**FLUFF.** Yeah, just bossing ourselves around all the time. Well, if I ruled you and you ruled me, that's a balance of power. Ideally. Anyway, I'll take a biarchy or a diarchy any day over the stinking kakistocracy out there. Rule by the worst.

**TIFF.** Did you hear that? Far away. But I feel it coming. Right in my guts.

**FLUFF.** You have always been able to hear things that no one else can hear, Tiff.

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So so ghosty.

**TIFF.** I hear the deep rumbles, I don't know why. Sometimes like an earth shiver. There it is again. Fluff oh Fluff. What was that place, that big land mass that looked like a gigantic ear, an ear of a, a what do you call it? What did we call it? What did we all call it?

**FLUFF.** Yes, yes, yes. An ear. Of an elephant. Yeah. On one of Mother and Father's maps. Before the maps were all burnt. It was a land mass called Africa. Cape Horn is there. Was there. Cape Horn is far away.

**TIFF.** Yes, an elephant. Yes, a land mass called Africa. Oh, there's another land mass like an ear. They used to match in a massive puzzle. An America, that was its name. Must have been two kinds of America, one up one down.

**FLUFF.** Let's focus on the elephant.

**TIFF.** So yes, an elephant. I remember the shape, the big picture of it. The creature. Magnificent creature, uh, being I should say. Creature sounds creepy, not sure why. I'm remembering that the huge ears, the big brain, it all worked together to give the massive being an early signal, a sort of radio wave, oh what did Father call it. Uh, yes, "infrasonic" signals. Way, way low, at fourteen hertz. Human beings can't hear that low. Usually. Fluff, I think I'm "infrasonic" more than ever now. Why?

**FLUFF.** Hertz, now I remember too. A unit of measurement, the cycle of a single sound wave. Fourteen hertz, like a low pulse of fourteen pulses per second. Right, only the biggest beings could hear the oncoming earthquakes and tsunamis, the erupting volcanos. Or detonation of bombs. Whales, rhinos, giraffes. I remember pictures of those beings.

**TIFF.** So, do you think that those fourteen hertz radio waves were like a kind of Latin or Morse Code to the big beings? Was it their Kalahari click click? Clean clear direct?

**FLUFF.** Aw Tiff, it's coming back. It's coming again. I feel good and sick this time. Nauseous. Can't stop shaking.

**TIFF.** Fluff! Fluff! I know what they're doing. Oh, it's really evil if I'm right about this. Do not put on the mask. We have to subject ourselves to this without the mask.

**FLUFF.** Aggghhhh. Hurts so much.

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**TIFF.** Just hold on. Ok I think I can articulate this. There's always this first part, this low part. Makes you really sick. Little by little, I've begun to feel queasy too, when they drive the truck around here. Ahhh, here they come again. Why again?

**FLUFF.** Scrambled. Dizzy.

**TIFF.** Tough it out, Fluff. The scope. Fluff, look at the scope, the oscilloscope.

**FLUFF.** Mmmmmmmmmmm. Head hurts. Like an anvil.

**TIFF.** All over. Off they go.

**FLUFF.** I am going out there and I am going to fight them. Muscle bound cowards. I'm going Tiff. My head is splitting open. They can reach right in and wash my brain all they want. I'm going out there. I'll eat their bullets if it makes my brain just stop and it makes the remembering make sense.

**TIFF.** Fluff, stop. Now calm down, you can't leave me, and I would never leave you. Fluff, I figured it out while you were having that sad seizure. Fluff, I know just what they're doing, I know it now. That low part, that first part, that is a truly and really evil thing. We thought it was just a weird, just a goofy transmission, but it is not. I looked at the oscilloscope. It was barely registering a wave form. Way, way low. Like eight hertz, of course that's only eight cycles per second.

**FLUFF.** Tiff, I just need to lie down a while. This whole hertz thing, it really hurts. Should I laugh, or should I cry. No seriously, I might die from this hertz thing, Tiff. What if. They are trying. To kill us all? We never heard much about the low frequencies from Mother and Father.

**TIFF.** You're really going to lie down there, aren't you. Ok, here I come too. Here. Imagine you have a pillow. Pretend we're on a lovely desert plateau. We can still see the stars, even through the space junk. Pretend we've made that long journey over all the rooftops, bringing the words of hope, the good words from Lo Po Vox Populi. Or even Vox Dei, why can't we hear the voices of the gods too?

**FLUFF.** I remember a medical thing or maybe it was a spy thing or maybe both. Low hertz. Yeah! In the olden days there was an oligarchy that actually poisoned enemies with low hertz radio waves. But it was lower than eight hertz. It was seven hertz. Didn't Mother and Father warn us about that? I can't remember.

**TIFF.** Wait. Wait wait wait. It was seven, seven hertz exactly matches the frequency of the human brain and internal organs. It's how we hum along. So, if an evil source transmits radio waves at that frequency of seven hertz, it scrambles us. I think they told us it can kill us.

**FLUFF.** I need to sit up for this.

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**TIFF.** So, what about the loud lies that the propaganda truck churns out. I hardly understand a word. It's just a wall of noise.

**FLUFF.** Probably something subliminal happening in their word mess.

**TIFF.** Mother and Father said that the loudest sounds on earth could also kill a person, or really any being. Or at least make eardrums burst. Let's see, that is measured in decibels.

**FLUFF.** I want to extinguish those soulless, combat gear-covered cowards.

**TIFF.** Now I remember the threshold for burst eardrums, even death. 185 to 200 decibels.

**FLUFF.** And why do I remember that the loudest human scream has been measured at 129 decibels. Wonder if I could injure someone with my scream.

**TIFF.** Mother used to tell us the oddest bedtime stories. She must have made up that one about the quietest place on earth. She called it the kingdom of anechoic. No sound waves of any kind could penetrate the chambers of the kingdom. You hear yourself, your organs, your brain, all at work, working marvelously for you. You become the sound, the only sound. There are no decibels there. She said that perhaps there are negative decibels. Imagine that!

**FLUFF.** Such a janky noisy dangerous world now.

**TIFF.** I remember learning about the loudest sound ever recorded.

**FLUFF.** Was it a bomb?

**TIFF.** No. It was a volcano. A volcano called Krakatoa. How do I know this? I do not know. The eruption of it ruptured eardrums forty miles away. People claimed they heard it and felt it around the world.

**FLUFF.** Power equals force times velocity.

**TIFF.** Energy equals power times time.

**FLUFF.** I'm feeling a little sick again, Tiff. Ears and brain are just rattling. Vibrations hurt so much. So much. *(The propaganda truck returns, blaring an indistinct message. Tiff and Fluff dive under the table. There is a flash and a breaking of glass. The barrel of a long rifle is shoved through window, smashing and bending the window blinds. As it is withdrawn, it leaves room for a shaft of light to be projected onto the floor. The truck departs and Tiff and Fluff slowly move about again.)*

**TIFF.** Here, let's just calm down. I'm getting the dream box. *(Tiff fetches a disintegrating old suitcase, tenderly opens it, and takes out an old plastic stereoscope and passes it reverently to Fluff, along with several round slide discs.)*

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There you go. Now see that hole in the window? In the blinds? Great little light hole for us. That street light can finally do us some good. Here's your favorite. Go ahead now. Put in the disc.

**FLUFF.** Yes, excellent blind hole. (*Fluff quietly clicks the forward lever of the stereoscope after each image.*) Redwood Highway. Carlsbad Caverns. Yosemite. Cypress Gardens. Bluestem Prairie. Sunken Gardens. Niagara Falls. Tiff, I do love the picture tours best of all. How blue, blue, blue, were the waters then.

**TIFF.** Oh here's a Bible Story disc. Genesis in seven images. Ha. Remember when Mother put a big cigarette hole in that one?

**FLUFF.** Can you find the "Seven Wonders of the World" disc?

**TIFF.** Oh, I love that one too. Here you are, Fluff.

**FLUFF.** Read the pamphlet, ok?

**TIFF.** (*Tiff unfolds a yellowing order form and reads from it.*) Full color stereo pictures. Just like real. Three-dimensional picture postcards come to life, right in your hands. Find the light and aim to the light for your best illumination.

**FLUFF.** So pretty. Getting a little sleepy now. Let's sing a song, Tiff. We'll get a little sleep and work on the Sky Champion in the morning.

**TIFF.** I'm going to make that microphone work again. Our radio station needs music and I want to sing it. If we sing, will the songbirds come back?

**FLUFF.** Don't forget to put on your mask before you fall asleep, Tiff.

**TIFF.** Sing now Fluff. What was the song they sang to us? (*Tiff attempts to sing "All The Pretty Little Horses".*) Hush-a-bye, don't you cry, go to sleep my little baby.

**FLUFF.** (*FLUFF joins in the singing.*) When you wake, you shall have, all the pretty little horses. Mask on, Tiff. Good night, sister.

**TIFF.**

Good night, sister. (*End of scene*)

## SCENE 2

*The stage contains the remnants of a different and even larger ruined tourist destination. Twin metal scenic viewers are seen SL and SR. Strewn about are rusted and dusty neon signs, battered trash cans, rocks and rubble. There is an exercise bike attached to a small generator. An old trunk is seen by the cave, with costumes and props spilling out of it. The raw opening of a cave is seen SL and the*

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*flat area above the cave is accessed from a stick ladder, which leans nearby. A small cookpot sits atop a glowing campfire, which is seen near the mouth of the cave. A very small garden plot and the trickle of a spring are seen USC. A rusty armillary and a piled-up rope ladder are seen on top of a smaller and higher plateau USR, which is also accessed by a stick ladder. Military desert camo netting is stretched above and across the stage. Fluff and Tiff use two long, slightly burnt tree branches to shove the netting open. They stir the fire, make breakfast and begin their daily routine. Their faces are obscured by rough head coverings and both are wearing a tool belt in bandolier fashion or on the hip. The tool belt contains an odd assortment of clanking things, including half of a broken scissor each, carpenter pencils, wrecked spectacles, and bits and pieces of seemingly useless technology.*

**FLUFF.** I was hoping to see clouds today.

**TIFF.** The dew hardly falls anymore

**FLUFF.** Just as well. Might drown our expectations.

**TIFF.** I don't expect much anymore

**FLUFF.** We have our work, Tiff. At least we have our work.

**TIFF.** It seems important.

**FLUFF.** We'll need to hike out and scout some fatwood this morning.

**TIFF.** Hate the way that greasewood burns. It hurts my eyes, it really does.

**FLUFF.** Reminds me of crying. Remember that?

**TIFF.** I'm all done with that. And what are you talking about, eyes. Like you have two of them.

**FLUFF.** You know what I mean.

**TIFF.** Oh, I know that you know that I know what you mean. Here's looking at you, kid.

**FLUFF.** Ah gawd don't do that!

**TIFF.** Laugh now. Have a little laugh. There's no sheriff out here. No stinking badges.

**FLUFF.** (*Fluff goes up to the small garden plot and tidies up the area.*) And no religion too.

**TIFF.** Amen to that.

**FLUFF.** Tiff, I really don't like the looks of the corn today. Beans and squash are just ok.

**TIFF.** Let me see. Oh, now come on. We need all three of you. Good old three

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sisters. Please, please grow for us. We need you and we love you. The crows need you too. And all those refugees.

**FLUFF.** Well, some of the refugees. The ones who are willing to hear the words. Not sure if they deserve the words.

**TIFF.** Fluff, Fluff, Fluff. It is not our choice to choose.

**FLUFF.** Somedays, that just sticks in my craw. Caw! Caw!

**TIFF.** Please don't let them hear you. You don't know what you are cawing. Could be a gathering caw or a warning caw, you don't know. They went hunting before you got up. They have their work and we have ours.

**FLUFF.** We are the readers. We are the mainstage. We have the food. Don't we have as much in the synapses of our brains as those crazy crows?

**TIFF.** We should not mess with our system. At least we are surviving. We can't save everyone. Nope. Just a few other chosen few. And a crow can choose as well as a human.

**FLUFF.** I suppose so.

**TIFF.** The corn wants grinding.

**FLUFF.** Yes.

**TIFF.** I miss fresh sweet corn.

**FLUFF.** This kind is better. Can't store fresh corn.

**TIFF.** I remember the fields. We were safe there. Such a green, green smell. Such a soft safe place. And all of that black sweet earth. Crumbles like a chocolate cake. I miss the locusts too. Their rhythm and hum. Mm. Makes me want to go to sleep all over again. Only back there.

**FLUFF.** It isn't there anymore, remember? The, uh, "engineering" wrecked the cell structure of just about everything. I hate to be a pest, but could you start with the grinding? Let's bake the hoe cakes. There could be a crowd today. You never know.

**TIFF.** And all those seed names, so beautiful. All of those names, just for corn seeds. Blue Shaman, Bloody Butcher, Bronze Orange, Black Mexican, Hopi Blue, Calico Corn. Oh Fluff, really what am I griping about? Look at our very own, beautiful strain, "Glass Gem". What more could we ask for? We are not hungry and we can look upon jewels.

**FLUFF.** So, hmmm. If there is a crowd, we might need new maps. I'll just run back in for some end papers. If we can't put our hands on any greasewood today, we still have plenty of old books left to burn and all the time in the world, right

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Tiff? (*Fluff goes into the cave and returns with a small cart full of books.*)

**TIFF.** Oh yeah. (Shouting) Hey, bring out the bookkeeping books. Tired of staring at those. Come here, corny boy. Time to soften you up. (*Tiff throws several ears of corn into the campfire water pot.*) Submarine at twelve o'clock. Submarine at two o'clock. Surfacing. Surfacing.

**FLUFF.** Must be fifty of these ledgers in there. Completely blank. Nice lines. Real official looking. Too bad we can only block print so the refugees can read it. I miss cursive. It was elegant.

**TIFF.** Nothing stopping us from re-introducing it. Let's put some onto the maps. Starting today.

**FLUFF.** Hell yeah. Let's write out the whole alphabet on the map borders.

**TIFF.** No, just on random ones. We don't have time to do them all. And remember, just one map per group. And we let the crows decide. Good map or bad map.

**FLUFF.** Say, where are those crows. (*Fluff and Tiff go to the scenic viewers and hurry to deposit coins from the small piles at the base of each scenic viewer. They scan the audience area in search of the crows.*)

**TIFF.** We need to take better care of these coins. I mean, what if we lose any of them, all of them? Sandstorms, monsoons, strafing, those fucking drones.

**FLUFF.** I agree. Add that to the task list.

**TIFF.** Can't see a damn thing. Just the scorch. Miles of scorch.

**FLUFF.** If you sort of soften your focus, it has a pattern. You know, that layer of dried mud patch, how it curls up just a little. Thousands of little mud patches out there.

**TIFF.** There sure are thousands. I know what you're saying. Kind of pretty if you squint. Mesmerizing. I like to squint-slash-pretend that the dead trees are like, dancing. But just now, holding a pose. Holding a pose. Scraggly arms raised up. Like in a prayer.

**FLUFF.** Remember, we agreed, no prayers.

**TIFF.** I agree that we agreed. But we agreed that it was none of their prayers. Why can't we have our own prayers. A prayer on a map might not hurt either. Maybe those trees were screaming, not praying.

**FLUFF.** Wait. Shhhhh. Quiet. I think I see something. Incoming at one o'clock.

**TIFF.** Locked on it. Hell, I need more coins.

**FLUFF.** Oh shit shit shit.

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**TIFF.** Look at them go. Dive bomb, do it. Do it. Bravo! Brava!

**FLUFF.** Bring it on home.

**TIFF.** What a magnificent mangling.

**FLUFF.** By our little murder of crows.

**TIFF.** Oh Fluff, those drones are no match for nature. Bully for our little murder of crows. Our magnificent mangling little murderers. Those filthy drones. Like insects.

**FLUFF.** The ruling class has no idea how their bird training has failed them. Backfired right into their ugly mugs. Insects, yes. How they used to pester us, the pests. But some were beautiful. *(A small metallic drone is dropped from above, clattering to the plateau somewhere near the stick ladder.)*

**TIFF.** Welcome back you lovelies. Caw! Caw! And thank you for delivering the prey. Fluff! Reward the corn to our glorious avian allies! I'll just put this little monster in a cage. *(Tiff struggles with the drone. It flaps and whirs even as it is shut up in a metal trash can. Fluff climbs the stick ladder and tosses out kernels of hard corn to the crows. Tiff joins her on the stick ladder.)*

**FLUFF.** There you are my sisters. There you are my brothers. Well done, well done. Yes, plenty for all of you. Oh Tiff. Their feathers. What a beautiful design. The blackest black and oh, the iridescence. See that shimmer. The shimmer of jewels. No, moonlight. Like the shimmer of moonlight on water. Water.

**TIFF.** What a pleasure to look at them. And what friends we have in them. Look at their feet, so complicated.

**FLUFF.** I think dexterous is the word.

**TIFF.** Remember last week when the big one used that splinter of fatwood to reach the other larger stick of greasewood to reach the little hidden piece of corn? Can you imagine what we could teach them? I think they want to learn.

**FLUFF.** Well I am very impressed with their hunting. I think they have the talents of a hawk, they just don't know it. They're a little more handicapped by their eyes, just not hawk eyes. Haven't seen a hawk for months.

**TIFF.** I miss hawks. Hmm. Almost forgot about counting the days too. How long have we been here, Fluff?

**FLUFF.** Hard to say. The seasons never change now.

**TIFF.** Look how they walk about. Like a strut. But sort of pigeon-toed. Pigeon-toed. I haven't thought that phrase in a dog's age. Dog's age.

**FLUFF.** A dog's age, yeah. That must be about 10 years. They ruined all the dogs.

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Well, canines I'd rather say.

**TIFF.** Yes, that is how I remember it too. Made them into dogs of war. Then they ate them.

**FLUFF.** Filthy politicians.

**TIFF.** Gave everyone guns though.

**FLUFF.** And said good luck, suckers.

**TIFF.** Hey Fluff, look at them now. Hopping. Go ahead and hop, kids. Oh you crazy crows, you're so much fun. Fluff, do you think they have backward knees?

**FLUFF.** Maybe we are the ones with backward knees.

**TIFF.** Well, there they go! To their home in the trees.

**FLUFF.** The dead trees.

**TIFF.** Fluff, I had a dream last night. And in it, a crow was crying. Not crying out, but weeping.

**FLUFF.** Let's climb down from here.

**TIFF.** And then the crow showed me to me. Me, dead, I guess. And I was laid out way over there. On that other plateau. Along the safe trail.

**FLUFF.** Tiff.

**TIFF.** Well before I came out of the cave today, when I was sleep-waking, I was thinking, yes. I want that. I want that. It's like the ancient burial, the sky burial. Why shouldn't the crows pick my bones clean?

**FLUFF.** I am not chopping you into pieces for that. Come on, let's get down.

**TIFF.** Promise me you'll do that for me. Just lay me out over there. I'll help you make a carry sledge. And the successor can do it for you too. Put that on the list. Promise me. Promise me, ah please, Fluff.

**FLUFF.** All right. But only if you do the same for me. If I keel over first.

*(Fluff and Tiff descend the stick ladder.)* I think I'll check the beacon light. Let me give it a bump. *(Fluff mounts the exercise bike and rides it, storing up energy in the small generator. Both Tiff and Fluff shout to each other over the grinding and squeaking bike noises which continue until Fluff dismounts.)* Hey Tiff, I just had a thought. At least riding this bike ride will make me even skinnier. Minus a few pounds and minus an ounce or two for the soul, well you should have no problem hauling dead me around with the sledge. Guess we will really have to go out and find some big dead limbs when we get the greasewood, huh?

**TIFF.** Yeah sure. But let's not call it a sledge. That reminds me of some music. Oh yeah. Percy Sledge! That poet. On that old cardboard in the cave! And the

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other Sledges. Sister Sledge! There was a whole family of poets there. I still wonder why they banned those soul things. What is wrong with a soul? Seems like there was a lot of suffering over whatever everyone's gawd ever was or is!

**FLUFF.** Tiff, could you read me a little something from the cave? The generator needs a long ride. It's going to be a bumpy night. Things do go bump in the night. Aggggh. Why are these random bits in my head? (*Fluff cycles on and hum-sings Miss Gulch/Wicked Witch of the West theme music.*)

**TIFF.** Be right back. I think there's a better word than sledge in here somewhere. (*Fluff pedals the bike and makes a sort of music by yowling "Oh Oh Oh Oh Oh Oh Oh Oh Oh" in 4/4 time. It sounds vaguely like the "We Are Family" disco-era music.*)

**FLUFF.** Tiff! Tiff! What is taking you so long?

(*After a few moments Tiff returns, pulling along the small cart. In it are a huge dictionary, a large white bible with a lace-edged cover, more bookkeeping ledgers and two yellowed paperback books.*)

**TIFF.** What a mess in there. Dozens of these big things in there. They're enormous. I pulled one of them out of the pile and the whole damn stack came down. Good gawd, what if I had broken something or one of these damn things had stabbed into something vital?

**FLUFF.** Or fallen on your face?

**TIFF.** Yeah. Last place again, in the makeover division.

**FLUFF.** On the count of three. One. Two. Three.

(*Fluff and Tiff twice turn their heads right and then left, to reveal the acid scars.*)

**FLUFF & TIFF.** Before. And after. Before. And after. (*Their laughter grows. Fluff dismounts the bike and the noises stop. Tiff and Fluff circle each other like wrestlers, occasionally touching the other's face and quickly pulling back. This makes them laugh in fits and starts until they tire of the game. Tiff returns to the cartload of books. Fluff goes to the rusted neon sign and wiggles the wiring before flipping an electric switch on the small generator. The neon pulses on briefly and flashes "Sans Souci". The neon also contains a yellow star and the broken and unlit word "Restaurant".*)

**FLUFF.** Good enough. I'm happy now. (*Fluff switches off the sign as Tiff opens the giant old dictionary. Both put on cracked spectacles to examine the gigantic dictionary.*)

**TIFF.** I admit, I've looked at this one before, in the cave. Words. Just all words, I've never seen so many words. Must have a couple of thousand pages. People

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knew all these words? Fascinating.

**FLUFF.** Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary. What a monster. Universal. Mm.

**TIFF.** Soooooooooo. Sledge. SSSSSSS. Sledge. Ha! Also a sleigh. But we can't pull a sleigh. Look at the picture. Horses did that. Horses. Think I am going to cry. What happened to them. I can hardly remember them. How could we forget something so beautiful?

**FLUFF.** Something disappeared them.

**TIFF.** What good are all these words now?

**FLUFF.** It's our work now. To decide. To choose. Hey friend. What is that word. The word we need.

**TIFF.** Trying to remember. It had a "t" definitely a "t". And a "v". And it traveled. Traveled. Travois, yeah travois! Look it up.

**FLUFF.** Will you look at that, "travois"! A crude sledge of the North American Plains Indians, consisting of a net or platform dragged along the ground on the two poles that support it and serve as shafts for the draft animal, be it a dog or a horse. Well I guess we won't have the dog or horse anytime soon.

**TIFF.** Now Fluff, I think we can make that thing. You just sort of cross the poles and lash them together. We have two poles already. Even the dead wood out there is good for something. Put it on the list. More deadwood for the travois. And more greasewood for the cook fire.

**FLUFF.** I never noticed this before. It's in cursive. Right here in the end papers. "Transient Global Amnesia". What do you suppose that means, Tiff? It sounds medical.

**TIFF.** Transient global amnesia. I do not have a clue.

**FLUFF.** Well, we'll just look it up later. Put it on the list. Must be somewhere in this word book. (*Fluff slams the big dictionary shut with a loud bang.*) Whoops. That sounded like a gun. Could be useful in the show. Later. For the re-enactment, right? I thought that all these books right here might combine for a fine show. They more or less volunteered themselves. It's so crowded in there, I'm surprised we have not been slammed in our sleep. Fascinating titles, some of them. Others, inscrutable. What do you think, Tiff?

**TIFF.** Oh, nice pairing Fluff. The New Bible, copywritten by the Confraternity of Doctrine. No author, but this thing must have over a thousand pages. And, The Born Again Skeptic's Guide to the Bible by Ruth Hurmence Green. And, well this

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is intriguing, “The Dead Lady of Clown Town” by Cordwainer Smith or this joke book. And, “Pornography” by Andrea Dworkin. And, “Frankenstein, Or The Modern Prometheus” by Mary Shelley. Challenging, to make something of all this. **FLUFF.** We should get right onto the readings, Tiff. So much to do. Could be a crowd tonight.

**TIFF.** Are you positive this was a random pull, Fluff? Random, right? We never choose.

**FLUFF.** Yes, really random. Although when the stack of the word ones fell on the white ones, well the Ruth Hurmence Green one must have been hidden between some of the white ones. It just sort of squirted out at me. Frankenstein, that one was in the shadows. The dead clown lady one was just lying there on the floor. It seemed so helpless. And meaningful. Full of meaning.

**TIFF.** I see. Well, not very well. But I see.

**FLUFF.** So. Just leave the pile there. Tiff, tend to the corncakes. I’m going to test the busker bucket. Then let’s run the camo drill.

**TIFF.** Then we make a greasewood gather. Then we rehearse, right?

**FLUFF.** Oh yes yes yes. Best part of the day, the play.

*(Fluff lowers a battered metal bucket via a rope made of plastic flower garlands and then raises it again. Both Fluff and Tiff maneuver the camo netting to a closed and then to an open position. They attach to their tool belts, objects such as battered water canteens, old binoculars, work gloves, twine, roping and rusted children’s lunch boxes containing one corn cake each. They also carry out a rolled-up tarp. Together, they climb the stick ladder to the highest plateau USR and toss a rope ladder off its backside to begin a descent. End of Scene)*

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