

Plays for Young Audiences

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Slap

By
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CHARACTERS

RACHEL	An American doctor in her mid 30's
WALKER	Her son aged around 11/12. As narrator, a young man
RANN	A Cambodian girl aged around 14
SCOTT]	Walker's friend, aged 18
LARRY]	A doctor
SETTING:	North America early 1980's. A small town not far from the ocean

ACT 1
SCENE 1

WALKER ADDRESSES THE AUDIENCE. HIS MOTHER, RACHEL, IS FILLING OUT IMMIGRATION AND NATURALISATION FORMS AT THE KITCHEN TABLE

WALKER:

You know there's times when I can understand how old Canute felt. You know, he was king and all in England someplace – I'm not too hot on history to tell the god's honest truth – and he shouted at the waves to go back and was real surprised when the tide came up to his knees. Where I lived was by the ocean and looking back of course all the summers were hot and the early morning mist hung in the air so if you licked your knees you tasted salt, sitting on your haunches wishing you could control the way things were. The tides. Bringing you gifts on the sand one day then taking them back the next. Like the folks in this story, some lived and some died. Didn't seem to matter bo diddly who you were. One bullet was fired and missed President Reagan, another was fired and stopped the heart of John Lennon. Being in showbiz is no guarantee, my Mom said. E.T. was the big movie of the day and kids would sell their grandmothers to own a Star Wars toy. God bless America. It was around this time I recall that my Mom came back from the far east where she'd gone on behalf of some relief agency. I was expecting her to bring me back some really wild exotic souvenir like a ceremonial sword or something. Instead she comes back with pictures of this kid she says wants to come and live in America. Jeez..mothers!

WALKER TAKES UP THE MANTLE OF HIMSELF AS A KID AROUND 10 YEARS OLD

WALKER:

Now as far as I was concerned we did not need another person in our lives – particularly not a girl. I mean Mom had more than enough to do with raising me and being the local doctor and all. And me – I didn't need anybody else. I had her and I had Scott.

RACHEL: That's exactly the point Walker honey, she doesn't have anyone.

WALKER: [IGNORING HER] Hey d'you ever play that game where you try to find the kind of animal a person most resembles – not just outside but inside too? Well, Scott Fernali was a horse. Big feet, small brain. Which was maybe why he was happy to hang out with a little kid like me. He could also belch louder than anybody in the whole entire universe.

SCOTT ENTERS BELCHING, NOT HAVING NOTICED RACHEL

RACHEL: Evening Scott.

SCOTT: Ohmygod I didn't see you Dr. Rachel.

RACHEL: Evidently.

WALKER: [TO AUDIENCE] He was also sort of my babysitter when Mom worked nights at the hospital but I never let that interfere with my plans.

SCOTT: I'm real sorry.

RACHEL: So I imagine are your intestines. How're your mother and father?

SCOTT: Ok I guess.

RACHEL: Your Mom resting like I told her?

SCOTT: Sort of.

RACHEL: If Frank Fernali spent less time at the factory and more looking after his wife and kids...

SCOTT: Dad's real busy. Union's heard there's talk of closing down the plant.

RACHEL: If you'd seen the number of injuries come out of that place I have, you'd think it no bad thing.

SCOTT: Dad says it's all right for the likes of you, folks are always going to get sick.

RACHEL: Oh does he?

SCOTT: Maybe I shouldn't have said that, Dr Rachel. Am I interrupting your work?

RACHEL: Oh this isn't work, it's a test of my determination.

SCOTT: Right.

WALKER: It's about this girl.

SCOTT: Right.

WALKER: She comes from another planet, see, hundreds of miles away and Mom's just been there and thinks we ought to adopt her and bring her here to live with us.

SCOTT: What does she look like?

WALKER: E.T.

SCOTT: Really? Wow.

RACHEL: Walker, that's enough. She comes from Cambodia, Scott. What's left of it.

WALKER: The planet Cambodia.

SCOTT: You didn't go there, did you?

WALKER: No dummy, she went to Thailand – to the refugee camps.

SCOTT: Right.

RACHEL: When I first interviewed her she just kept saying this one word. "Slap". After a while I didn't need the interpreter to tell me what it meant. "What happened to her mother?"
"Slap"
"The father too?"
"Slap"
"Did she have brothers and sisters?"

SCOTT: Slap?

RACHEL: Slap. Dead. All of them. She didn't cry. Not once. But she thought when I interviewed her – for my report – that I was going to take her back with me. What could I do?

WALKER: Did you know, Mom, Mrs Fernali used to tape her hair to her forehead every night to make her bangs straight?

RACHEL: What's that got to do with anything?

WALKER: Nothing.

SCOTT: She doesn't bother now anyways.

WALKER: I just thought it might interest you as you're so keen on everyone else's life these days.

RACHEL: OK I'll just tear these up, shall I? I had thought we'd agreed to go ahead. Clearly I was wrong. I have to go to work. What is it with you anyway? You have so much!

WALKER: I don't have a father.

RACHEL: Yes you do..

WALKER: I do?

RACHEL: He just happens to be dead.

WALKER: Big deal!

SCOTT: You can tell my Dad's alive on account of he's always yelling at someone. Mostly me.

WALKER: What in all use is a dead father?

SCOTT: They're quieter. Generally.

RACHEL: He loved you.

WALKER: How could he? I was only a baby when he went off.

SCOTT: Some babies are okay.

RACHEL: He did not "go off", he was drafted.

SCOTT: Mom said I was pug ugly from day one.

RACHEL: He didn't plan to get killed out there. No one did. He was a victim – like this little girl is. A casualty. That's what war does. I just thought we agreed we had...room.

WALKER: [CASUALLY] His room?

RACHEL: Your Dad never slept there, it's only where I've stored his stuff and I don't see where else she can go – she can't share with you. Unless..

WALKER: Could I?

RACHEL: If that's where you want to be. It's very small. I'd thought you'd want to stay put.

WALKER: No.

RACHEL AND WALKER HAVE REACHED AN UNDERSTANDING

RACHEL: [FONDLY] Where did you come from, you odd child?

SCOTT: Hey! I got it! Why doesn't Walker sleep in his dad's room and the alien can sleep in Walker's room?

RACHEL: Great idea Scott. I guess if she can find her way out of hell she can find her way into your room through all the mess. And by the way, the little alien's name is Rann.

MUSIC

WALKER: It took forever for the paperwork to be processed. Mom had a talk with me about my attitude. Like about being generous and imaginative about this kid, so she could be proud of me and all. She was so excited. Mrs Fernali sold me Scott's old bike which we painted up to look like it just came out of the store. Tell the truth I figured having a cute little sister around might liven things up a bit. There hadn't been an accident at the factory for weeks, no one famous had been shot, even the State Police were leaning on their motorbikes and complaining it was too hot to hassle. The day Mom went to fetch Rann from the airport I was nurturing a head cold and elected to stay home and meet her there. On my territory.

SCENE 2

SCOTT AND WALKER ARE PLAYING WITH STAR WARS TOYS, LEG AND OTHER ASSORTED WEAPONRY.

SCOTT: Hey you think we ought to fix this room up some before they get back from the airport?

WALKER: I guess so. D'you reckon she'll like the Godzilla poster – or should I have moved it along to my room?

SCOTT: I dunno.

WALKER: C'mon, you've got sisters.

SCOTT: They lock their door.

WALKER: Has Carly gotten a bra yet?

SCOTT: Yeah, two.

WALKER: Both at once?!

SCOTT: I don't think so. I guess one's for everyday and one's for best.

WALKER: [TO AUDIENCE] He killed me. He really did.
And how's things with Elizabeth Androssi?

SCOTT: I don't know what you mean.

WALKER: Ah c'mon, you said you sat behind her at the movies.

SCOTT: Your mom'll be real mad if she finds this place in a mess.

WALKER: But you said, she's real cute – blonde, blue eyes- great braces on her teeth.

SCOTT: Cut it out.

WALKER: You're scared! That's what it is, scared of a girl!

SCOTT: I am not.

WALKER: Oh yes you are. Your dad's right.

SCOTT: Don't say that.

WALKER: I've heard him say it.

SCOTT: Don't. Let's go ride the bikes.

WALKER: Coward. That's what he says.

SCOTT: So?

WALKER: So..so..you be Darth Vader and I'll be..

SCOTT: That's the car.

WALKER: It is?

SCOTT: It's her!

AS RACHEL AND RANN ENTER WALKER EDGES BEHIND SCOTT, HE MAY EVEN HOLD HIS HAND. RANN SMILES AT EVERYTHING THAT IS SAID TO HER. SHE IS WEARING AN OVERSIZED SWEATSHIRT BELONGING TO RACHEL.

RACHEL: C'mon in Rann. This is Walker, my son. And this is Scott, his friend.

SCOTT: Hi.

RACHEL: Walker?

WALKER: Hi.

RACHEL: This is the kitchen where we eat and this is the living room. Rann only has a little English and it must all seem very strange to her. The Guardian Society had a bilingual social worker meet us at the airport but we couldn't bring her home with us, could we Rann?

RANN SMILES, NOT UNDERSTANDING.

Here goes then. Um.. Nea'chawng tau dek te?

RANN SHAKES HER HEAD

WALKER: What's that mean?

SCOTT: It means No.

RACHEL: It means d'you want to go to sleep.

SCOTT PANTOMIMES SLEEPING. RANN SHAKES HER HEAD

SCOTT: You're right! She doesn't want to sleep!

RANN SMILES

Ask her something else.

WALKER: How d'you say hello?

RACHEL: Chum..er Chum riap sua.

WALKER: Chum riap sua.

SCOTT: Chum riap sua. Hey, I can speak alien!

RACHEL: Khmer.

SCOTT: I beg your pardon?

WALKER: Her language, dummy. It's called Khmer. Why didn't she answer when we said hello Mom?

RACHEL: Maybe we got it wrong.

SCOTT: Maybe she's hungry. Can you do that, Dr Rachel?

RACHEL: I'll try. Nea' khlien bai te?

RANN NODS

SCOTT: Great! Me too. You want a hamburger? You know, in a bun with chilli sauce? No? Or what about a hot dog maybe? Hot dog?

SCOTT BARKS. RANN LOOKS AGHAST

WALKER: You idiot. She'll think we eat dogs. No hot dog. Not dog. No. Frankfurter. Sausage. Like this.

WALKER MIMES THE SHAPE OF A SAUSAGE, THEN USES HIS FINGER AS THE SHAPE, TO ADD TO THE CONFUSION.

SCOTT: What does she eat Dr Rachel?

RACHEL: Rice?

WALKER: Rice. I got it. Wait a minute! Here. Rice.

WALKER RUNS OUT AND RETURNS WITH A TIN OF CREAMED RICE WHICH HE DISPLAYS TO RANN

WALKER: There.

RANN LOOKS UNIMPRESSED

RACHEL: Here, we got the wrong kind.

RACHEL GETS OUT A PACKET OF UNCLE BEN'S RICE FROM HER SHOPPING BAG

Rice?

RANN LOOKS BEMUSED AT THE PACKET. RACHEL OPENS IT. RANN LOOKS INSIDE AND NODS AND SMILES

Great. Rice it is.

SCOTT: What about fish?

SCOTT OPENS AND SHUTS HIS MOUTH IN PANTO OF FISH. WALKER IMITATES HIM. THEY GET SILLY – SWIMMING AROUND.

RACHEL: I'll open a can of tuna and you can try it. You okay here with these crazy guys?

RANN SMILES BUT LOOKS ANXIOUS WHEN RACHEL LEAVES

WALKER: Hey, isn't that Mom's sweater?

SCOTT: It fits you real well.

WALKER POINTS TO THE SWEATER AND THEN TO THE KITCHEN.

WALKER: Mom?

RANN NODS

My Mom?

RANN NODS

SATISFIED, WALKER STARTS TO SHOW HER ROUND

WALKER: This is Darth Vader. R2D2. C3PO. This is for drinking out of [A KIDS FUN DRINKING FLASK]. This is an eraser, for drawing [A RUBBER IN THE SHAPE OF A SPACE MAN]. This is Kermit and Miss Piggy but I'm really too mature for them now so you can have them. If you wanted.

SCOTT: The movie was good. We could take her to the movie.

WALKER: Yeah, the Muppets. You'll like that.

WALKER POINTS OUT THINGS IN RACHEL'S BASKET

This is Chlorox. It's for cleaning the John.

SCOTT: She won't know what that is. The powder room.

WALKER: The bathroom.

SCOTT: The Ladies.

WALKER: Nah, the Women's Room.

SCOTT: Little girls' Room.

WALKER: The can.

SCOTT: The toilet.

WALKER: Whatever. You must never never touch that or drink it or you die. OK?

WALKER MIMES CHOKING. RANN'S ALARMED.
RACHEL RETURNS.

RACHEL: Nearly ready. Everything okay honey?

RANN RESTS HER CHEEK ON HER HANDS MIMING
SLEEP

Of course you are.

SCOTT: She wants to sleep.

WALKER: I could tell that.

RACHEL: Larry's coming over for supper tonight, d'you want to call your Mom and stay over, Scott?

WALKER: Ohmygod it's Doctor Death!

RACHEL: Cut it out Walker.

SCOTT: I better not. Thanks all the same.

WALKER: Stay. Don't leave me alone with him.

SCOTT: I can't. It's my turn to cook.

RACHEL: Larry is a perfectly nice man and a very fine plastic surgeon.

WALKER: He's plastic all right. And what's more he's a...

RACHEL: Goodbye Scott.

SCOTT: Night Dr Rachel, Walker, Rann.

SCOTT GOES

RACHEL: Walker, say goodnight to Rann.

WALKER: Night.

RACHEL AND RANN EXIT

So there I was, alone. With a dumb skinny kid moved in upstairs and the prospect of dinner with Mom's "admirer" Dr Lawrence McGann. What a jerk he was. Something I could never figure out. What is it a woman like Mom –

who's real smart – sees in a guy like Dr Death. I mean, she saw clean through me all the time. Why not him? I decided to do my disappearing act soon as I heard his phoney car pull up outside and went upstairs.

SCENE 3

WALKER: [CALLING] Mom, the face lifter's here!

RACHEL PASSES HIM, TWEAKING HIS EAR AS SHE GOES

That hurt.

RACHEL: It was meant to. Wash your hands before dinner.

RACHEL EXITS

WALKER: I was about to go in my room when I remembered it was no longer mine. Out of habit I listened at the door. Dumb huh? Only problem was I couldn't understand a word she was saying. Khmer I guess.

WALKER LISTENS AS RANN SITS UPRIGHT FROM HER BED. SHE SPEAKS ENGLISH WITHOUT AN AMERICAN ACCENT

RANN: Sounds...rubber sandals on flagstones, bare feet dragged on tiles, screams. In the distance tolling bells. Green sparkling hills in the dawn. Clothes strewn on the earth. And bones, thousands of bones. Grandmother? Is that you? I remember you. I do. Looking at the full moon in the time before The Middle World, you saw a dark ring around it. If the dark ring swallows up the moon, you said, Cambodia will be taken over by crows. Black crows will fill the sky and turn everything into a long cruel night. I remember you, I remember you Grandmother. How you broke in two halves and diamonds spilled out.

RANN: How you told of the pramat prumong, the flying monster that likes to catch children and split them open from their throat to their legs and lay them down over the river for a bridge. Which is why little children must always come straight home after school. Cannot even go to another town. Grandmother, I don't know where home is.

I don't know what they want of me. Since Pol Pot time, I don't understand anything. I'm cold, Grandmother. Let the spirits come back for me. Take me to the old old time. The time before blood drowned the moon.

WALKER: Looking through the keyhole, I couldn't, hard as I tried, make out what exactly she was doing. She seemed to be placing small objects in a pattern on the floor. What if it was witchcraft?! The hairs on my back prickled to attention, my armpits itched like poison ivy. I was..frankly..scared. Mom!

WALKER RUNS OFF.

THE OBJECT RANN SETS OUT ARE A LITTLE BLUE PLASTIC MIRROR, A TATTERED PHOTOGRAPH OF A SMALL BOY, A THIN BENT METAL TEASPOON, A MUCH THUMBED AIRMAIL LETTER. RANN KNEELS AND BOWS BEFORE THEM.

SCENE 4

RACHEL AND LARRY ARE DRYING DISHES. LARRY IS HA-ING ON A GLASS. WALKER IS OSTENSIBLY READING A COMIC

LARRY: Is that it?

RACHEL: I think so. It's really unhygienic to do that.

LARRY: I know but it looks good in the end.

WALKER: That was Leery Larry all over. I'd sure hate to be operated on by him. You should just see his eyes when he cuts up steak.

RACHEL: You must have heard wrong about the redundancies. There's always been a canning factory here. Where else would folks get work?

LARRY: That's recession for you.

RACHEL: Frank Fernali'll have something to say about it.

LARRY: Frank Fernali's a moron.

RACHEL: Larry! He's Scott's father.

LARRY: Scott who?

WALKER: Scott Fernali. [UNDER HIS BREATH] Moron.

RACHEL: I heard that. That's 50 cents off your allowance.

WALKER: But Mom!

RACHEL: Don't sass me or I'll take off a dollar.

LARRY: That's recession for you, son.

WALKER: [TO AUDIENCE] Don't you just love this guy? I couldn't believe my mom was taking him seriously.

LARRY: Anyways it's nothing to do with us honey. D'you think my bleeper's working?

WALKER: Planet Zog. Oh Doctor dear, this is Audrey from Reception calling. Now you said you'd be right down after dinner to sew those heads back on the right way. I've tried twisting them but they will keep on swivelling backwards again. Over and out.

RACHEL: Ignore him.

WALKER: You think I'm bad. You wait till you meet Rann.

RACHEL: Walker.

LARRY: Poor kid. Still, whatever she's done, she's out of it now.

RACHEL: How d'you mean?

LARRY: Well whatever the Khmer Rouge do to their people now, she's out of it. She's safe. In America. Bear in mind one thing though, in order to survive hell, sometimes you must compromise with the devil.

RACHEL: What are you saying Larry? 3 million Cambodians have been killed over the past four years.

LARRY: That's communism for you.

RACHEL: That's fascism.

WALKER: Can I watch the ball game?

LARRY: I'm just saying, don't get too romantic about her.

WALKER: Just for a little while?

RACHEL: I just want her to be able to have a chance. For life.

WALKER: Excuse me..

LARRY: I know your motives are honourable but you do have a habit of letting your enthusiasms run away with you.

WALKER: Excuse me..

RACHEL: Enthusiasms? You make her sound like a toy!

WALKER: Mom.

LARRY: Now calm down. You're getting over emotional.

WALKER: Larry.

RACHEL: Too damn right I am. At least I'm doing something.

LARRY: Of course you are.

WALKER: If I could just...

RACHEL: That child needs love. All the love I can give her.

WALKER: THE HOUSE IS ON FIRE!!

RACHEL: Oh don't be so childish Walker. Go to your room immediately.

WALKER: That's not fair!

RACHEL: Life isn't fair. Go!

WALKER: I went. I was outnumbered. Lying under my bed in the dark I promised myself the most excellent promise that if I ever grew up I would never never treat my kids the way they treated me. I stayed under there just long enough for them to get real worried and to send out search parties and then went downstairs to reassure them. You know what? They were only sitting together all close on the couch watching the ball game. That's all! I thought about running away but I didn't have anywhere particular to go, so I decided not to brush my teeth instead. Not thinking, I opened the door to my old room. The bed was empty. Window shut. Closet? Nope, just clothes. She couldn't have just disappeared, could she?! Out of luck, a small snore. I dropped to my knees and there she was, spark out under the bed. Darn it, what in hell did she have to be mad about?

WALKER EXITS

SCENE 5

RACHEL ENTERS IN HER DRESSNG GOWN, HALF ASLEEP. SHE CATCHES RANN ABOUT TO TAKE FOOD FROM A PACKET.

RACHEL: Who is it? What's going on? Rann?

RANN BACKS AWAY CLUTCHING THE PACKET

It's not even light yet. What time is it? Are you hungry? I can't remember the words I'm sorry. Oh, of course, it's jet lag. For you it's somewhere in the afternoon right now, isn't it? Hungry? [RACHEL MIMES] I'll fix you something. Give me the pack.

RANN HANGS ON TO IT

You can't eat that. It's dried pasta. Well, you can eat it but you have to boil it in water first and then you put sauce on it. Like tomatoes —round red fruit with seeds. Or cheese. That's how Walker likes it. Myself I prefer garlic, seasoning and a little butter. Or possibly Pesto sauce but not the bottled kind. Well, I think that's the Italian cookery lesson for the night. Would you like a cookie? There's Fig Mewtons, peanut butter Rolos, chocolate chip, malted milk, jelly centres...I'll get the jar. Here, you choose. I'll take those shall I?

RACHEL SWOPS PACKET FOR JAR AND TAKES OUT A PIECE OF DRIED PASTA, BITES IT AND SPITS IT OUT.

This pasta, pah. Not good until cooked. Boiling water. Bubble bubble. Oh, you like Fig Newtons do you? Me too. Fig Newtons mmm mm. Very good. Make you blow up though. Get fat.

RACHEL BLOWS OUT HER CHEEKS, MIMES BEING HUGE AND FAT. RANN IS WATCHING HER INTENTLY THROUGHOUT. SHE NOW STARTS TO SMILE FOR THE FIRST TIME.

RACHEL:

Hey, are you thirsty? I'll fetch you some juice.

WHILE RACHEL FETCHES THE JUICE RANN TAKES A BITE OF BISCUIT AND THEN BLOWS OUT HER CHEEKS. IT ALL SEEMS A BIT ODD TO HER. RACHEL RETURNS WITH A MICKEY MOUSE BEAKER OF JUICE.

You hear that? That's a foghorn. To warn the boats. Ted used to go fishing. That's Walker's father. We don't talk about him much. I don't want to upset Walker you know with crying and stuff and he never really knew Ted. This is the worst time, daybreak, for remembering. Hey you're shivering. Come and sit here.

THEY SIT TOGETHER. DURING THE NEXT SPEECH WALKER ENTERS UNOBSERVED AND WATCHES THEM TOGETHER

Wrap this comforter round you. It was a wedding present. We were very young but we had Walker and Ted was being drafted into the army. My mom held Walker who cried throughout the ceremony. We played Beatles music, All you need is love. Afterwards, Ted threw Walker up in the air and caught him. Time and again. Walker was only little. He laughed in the air and then threw up in a great arc. Everyone scattered but it seemed to touch no one. We were so young. It's like yesterday. They sent him home in a body bag. They keep the feet tilted down so the bodily fluids don't seep out of the eyes or nose.

RACHEL: This is Mickey Mouse. He's sort of a national hero. He gets into all sorts of trouble and always survives. I'm sorry, I didn't mean to..

RACHEL DRIES HER EYES ON THE COMFORTER

You can't understand a word of all this can you? You must think we're all crazy. After what you've been through.

RANN NODS, NOT UNDERSTANDING, AND OFFERS RACHEL THE JAR. SHE SPEAKS IN AN AMERICAN ACCENT

RANN: Fig Newton.

RACHEL LAUGHING AND CRYING HUGS RANN

RACHEL: Thank you sweetheart.

WALKER TURNS AND WALKS AWAY.

SCENE 6

THE YARD. A CHECKERS BOARD WITH A HALF FINISHED GAME IS ON THE GROUND.

SCOTT: [CALLING OFF] Walker! Hey Walker!

WALKER: When my grandma gets mad she goes to church. When my grandpa gets sad he goes downtown to a bar. I climb trees. I figured I'd save religion and alcohol for later. There was this old apple tree in the back yard. In summer I could sit up there for hours, no one knowing from below.

SCOTT: There you are.

WALKER: Except Scott of course. C'mon up.

SCOTT: Where's Rann?

WALKER: I dunno.

SCOTT: I better go look.

WALKER: No. She's indoors someplace. Reading baby books. [HE MIMICS] A for Ant, B for Bee, C for Cow.

SCOTT: [ENTHUSIASTIC] I remember that one! D for Duck, E for Elephant.

WALKER: You should hear her trying to say elephant.

SCOTT: F for Frog, G is for Goat, H for Hen

WALKER: I can't wait till she has to spell it.

SCOTT: I for Ibis. I always liked Ibis. J for Jaguar.

WALKER: What d'you wanna do?

SCOTT: Jaguar, jaguar..

WALKER: Yeah, you said that. It's too hot to ride bikes.

SCOTT: K. K for...

WALKER: I guess we could finish the checkers game.

SCOTT: Could do.

WALKER: Are you coming up, or what?

SCOTT: Sure.

SCOTT CLIMBS UP

Your grandparents go home this morning?

WALKER: Yeah.

SCOTT: What d'you get?

WALKER: I got Jesus Saves pyjamas, Mom had Views of Jerusalem place mats

SCOTT: And Rann?

WALKER: The pop up book of patron saints.

SCOTT: I bet they liked Rann a whole lot.

WALKER: Yeah, a whole lot. Grandma didn't seem to notice Rann never spoke. Just kept on telling her how Jesus said suffer all the little children, even the yellow ones.

SCOTT: Koala!

WALKER: Will you cut it out.

SCOTT: I was good at alphabet.

WALKER: Maybe you and Grandma should team up and make a religious one. You know, A for Able, B for Bethlehem, C for Cross, D for

SCOTT: Death.

WALKER: Oh c'mon. You don't have to be religious to be dead.

SCOTT: So? You don't have to be cross neither.

WALKER: Not that kind of cross, dummy.

SCOTT: Oh. I liked the animals alphabet better. L for Lizard, M for Monkey.

WALKER: L Lazarus, M Mary.

SCOTT: N for Newt.

WALKER: Er..

SCOTT: C'mon then. N for

WALKER: Newt too.

SCOTT: Newt is religious?

WALKER: Yeah.

SCOTT: I never heard of a religious newt.

WALKER: There is so.

SCOTT: Who says?

WALKER: My grandma and she's practically best friends with God. Anyway there was newts on the Ark, two of them.

SCOTT: The Ark? Are we allowed the Ark?

WALKER: Course.

SCOTT: Sure?

WALKER: C'mon, you're the one goes to church Sundays.

SCOTT: OK. Octopus, quail, penguin, rabbit, snake, tiger, umbrella bird, yak, zebra, I won.

WALKER: So? It was a dumb game anyhow. Let's play when we grow up.

SCOTT: Nah. My dad wants to send me in the army.

WALKER: What for?

SCOTT: To be a soldier.

WALKER: You can't do that.

SCOTT: I don't want to.

WALKER: No, you can't cos you'll get killed. That's what they do to soldiers.

SCOTT: Only when there's a war on.

WALKER: Is there a war on now?

SCOTT: I don't think so.

WALKER: Oh. When'd he come up with that idea?

SCOTT: He says there's no future for me here. Army'll make a man of me. Teach me a skill.

WALKER: Hey, you'll get a uniform. And a gun. A real one!

SCOTT: I guess.

WALKER: Will you let me borrow it? Will you?

SCOTT: I guess, if I go.

WALKER: I'd go. As long as there wasn't a war on.

SCOTT: Look, there's Rann.

WALKER: Ssh. Let's ambush her.

RANN ENTERS AND LOOKS AROUND. SHE DOESN'T SEE THE BOYS.

SCOTT: [WHISPERING] What's she doing?

WALKER: Ssh. Maybe she'll take her sneakers off, her feet are really weird.

RANN TAKES OUT A STUB OF CANDLE AND PLACES IT ON THE GROUND

SCOTT: How?

WALKER: Just weird. She walks like a duck.

RANN LOOKS FOR A PLACE TO HIDE/BURY ONE OF HER OBJECTS WHICH SHE WRAPS IN A CLOTH

RANN: [NO AMERICAN ACCENT] It was not my fault, Father. The water threw up the dead fish. Its eyes jumped on me.

SCOTT: What's she saying?

WALKER SHRUGS

WALKER: And Mom still thinks she can't speak.

RANN: I know the fish is bad luck Father – the spirit of a dead person who has not been buried with ceremony – but who? A sudden scattering of birds – the men in black moving in the evening shadows. But who?

RANN STARTS TO COVER/BURY A SPOON WRAPPED IN CLOTH

WALKER: What's she doing?

SCOTT: I can't see. Burying something I think.

RANN: I run back to the hut to wait for you and Mother. Sopak comes from the fields, then Sisopha, Bophal with our baby sister on her back. I try to forget the fish. The dead eyes. It is dark. You come home. Where's our mother? You don't throw me up in the air. You always do that to make me laugh. Instead you bend down and pick up my little sister and brother. So tender. You wash them. You've never done that before. You say nothing. It's like you are floating in the air and not really there. Where's my mother? Has she

been sent away? We worked so hard pretending to be farmers. No one can know about us. I never said you were a doctor. Then I learn about the children, the spies. Under the huts, hidden in the trees, small children no one sees. People say the night of Pol Pot time is like a pineapple, it has a thousand eyes. The eyes are the children.

RANN LIGHTS THE CANDLE, HANDS TOGETHER SHE BOWS TO THE CANDLE. SCOTT UNCONSCIOUSLY CROSSES HIMSELF

WALKER: What d'you do that for?

RANN: The boy hates me. He thinks I want his place. I must be careful or they'll send me back. I will be careful. I will survive. I promise.

RANN BLOWS OUT THE CANDLE. SHE HEARS RACHEL AND RUNS OFF

RANN: Mom!

WALKER: Quick!

SCOTT AND WALKER SCRAMBLE DOWN OUT OF THE TREE

WALKER: It was round here someplace. You look over there.

WALKER LOOKS BUT SCOTT'S ATTEMPTS ARE HALF HEARTED

C'mon, they'll be out in a minute for Pete's sake.

SCOTT: D'you think maybe..

WALKER: I got it! What?

SCOTT: It might be sort of personal or something.

WALKER UNWRAPS A TIN SPOON FROM A PIECE OF DIRTY OLD SHEETING

WALKER: Euch, this must be about a million years old.

SCOTT: Maybe it's treasure.

WALKER: Some treasure.

SCOTT: Let me see.

RACHEL: [OFF] What have you been doing? God it's hot.

WALKER PUTS THE SPOON IN HIS POCKET AS THEY CLIMB BACK UP THE TREE

RACHEL: Walker, Scott, you want a cold drink?

RACHEL AND RANN ENTER. NO ANSWER FROM THE TREE

I bought some ice cream. The factory's on strike. I saw the picket line as I drove home.

SCOTT: [JUMPING DOWN] You see my dad?

WALKER: Scott!

RACHEL: Large as life.

WALKER: We were supposed to be invisible.

RACHEL: Did you let Rann in on your game?

WALKER: Scott, d'you want to finish the checkers?

SCOTT: I guess I'd better get on home.

RACHEL: Show Rann how to play instead. Bye Scott. And thanks. Walker.

WALKER: She won't understand.

RACHEL: Then show her. Juice?

WALKER: Coke.

RACHEL EXITS

You sit that side. We'll finish this game in progress okay. Now you're black and I'm white and you want to get my back row see. You do that by jumping over my checkers diagonally, right, cos you got to stay on white squares and I go to stay on black. Okay? You got that? Nod your head for yes. Like this. And you shake it like this for no. OK? You got it? Nod then. Like this. Good girl. Right. I get to move first because..because I was here first. Now it's your move.

RANN CONTEMPLATES THE BOARD

C'mon, it's only a game, for Pete's sake.

RANN MAKES A MOVE

At last.

WALKER MAKES A MOVE, BARELY PAYING ATTENTION TO THE BOARD. THEN HE LAYS BACK, ACTING BORED.

Wake me up when you're done.

RANN LOOKS AT THE BOARD, THEN AT WALKER AND THEN TAKES MOST OF HIS CHECKERS IN A SERIES OF HOPS. SHE SMILES SWEETLY

RANN: Walker?

WALKER LOOKS UP LAZILY. RANN NODS HER HEAD.

Done.

WALKER: OK if you're so damn smart why don't you make your own telephone or something. Phone home why don't you. Phone home, gettit? Phone home?

WALKER IMPERSONATES ET'S WALK AND VOICE

ET phone home. ET phone home.

RANN JOINS IN BEHIND HIM DOING THE WALK.
RACHEL ENTERS. SHE SMILES

RACHEL: I can't tell you how happy it makes me to see you kids getting along.

RANN AND WALKER KNOW DIFFERENT.

SCENE 7

WALKER: Grown ups think they're so smart, as if just staying alive made you intelligent or something. It's like some old people you meet who reckon having a million wrinkles entitles them to pass personal remarks – time you got your hair cut sonny – straighten up young man. You know the type? And then when you let them pass off the bus first they let go the door in your face. Old Larry's going to be just like that. Can't you just picture it? Scott and I made a pact never never to get old. He was spending a deal of time with us since the factory went on strike, couple of months back.

WALKER: I wasn't sure if it was in order to make some money, to be out of the way of his dad or because of the women in my house. All I knew was, things were disappearing and I was not getting enough attention.

RANN AND SCOTT ARE PLAYING SCISSORS, PAPER,
STONE OUT IN THE YARD

Okay where's my darn bike. I got to take it to get it fixed. Has she been riding it again? If you've been riding it you can pay for it cos honest to god you'll have made it worse. Has she been riding my bike? Has she?

SCOTT: Did you know they play scissors paper stone in Cambodia too? Isn't that incredible?

WALKER: Mind blowing.

SCOTT: Rann knows all the alphabet now, don't you? I've been helping.

WALKER: Oh great. She's two years older than me and she's just learning her alphabet.

RANN AND SCOTT CONTINUE THEIR GAME. IN THE NEXT TWO TURNS SHE DOES SCISSORS AND HE DOES PAPER

SCOTT: Scissors, it's yours. One two three, scissors again!

WALKER: Oh pardon me for interrupting your intellectual conversation.

SCOTT: Did you know Seh means horse. Did you know that? Seh. Yes?

RANN SMILES AND CLAPS HER HANDS IN PRAISE.

WALKER: Horse, that's good. You got him right there, Rann. Old horse head. The only word I know is slap. Yeah? Slap?

RANN IS DISTRESSED

WALKER: She knows what I mean. And another thing. Where's my Darth Vader? I particularly know I left it in my room. Now it's gone.

SCOTT: You tried looking under your bed lately?

WALKER: Suddenly he sounded just like my mother. Scott?

SCOTT: Yeah.

WALKER: Are you all right?

SCOTT: Yeah. D'you wanna get the phone?

WALKER: I don't hear it.

SCOTT: It'll wake your mother.

WALKER: She was on duty fifteen hours, she'll be a zombie till dinner time at least.

SCOTT: OK I'll go.

WALKER: It's stopped. So, where were we? Oh yes, death. I am Darth Vader – death to the planet!

WALKER RAYGUNS THE OTHER TWO, COMPLETE WITH SUITABLE NOISES. RANN HIDES BEHIND SCOTT.

SCOTT: Hey, cut it out! Walker, stop it, you're frightening her!

THIS ONLY SPURS WALKER ON TO GREATER FEROCITY. HE IS NOW EQUIPPED WITH MACHINE GUNS AND HAND GRENADES

Walker! You idiot. Cut it out!

SCOTT TRIES TO PHYSICALLY STOP WALKER AND THEY END UP WRESTLING

It's not funny.

WALKER: Ah ahahahahah. Slap! Ahahahahah. Slap! Gotcha!

RACHEL ENTERS, HER HAIR IS UNBRUSHED, SHE IS WEARING A WHITE COAT, BARE FEET AND IS PUTTING ON HER SHOES

RACHEL: Scott! Walker. Hey you guys, listen to me!

THEY ARE QUIET

RACHEL: I got to go out. There's been an accident. At the factory. Walker you take care of your sister. I'll take Scott home on my way.

SCOTT: It's okay. I'll stay here.

RACHEL: I'm sorry Scott, I reckon your mom'll need you. It's your dad.

SCOTT: What's happened to him?

RACHEL: I don't know. It seems he fell. They found him on the floor inside the plant. Let's get going. Bye honey.

RACHEL KISSES RANN

Where's my bag?

WALKER: Mom, have you got anything on under that?

RACHEL: Oh Walker, why don't you just grow up!

RACHEL AND SCOTT LEAVE. WALKER CIRCLES RANN

WALKER: Be dark soon. Mist coming off the ocean. You wanna hear a ghost story? It's a true one. In the fall, on evenings like this, when the wind blows in off the water, they do say if you listen hard a presence comes calling.

WALKER: First you hear the creak of the oars, then a long low moaning. Then through the mist a child appears, dressed all in white. She stands before you, pale as the moon, her eyes are closed and her hair green as seaweed. She begs you "hold out your hands, please, please, for pity's sake" and with her gentle fingers she closes your eyes so that you may not look on her distress.

RANN HOLDS OUT HER HANDS AND ALLOWS
WALKER TO CLOSE HER EYES

And she whispers like the waves "you have seen my face,
you have touched my hands and here, here are my eyes"

WALKER PRESSES TWO PEBBLES/GRAPES INTO RANN'S
OUTSTRETCHED HANDS. SHE SCREAMS AND DROPS
THEM. WALKER HOPS ABOUT LAUGHING.

Here are my eyes! Don't you just love it. When they did it to
me I near screamed the place down. It was dark then too.

RANN SUDDENLY HURLS HERSELF AT WALKER,
KNOCKS HIM TO THE GROUND, HOLDS HIS WRISTS
WITH ONE HAND AND WITH THE OTHER PRESSES HER
THUMB ON HIS JUGULAR

WALKER: Hey what're you doing? It was a joke, okay? Get off, you're
hurting! It was just for a laugh.

RANN: I kill you. Slap. I have to kill you because you laugh.

WALKER: What?

RANN: Laughing not allowed.

WALKER: OK, OK. I'm not laughing. I promise.

RANN GETS UP.

RANN: Give me my spoon.

WALKER: Sure. OK.

WALKER HANDS IT OVER

RANN: Scissors, paper, stone?

WALKER: Sure, sure.

RANN EXITS

SCENE 8

WALKER: So, she was tougher than I thought. So what? I could handle it. What I couldn't handle was the idea of old Larry acting like he owned the place, like he was my dad or something. So I was real happy when he and Mom started to disagree about Frank Fernali's accident.

LARRY HAS ON A CATCHER'S MIT AND IS THROWING THE BASEBALL TO AN UNWILLING WALKER. RACHEL IS HEMMING A PIECE OF BRIGHT MATERIAL FOR A SARONG FOR RANN WHO IS READING.

RACHEL: [PRICKING HER FINGER] Ow. It was not an accident Larry.

LARRY: Good catch son. Rachel honey the man fell. It happens all the time. If you had to work at that place wouldn't you get a little drunk most nights?

RACHEL: It was afternoon. And Frank Fernali was not drunk.

LARRY: Who says? Nobody saw him after he left the picket line. And what was he doing inside the plant anyway? Are you paying attention Walker?

WALKER: You bet I was. Yes sir.

LARRY: Anyways there's nothing to be done now. Fernali's getting the best possible care in the hospital. You know that.

RACHEL: I know he can't recall what happened that afternoon.

LARRY: If Fernali thinks he fell then let it rest. He fell.

RACHEL: Fernali thinks? Frank Fernali can hardly think of his own name. How are his family going to manage?

LARRY: I gather the firm are still offering a generous redundancy, which considering his record as a troublemaker..

RACHEL: A few thousand dollars won't keep them. He was a young man.

LARRY: Was? Aren't you being a little melodramatic Rachel?

WALKER: [GLEEFULL] Oh she'll love that!

RACHEL: You know what I mean.

WALKER: What's the matter with her?

RACHEL: There ought to be an enquiry.

LARRY: I understand the police are satisfied and the company are not pressing charges. Legally he was trespassing.

RACHEL: Oh bull. He'd worked there twenty years. He's entitled to compensation. Ouch dammit.

LARRY: Here, let me do that. It is my forte after all.

RACHEL: Yes, why don't you? You seem to have just about everything else around here sewn up – you and your freemason cronies.

LARRY: Rachel, Rachel, let's not argue in front of the children.

WALKER: No, no, carry on.

RANN GETS UP AND TAKES RACHEL'S HAND AND
WALKER'S

WALKER: Hey, what's going on?

RANN: Beach.

RACHEL: What?

RANN LEADS THEM OFF

RANN: Beach.

RANN TURNS TO LARRY AS THEY EXIT

Goodbye.

LARRY IS LEFT FORLORN WITH HIS CATCHER'S MIT

INTERMISSION