

LOON

by Dan O'Neil

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LOON

CHARACTERS:

Monty, early 40's, male

Gab, first 16, then 26, female

Rick, first 19, then 29, male

Brent, early 40's, male

Clark, played by the same actor as Brent

Loon, played by the same actor as Monty

SETTINGS:

The Boundary Waters, night

A parking lot in Detroit, day

A prison cell

Gab's house interior, with full walk-in closet

A camp just outside the Florida Everglades

LOON

SUMMARY

A father's attempt to take his daughter camping goes awry when two men with guns terrorize the campsite for a night - the girl and the younger of the two men form a strange bond before her father falls off a cliff in the dark and becomes a loon. Ten years pass. The girl is revisited by the boy, each ten years older, one fresh out of prison, the other pushing just hard enough to keep the wall of memories from crashing down. A dark and sleepless night ensues, complete with a loon sighting in the walk-in closet, flashbacks, the rebuilding and extinguishing of the campsite from ten years ago, hunting shows on television, and piercing glances into the murky depth of suppressed memories. In the end, the two set off in search for a new home - trying their best to imitate a migration, they head south and forget the rest.

TEASER

Includes men with guns, campfires, a very dark walk-in closet, song, excerpts from hunting shows, mysterious tents, transgressive behavior including but not limited to foreclosures, and a man dressed up as a loon.

DEVELOPMENT HISTORY

Loon was developed at the Playwright's Center as part of a Core Apprentice Intensive Workshop (June, 2012, dir. Ben McGovern)

Reading: Stella Adler's First Breath New Play Reading Series, 2014

SCENE ONE

The Boundary Waters, Minnesota

Campsite. A tent in one corner, empty.

MONTY, late 40's, tries to break little branches over his knee.

MONTY

Gabby. GABBY!

These aren't any good.

Can you hear me?

I can't start a fire with these, you have to bring me something smaller-

MONTY hurts his knee trying to break a particularly stout branch and hops around for a second, swearing under his breath.

MONTY

Used to be - Didn't used to have to pay - don't get any *kindling* and you pay *six flipping dollars* for firewood and they don't even give you any *kindling* - and okay the beetles, right, can't have them cross-contaminating the forests - GABBY! - okay this is just about enough right here, this is as far as I'm willing to - didn't used to cost six dollars when I was - GABBY, DID YOU FIND ANY LITTLE STICKS?!

GABBY, sixteen, dressed in a sweatshirt and skirt (i.e., not exactly campsite-appropriate), drags a big branch onto stage and stands by it, staring at MONTY.

MONTY

Okay well. Okay then.

MONTY tries to break off one of the smaller twigs. It bends in his hand.

MONTY

Goddamn it Gabby this is *green*.

GAB

It's Gab now.

MONTY

What?

GAB

My name is Gab now.

MONTY

I'm sorry, I'm just used to the name that, you know, I gave you-

GAB

Exactly, so now it's mine.

Silence.

MONTY

Gab.

GAB

Yes.

MONTY

These branches are green.

GAB

So?

MONTY

So it's - so it doesn't *help us out here* - was it on the ground?

GAB

Yeah.

MONTY

There wasn't anything better, up higher, I don't know, in a tree?

GAB

No.

MONTY

In this whole forest there isn't?

GAB

It's dark out.

MONTY

Well what about the flashlight, where's the damn flashlight?

Doesn't work. GAB

The batteries died? MONTY

Yeah. GAB

These being the same batteries that *you* told *me* to buy at the gas station? MONTY

When? GAB

On the way, Gabby, I don't know, three days before now, on the way we *stopped* to BUY SUPPLIES and I asked you which batteries we should buy because, because you are a teenager and more technologically advanced and own several electronic appliances that I have purchased for you personally and sent to you as *gifts* and so I... MONTY

Those are different. GAB

What? MONTY

You don't put double A batteries in a phone. GAB

So we should have gotten *lithium*. MONTY

I guess. GAB

You guess. MONTY

*MONTY sits, head in hands.
GAB watches him for a moment.*

GAB

Aren't you going to start a fire?

MONTY

No, Gabby - Gab - no I'm not. We have no kindling and it's rained for the past three days and just because it's not raining right now is no reason to assume that it won't start up again five minutes after I've spent the *entire evening* looking for goddamn sticks - Why bother? You don't want to be out here with me in the first place, you've been making that point quite abundantly clear - and - You know, let's just... Fuck it. Get in the car.

GAB

Dad-

MONTY

Because when you *asked* me to take you on a trip, I don't know, I thought maybe you wanted to SPEND TIME with me, quality time, is sort of what I was thinking but apparently that's just too much to ask so *get in the car* and wait.

GAB

What are you going to do?

MONTY

Take the tent down. Pick up the trash you've left all over the campsite. Maybe I'll go for a walk. I don't know. I'm going to do what I came here to do, which is, to enjoy nature. To enjoy nature *with my daughter* - is what I came here to do - but I'll go for a walk alone-

GAB

You said we'd see a bear.

MONTY

I said we *might*.

GAB

We didn't see anything.

MONTY

You wouldn't go anywhere!

GAB

It was *raining*.

MONTY

Well you be sure and tell your mother all about how terrible and boring this trip turned out to be, then, can't you. When I drop you off at her door at three in the morning you can tell her all about it.

GAB

We're really leaving tonight?

MONTY

Yes.

GAB

Can I drive?

MONTY

No.

GAB

I'm sixteen now, I can drive, Mom lets me drive.

MONTY

You would hit a deer and we would both die.

GAB

Maybe just you.

Silence.

MONTY

Okay. You know, you've turned into a real-
You know, just. I blame your mother.

GAB

A real *what*.

MONTY

Gabby, this wasn't what I wanted-

GAB

Yeah, yeah, I kinda GET that, you wanted me to be the same but I'm NOT anymore, I'm not a KID and I thought when we planned this that you KNEW that but - I know what you want but you don't? Ha! You don't know ANYTHING!

MONTY

Gabby-

GAB (*absolutely lethal*)

WHAT.

GAB takes her sweatshirt off, throws it on the ground. She goes into the tent.

MONTY

You wanna pick that up? Ah. Never mind. Just forget it.
You know, I took a *week of work off* for this.

*MONTY takes a deep breath.
Stares up at the stars.
Then down at the unlit fire in front of him.*

MONTY

Hey Gabby. Gab.

I took you camping that one time before. Remember?
I think you were seven.
Your mother & I were still together, kind of - but we went alone.
Just You & I.
You loved the fire.
You'd grab a stick and hold it in the flames until it glowed and then...
You would write things in the air and tell me to read them.
But I couldn't.
I couldn't read them.

*MONTY crouches in front of the dead fire,
pokes at it.*

MONTY

I'm going to go find some more sticks.
Get this fire started.
If it's the last thing I do, I will.

MONTY exits into the underbrush.

*A long silence, broken by an inhuman echoing
resonant bird calling across the lake.*

*The sound of a tent unzipping.
GABBY sticks her head out.*

GAB

Dad. Monty. Dad?

*Off-stage, the sound of gunfire.
Lots and lots of gunfire.
It goes on for a long time.
Then it stops.*

SCENE TWO

The fire is burning.

RICK blows on it.

BRENT, a little ways off, drinks a beer.

MONTY & GAB sit silently by the fire.

RICK & BRENT hold semi-automatic weapons.

RICK's is pointed at the ground.

BRENT's is pointed near MONTY's feet.

RICK

The trick to starting a fire? Patience. Brent n' me, we used to do a lot of expeditions out here, we had this little motorized boat, we'd go out on week long trips, just trying to get lost, you know, out here? Saw a moose one time.

BRENT

Before the Park nazis came in and outlawed motorized vehicles, This used to be a place for people.

RICK

You get out there, three days from nowhere with nothing but a couple of walleyes? You have to be able to get a fire going from nearly nothing, you know? Or else you don't eat. Else you starve. You go back if you can't start a fire. Hungry. That's why we're so good at it. Takes practice. Takes some knowledge. You people from the city, you wouldn't understand that, you just think you can come out here and everything will take care of itself, don't you? Flip a switch and the fire goes on. It's not like that.

They watch the fire burn.

GAB reaches out her hand as if to grab one of the burning sticks near the edge of the flame; she gets most of the way there before MONTY notices.

They stare at each other for a second - MONTY shakes his head at her. She looks away but withdraws her hand. BRENT notices.

BRENT

What's the problem?

MONTY

...You.

BRENT

We're the problem?

MONTY

You have guns.

BRENT

That's a problem?

MONTY

You - you shot up - you shot at people in a public *campsite*-

RICK

We didn't hit anybody.

BRENT

Yet.

MONTY

I came here to spend quality time with my *daughter*.

BRENT

Yeah, well, you're spending time with her right now, aren't you?
Quality time. Under the stars. Fire's burning.
We're *all* spending some quality time together, I think.

MONTY

What gives you the - the *right* - for *no reason* -

BRENT

You're trespassers.

MONTY

It's a park!

GAB

Dad -

MONTY

No, this is a *public and protected environmental* park that is set aside for people like us to enjoy *nature* so what gives *you* the right to-

BRENT (*pleasantly*)

Shut the fuck up.

MONTY

I will - I will *not SHUT the fuck UP SIR* it has been ten years since I've taken my daughter camping, this, you, you're going to jail for this. For what you've done. What you're doing. You're terrorists.

BRENT

You're trespassing.

MONTY

I have a park pass!

BRENT (*to RICK*)

This is exactly what I was talking about.

RICK

No, yeah, I know but - let's just...

BRENT

Rick thinks that I just need to get to know other people.
That it will make me feel better.

RICK

Go back, let's just go back-

BRENT (*suddenly and directly to GAB*)

What's your opinion, little girl?

MONTY

DO NOT speak to her.

BRENT

Oh, see, there-
You get a little protective of what belongs to you, huh?
What *used* to belong to you. This one doesn't anymore, from the looks of her.
Right? What's your name?

MONTY

I said *don't*-

BRENT

Rick, ask her what her name is. You've been staring at her the whole night-

MONTY

My name - *my name* - is Montgomery Sherrill and I am from Detroit and I have a lawyer and you had *better* believe that you will have the mother of all lawsuits to go on top of, oh, I don't know, federal charges for acts of terrorism and, and -

GAB (*whispers*)

Don't.

MONTY

Help! HELP! SOMEBODY HE-

BRENT swiftly raises his gun and points it at MONTY's temple. MONTY stops yelling.

GAB (*full voice*)

Don't.

BRENT

I like her.
She's not fazed.
Are you?
Unfazed in the face of violent men?
I like that very much.
You like her too, right?

RICK

I mean sure yeah but,
She's just a kid-

BRENT

You're just a kid, no offense.
Does everyone know that it's Rick's birthday?
He just turned nineteen.
I think he deserves a birthday present, don't you, Rick?

RICK

It's not really my birthday 'til tomorrow-

BRENT

All the girls back in town are either fat or pregnant or got boyfriends already, Rick's kind of a late bloomer, you wouldn't know it from looking at him but he's sensitive, like his mother. Here's what we'll do: I'll keep a gun on loud-mouth Monty over here, and you go ahead and get to know her a little. Go on. Happy Birthday.

RICK doesn't move.

BRENT

I said, *go on*.

RICK

I think we should, just, think about going back now before-

MONTY

Listen to your friend, *sir*, just, we'll just, please, everything is fine here-

BRENT

Everything is *not fine*. This is my land, I just want you to understand that, before the U.S. of Fucking A swooped in and forced everyone off, as though we were fucking indians, o.k.? As though this here system of lakes didn't belong to nobody, well, it belonged to ME. You are trespassing. You're protective of what's yours, I get that, but *so am I*. We take what we want from trespassers.

RICK

You're drunk.

BRENT

I shot a wolf yesterday.

RICK

Just - okay but -

BRENT

These people don't respect us right now, and I can't abide by that.

RICK

Not like *this*.

Fire crackles and pops.

BRENT

Oh, I see, you want a little privacy?
You're a modest type.
I get that.
No, I do.
Monty.
Stand up.

MONTY stands, shaking.

He tries to make eye contact at GAB but she's not looking at him, just staring into the fire.

BRENT

We're just going to go let these two get to know each other a little better. I want you to stare down the barrel of this here weapon of mine, and I want you to know that if you make a noise, or try to run, or anything of that nature - I *will* not hesitate to take you down. I shot a *wolf* yesterday.

MONTY

Gabby-

GAB

It's okay.

MONTY

Gabby!

GAB

It's... Gab now.

BRENT

I like her so *very* much.

BRENT and MONTY exit.

Silence for awhile.

RICK

I'm Rick.

A loon cries out on the water.

RICK

You hear that? That's a loon. You ever heard that before?

GAB shakes her head.

RICK

It makes me feel like crying, that sound. You know that feeling?
When you almost cry for no reason?

GAB nods slowly.

RICK

They say, about the loon, that if you listen to it, the sound of it, all your hopes and dreams and secret wishes come to the surface. That's what they say. But it just makes me sad. They also say it's the cry of a drowned woman, I've heard that one too.

Fire crackles. Space. Darkness. Loon.

RICK

I'm going to put my gun down, ok?
I'm putting it down. I'm not going to hurt you or take you or anything.
But when Brent comes back, you have to seem like I did. Uh. You know.
He's on this sorta rampage for me to - we were *gonna* go to a strip club but -
Maybe later.

GAB

Why don't you?

RICK

I don't want to - I mean, strip clubs are weird.

GAB

I mean, me.

RICK

Oh.

*GAB and RICK stare at each other.
Interesting darkness.*

GAB

Is it really your birthday?

RICK

Tomorrow it is, yeah.

GAB

Will he really gonna shoot my dad? If he tries to... run, or...

Fire shifts, pops.

RICK
...No.

GAB
You're sure?

RICK
Yes.

GAB
How do you know?

RICK
The thing about Brent is -
I mean, he's just a little crazy about certain stuff. But he's not like - He wouldn't actually shoot anyone, okay? I just know. He's my - my mom and him dated. After my dad went to prison. So he's not family exactly but... I trust him.

GAB
...okay.

RICK
We were just drinking, at this locals bar we meet up at, and Brent was real happy 'cause of killing that wolf yesterday, he was on top of the world. He said, "Let's go, all of us, and teach those trespassers a lesson in American history." I didn't know that he was... Well, I guess I figured it out. But it seemed harmless. Go into a campground. Fire some weapons. Scare some people. Show them who's boss here. No big deal, you know?

GAB
Yeah.

RICK
His family did live inside the park limits. Before it was a park.
And yeah, the government made them move.
I he's got about as much a right as anyone to be pissed off.

GAB
I think it's okay.

RICK
Really?

GAB
I like that he scared my dad.

RICK
Yeah?

GAB
Monty's an asshole.

RICK
I guess, yeah, you know Brent's kind of a father figure for me too, go figure, but he can be an asshole sometimes... Look, we should, uh, call them *back* probably-

GAB
Take me with you.

Campfire pops, crackles.

RICK
I don't really think that's a good idea, isn't that, I don't know, kidnapping or something?
How old are you?

GAB
I'm not a kid.

RICK
But let's just, I'm gonna, like, yell for them-

GAB
My dad took me out here to have sex with me.

Campfire crackles.

RICK
He-
He did?

GAB
You see another tent? There's one tent.

RICK

Oh man. No. That's totally - you're right about that.

GAB

He said he didn't have another one, so we could share.

RICK

No, I absolutely did that a couple times, the one tent trick.
I mean, but, you're *sure*-

GAB

Last night he rolled over in his sleeping bag and sort of got all close to me, I rolled over too but the edge of the tent was there and we laid like that. I didn't sleep. I can't sleep out here. I haven't slept for, like, three days.

Campfire pops loudly. Then crackles. Loon.

RICK

Oh *man*.

GAB

Yeah.

RICK

I mean, maybe he was just asleep and rolled over-

GAB

Three days in a row?

Campfire shifts, the glow from the fire illuminates their faces. Sparks fly everywhere.

RICK

You *should* come with me.

GAB

Yeah?

RICK

I have my own part of a house, it's a duplex, the downstairs part. I think you'd like it. Only one bed, but I got a couch, I'd have to clean it but -

GAB

Why did you go along with it?

RICK

With... what?

GAB

When your friend said what he said at the bar.

RICK

Oh! It's, uh. Our community. We need to stand up against, you know, I agree with that part, we can't just let the protection agencies take away our homes, can we?

GAB

Wasn't *your* home.

RICK

No, but, what's to stop them? They could take my house too if they wanted. Maybe I live next to some important tree. Maybe some endangered beetle makes its nest under my porch. They could take my house. Maybe some endangered worm lives in my intestinal tract, they gonna take that too? You get me? Man's gotta fight back at some point.

GAB

My *dad* took our house. I live in a shitty townhouse now.

RICK

So look, can I take you home with me?

RICK reaches out for GAB, but before he touches her:

GAB

Wait until they get back.

RICK

Uh, I'd rather not? If that's okay -

GAB

Tell your friend -Brent- to let my dad go.
And tell my dad to let *me* go. With you.
Then I want you to, like, shoot... at the stars.
Make them *both* run. Then I'll go with you. We'll be..
Home-free.

Crackling fire, loon, darkness.

RICK

We should put another log on that fire, it's gonna go out.

GAB

Are you afraid?

RICK

Brent's gonna be real pissed at me.

GAB

I'm not.

Fire pops. RICK shifts the gun from one hand to the other, considering his options.

RICK

...Why?

*Loon, very distant.
RICK looks over his shoulder into the dark.*

RICK

...He really took you out here to have sex with you?

GAB, slowly, nods, careful to keep her eyes only on the fire and nothing else.

RICK

Maybe he already got away, your dad. Maybe Brent already headed back to town. I mean, I don't hear anything out there, do you?

GAB

It's real quiet.

RICK

Isn't it really kind of amazing how dark it gets when it's really dark? Can't see your hand in front of your face. I wish I was a bat. I wish I had sonar powers. That's what I wish.

GAB

So you gonna do it?

*A heavy crackling in the brush.
RICK grabs his gun.
BRENT appears.*

His gun is missing. So is MONTY.

RICK

Where's the guy?

BRENT

He fell.
In the dark.
Off a cliff.
He fell off a cliff.

*The sound of a body hitting the water from high up.
The call of the loon.
Ten years pass.*

SCENE THREE

*A parking lot, Detroit, early spring.
GAB is twenty-six years old.
She stands at a podium-like structure,
handles notes, wears glasses now.*

GAB

On behalf of the entire Reclamation of Gray Spaces organization - Tim, thank you, Ellie, you've been so helpful in everything, and George! Our new offices are, well, offices! For those of you who don't - who aren't hearing this for the fourteenth time, we've been working out of Tim's garage for the first two years of operations, and we've finally found the funding - again, thank you George - to take a big step and secure an office, right around the corner actually - so we could WALK to the future construction site, instead of DRIVE - and it's really neat to have you all here today because we are ready to serve our mission, return nature to places that humanity has used up and forgotten - and so this parking lot and the warehouse behind me - which once housed a car dealership but has been closed for the past four years - our new initiative is to turn this warehouse into an aviary.

*Somewhere else on stage, MONTY enters.
He's dripping wet, drenched.
Onstage, he is turned into the LOON.
Once he has metamorphosed, he leaves.*

Tim will be passing out the architectural drawings at the lunch following this press conference, and you'll see that we're trying to use the industrial decay - it wouldn't be Detroit without it, right? - we're trying to incorporate the features of the warehouse, to create a tension and conflict between the metal and glass overhead and the vast array of birds housed within it - we're already in discussion with the San Diego zoo on what birds are most appropriate, but we're staying for the most part local - except for the penguin pond, because, Ellie really likes penguins - no no that's a joke, everyone likes penguins - but we're trying to evoke, maybe, a dream of the future, after all, we won't be here forever - it all goes back to the birds - lake birds, mostly, egrets and sand pipers, all variations of water fowl, after all, there's a huge LAKE just to the north of us - and so you'll walk in and everything will flutter around you, utterly, the word is, transformed. And - I think, my notes are out of order, the same page printed twice - that's a little embarrassing. Put new printers on the list George! Ha. Okay. That's it. I think, final remarks, thank you for placing me in this new position, I am now the Senior Program Manager of RGS, I'm really looking forward to the challenge, and I thank those of you who came out early today for this press conference, seriously, THANK YOU, I know there aren't a lot of you but that just means more bagels and juice for everyone!

*RICK enters, with a bagel.
He's wearing rumpled clothes, a mess.*

GAB

We're going to head over now into the warehouse where we'll have, just, an informal gathering where everyone can ask questions, look over the press packet, and if you happen to know of any funding organizations that would like to be involved, we would be so happy to take down your name and number and add you to our support list, it's really IMPORTANT to have all of you here. Thank you. Thank you so much. Thank you.

GAB takes her notes, shuffles them, leaves the podium area. RICK closes in.

RICK

Gabby?

GAB

It's Gab - sorry - Gabby is fine - Yes?

A long pause.

RICK

Hi Gabby.

GAB

Can I help you?

RICK

I hope so.

GAB

Okay, well... if you want to sign up, I'm actually not the keeper of the list, I think that George, he's the one in the hunting jacket - over by the future eagle pen - if you just want to talk to him-

RICK

I want to talk to *you*.

GAB

Oh. Okay.

RICK

You look great.

GAB

Do I? I mean, thanks, that's -
I'm sorry, Are you with the newspaper?

RICK

I'm not.

GAB

From the paper? Ok, is this a - ? The city council committee? The planning committee!

RICK

Do I look like I'm on a planning committee?

GAB

No.

Long Pause.

RICK

I'm kind of a mess right now but I can clean up real nice.

GAB

I'm sure.

RICK

Is there somewhere we could talk?

GAB

You mean, what...

RICK

Somewhere private?

GAB

Well there's my place but-

RICK

Can we go there?

GAB

I don't think so.

RICK

I think we should.

GAB

You know, George would be MORE than happy to take down your information and maybe we can schedule a meeting at some future date?

RICK

You want to get rid of me?

GAB

I don't know who you *are*.

RICK

Yeah you do.

*RICK, annoyed, turns to leave.
Then he turns back.*

RICK

You gonna have loons?

GAB

What?

RICK

Can you hold loons in your aviary?

GAB

Well, they're not - local -

RICK

They're migratory.

GAB

They're not on our current list of targeted birds but-

RICK

You should add them.

GAB

I'd have to run it by a few people-

RICK

They're coming.

GAB

The bank. *That's* it. I have until the end of the month.

RICK

You *know* me. And I know it. I'm just gonna wait you out. I got time.

Little pause.

GAB

We'll consider the loons, okay, we'll consider adding them. To the list. But at a future date. We're only in the planning phase. Please go consult with George, he's the one now putting the bagels away, he'd be very interested in why you think the loon should be included in our aviary-

RICK

We need to be protected from them.

GAB

It's the other way around, I think?

RICK

Brent. Peterson.

GAB goes silent, pale, internal.

RICK

First full-blooded American citizen to be incarcerated and convicted of domestic terrorism, alongside the manslaughter, I think you'd have a hard time *not* remembering that-

GAB

I *don't*, I've worked very hard-

RICK

He's dead.

GAB

They never found a body-

RICK

Not your dad.
Brent Peterson's dead. He just died.
I thought you should know.

GAB

How do *you* - who-

RICK

I'm Rick.
Rick. Yeah.

GAB allows herself to recognize him fully.

RICK

Where's your apartment?

GAB

My house. It's down the street.

RICK

We should go there.

GAB

Please don't.

RICK

Yeah we need to.

GAB

Oh my *God.*

RICK

I'm Rick.

GAB

I know who you are.

SCENE FOUR

*A jail cell.
BRENT sits on a cot.
Harsh light.*

*After a few moments, The LOON enters,
dainty, dandy, just happy to be walking
through walls, an unencumbered presence.*

BRENT

Hello again.

*The LOON holds, in his hands, what appears
to be reeds, or seaweed, half-woven into a
rope - he continues to weave this during the
scene.*

BRENT

I was wondering-
Now that I'm having these visions-
What else I could see.

The doctor, by the way, had a look at the old noggin from the inside out and he said, *he said*, nothing wrong, no tumors, no dissonant cognition or whatever, nothing wrong with *me* that another thirty years of incarceration couldn't cure, just to let you know, just to say, I'm onto you, you're not a rational or explainable part of this experience, my friend, you're just a fucking *loon* in a jail cell, that's what you are.

So here's what else I see: I'm twelve years old. Our house is this little shack hunched down near the shoreline of Lake Elmo, at the end of this rickety-ass dock of rotten two-by-fours and abandoned tires pulled off my uncle's collection of Ford trucks out back, all grown over now by weeds. I'd climb into the cabin of the truck nearest the water and pretend like I was a boat captain - the water line was all I could see through the windshield, even cracked like it was, and I'd hold onto the steering wheel and imagine we was a barge and I was driving through the night and fog and wild black deep water towards some port with a full load of, I don't know, gravel. I don't know what I thought I was hauling, not that it mattered anyhow - Our house, our yard, I'm just some kid, some fucking north-woods tike; my grandparents, both of 'em, straight from Norway, the old country, and so the forest is hugely key I think, the forest hides ancestry, in a way. Keeps you from seeing anything straight on 'cause all you see is trees; by November they turn into dark lines on a white background. So cold in the wintertime you can't open your eyes all the way, that permanent wind-burnt squint, that's how you knew that some other was one of you - the park rangers, when they first came to evict us, wore sunglasses, I remember *that* like it were yesterday.

But in my vision. My father, he was alive, wearing that fishing hat of his, the one with the shiny hand-made triple-hooked lure hanging right over his eyes like some kind of a ornament on Christmas morning. He took me by t'hand. We got into the canoe. This being morning, it was foggy. No sun, pre-dawn. The mist on the lake heavy. The water like lead underneath oars. We go out on t'water. Fish like roaches underneath us, just barely invisible but we know they're there. We cast out and the cast lasts forever, must be a hundred miles of line before the bobber hits water; and in the little ripple that spreads I see the red dudes that rightly lived here before my grandparents came down from Norway and dared settle where no roads yet led - but so I see these faces and one murmurs, "They are coming," and I recognize he is a chief and there is wisdom in his eyes; like I seen ever-so-faintly glittering in that bartender down at Elks club, he's at least half native, and even though it's been beaten out of him I can see that he remembers, he knows something was taken away; and then what I see in the water is my own face. And in the darkness of my own pupils, the same wisdom, that something's going to be taken, something that felt like MINE, my youth maybe, or all memory of ownership of a *place*. I see my faces reflection too in the park ranger's darkest mirrored glass eyes when he comes, hand on gun on hip, notice under arm, to take us by force from this land that we settled, unsettled already as it was, being land of the red dudes before of course. I'm not stupid. I know history. I know what was mine was never mine to begin with - but that don't mean just anyone can take it away and give it away to nobody. The fuckin' *loons*, right? Elk. Wolves. Government can decry that nobody lives here anymore, but that don't make it right, or true.

The day turns into night. The stars reflect in the water and everything turns into a mirrored plane. You can't tell night sky from water except that you know what's up and down. And even that is hard to determine. The inlet that we came from is obliterated by a fog. And my father with his lure over his forehead, asleep at the bow, pants wet from the waist down, empty cans at his feet, empty cooler at his elbow. I paddle and paddle and I can't point us towards home no more. I don't know no home. All I can see in the water is the stars.

The LOON has woven the reeds into a noose.

BRENT (cont'd)

All was silent 'til I heard a loon cry at four in the morning.
It was *you*.

BRENT reaches for the noose, but the LOON won't hand it over, just looks at BRENT with strange intensity.

Above the jail cell, the sky fills with stars.

BRENT

I know what you want. I figured it out.
It's under my pillow.

BRENT reaches under his pillow, pulls out papers, a hand-drawn map, scrawled notations, drawings of trees and birds and feathers.

BRENT

All anyone ever wants to know is, "What happened?"
How did I get fucking here?
What's mine?

But this is what *you're* after though, right?

This is a map. There's a mark where the cliff was. I have indicated, to the best of my recollection, where your body fell. It was dark. I'm not sure about anything. Maybe I should have - maybe, I don't know, I thought it would serve me better if they never found the body, but turns out the *law* - wasn't on my side. Not ever. Not once. So it don't make no difference to me now if you get found. You might. I know that terrain better than any other man alive. Don't know if it's going to change anything though.

*BRENT places the papers at the LOON's feet.
The LOON, in turn, hands BRENT the noose.*

All you gotta do is find someone who cares and deliver it to them.
Loon like you, with wings and all, that shouldn't be too heavy a load to bear.
Not like mine.

BRENT tests the noose for strength, places it around his neck.

For what it matters, it were never something personal between us.

Lights fade as the LOON holds the rope up over BRENT's head and the stars intensify, then blink out.

SCENE FIVE

Inside of GAB's house.

It's messy, boxes, never entirely unpacked.

Pictures of birds on the wall.

Not much furniture, but there is a bed, unmade.

RICK stands carefully near the entry-way, casing the joint.

RICK

I took the train.

GAB

Aren't trains expensive now?

RICK

Inmate special rate.

GAB doesn't laugh.

RICK

Had a couple hundred dollars in my pocket when I went in. My mom gave it to me. She had this idea that having some money would help me inside but I let them confiscate it with the rest of my personal articles. It sat there in my pants for ten years. Ten years. How much should you get from interest on two hundred bucks for ten years, do you think?

GAB

I -

Don't know, I'm not great with money, actually.

RICK

Like, how much would they do normally, four, five percent? For holding money?

GAB

I don't really have an idea.

RICK

Least fifty bucks. State of Minnesota should owe me least fifty bucks in interest.

GAB

It's not like they put the money into an account and *spent* it, it just sat there-

RICK

Like me. Yeah. We both just sat there. But I got out. Last Thursday. My mom? Picked me up. Like from school. Did your mom pick you from school?

GAB

No, I walked.

RICK

Really?

GAB

Yeah.

RICK

Wasn't she afraid some guy, would like, molest you?

GAB

No.

RICK

Do you have a good mom?

GAB

No.

RICK

We never talked about your mom.

GAB

No.

RICK

...I'm sorry.

GAB

Sorry about what?

RICK

That's kinda silly though isn't it, I'm the one sat in a jail cell for a decade, look at *you*, got a job and a house in *Detroit*, that's... Yeah.

GAB

Rick.

RICK

Yeah?

GAB

What are you doing here?

*Pause. RICK takes one step into the house.
GAB retreats one step but doesn't stop him.*

RICK

You know how long it takes to get from Stillwater to Detroit? You gotta go through Chicago, man, I had never BEEN to Chicago, that is one big city, even Detroit looks big to me, I never realized really, how much I hadn't done. I was only, what, twenty? I've never really even left home, isn't that just pathetic, I mean, I have to wonder what I could have done with all that time, I could have traveled the world, yeah? Isn't that what people do? In their twenties? Isn't it?

GAB

It's not really what I'm doing.

RICK

What's the farthest away you've ever been?

GAB

From...

RICK (over)

Home.

GAB

Here?

Oh from home.

RICK

This *is* where you - I remember your dad saying-

GAB

Detroit. Yeah. My mom lives in Florida now. So I go there sometimes.

RICK

Have you ever been to Canada?

No. GAB

I have. RICK

Okay. Did you like it? GAB

RICK
It's pretty much the same as Minnesota.
So you've been to *Florida*?

GAB
Yeah, and Colorado, I go skiing there sometimes, and I went to Mexico for a wedding last year...

RICK
Mexico?!

GAB
Destination weddings, you know, I don't know *why*.

RICK
Are you married?

*GAB starts laughing, stops herself.
RICK takes one more step inside.
GAB doesn't retreat this time.*

No. GAB

Well me neither- RICK

GAB
Yeah I wouldn't think-

RICK
Not much chance to date while you're in-

GAB

Right.

RICK

At least not *conventionally*. You know, you could a written me a letter if you wanted, I wrote you a bunch but I never sent them.

Pause. RICK keeps touching things.

RICK

Nice guitar, you play?

GAB shakes her head.

RICK

I used to. Wonder if I still could. Maybe I'll play you something later. Where'd it come from?

GAB

My dad's. A lot of this stuff is his.

RICK

Oh. *Oh*. Like a mushroom. Or heirloom. Heirloom, right? Did you just move here?

GAB

I've lived here three years-

RICK

The boxes-

GAB

Yeah I just-

RICK

Been waiting for something?

GAB

I should unpack.

RICK

You have a *home*.

GAB

And closets, I should at least put the stuff in closets, I don't have many visitors-

RICK

Mine was a ten by ten cell with bars.

GAB nods slowly.

GAB

Did you have a roommate?

RICK laughs hard, then abruptly stops.

RICK

I thought about you every night for ten years.

GAB is frozen.

RICK takes another step towards her.

RICK

It's fourteen and a half hours on the train, and I thought about you every minute. My mom picked me up from *prison*, Gabby - Sorry, *Gab*, It sure feels weird to be saying your name out loud, I said it in my head over and over, I chanted it, I sang it like a lullaby to fall asleep, Gabby Gabby Gabby it sort of rhymes with Baby but it's Gab now huh.

GAB nods.

RICK

On the train I watched back yards, they flash by, it's like you're in a trance, fields and trees and telephone wire go by 'til they blur together; I couldn't believe I had never taken a train before - it was all rushing by too fast - and I suddenly realized that I could order a beer as a drinking-age person, like, you know, legally! They have bars on trains. I got a Budweiser, they cost like eight dollars and I only had ten left over from buying the ticket but I ordered it and they didn't even *card* me. I had a beard. This long prison beard. Maybe that's why. I suddenly realized that I had this beard and so I went into one of those tiny little bathrooms, have you been on - No? They're tiny and with just this little foggy metallic mirror and I went inside and stared at myself and I didn't know who I was looking at. Suddenly, I couldn't believe anything was truth, like, I couldn't even comprehend what was happening; but I had to get rid of the beard, that much I knew, so I went back to the bar and there was this old fella sitting in a booth watching the scenery go by like I had been doing and I asked him if he had a razor, if I could give him my last two dollars for a blade so I could shave, and he looked up and I saw myself in thirty years, this man was *lost*. Have you ever seen that? Yourself, but on the face of another person? It's real freaky.

RICK

Maybe he saw himself from the past too, I don't know, but he gave me a razor without even asking for anything in return. I took it back into the bathroom, tiny, very small space. But I am used to small spaces. I couldn't stay calm so I drank most of the can of Bud really fast and it made me light-headed. I cut my beard off. I tried to shove it into the little garbage container. Looked like I was trying to stuff a dead cat in there. I cut myself a couple of times and just let it bleed. I looked at my face. I couldn't believe it was me. I didn't know who that was. I said your name out loud, "Gabby." Then I smiled. My teeth looked strong. I smiled bigger. I finished my beer. I said "Gabby, I'm coming."

RICK takes two more steps towards GAB.

He slowly reaches out his arm.

He places it on her shoulder.

GAB stiffens, then relaxes.

A long pause.

RICK places his other hand on her head.

She lowers her head.

RICK closes in, gets really close.

RICK

I love you so fucking much.

RICK wraps her up, inhales her.

GAB suddenly raises her head, panicking.

GAB

So all you've had is a beer in the last twenty-four hours?!

RICK

Well I had a - I had a bagel at the thing just now-

GAB

You have to eat!

Aren't you hungry?

You must be hungry!

RICK

Yeah, I mean, I am kinda hungry.

GAB

I don't have any food here!

RICK

No?

GAB

No, I don't have any food here, I haven't been shopping! I've been so busy! With my job? I should put all these boxes somewhere and I should have food in the house but I don't!

RICK

Okay well that's okay we could order in-

GAB

Do you like Dennys?

RICK

Do I like-

GAB

It's a diner.

RICK

Or maybe somewhere with more beer.

GAB

We can get beer...

RICK

After?

GAB

Yeah. After.

RICK

And take it back...where are we gonna drink it?

Little pause.

GAB

Here, we can take it back here.

RICK

Okay. Let's do that. That sounds good. Let's take it back here.

SCENE SIX

*GAB's house waits, empty.
The door rattles, shakes, opens.*

*Light from a street lamp floods in, fills in the
doorway, illuminates the silhouette of the the LOON.*

*The LOON turns on the lights. He stands in the
empty apartment. He rubs his wings together.*

*He sees RICK's pack where RICK has dropped it.
He rifles through it, nods his beak once or twice.
Drops it back on the floor.*

*He sees a guitar on the bed.
He picks it up, considers.
He plays. After a while, he sings.*

LOON

*The migration it is happening.
The water it is lappening.
The birds they are overhead.
Your books they are never-read.*

*Inside the boxes are more boxes.
Inside your dreams there is more.
Inside your heart there is oxygen.
Under the water, where I've always been.*

*Breath for a while to the tune of this.
Sing while you've still got a tongue.
Wash with the water of the lunatics.
The ladder is missing all rungs.*

*Home is a place with view of lake.
The water that is deep there.
The rules that are never fair.
The sun hits at a liquid glare.
Home is a place with a view of a lake.*

*Take the woods by the neck and string.
We all end up there after migrating.*

*The sound of laughter outside.
The LOON puts down the guitar.
He looks up at the light, which flickers and goes out.*

*GAB enters, RICK a few steps behind.
GAB carries a six-pack of beer with two beers left.*

RICK

You left the door open!

GAB

It wasn't - maybe I did.

RICK

The door was open.

GAB

That sort of like a novelty for you Rick, doors being open instead of being locked?
How is it, being out here in the real world?
Is it scary?
Does it scare you to have unlocked doors?
To drink beers from the corner deli?
Do I frighten you a little?

RICK laughs.

RICK

You're like a ghost story.
Hey is that a guitar?

GAB

Yeah Rick Yeah I mean of course it is. It's my dad's, I told you that already.

*RICK picks up the guitar.
He strums a basic chord poorly.*

RICK

I used to be sort of good. I could play at least two songs.

GAB

All boys know how to play two songs.

RICK

That's all it takes, is two songs.

GAB

Or one tent.

RICK

One tent. Oh man.

GAB

One tent.

RICK

Two songs, one tent, open sky, that's what it takes.

GAB

Guess you would know.

RICK

Well no, not really, I mean, what do I know.

GAB

How to shoot a gun!

RICK

That is something, yes, but-

GAB

How to drink a beer!

RICK

I'm very good at that one.

GAB

It's like riding a bicycle, right?

RICK

Never actually ridden a bicycle.

GAB

You're kidding.

RICK

No, we went out on the water, no need for bikes up there, least not in my family.

GAB

You've *never* ridden a bicycle?

RICK

Nope.

GAB

Then have another beer!

RICK

Okay.

*He does.
So does she.
They sit on the bed.*

RICK

I think my tolerance is a little less than it used to be.

GAB

I never drink, so I don't really have one.

RICK

A tolerance?

GAB

Not any at *all*.

They laugh.

RICK

Can I ask you something?

GAB

Sure, Rick, whatever.

RICK

Did you think about me?

GAB

What do you mean, did I think about-

RICK

The way I thought about you, like, at night, in the dark...
I couldn't get you out of my head.
You were like a dream but now you're right here.
I can *touch* you.

*RICK reaches out carefully, touches GAB.
He nods.
She looks down at his hand.*

RICK

Did you - ?

GAB

No.

RICK

Oh.

RICK removes his hand.

GAB

Does that hurt you?

RICK

No. No.

GAB

You wanted me to dream of you.

RICK

Well - no.

GAB

Because, why, because you almost kidnapped me in the woods ten years ago?

RICK

That's not what happened.

GAB

What *did* happen?

RICK

I wanted to save you. In the woods. Is how I remember it.
There was opportunity for me to do a...
A bad thing. But I didn't.

GAB

I remember it more along the lines of you being in the middle of doing something extremely bad and then offering to shoot at my dad when I asked you to.

*RICK stares at GAB.
He plays another bad chord.
He puts the guitar down.*

RICK

Well, he's at the bottom of a lake somewhere.

GAB

That's what they think.

RICK

So... you got what you wanted.

GAB

I was sixteen, Rick.

RICK

Old enough for your dad to-

GAB

I don't want to -

RICK

Look at all these boxes! Lady, it's time for you to unpack some things!

GAB

You're going to play psychologist now - ?

RICK

That's not why I'm here-

GAB

Then why did you-?
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

Pause.

RICK

I think you know.

GAB

Say it, though.

RICK

No I don't want to say it.

GAB

Say it.

RICK

I can't help but feel that-

GAB

Yeah, this is what you need to do, is say what you want.

RICK

I'm here to help you unpack.

GAB

Say.

RICK

I want you.

GAB

Okay.

RICK

Okay?

GAB reaches out, takes the back of RICK's head.

She forces him towards him.

He resists for a second, trying to figure out what he's being asked to do, then relents.

She pushes his head down into her lap, turns him so that he's staring up at her.

GAB

You came back for me.

RICK nods.

GAB

I'm sorry.

RICK

Sorry for -

GAB

I did think of you. Not always, but-
This is embarrassing actually but-
You came back for me so I guess...and who else could I ever tell this to -
When I see hunting on television it turns me on.

RICK

It what?

GAB

You heard me, men with guns make me ache.
Inside. In this dark place right here.

*She points to her abdomen.
He turns his head, kisses the place.*

GAB

Oh that's nice, Rick, but I don't think you can kiss it away.
It's like I want someone to shoot me there.
That's how it feels.

RICK

That's what being turned on feels like to you?

GAB

Sometimes. I don't know. It doesn't happen very often.

Little pause.

RICK

We could see what's on television I guess-

GAB

No, Rick, ever since you walked in my door I've been...
Aching.

RICK

Oh.

GAB

Yeah, right, Oh.
A big empty Oh.

RICK

So we should-

GAB

Do what you came to do, Rick.
We've both been waiting.

RICK

It's not like I think I have any, I don't know, it's not like Brent - I mean- he-

GAB

Gave me to you there, under the stars?
It is like that, a little, but it doesn't matter.

RICK

Is it what you want?

GAB

I don't know what I want.

RICK

I don't want to-

GAB

Take advantage?

RICK

Yeah.

GAB

It's okay, you're not.

RICK slugs the rest of his beer.

GAB watches him, tries to swig hers too, but can't quite finish it. She chokes a little, some of it runs down her chin. They giggle.

RICK

Here, let me-

GAB

Can't even *drink right-*

RICK tries to lick the beer off her chin, they end up kissing instead. It's awkward for awhile, and then gets interesting. RICK struggles with his shirt, pulls it over his head. GAB takes his belt buckle with both hands and pulls down as hard as she can, until she's worked his pants down to his ankles.

GAB

You-
Waited-
Ten Years for this?

RICK

Yeah I did.

GAB

Me too.

RICK

What?

GAB

I waited too.

GAB goes back to kissing him, RICK separates.

RICK

I - think you should tell me what you mean by that.

GAB

Oh my *God* Rick, does it matter?

GAB pulls her shirt over her head, throws it at RICK. He catches it, stands, looks at her.

RICK

No. I guess it doesn't.

GAB

How do I look?

RICK

You're not sixteen anymore.

GAB

No.

RICK

Somehow you look exactly how I imagined you would though.

GAB

You look older.

RICK

Well I was in prison.

GAB

Yeah, I guess.

RICK

You should have seen me with my *beard*.

GAB

I'm glad you shaved it.

RICK

...This is your first time.

GAB nods.

RICK

It's not mine.

GAB

Really!

RICK

Not in prison, no, *God* no-

GAB

Rick, It doesn't matter.

RICK

There was another girl, this was while I was out on bond before the trial, I felt *bad*, Gab, like I had betrayed you, I'm serious, I've had a lot of guilt about doing that, I let you down, I *cheated* on you-

GAB

I don't *care*.

RICK looks at her. He carefully removes his underpants and folds them, looks around for somewhere to place them.

RICK

Is there somewhere I should-

GAB

Just drop them.

After a little second, RICK drops the underpants, and gets on top of her. They struggle with her pants, finally get them off.

GAB

You're hyperventilating.

RICK

I'm not-

GAB

Breathe.

RICK breathes deeply, in and out.

RICK

I've been wanting this one thing for *so long* and I never thought-

GAB

You *never* thought?

RICK

I did, I *thought*, but I never thought - You know.

GAB

Um. Yeah. Can you hold the thought for just a few seconds longer actually?
I just realized I really gotta pee.

RICK

Oh! Sure.

GAB

I don't know how well this is going to work if-

RICK

No! I've waited ten years, I can wait a few more minutes-

GAB

All that beer.

RICK

No, please, take whatever time you need-

GAB

Just chant my name over and over like you did in prison or something, ok?

GAB exits into the hallway.

RICK lies back on the bed.

From a closet, the LOON appears.

RICK sees him.

They stare at each other.

RICK

Gab. Gab!

GAB (*off*)

Yeah, like that.

No, Gab! GAB!
RICK

*RICK covers his face with his hands.
The LOON swims back into the closet.
GAB re-enters with no clothes on.*

Is this how you-
Rick?
What's wrong?
GAB

I don't know.
RICK (*with face covered*)

...Okay...
GAB

*GAB vanishes back into the bathroom, re-emerges
wearing flannel pajamas a second later.*

RICK still holds his face in his hands.

Is that you?
RICK

Well *who else would it-*
=
GAB

There was a *thing*. In the closet.
RICK

A thing?
GAB

A loon.
RICK

In the closet.
GAB

Yeah.
RICK

GAB

There's nothing in the closet except boxes.

Rick. Look at me. I want to tell you something. I'm afraid too, we're both afraid. It's... funny, in the bathroom mirror, just now, I looked at my skin. Which I hardly ever do. And knowing that you were in the other room and about to, you know, look at me, I saw my body in this new light, like, a "Rick" light. I saw what you dreamed up. You see something in me. I felt. Feel. Good. Look. I am *this* now.

RICK removes his hands from his face, stares at her.

RICK

I think he made Brent hang himself.
He's here now.

GAB

Who's here. Rick? Who is here.
Who is here?
We're here.
It's just us.
You and me.

RICK

And him.

SCENE SEVEN (DARK WATERS)

I. *RICK stands with the closet door open.*

RICK
It's empty now.

GAB
Are you going to stay here tonight?

RICK
I don't have anywhere else I can go.

GAB
You can stay here.

RICK
Should I sleep on the couch?

GAB
I don't have a couch.

RICK
Oh.

II. *RICK sleeps facing the wall, GAB lies staring out.
The closet door is closed.*

GAB
Are you sleeping?
Rick. Rick.
I haven't ever shared my bed. I never went to college or anything.
It's really strange.
I'm afraid to roll over.
To make any noise.
Suddenly aware of my bed covers.
I don't want to breathe for fear of making the mattress move.

RICK mutters, rolls over.

GAB
Two people could make a home together, I think.
Like a nest.

GAB (cont'd)

Find some high place and make a nest.
 Or some low place.
 Reeds or marsh or wherever.
 What kind of bird would you be, Rick?
 I think I'd be, like uh...
 I don't know.
 Just like a... common bird.

III. GAB sleeps, face down. RICK sits straight up. The closet door is open. Slowly, careful not to wake GAB, RICK slides out of the bed. He picks up the guitar and plays a few notes, first awkwardly, but then it seems to all rush back into him, and the notes turn into a tune. He plays until he gets to a part he can't seem to remember. He tries again, still can't remember the part.

IV. GAB sits up in bed. RICK is asleep next to her. The closet door is closed. GAB uses a remote to activate a small television set across her room. The pale blue light washes over her. She turns the volume up until it's just barely audible.

TELEVISION HOST

So we're just going to follow Jake, here, into the underbrush, what're we hunting for today, Jake?

JAKE (O.S)

Wolves, Arnie, we're just trackin' a wolf across-country here, you can see some tracks here in the mud, those haven't been there for more'n a day or so, so we know she's been here within, oh, last twenty-four hours.

TELEVISION HOST

Just so that our viewers recall, the wolf has been removed from the protected list and now is fair game, right Jake?

JAKE (O.S.)

That's right Arnie, and we're gonna see if we can't shoot us one today.

TELEVISION HOST

Why don't you describe the tools you'll be using to do so, to our viewing audience?

JAKE

Oh sure, this is a .220 Swift here and we're packing it with heavy, solid core bullets, now I need to mention that this is *not* an ideal long-range weapon for taking down a wolf, so we've definitely got to get her at least into a medium range; but on the up-side, the entry hole is significantly reduced, the hide will retain a lot of value with this weapon.

GAB places the remote carefully down atop the blankets and slowly, careful so as not to rustle the covers, slides her hand underneath the covers. Her head falls back.

TELEVISION HOST

Wow, just look at that view, would-ya Jake?

JAKE

There's not a more beautiful place to experience, Arnie, there really isn't, then this type of terrain.

*GAB has an orgasm in the middle of the night.
RICK doesn't wake up.*

*V. GAB is asleep on her side of the bed, splayed out.
RICK sits on the bed. The closet door is closed.
Then, it opens. BRENT enters, in the clothes we first saw him in.*

BRENT

You didn't do anything, right? To the girl?

RICK

No!

BRENT

No DNA or-

RICK

I didn't DO anything! Did you?

BRENT

Christ, Rick, no! He tried to run and fell off a cliff. We can't talk about this anymore. From now on, all that happened is what we tell them. Do you know what to tell them?

RICK

Yeah.

BRENT

Because you have to be fucking certain.

RICK

I know, Brent.

BRENT

Or else we'll go down, okay, together. I'm not selling you out, Rick, we are family, I have no intention of doing that, but you have to stick to the story, got it? It's us against her.

RICK

Yeah, okay, I'll try but-

BRENT

Tell it again.

RICK

I stayed with the girl. You went with the father to get help. People had been shooting up the campsite. We happened to be hunting nearby and heard the shots, came to help.

BRENT

Did they ask for our protection?

RICK

They did, they *did* ask for our protection. They wanted us to stay close-by until the authorities arrived. But - the father... Uh, Monty. He needed to use the restroom and so you accompanied him into the woods.

BRENT

How far into the woods?

RICK

Pretty far - far enough that I couldn't hear anything anymore.

BRENT

And why did we go so far?

RICK

I don't know.

BRENT
You don't know.

RICK
I mean, why *did* you?

BRENT
Privacy.

RICK
Yeah.

BRENT
Right.

RICK
I wanted some privacy.

BRENT
No, *fuck* Rick, he wanted - the father, Monty, *he* wanted privacy.

RICK
Oh. Yeah. That's what I meant.

BRENT
And when I came back?

RICK
He was gone.

BRENT
And what *happened*. Why was he gone?

RICK
Because...

BRENT
Because why, Rick?

RICK
Because you had left him there in the woods, you had heard a sound from the campsite that sounded bad and so you rushed back, so fast that you dropped your rifle somewhere in the woods.

And? BRENT

RICK
It was the girl you thought, who had cried out.

BRENT
For help.

RICK
Yeah.

BRENT
And so I came rushing back.

RICK
Yeah.

BRENT
And what was the actual sound that I responded to?

RICK
A loon. It was the call of a loon.

VI. GAB sleeps on the bed. RICK sleeps on the floor. The closet door opens. The LOON enters, pulling a cardboard box behind him. He goes back into the closet, pulls out another one. And then another. And another.

VII. RICK sleeps on top of the covers. The closet door remains open. GAB carefully slides out, so as not to disturb RICK. She walks amid the boxes. She opens one box. Reaches inside. She pulls out a log. She places it in the center of the floor, opens another box, pulls out more logs. She recreates a camp-fire.

VIII. GAB sleeps by the campfire. RICK sits by it. BRENT rushes in through the open closet door.

BRENT

We have to get rid of this.

RICK

What? Why?

BRENT

Get rid of the fire! Put it out.

RICK

Where'd the guy go?

BRENT

I told you, he *fell*.

RICK

Is he okay?

BRENT

Put the fire out! Extinguish it all! We have to erase this.

RICK (*indicating GAB*)

What about her?

BRENT exits, slamming the closet door closed. RICK tries to disassemble the fire, wincing when he has to grasp a particularly hot piece of wood. He puts the wood back into the boxes.

IX. RICK is asleep on the bed. GAB sits at the foot of the bed. The closet door opens, the LOON comes out of it. They stare at each other. The lights shift in some weird way, some color we haven't seen before.

GAB

He was just trying to help.

LOON (*speaks blankly, neutral, courtroom manner*)

Why did you tell one of the men-

GAB

Rick, it was the younger one, his name is Rick.

LOON

What exactly did you tell Rick, Gabby?

GAB

That my dad was trying to... Have sex with me.

LOON

And did he, ever, in your remembered experience of it, *have sex with you*?

GAB

No.

LOON

Did he ever ask to have sex with you?

GAB

No.

LOON

Did he ever put his hands on you in any inappropriate way?

GAB

Well, he *touched* me.

LOON

Like a father would touch a daughter?

GAB

Well how I am supposed to know-

LOON

Did he ever touch you in a sexual way?

GAB

Like, did he grab my boobs?

LOON

In any way, did he ever touch any parts of your body that felt unwanted?

GAB

He rolled against me in his sleep.

LOON

Why did you tell Rick that your father was trying to have sex with you?

GAB

I knew.

LOON

You knew.

GAB

Yeah, I *knew*.

LOON

But you can't be completely certain, can you?

GAB

Well-

LOON

Because your father, never, *actually*, did anything that would legally constitute unwanted advances. In *your* recollection of the events. You can't tell me anything that he did.

GAB

We slept in the same tent.

LOON

Did your father have another tent?

GAB

Yeah, I mean, I think, yeah, he has two at least.

LOON

And what happened with the other tent? Did you ask him to bring it with on your trip?

GAB

He said it had a hole in it.

LOON

A hole.

GAB

That the bugs would get in.

LOON

The tent had a hole in it.

GAB

That's what he said.

LOON

So you brought a single tent.

GAB

Yeah.

LOON

Yet your father made no sexual advance.

GAB

Well, he didn't get the chance, he *died*.

LOON

Did you say anything else to Rick that night? That would, in any way, motivate the actions of either men involved?

GAB slowly shakes her head.

LOON

I'm sure this is a very difficult time for you.

*The LOON exits through the closet door.
GABBY stares into the darkness after him.*

X. GAB is asleep on top of the covers. RICK watches television with the sound off. The pale light flickers on his face. The closet door opens. BRENT comes out, dressed in an orange jump suit.

BRENT

They're taking me in for tests they said, brain scans.

Yeah. RICK

This fucking bird. BRENT

Yeah? RICK

I keep seeing him. BRENT

Like, a bird, a real bird? RICK

It's a man dressed up like a bird. BRENT

Oh. RICK

Yeah. BRENT

Oh. RICK

Not good, right? BRENT

They're having you do some tests? Maybe you'll get out! Maybe there'll be something wrong and you'll get released! RICK

Fuck do you care about *that*, Rick? BRENT

Just that it's the only way that you'll -
I mean, outside of parole- RICK

You get out next week, right? BRENT

RICK
That's the date.

BRENT
Where are you going to *go*?

RICK
I'll go home, maybe.

BRENT
Home.

RICK
Yeah, home.

BRENT
And what's home?

RICK
Where I grew up?

BRENT
Is that home?

RICK
It was then.

BRENT
When you were younger.

RICK
Yeah.

BRENT
It was home then.

RICK
All I had.

BRENT
Still all you have.

RICK

I guess.

BRENT

It's all you'll ever have.

RICK

Unless I find something else.

BRENT

All you'll ever have.

RICK

Yeah, that's- are you okay?

*A little scuffling noise from the closet.
BRENT doesn't seem to notice, but RICK glances up,
then tries to ignore it.*

BRENT

Every night, a man dressed up like a loon comes and sits on my bed and watches me.

RICK

Every night?

BRENT

You haven't seen this man?

RICK

No, what does he look like?

BRENT

He looks like the guy.

RICK

The guy?

BRENT

Who drowned. Who fell. Who was never found.

RICK

Gabby's dad? He's the one you see?

BRENT

When I wake up, he's there. When I sleep, I dream of water.

RICK

Water?

BRENT

Deep and dark, where the sun never shines, where the walleyes bite.

RICK

Water.

BRENT

It feels like home.

RICK

The water.

BRENT

Until I wake up. Then the feeling is gone.

XI. RICK sits on the bed, frozen. The closet door gapes open. A weird light is coming out of it. RICK takes a deep breath, jumps out of bed, SLAMS THE CLOSET DOOR REALLY HARD. GAB gasps, sits up.

GAB

It's you.

RICK

Yeah. Me.

GAB

You're actually here.

RICK

Uh-huh.

GAB

I couldn't remember if that really happened or not.

RICK

I'm here.

GAB

You can't sleep either?

RICK

It's... uh...weird in the dark. No security lights. Without bars. The sounds of the other men. Constant drip of the sink they never bothered to repair. It's... Harder than I thought.

GAB

Were you looking for something in the closet?

RICK

No. I was- Just. Trying to. Put some things away?

GAB

What things? My things?

RICK

I guess I, Uh. I see why you might not want to unpack.

GAB

Yeah? Okay.
Will you...
Hold me?

RICK

Yeah?

GAB

Yeah, hold on to me.

RICK

Okay.

GAB

Like this.

GAB rolls into him, RICK wraps his arms around her.

GAB

So I have to go to work in the morning.

RICK

That's okay.

GAB

You'll have to go out for something to eat, I don't think I have anything good. You can find your way to the Dennys at least, you remember where it is?

RICK

I can find it.

GAB

There's some money in the desk I think.

RICK

I'll look in the morning.

GAB

There's a land phone somewhere in the closet if you need to get ahold of me. I'll write my number down for you, okay?

RICK

Okay.

They lie in the bed.

RICK

I never told anyone about what you said.

GAB

What I said?

RICK

Your dad. The sex thing. The shooting at him thing. I didn't tell anybody.

GAB

I did.

RICK

Really?

GAB

I *wanted* to help you.
They wouldn't let me testify.

RICK

I know, but it's okay.
We're here now.
Maybe it's even better than...
If we had run off that night - I mean, we wouldn't be here right now probably, right?

GAB

No. Maybe. Probably not.

RICK

We're here now.

GAB

Well... Good night.

RICK

Good night Gab.

GAB

Sleep tight.

They fall asleep.

SCENE EIGHT

Morning.

*GAB gets up quietly, puts her clothes on.
- stares at RICK in the bed, sleeping.
-almost wakes him up, but doesn't.*

*She notices there are boxes everywhere.
- opens the closet door.*

RICK rolls over, mutters.

*She looks at him, then drags a few of the boxes back
into the closet, and closes the closet door.*

She leaves the house.

A lengthy pause.

The closet door swings open.

*The LOON comes out, with a cup of coffee.
The coffee steams in the early morning cool.*

RICK wakes up in a good mood.

RICK

Oh. Hey. You. I *knew* it was.

You found me.

Caught up.

Followed me here.

Did you take the train? Or fly? Or swim? It's a long way from Stillwater.

How's that closet for you? Comfy? Dark? Dark.

You're not as freaky in the daytime, I'm noticing.

The LOON sits on the bed next to RICK.

RICK

Hey you've got coffee. You make enough for two?

*The LOON stares at RICK, then gets up, vanishes into
the kitchen.*

RICK (yelling off)

HEY, LEAVE IT DARK, OKAY? I GOT USED TO DARK COFFEE IN PRISON. CREAM SUCKS.

The LOON re-enters with a second cup of coffee, hands it to RICK, who sips it tentatively, then with more enthusiasm.

RICK

Hey, this is pretty good coffee.
High five! Or wing.

The LOON does nothing.

RICK

You talk?
Make sounds?
Searching for a new home? I am.
Where do loons live, anyway? In a nest?
Twigs and shit?

I wouldn't mind a nest, I don't think, a nest sounds kinda nice, in the open air, water nearby, little feathers everywhere, I could get used to a nest.

This place could be like that. Instead of feathers, it'd be like, ladies underwear. Unsorted mail. You line your nest with that kind of thing when you're a human like me. Do loons have mates? I think I'm going to stay here.

What do you think of that?
Nod if you're into it.
We could maybe co-habit. Habitat?
You're not so terrible.
Very quiet. But still. Admittedly, you're a little creepy.

Squawk, Loon.
Tell me how I'm supposed to get rid of you.
Or cry. Loons cry, right? Some kind of song.
If you won't talk, sing.
Go ahead.

But sing something I recognize, yeah?

*The LOON sips coffee, puts the cup down.
It picks up the guitar.*

*Strums it once.
Finds that one of the strings is out of tune, re-tunes.*

Then the LOON plays.

*The song is instantly recognizable to anyone who
knows the song LOSING MY RELIGION.*

RICK

Pretty good, loon, pretty damn good.

LOON (*sings*)

*Oh Life.
It's bigger.
It's bigger than you
And you are not me
The lengths that I will go to
The distance in your eyes
Oh no, I've said too much
I set it up-*

A POUNDING and KNOCKING at the door.

*The LOON stops playing, calmly puts the guitar
away and dissolves back into the closet.*

RICK

Hey. HEY! You're supposed to *tell* me something *useful*-

The knocking continues, persistent.

RICK

All right. All *right*. Just let me put some pants on-

*RICK finds his pants, pulling them up as he hops
towards the door.*

RICK

Hold your fuckin' - Jesus - Okay

RICK opens the door.

CLARK stands in the door frame.

Suit & tie, glasses. Briefcase. Etc.

CLARK
Gabrielle Sherrill?

RICK
Do I - Do I *look* like a-

CLARK
Sorry. Sorry. Sorry, this isn't my normal account.
Gabriel. Sherrill.

RICK
No.

CLARK
Are you the resident of this home?

RICK
I am *now*.

CLARK
The sole resident?

RICK
No, I live with Gab. Gabrielle.

CLARK
Ah. I see.

CLARK makes a note.

CLARK
And who are you?

RICK
I'm Rick, who are you?

CLARK
Oh, then this must be for you.

CLARK hands RICK an envelope.

RICK

What is this?

CLARK

It was halfway up the steps, must have fallen.

RICK

It's addressed to me?

CLARK

If your name is Rick, yes, it is.
This surprises you?

RICK

Uh. No. Just. Let me have that.

CLARK

Return address of Stillwater Prison, It looks like, in Minnesota.
Got a pen pal, Rick?

RICK takes the envelope but doesn't open it.

CLARK

May I come in?

RICK

You wanna come in?

CLARK

Yes, if I might come in-

RICK

Who the fuck are you?

CLARK

Oh! My apologies. I'm Clark Gregson, from Esteemable. The bank. Reclamation, I'm afraid.

RICK

You're from the bank?

CLARK

Yes!

RICK

And you want to come in why?

CLARK

We've sent many letters.

RICK

I haven't - we haven't gotten any.

CLARK

Except for the one you're holding.

RICK

This isn't from you.

CLARK

No. It's from Brent Peterson, according the return address. Are you going to open it?

RICK

Uh - It looks like it's already open.

CLARK

I took a little peek. There's a map! Very interesting. A map from an inmate, now that sounds to *me* like some treasure-hunting business.

RICK

You opened my *mail*?

CLARK

You're not supposed to be here. I wanted to find out who you were. I apologize Rick, this isn't your property, is it? It's not, I've seen the records, it was transferred from Montgomery to Gabrielle, let's see, about nine years ago, looks like some difficulty with the title transfer at the time, and it's under Gabrielle's name now but I don't see you anywhere on this document.

RICK

Gab owns the place now?

CLARK

Well, no. I mean, not anymore. May I come in?

RICK

Who owns it?

CLARK

We do. The bank does. You were supposed to have vacated by now.

RICK

You do?

CLARK

I'm sorry Rick, you don't seem to have a lot of information, do you?

RICK

No, I guess I don't. Clark.

CLARK

Look, I can come back with the police or you can let me onto what is our property now, I'm instructed to report on whether the home has been vacated.

RICK

Clearly it has not been vacated.

CLARK

Yes, I can see that.

RICK

So report that.

CLARK

I'm, I apologize Rick, it's just protocol really, I'm obligated to inspect the home for damages, make an estimate, write it up, we're very behind which is why I'm taking over this account in the first place, the last guy, just, you wouldn't believe it, is in *jail* right now.

RICK

Really.

CLARK

Yes, can you believe it? I mean, can you imagine?

RICK

No.

CLARK

For *fraud*, of all things.

RICK

Can't imagine that.

CLARK

I'm going to ask one more time.
May I enter?

*The LOON comes out of the closet.
RICK notices.*

RICK

Yeah, sure, come on in.

*CLARK enters.
The LOON slips back into the closet.*

CLARK

So you're the-

RICK

Boyfriend out on parole.

CLARK laughs.

CLARK

That's funny, very humorous Mr. Rick, I'm glad you can maintain a sense of humor at time like this, many of the folks I pay a visit to can't find the - I mean, not that it's a funny business, it's really not at all. Tragic, actually. People cry all the time. What's in these boxes?

RICK

I don't know. Clothes.

CLARK

They're heavy. Clothes, you say?

CLARK peeks in one of the boxes.

CLARK

This looks like an old tent.

RICK

Yeah I don't know what's in the boxes. We're packing things up.

CLARK

You should label the boxes, it's much easier to move that way.

RICK

That's a good idea.

CLARK

So at least some effort is being made to vacate, I'll make a note of that, at least partial compliance is better than no compliance at all.

RICK

There's more in the closet.

CLARK

More boxes?

RICK

Yeah, you should see the closet.

CLARK

Oh? Well, I probably don't-

RICK

There's definitely something you should see in the closet.

CLARK

Oh. Okay. This closet?

RICK

Yeah, that one.

CLARK goes into the closet.

CLARK

Is there a light in-

*RICK SLAMS THE CLOSET DOOR.
He leans up against it.*

CLARK (off)

Hey! HEY! OPEN THIS DOOR!
MR RICK! MR RICK!
COME ON.

Slamming from the inside of the closet.

*Rick strains against the door.
The slamming stops.*

CLARK (off)

Okay, I'm going to have to make a note of this.

RICK continues to struggle with the door, holding it closed from the outside. CLARK starts banging on it again from the inside.

CLARK

I'm going to call the police! I have a phone in my hand! I'm calling them.

*From under the bed, the LOON rolls out.
RICK sees this.*

*The LOON stands, stares at RICK.
Then slowly shakes its beak.*

*The LOON turns its attention to the envelope.
Stares at it meaningfully.
Then back at RICK.*

The closet door slams open, CLARK having taken advantage of RICK's lack of attention. RICK is propelled forward, falls onto the floor. The LOON glides out the open front door. CLARK, furious, comes out of the closet.

CLARK

You're a lunatic! You know that? A lunatic!
I'm coming back with the police.

RICK

Sorry about the closet, man.

CLARK

Raving lunatic.

*CLARK exits.
RICK opens the envelope, pulls out papers.
A map unfolds.*

SCENE NINE

Same house, different light.

Ten years earlier, sort of.

Except RICK is there, looking for the phone.

He pulls boxes out of the closet, throws packing peanuts in the air, tips another box over.

RICK

The phone, where's the *fucking* phone-

MONTY comes out of the closet holding the phone.

He's still dressed as the loon, but no beak.

RICK

Oh. There it is. Can I-

MONTY holds up one feather, as in "wait."

He picks up the receiver in one wing.

He dials.

RICK watches.

ACROSS THE UNIVERSE - GAB, 16 years old, answers the phone.

MONTY

Hey babe.

GAB

Dad. Okay, I gotta take this-

MONTY

Who's there with you?

GAB

Just some girlfriends, stupid eighth graders - *yeah*, that was meant for you, Clarissa.

Okay! Okay, just- Okay dad, I lost them.

MONTY

Hi.

GAB

You haven't called for so long.

MONTY

Well, your mom called.

GAB

She did?

MONTY

Well, she asked if I'd seen you. It was at three a.m. You hadn't come home and she was looking for you. I thought you'd died or something. I waited at the phone the rest of the night-

GAB

I was just at a party.

MONTY

You can't do that, Gabby. You know? We wait *up* for you. You have to tell us where you are. That's your responsibility.

GAB

Oh. My. God, Dad, okay, fine. Mom doesn't even care anyway.

MONTY

Well. I do. Okay? So. Enough about that. Did you get your birthday present?

GAB

Yeah.

MONTY

Did you like it?

GAB

I don't know what it is.

MONTY

Yeah you do, it's a tent.

GAB

What I am supposed to do with it?

MONTY

It's actually a really fancy tent, Gabby, I talked to the outfitters for about an hour about it, we looked at all kinds, you can set them up there in the store, it's actually a lot of fun, I wish you could have seen me. You lie down on the store room floor and look up through the screen at the top and try to imagine being outdoors. It's silly. But. It's a great tent. It'll keep you dry, warm, keep the bugs out, it's perfect.

GAB

Okay. Thanks.

MONTY

So. You wanna go camping?

GAB

Dad, I've got *school-*

MONTY

Well not right now, I mean, I have work, a full roster of clients now, your dad's doing pretty well for himself!

GAB

Congratulations.

MONTY

Thank you honey. I know you didn't mean that, but thank you. You sound like your mother.

GAB

What's *that* supposed to mean?

MONTY

...This summer. Once school is out. We'll go then.

GAB

Camping.

MONTY

Just the two of us.

GAB

With you.

MONTY

I took your mom once, did she ever tell you about that?

GAB

No.

MONTY

You should ask her, she *hated* it.

GAB

Yeah, I bet.

MONTY

She couldn't figure out why we had to cook things over the fire, she kept asking where the nearest restaurant was, I kept having to tell her, this is the *north* and there aren't - well there are now, resorts everywhere, but back then-

GAB

Dad?

MONTY

Yeah kiddo?

GAB

I miss you.

MONTY

What? I'm sorry, a truck was-

GAB

Mom's kind of a *bitch* and I just want to be someplace else, I want to run away.

MONTY

You can't run away, it's where you live.

GAB

No, it isn't.

MONTY

I'm never home, Gabby, work, it takes me away so often, I can't -

GAB

I know.

MONTY
I'm sorry but-

GAB
It's fine.

MONTY
So this summer then. We'll go.

GAB
Okay.

MONTY
We'll run away from home.

GAB
Okay.

MONTY
Okay.

GAB
Promise?

MONTY
I promise.

*MONTY hangs up.
The world spins back around, ten years later;*

*The sound of distant sirens.
They're getting closer.*

*MONTY holds the receiver out to RICK.
RICK takes it but MONTY holds on.
They both hold the phone.*

RICK
So... what? You want me to *what*. Tell her that her whole life is a...
Bring her back? You want me to bring her back. To *you*.

*MONTY lets him have the phone.
RICK dials really fast, his hand shaking.*

ACROSS TOWN - GAB, at work, answers.

Gab! Gab! RICK

Who is this? GAB

It's RICK. RICK

Oh, *hey*. GAB

RICK
I fucked something up.
The cops, I'm already violating my parole, they're coming.

GAB
The *cops* are coming?

RICK
We gotta go!

GAB
Where are you going?

RICK
I don't know! I don't know!
Are you coming with?

Pause.

GAB
What?

RICK
Are you coming with me? I have to go now.
So do you. The bank - they're taking your house away.
I tried to - I don't know. It didn't work.

GAB

The bank came?

RICK

And I locked some guy in the closet.

GAB

Why would you do that?!

RICK

I don't know! But the cops are coming NOW. *RIGHT NOW.*
We have to go.

MONTY closes in on RICK.

RICK

North. We gotta go north. We gotta go back.

GAB

To the...

RICK (taking his cues from MONTY's presence)

Yeah. Uh. My mom is still there. We can stay- Just...

Sirens get closer.

GAB

Why would we do that?

RICK (to MONTY)

WILL YOU JUST GIVE ME SOME ROOM! OKAY? SOME PRIVACY?

MONTY raises an eyebrow, shrugs, and goes back into the closet.

GAB

Rick, who are you talking to, who else is there?

RICK

It's - it's just, I don't know, like someone else on the line? I don't know, interference, I heard someone talking-

RICK closes the closet door, leans against it.

He lowers his voice.

RICK

We're *not* going north.

GAB

What? I can't-

RICK

Can I meet you somewhere?

At the Dennys? We meet at the Dennys in twenty minutes, okay? Okay?

GAB

Okay. Shit. I'll.
I'm at work, Rick.
We?

RICK

Yes, we have to go. We need a - a brand new faraway place.

GAB

A new place? Rick, I don't-

RICK

You have a car, right, if we drive *really fast*-

Gab, you're...Everything I know about you. Every thing you've said to me?

That's what's I think is true, okay? I can be *that* for you.

Gotta go now. Us. Together. Away.

We leave the boxes. We leave everything.

We lock all the doors and leave the rest for the... birds.

Pause.

GAB

Okay.

RICK

Okay?

GAB

I'm on my way.

SCENE TEN

The Florida Everglades.

Onstage:

A pile of wood. It's way too green.

Big leafy branches, the leaves huge, tropical.

Behind the pile of wood, a tent.

Tropical sounds, echoey, humid.

GAB enters, dragging brush.

GAB

Rick! I found some small sticks. Kind of.

They're actually really huge. But I stripped some palm trees of their bark, too, so, we could try using that to start the fire... Rick?

RICK comes out of the tent.

RICK

There's a hole in the tent?

GAB drops her brush.

GAB

What?

RICK

There's a hole in the tent, I said.

GAB

A hole.

RICK

Well hey, I didn't mean it as a negative thing, I mean you didn't *know-*

GAB

No. I didn't know. For sure.

GAB starts to almost cry, hyperventilate.

RICK

Gab. Gab! Jesus, just, breath? Okay? Breath.

*RICK wraps his arms around her,
wrestles her into a sitting position.
They sit there for a minute.*

RICK

Did I say it in a bad way? I didn't mean it that way, like, critical.
I'm just getting used to this. Us. It's okay that there's a hole in the tent.
It's not raining. Right now. Does it rain a lot in the Everglades?

GAB

Rick...

RICK

Right, it's all tropical and what not. And buggy. It probably rains all the time.
How are we going to keep the bugs out? Are we *sure* your mom's not home?

GAB

We looked. You were there. You saw. We went to the house. Boarded up.
I don't know where she is anymore.

RICK

We came all the way to *Florida-*

GAB

So what do you wanna do, Rick. There's a hole in the fucking tent.
Also in my life. A whole lotta holes and nothing to fill them with out here.

RICK

We're gonna be fine. All right? At least I think we are.

RICK considers.

RICK

What lives in the Everglades?

GAB

I don't know. Alligators? Storks. Definitely a lot of bugs.
I can look it up if I get reception.

RICK

Yeah, look it up, would you?

GAB types in her phone.

GAB

Okay. Wow. Florida panther. Florida black bear. Everglades mink. Key deer. Marsh Rabbit. Rice Rat, both varieties.

RICK

What are the varieties?

GAB

Sanibel Island and Silver.

RICK

Oh.

GAB

Key Largo wood-rat. Key Largo Cotton Mouse. West Indian Manatee. Stock Island Tree Snail. Florida Bog Frog. Georgia blind salamander. American alligator, American Crocodile. Eastern Indigo snake. Blue tail mole skink. Also, sand skink. Loggerhead sea turtle.

RICK

What about... birds?

GAB

Okay, let's see - Everglade snail kite. Piping plover. Brown pelican. Rose- I can't pronounce it - Roseate Tern. Snowy egret. Little blue heron. Tricolor heron. White ibis. Wood stork. Spoonbill. Burrowing owl. Crested caracara. Bald eagle. Osprey. Florida scrub jay. Cape Sable seaside sparrow. Kirtland's warbler. Red-cockaded woodpecker.

RICK

That's it?

GAB

That's it.

RICK

We can *live* here.

GAB

What are you doing?

RICK

I need some paper. If we can get some smoke at least, the bugs'll clear out.

GAB

The tent's full of them already.

RICK rifles through his bag, pulls out the map and document delivered to him in the prior scene.

GAB

What's that?

RICK hesitates.

RICK

It's just paper.

RICK tears little strips of the map, places them in strategic positions in the fire pit.

RICK

You know, this married guy I got to know in prison? He used to talk a lot about how home was another person. That's how he felt. Like it didn't matter where he was in the whole entire universe so long as he was around that other person. The smell of her, or something. The way the world got calm when he took her hand in his. He kept talking about her, every day. He was in for vehicular manslaughter. He got drunk and ran over someone on an on-ramp.

GAB

Doesn't sound very homey.

RICK

She was out of town. He didn't know what to do. He was just going for a drive. To clear his head and wait for his home to come back to him. He's still waiting, I guess.

RICK lights the fire.

Smoke billows.

RICK coughs, waves the smoke away from his face.

RICK

We can stay here, yeah?

GAB

I guess.

RICK

In Florida.

GAB

About as far as we can go, I think.

RICK

No where else *to* go.
We'll build a little shack.
I'll catch Marsh Rabbits.
We'll cook them over the fire.
And lie in the tent and look at the sky.
Watch for birds.
No loons could make it down here, don't you think?
They wouldn't go this far.

GAB

Not unless they got lost.

RICK (*pleased*)

They'd get eaten by alligators.

GAB

I'm going swimming.

RICK

There's, I just said, *alligators*.

GAB

After I swim, we'll have sex, okay?

RICK

Oh. Okay.

GAB

And I don't know after that.

*GAB, discarding clothes, makes her way off-stage.
RICK, after a moment, follows.*

SCENE ELEVEN

The Boundary Waters, Minnesota.

Onstage:

The fire remains, but the big leafy parts are gone.

The sky is full of stars.

Northern stars.

Cold air.

Pine trees.

The tent is gone too.

It's just a forest. With a fire burning.

The LOON enters.

He sits by the fire.

He looks around.

He warms his wings in front of the fire.

*After a long while, another LOON (BRENT) enters
with a guitar.*

LOON #2

Are they home yet?

The LOON stares into the fire.

LOON #2 plays soft music.

Stars.

Water.

Dark.

END OF PLAY