

ADAM'S DREAM
by Steven Gaultney

“The imagination may be compared to Adam’s dream – he awoke and found it truth.”
– John Keats

CAST:

Daughter, 20, f
Father, 40, m
Adam, 28-48, m
City Dweller 1, 45, m
City Dweller 2, 30, m
City Dweller 3, 20, m
City Dweller 4, 25, m
Farmer 1, 40, m
Farmer 2, 45, m
Farmer 3, 30, m
Farmer 4, 30, m
Queen Dido, 15 - 35, f
Royal Attendant 1, 40 - 60, m
Royal Attendant 2, 30 - 50, m
Anchises, 45 - 55, m
Eve, 22 -32, f
Miriam, 26 - 46, f
Cain, 10 - 20, m
Abel, 8 - 18, m
Abram, 7 - 17, m
Sarah, 8 - 18, f
Killer, 40, m
Prisoner 1, 35, m
Prisoner 2, 30, m
Prisoner 3, 60, m
Prisoner 4, 19, m
Jailer, 40, m
(22m, 5f)

CHARACTER BREAKDOWN BY MOVEMENT:

For First Movement:

Daughter, 20, f
Father, 40, m
Adam, 28, m
City Dweller 1, 45, m
City Dweller 2, 30, m
City Dweller 3, 20, m
City Dweller 4, 25, m
Farmer 1, 40, m
Farmer 2, 45, m
Farmer 3, 30, m

Farmer 4, 30, m
Queen Dido, 15, f
Royal Attendant 1, 40, m
Royal Attendant 2, 30, m
Anchises, 45, m

For Second, Third and Fourth Movements:

Adam, 28, 38, 48, m
Eve, 22, 32, deceased, f
Anchises, 45, 55, deceased, m
Miriam, 26, 36, 46, f
Cain, unborn, 10, 20, m
Abel, unborn, 8, 18, m
Abram, unborn, 7, 17, m
Sarah, unborn, 8, 18, f
Killer, not present, not present, 40, m

For Fifth Movement:

Cain, 20, m
Queen Dido, 35, f
Royal Attendant 1, 60, m
Royal Attendant 2, 50, m
Prisoner 1, 35, m
Prisoner 2, 30, m
Prisoner 3, 60, m
Prisoner 4, 19, m
Jailer, 40, m Sarah, 18, f

PLACE:

First Movement – a small, arid farming village
Second, Third and Fourth Movements – a dry, temperate forest
Fifth Movement – a prison

NOTE ON CASTING: There are twenty-seven parts in this play (22m, 5f). While a cast of twenty-seven is certainly desirable, I understand this may not be within the resources of all productions. What follows are suggested doubling and tripling combinations for a cast of fifteen (11m, 4f).

I	Father, Jailor (M)
II	Adam (M)
III	City Dweller 1, Prisoner 2 (M)
IV	City Dweller 2, Royal Attendant 1 (M)
V	City Dweller 3, Prisoner 4 (M)
VI	City Dweller 4, Cain (M)
VII	Farmer 1, Royal Attendant 2, Killer (M)
VIII	Farmer 2, Prisoner 1 (M)
IX	Farmer 3, Abel (M)
X	Farmer 4, Abram (M)
XI	Anchises, Prisoner 3 (M)
XII	Daughter, Sarah (F)
XIII	Eve (F)
XIV	Miriam (F)
XV	Queen Dido (F)

NOTE ON COSTUME: Very little should distinguish the appearances of City Dwellers and Farmers. While practical concerns may lead the groups to dress differently, such differences are pragmatic, not stylistic. That is, what distinguishes the groups is occupation and class, as opposed to region or culture. They are co-dependent neighbors.

Conversely, the Prisoners dress differs stylistically from that of Dido, Jailor, Royal Attendants, etc. That is, culture, as well as fortune, explains the difference in the way these two groups dress.

NOTE: *Adam's Dream* is Part One of *The Cain Tetralogy*.

NOTE ON "BEAT": A "beat" is a pause in which one character waits for another to speak.

NOTE ON "(...)": A "(...)" written in place of a line indicates a character attempting to speak, but failing to find the words to do so.

NOTE ON "(/)": A stroke (/) signals the point of interruption in overlapping dialogue.

FIRST MOVEMENT: ADAM ESCAPES
CERTAIN DEATH

Positioned upstage center: a one-room house with a dirt floor and walls made of clay. The walls of the house are curved, without corners. There is an opening in the roof for smoke to escape. Beneath the opening is a large pot positioned over a fire pit. There is no fire. There is a doorway, but no door. Two sleeping pallets of cloth and animal skins line the walls – one of the pallets should be large enough for two. Several cooking vessels by the fire. The inside of the house is visible due to the portion of the wall nearest the audience having been cut away.

The downstage area will be a playing space for characters passing in front of the house. In the reality of the play, characters inside the house have no direct line of visibility to connect them with characters in the downstage space.

(1.1 – Autumn. Night. DAUGHTER sits on the ground inside the house, her back against the wall. She is bleeding from her neck. FATHER holds a cloth against her neck in a desperate attempt to stop the bleeding.)

DAUGHTER

His knife was at my throat while he was /

FATHER

Don't talk you'll bleed more / you'll

DAUGHTER

They killed mother. They killed her when she tried pull him off.

(Beat.)

Father?

FATHER

Hush.

(They sit in silence. He continues to hold the cloth against her neck. He waits several moments, then lifts the cloth to check the wound. As soon as he lifts the cloth, blood streams down from her neck. He quickly reapplies the cloth and turns his head.)

DAUGHTER

We saw them running. Towards us, fast. We ate all the food. They stuck hands down our throats to get it back.

FATHER

You're bleeding.

DAUGHTER

They said it's theirs. All our food. They called us thieves because we kept the food we've grown. One of them said we killed his children. We aren't slaves, I said! Our food is ours, we don't have to sell it! The drought's what's killed your children – the sun you worship! They threw me down. Mother tried to pull them off. They pulled *her* off. I heard her screaming, then not. One of them tried to say enough, tried to make them stop. They made him rape me. They kept saying his name. "Adam, Adam, Adam." They closed his hand around a knife, pushed the knife beneath my chin. He called me beautiful, kept saying it. "Beautiful, beautiful." "Adam," they said. When he came, he slipped – his knife cut me. I felt the blood. I didn't want them to see it, the red on my skin. I don't know why. I tried to hold it back, like tears. It just ran faster. Then I heard them shouting: "Adam, Adam, Adam!" I saw him above me. He was shoving them away. He told me run! Don't kill me, I said. Young. Said.

(She listens for a moment to her own labored breath. She looks at her father.)

DAUGHTER

You look like a baby. Like a little boy.

(She dies. FATHER lifts the cloth and watches the blood drain. After several moments, he reapplies the cloth.)

FATHER

Still bleeding.

(He waits.)

FATHER

I should have listened to your mother. They're coming, she said, we should run. We sold last year, they'll expect the same again. They can't feed themselves – they don't grow food! Their choice is to steal our food or watch their children die. Our choice is to wait for them or run. I knew they were coming, but I never thought they would. Priests tell us the sun will one day turn its head, become a black hole moving in the sky. His back will stay turned until all the world has died. He'll weep but refuse to show his tears. We know this as a truth – we don't expect for it to happen! That's how I thought of these reports. Of people so hungry they would have to take our food. Skin sliding like mud off their bones. It didn't sound like something real.

(The blood has stopped draining. He removes the cloth from the wound, wipes away the blood and puts the cloth in DAUGHTER'S hand.)

FATHER

I'll find her.

(He walks out of the house and EXITS.)

CITY DWELLER 1 ENTERS, dragging FARMER 1 behind him. FARMER 1 has been badly beaten. CITY DWELLER 1 throws him to the ground.

CITY DWELLER 2 ENTERS, pushing ADAM forward.)

CITY DWELLER 1

(to FARMER 1)

Stay there.

(to CITY DWELLER 2)

Hold him.

(CITY DWELLER 2 holds down FARMER 1.)

FARMER 1

We don't have any food!

CITY DWELLER 1

I know how it works – hear us coming, you shove the food down your throat. Fill your stomachs and show us empty hands.

FARMER 1

There's a drought – there's nothing to sell!

CITY DWELLER 1

(to ADAM)

Not as pretty as the last one, is he?

ADAM

The prince said they'd be fat. He said there's extra food, they eat it all for spite.

FARMER 1

I have children. Please.

CITY DWELLER 1

I *had* children. They suffered for weeks before they died. You turned their stomachs into prunes!

(to ADAM)

They don't get fat. They work too hard, they're farmers. Don't let that fool you. The food's still stuck between his teeth.

FARMER 1

It's not our fault you don't plant your own crops!

CITY DWELLER 1

This is yours? You think this land belongs to you? We have the power to take it. That means it's ours. The only reason we haven't is we don't enjoy farming. That's why we left you here to farm. You're mules. That doesn't mean you can walk away with packages. Adam, we don't have all night.

ADAM

Fuck you.

(CITY DWELLER 1 leaps onto ADAM. They tumble to the ground. FARMER 1 tries to squirm away from CITY DWELLER 2. He bites CITY DWELLER 2'S finger.)

CITY DWELLER 2

Fuck!

(CITY DWELLER 2 stabs FARMER 1 through the hand – his knife pinning FARMER 1’S hand to the ground. FARMER 1 retches.)

CITY DWELLER 2

Quiet! We need to be quiet!

FARMER 1

City shit! You live in shit! You throw your shit out your windows! You drink shit from the gutters in the streets!

(CITY DWELLER 2 presses the knife into FARMER 1’S hand. CITY DWELLER 1 has subdued ADAM.)

CITY DWELLER 1

(to ADAM)

Hear that? Your wife and the child inside her are starving. That’s why. Him – all of them – the girl you helped escape. She was not beautiful, she’s the reason our valley’s full of corpses! Killing them isn’t enough. We can’t treat them like people, that’s not what they are. We have orders.

ADAM

From God?

CITY DWELLER 1

You know better than that.

ADAM

It was the priests who gave the orders.

CITY DWELLER 1

That means they’re from the prince.

ADAM

An even worse excuse than God.

CITY DWELLER 1

You think you’re above this?

ADAM

Yes. I’m above rape and murder.

CITY DWELLER 1

This happens whether you do it or not. If you stayed home, it would happen. You're here, it happens too. If you refuse, it still happens. You've still *done* it – we've just done it for you! Nothing changes if I take your place. Not for him. And you still get his food. Unless you don't take it, refuse to feed your wife and unborn child. The only way to save him is to overthrow the prince, or to kill every man he's given orders. Is that what you want? If it is, that means you want to starve. It also means I'll have to kill you. Do you want your wife to starve? Adam?

ADAM

No.

CITY DWELLER 1

Prove it.

(CITY DWELLER 1 rips off FARMER 1'S pants, whose hand is still pinned to the ground by the knife. CITY DWELLER 2 continues to hold FARMER 1. CITY DWELLER 1 stands beside them.)

FARMER 1

Don't. Please.

(CITY DWELLER 3 ENTERS, running, and leaps onto CITY DWELLER 1's back. He rides him about like a bull.)

CITY DWELLER 3

(chanting)

Plow! Plow! Daddy cow!
Heifer good and take a bow!
Poke the next, don't call her wife!
Farmer's ready with the knife!

Plow! Plow! Oxen cow! /

(CITY DWELLER 1 attempts to dump off CITY DWELLER 3. ADAM leaps up and stabs FARMER 1 repeatedly in the back. CITY DWELLER 2 backs away from FARMER 1. CITY DWELLER 1 and CITY DWELLER 3 fall to the ground in a heap.)

CITY DWELLER 3

(ecstatic)

What *is* this shit? What did they put in those drinks? I'm a god! My face – it's a god face! It's made of fire!

CITY DWELLER 2

How much did you drink?

CITY DWELLER 3

I'm all the gods at once! I never knew it before – they just told me! What should I do? I can do anything! Should I break the earth in half? No! I'll bring the dead back to life! Which one? So many.

CITY DWELLER 1

Shut him up.

CITY DWELLER 2

It's the powder. There must have been extra in his drink.

CITY DWELLER 1

We all had the same.

(CITY DWELLER 3 falls back to the ground, laughing wildly.)

CITY DWELLER 3

I'm *laughing!* Look – I'm having *fun!*

(to CITY DWELLER 1)

Hit me in the face! I'm a god, it won't hurt. To a god face, your hand's a feather pillow!

(sings)

Please hold my head tight feather pillow,

Though yes I'll weep more than a willow,

Please stop mouth and nose,

So no more breath flows,

I'll shed no more tears for this fellow!

Give me more of those drinks, I'll kill farmers every day!

CITY DWELLER 1

Kick his mouth.

CITY DWELLER 3

(attempting self-control)

No, don't.

CITY DWELLER 1

It needs a lesson.

CITY DWELLER 2

He's my brother.

CITY DWELLER 1

Would you rather I kick him instead?

(to CITY DWELLER 3)

Stop smiling.

CITY DWELLER 2

Did you have an extra cup?

(to CITY DWELLER 1)

Did you see?

CITY DWELLER 1

He's not *my* brother.

CITY DWELLER 3

I stopped laughing. I'm not.

(CITY DWELLER 3 giggles.)

CITY DWELLER 2

Did he tell you not to laugh?

CITY DWELLER 3

Please. Don't.

(CITY DWELLER 2 kicks him in the face. His head jerks up, then falls, a dead weight, and hits the ground. He lifts himself up, spits out blood.)

CITY DWELLER 3

You cut me.

CITY DWELLER 2

It's nothing.

ADAM

He's dead.

CITY DWELLER 1

You're still going to fuck him.

ADAM

If I don't, will you still do it for me?

(CITY DWELLER 1 produces a knife. He and ADAM stand there, squared off. ADAM also holds a knife. Pause.)

CITY DWELLER 2

(nervous)

There's a house. We haven't checked it. There could be people. We're losing focus. They could have knives.

(Pause.)

CITY DWELLER 3

(for no apparent reason)

I drank two! Two cups! I snuck the second!

(He laughs.)

No one saw me! The priest, he was talking, everyone was looking at their toes!

(He laughs, a muted giggle.)

CITY DWELLER 2

(looking off)

Something's burning.

(CITY DWELLER 1 breaks the standoff by kneeling and cutting off FARMER 1'S head. This takes some time. ADAM and CITY DWELLER 2 watch.)

CITY DWELLER 3

(sings, in a childlike whisper)

Earth is flat, earth is flat

Where does she keep all her mountains at?

Underneath, down below...

Down below... down below...

(CITY DWELLER 1 finishes with the head, stands. He tosses the head at ADAM'S feet.)

CITY DWELLER 1

(to ADAM)

I did everything I thought I should be doing. The king asked me to advise him. I didn't run away. I could have said no. I could have stayed home, written poems. That's all I wanted. Live on the edge of the city, scribbling. But he said, what are your poems without my people? I didn't write about people! I wrote about buffalo, and butterflies, and *trees*. The trees we had before *he* chopped them down! I knew what he was doing. Everyone thought I'd been duped! I'm not stupid. Shout enough about a king, he'll find a way to make sure you stop shouting. Poetic Advisor. New government appointment. I knew what it meant. I kept writing! And I told him he had to find solutions! He'd turned our garden to a desert! Not a tree left in sight, nowhere near! One quarter of our people employed dragging logs from forty miles? Not sustainable! Farmers hauling logs – it won't work! First draught we'll all starve! I said that – find a solution! Why don't we find one together, he said. What are my poems without his people. I'm the one who suggested we start trading for our food, but as a temporary measure! I warned him, draughts would be a problem. These people, what do they care if we starve? They're animals, or worse! We can't depend on them to sell!

CITY DWELLER 3

(to URBAN MAN 1, comforting)

Hush. Don't worry. I absolve you. I remember. It was different, not being god. Now my face is made of fire.

CITY DWELLER 2

(looking off)

It's getting bigger.

CITY DWELLER 1

What is?

CITY DWELLER 2

What would burn like that? They don't use thatch. Their houses are made out of dirt.

CITY DWELLER 3

Did you hear me? I've absolved you! Gods don't need a priest!

CITY DWELLER 1

Someone's coming!

CITY DWELLER 3

I've seen the light of myself and I absolve you of your crimes! I absolve us all! By the light of my pure burning flesh! I can see my own eyes.

(CITY DWELLER 3 falls to the ground. He begins to convulse silently. ADAM kneels beside him, not knowing what to do. CITY DWELLER 1 and CITY DWELLER 2 ready themselves for the approaching man. Neither of them notice CITY DWELLER 3. CITY DWELLER 4 ENTERS, running. CITY DWELLER 2 stands in his way.)

CITY DWELLER 2

What is it? What's wrong?

CITY DWELLER 4

We found their store of grain. There's no water to put out a fire.

CITY DWELLER 2

They torched it?

CITY DWELLER 4

They have vats the other side of the village!

(CITY DWELLER 4 EXITS, running.)

CITY DWELLER 2

They torched it.

(CITY DWELLER 2 EXITS in the same direction, also running.)

CITY DWELLER 1

(in blind rage)

I knew it! They've even hid it from themselves! Their bones exposed to air and there's a stockpile! They've been here, starving, eating their own shit and they're staring at a room full of food! Don't say saving for winter – if that's what it was, why would they burn it? This is spite! This is hatred! They *hate* us! We have to keep up with that hate or we'll be finished! They pull us all down to their level! They make us choose between cruelty and survival! Look at those flames. Just think how much food they've used to feed them. Adam?

(CITY DWELLER 3 has stopped convulsing.)

ADAM

He's dead.

CITY DWELLER 1

He's what?

(FARMERS 2, 3 and 4 ENTER with drawn knives. ADAM stands quickly. He and CITY DWELLER 1 produce knives. They take a few steps back, then stand their ground. A standoff – CITY DWELLER 3'S body in the middle. FARMER 1'S head is on the ground beside ADAM.

FARMER 2 slowly walks to the body, FARMER 3 proceeding just behind him. FARMER 4 stands back, keeping watch. CITY DWELLER 1 and ADAM stand still, poised. FARMER 2 reaches the body, squats down and cuts off CITY DWELLER 3'S head with his knife. This takes some time. No one says a word. Eventually, FARMER 2 rises with the head. He holds out the head, nods to the head at ADAM'S feet.)

FARMER 2

Trade.

CITY DWELLER 1

You want to trade?

FARMER 2

I thought that's what you wanted. Yes. Trade.

CITY DWELLER 1

I will not be mocked. That you would do so – that you'd spend the time, exposed in the midst of a slaughter, to kneel down and cut off a human head – and just to mock me!

(to ADAM)

Don't give him that!

(ADAM puts FARMER 1'S head back on the ground.)

CITY DWELLER 1

(to FARMER 2)

We have fundamental differences. There are places my mind would not sink to. I've killed dozens of people! I've watched them be brutally raped! You've destroyed months worth of food! And on even such a night, you do this! You expend such energy to *insult* us! For spite! For those grins you have now on your faces! I've called you animals, you're worse. You're monsters! Not human, you're possessed by something else! You're –

(ADAM stabs CITY DWELLER 1 in the back of the neck. They fall together to the ground like a toppled statue. On the ground, ADAM withdraws the knife and quickly inserts the blade into CITY DWELLER 1'S temple. He then scrambles to FARMER 1'S head, picks it up, scrambles back to the FARMERS and kneels in front of them. He holds out the head, offering. They stare at him, in shock.)

ADAM

I have a wife. She's pregnant. I didn't know until this morning.

(Beat.)

Please.

(Pause. FARMER 2 nods to FARMER 3. FARMER 3 takes the head from ADAM. FARMER 2 drops CITY DWELLER 3'S head on the ground beside ADAM. The FARMERS turn and EXIT. ADAM collapses, lies there on the ground. Pause.)

FARMER 4 ENTERS, running, wielding an ax. He uses the blunt end to beat ADAM within an inch of his life.

FARMERS 2 and 3 ENTER, also running. They stand and watch the beating. When he is finished, FARMER 4 drops the ax on the ground.)

FARMER 4

(to ADAM)

My wife is *dead!* She's in so many pieces I don't even know what happened! You scurried up from your valley, I was buried in her warmth. I didn't know! My arms, loose, held her close against me. The moisture was glazing on our skin. She played with my fingers, gave them voices, names. You'd already killed her! You'd already hacked her apart! Why didn't I know! She had breath but she was already dead! Our bodies trembled – she was already a corpse!

FARMER 2

There are others. There's still fighting.

FARMER 4

They're all the same. He thinks he's different, I can see it. He's worse than the others, he kills his own!

FARMER 2

Let's go.

FARMER 4

Murderer! Coward!

FARMER 2

(to FARMER 3)

Come on, he'll follow us.

(FARMERS 2 and 3 EXIT.)

FARMER 4

Scratch the earth for your own food.

(FARMER 4 EXITS, following.)

ADAM lies there. He labors to breathe through broken ribs. FATHER ENTERS with a female body slung over his shoulder. ADAM hears him, attempts to turn to look, but

cannot. FATHER sees ADAM, stops, then proceeds into the house. He situates the body inside the larger pallet. He situates DAUGHTER inside the smaller pallet. He climbs into the larger pallet, beside the female body.

He lies there. Something bothers him. He climbs out of the pallet and walks out of the house. He stands beside the house looking at ADAM, decides. He goes to ADAM, picks him up. Lights fade as FATHER ENTERS the house with ADAM slung over his shoulder.)

(1.2 – The next morning. A fire burns in the pit. DAUGHTER and the female body have been piled together in the larger pallet. ADAM lies asleep in the smaller pallet. Lights rise on FATHER sitting crouched beside the doorway, tense and listening. He holds a knife.

Outside, bodies from the previous night remain on the ground as they were. Several other bodies have joined them, including CITY DWELLER 2, who lies on his stomach with the ax sunk into his back. His face is turned towards the audience.

DIDO, 15, is heard approaching with ROYAL ATTENDANTS.)

DIDO

(off)

I'll walk the direction I want to walk, it doesn't matter if I don't know where I'm going –

(DIDO ENTERS.)

DIDO

– I don't know where I'm going if I'm going that direction with you!

(ROYAL ATTENDANTS 1 and 2 ENTER.)

DIDO

What is in that direction? Where are we going?

ROYAL ATTENDANT 1

Dido –

DIDO

That's my name! Stop saying my name!

ROYAL ATTENDANT 2

Dido –

DIDO

Stop it!

(She's seethes. The ATTENDANTS falter nervously, as if she might break something.)

DIDO

We are not going on vacation! This is not a vacation! You tried to keep me from seeing that supply train, why? Donkeys, wagons, people – hundreds! You've lied to me, why? I want to speak with my brother.

ROYAL ATTENDANT 1

Your highness, please. Look around. It isn't safe.

DIDO

Oh look, smoke. There's someone in the house. I'll go inside. I'll be here until my brother's / been informed of my

ROYAL ATTENDANT 1

Your brother's busy enough / as it is.

(ANCHISES ENTERS.)

ANCHISES

Dido!

DIDO

What?!

ROYAL ATTENDANT 1

(alarmed)

Anchises!

ROYAL ATTENDANT 2

The queen and high priest should not be together – anywhere, let alone a place like this. In the case of an attack, we'd lose you both!

DIDO

Did you say queen?

ROYAL ATTENDANT 1

Nevermind.

DIDO

Bring my brother, now.

ANCHISES

Your brother's dead. His throat was cut. As was your father's.

DIDO

I thought we won the battle.

ANCHISES

Who told you that?

DIDO

We had more men.

ANCHISES

Yes, we did.

ROYAL ATTENDANT 2

Your brother had all our men drugged. He thought it would be a good idea. They weren't used to fighting, he was worried they'd desert. The drug caused the men to lose control. They turned on each other, the raid fell apart, the farmers came into the city. They snuck into bedrooms. They picked the richest houses.

ANCHISES

You're the queen.

ROYAL ATTENDANT 2

Anchises was also in favor of the drug. He, of course, was also wrong. Being high priest, he brought the gods into the mix. He sought the sun's blessing, he prayed to the moon – he told us they were both on our side. Of course they weren't. Now some think he was lying, others that the gods have deceived him. Neither option helps Anchises or the family who enjoyed his support, yours. There's no point in staying – nothing left but chaos. The land's been worthless, now the people on it are against you.

ROYAL ATTENDANT 1

We've gathered those loyal to your brother – that's the train. We've loaded what food's left onto the wagon.

(DIDO is looking at the ax in URBAN MAN 2'S back. She touches the handle with one finger.)

ROYAL ATTENDANT 1

You feel deceived. I'm sorry. Time was important. No one knows your brother's dead. We thought things would move quicker if he was thought to be behind it.

DIDO

Who's we? You and you?

ROYAL ATTENDANT 1

Your father trusted us.

DIDO

Did my brother?

ROYAL ATTENDANT 2

Your brother was an ass. An imbecile. Your father knew this. It grieved him.

DIDO

(pointing to the ax)

Please take that out of his back.

(Beat. ROYAL ATTENDANT 2 removes the ax, places it on the ground, moves back to where he was.)

DIDO

I'm telling those people he's dead. They should know who they're choosing to follow.

ROYAL ATTENDANT 1

Yes.

DIDO

We'll leave fair amounts of food for anyone wishing to stay.

ROYAL ATTENDANT 1

If you like.

DIDO

Lie to me again you'll be imprisoned. Speak badly of my brother you'll be hanged.

(to ANCHISES)

Walk with me.

ANCHISES

Of course.

(DIDO and ANCHISES EXIT.)

ROYAL ATTENDANT 2

Should we stop her?

ROYAL ATTENDANT 1

No.

(ROYAL ATTENDANTS 1 and 2 EXIT. ADAM has been awake and listening with FATHER.)

ADAM

My wife won't leave without me. She has money but it won't do any good.

(Beat.)

How long have I been sleeping?

FATHER

Please be quiet. When you speak I remember they're dead. You should be too. Pretend. Don't worry, I'll feed you. You've slept one night.

(ADAM watches FATHER go to the pot on the fire.
FATHER looks inside the pot, then back to ADAM, who
avoids his look.)

FATHER

You've broken bones. Should I reset them? – Don't speak.

(ADAM nods.)

FATHER

I'll make you new.

(He stirs the broth. Lights fade.)

(1.3 – One week later. Evening. The bodies from outside
have all been brought into the house. They, along with the
bodies of FATHER'S daughter and wife, are naked and
have been propped upright with their backs against the
walls. The effect is a semi-circle of corpses, what appears a
tribal meeting of the dead. ADAM is part of the circle. He
is also naked, but covers himself with cloth from the small
pallet. There is a pile of clothing beside the fire pit, which
FATHER has been using to fuel the fire, which burns.
FATHER is clothed.

Lights rise on FATHER feeding broth to the body of CITY
DWELLER 2 from a small pot. His method of feeding is
to tilt back the head and pour spoonfuls of broth down the
throat. Inevitably, some of the broth does not go down the
throat, instead dripping from the corners of the mouth as
FATHER eases the head back to its chest. He moves about
the room feeding bodies in no discernible order. ADAM,
accustomed to this ritual, waits patiently.)

FATHER

(feeding CITY DWELLER 2, to someone else)

Fair's fair, it's his turn.

(to CITY DWELLER 2)

One more spoon, two each today. There.

FATHER

(over his shoulder)

Please stop talking about me like I'm not in the room! It's *his turn!*

(He finishes with CITY DWELLER 2.)

FATHER

(to DAUGHTER)

No, you are not next. *He's* next.

(points with the spoon to the headless body of CITY DWELLER 3)

He's a quick one though.

(He pours two spoonfuls of broth on the ground in front of CITY DWELLER 3, then goes to DAUGHTER.)

FATHER

(to DAUGHTER)

Now you.

(He feeds her one spoonful.)

FATHER

(to DAUGHTER)

Now you.

(He feeds her another spoonful. He gently eases her head back to her chest, watches the soup drip from her mouth. He turns and drops the nearly empty pot in front of ADAM. The spoon clatters inside the pot. Drops of the broth splatter onto ADAM'S face. He winces, then takes the pot and eats what remains.)

FATHER

(to all the bodies)

That's it. That's the last.

(He goes to the fire and begins ripping the clothing into smaller pieces, putting the pieces into the fire. As he does this, ADAM eats. After a moment FATHER stops, tenses. Beat.)

FATHER

(to DAUGHTER)

It was his turn to eat! His and then his and *then* yours!

(as he continues to rip the clothing)

The world is not yours – you have to share it. It belongs to you *and* to him, and to him and to him and to him. Everyone here deserves soup! We all deserve to eat, and no one's less hungry than you! That's important – not everyone knows that. Some people think their hungry's more than yours. They don't care about fairness – that's a problem. Fairness doesn't exist, but it's the most important thing. No wonder the world falls apart. The gods they try to be fair, but they're gods. They have no idea how ridiculous they look when they try. Maybe we can do better. What do you think? A father with a heart that pumps blood, maybe that's what it takes. Should we try?

(Beat.)

Yes, I'm their father too now! I've told you already, stop complaining! You didn't ask for this family, you're mother didn't either! At least you don't talk in your sleep.

(to all the bodies)

I've been meaning to bring this up. One of you talks in your sleep. We've learned a lot about you. Private things. You might try not sleeping.

ADAM

Please be quiet.

(FATHER bristles. He sits there holding the clothing. He rips one last piece off, throws the piece in the fire, stands up.)

FATHER

(to all the bodies)

We're out of soup. I don't know what to do. I'll need your help, I do know that.

ADAM

Be quiet.

FATHER

The dead do not say be quiet!

ADAM

I'm not dead!

FATHER

Oh. Well in that case.

FATHER

(to all the bodies)

He's not dead. And we are out of soup. Each of you has died already, you've all had your turn. I wouldn't want to be unfair. Unless one of you would like to volunteer to take his place, we all know who's turn it is by rights. We have to eat *something*. Anyone?

(The headless body of CITY DWELLER 3 slides down the wall and slumps onto the ground.)

FATHER

I can't speak.

(Beat.)

I thought sacrifice was gone. I thought it died with everything else.

(to CITY DWELLER 3)

It would be easy to say you lost your head. Got carried away in the moment. But I've never seen the moment that could make brave men of cowards. Adam?

(Beat.)

Don't you want to thank him?

(Beat. To CITY DWELLER 3)

His wife thanks you, I'm sure. I do know that. She's pregnant.

(He drags the body of CITY DWELLER 3 by the leg to the center of the room. He produces a knife and guts the body in the manner in which one would field dress a deer. ADAM watches.)

FATHER

(to ADAM)

Did you know him?

(Pause. He works in silence.)

You should bring your wife here. We have food.

(He works in silence.)

You could run, but everyone's running. You'll be running right into each other. So many people, the earth won't just swallow them up.

(He works in silence.)

I've been nasty, I know. I'll drop the act.

(He works in silence.)

I've delivered a baby. I was there. I know how.

(He works in silence.)

I could go and get her for you. You could tell me where she is. Still a week before you could yourself.

FATHER

(No response. He works in silence.)

Maybe less. Young bones.

(He works in silence.)

I used to dream I could do this by myself. Take care of myself and my own. It was everyone else who was the problem. If they'd just mind their own business, I could just mind mine. I was young. That's not the world. Not this one. No one can live on their own. Maybe before, but not now. It isn't safe.

(He works, then rises. He goes to the large sleeping pallet, lifts it up. From underneath the pallet he produces the ax which was once in CITY DWELLER 2'S back. He moves back to the body of CITY DWELLER 3.)

FATHER

If you knew him, you might not want to watch this.

(ADAM and FATHER'S eyes meet for the first time.
Lights fade as ADAM turns to face the wall.)

(1.4 – A few days later. Afternoon. The bodies remain as they were against the wall. FATHER is not present. The fire is low. ADAM, half-clothed, hurriedly puts on clothing. He selects from the pile beside the fire pit, examining each article. He puts on several extra layers. He looks about the room. He finds his knife. He goes to the large pallet, lifts it up and takes the ax from underneath. ADAM EXITS with the knife and the ax. Pause.

FATHER ENTERS from the opposite direction. He walks into the house in good spirits carrying two logs.)

FATHER

(setting the logs on the ground)

Logs!

(He goes to the fire pit, pokes at the fire with a stick, feeds it with a new piece of clothing)

FATHER

(as he works the fire)

Not sticks – logs! I went down into your city. If the house is big enough they have these. Stacks of them. I've been meaning to ask, what kind of house do you live in? The streets are getting nasty. It's strange they aren't nasty already. Been what? A couple weeks? You must have been counting. Like it's just setting in down there what's happened. That all those big houses are empty and empty for good. They all had big houses, the ones who left. I walked into a few, looked around. No wonder you ran out of trees! Your roofs are held up by whole trunks! You know that of course, but anyone living out here could have told you – the way to fix your tree shortage – we'd have said stop using them for everything!

(He has finished with the fire. He goes to the large pallet, lifts it up in search of the ax: not there. He whirls around to where ADAM used to sit against the wall: a gap in the semicircle of bodies. He stands there a moment, frozen, still slightly hunched from lifting up the pallet. All in one motion he collapses into a sitting position against the wall.)

FATHER

They must have axes, in those houses – they have logs. I'll find another. A new one. That's good.

(Blackout. End of First Movement.)

THIS PLAY IS FAR FROM OVER!

Email steven@stevengaultney.com to request the full script.