

DRIED ROSE DREAMS IN THE GARDEN OF EVE

Michael Pauley, Scottsdale Community College
Second Place, One-Act Play

AT RISE: A simple stage. Up-Center is a doorway. Behind the doorway mirrors are arranged at angles facing one another, creating an infinite reflection. Above this doorway is a clock, set to ten minutes before midnight. There are two tables, one set down right and one down left. There are two chairs at each table, facing one another.

Two tight spotlights come up on the table areas right and left, confining the space. GUARDIAN enters from left. GUARDIAN is dressed contemporary, white clothing, and leads in MARK and GOVERNOR. MARK goes to the table at right. He is a young man, around twenty-eight. He is attractive, dressed in casual neutral clothing. GOVERNOR sits at the table at left. She is a middle-aged woman dressed formally in neutral clothing. GUARDIAN stands to the left of the door. A third spot illuminates this space.

JAILER enters, dressed in uniform, leading in CLOE and ZIG. CLOE is in her mid-twenties. She sits in front of MARK. ZIG is in his thirties. He sits in front of the GOVERNOR. Both are dressed in bright orange prison uniforms.

JAIL: Ten minutes until midnight.

CLOE: Hello Mark.

GOV: You son of a bitch.

ZIG: Lovely to see you, too.

MARK: I want to know why.

CLOE: I figured you would.

GOV: I don't even know who you are.

MARK: Why?

GOV: Did you even have a reason?

ZIG: Everything has a reason. I want to be respected. I am going to be respected.

GOV: How is this going to get you respect?

CLOE: Mark, I did it because I wanted to be loved.

ZIG: It's what counts in life.

CLOE: I needed to be loved.

ZIG: Respect. Even if it means being feared. I would rather be dead than live life without respect.

MARK: What I gave you wasn't enough?

GOV: Life is more important.

CLOE: What were you thinking when you gave me those dried flowers? You gave me a bouquet of dried flowers.

MARK: I bought them at the store.

CLOE: You actually paid money for dead flowers?

MARK: I saw them and I thought of you.

CLOE: What is that supposed to mean? How is a girl supposed to take that?

MARK: I was just trying to be nice.

ZIG: I don't think it's a sin to kill a man if you're doing it to get respect.

GOV: How is killing someone going to earn you respect?

ZIG: I don't think it's wrong if you're getting paid either. A job's a job. We all have to make a living.

GOV: Did I ever factor into your equation?

ZIG: If someone is willing to pay money to have someone knocked off then I'm sure that they did something to deserve it.

CLOE: You didn't even kiss me. At the end of our date you didn't even kiss me. You walked away and left me standing on my front porch with those damn dried flowers in my hand.

MARK: I thought you would like them.

CLOE: I couldn't even put them in a vase of water because they were already dead.

MARK: You took it the wrong way.

CLOE: There was nothing I could do with them. The roses were all dead. Right from the start.

MARK: You did this because of a bunch of flowers?

ZIG: Why are you here?

CLOE: Do you have any idea how hard it is to go through your entire life never having been loved?

GOV: I want to make sure you die.

MARK: I loved you.

CLOE: But you never said it! I needed to hear it. You never said, "Cloe, I love you."

MARK: You know I loved you.

CLOE: You couldn't say it. You just wouldn't say it. And I never said it to you either. Don't you realize how wrong that is?

MARK: So you did it because of words?

ZIG: I am going to be the most respected man in the world.

CLOE: We had nothing.

GOV: You are delusional.

CLOE: Don't you see that?

ZIG: I am going to be the most respected entity in existence.

CLOE: Our lives had nothing.

GOV: *(pulling out picture from her purse)* I want you to see a picture of my daughter.

ZIG: I am going to be more respected than God.

GOV: *(thrusting it at him)* Look at the picture, you bastard. Look at it!

ZIG: Why do we all show God so much respect anyway? What has he done for us?

GOV: Look at the picture.

ZIG: He tells us that we have to go to church every week. So we go... blindly. Following the commands of this thing that is too afraid to even show himself to us.

GOV: I want you to look at my daughter.

ZIG: Well, fuck him. He has never made life easier for me. I have prayed, and I have worshipped.

GOV: Look at the picture!

(ZIG looks at the picture. He sets it down on the table and then slides it back over to her.)

CLOE: Why are we so afraid to say the things we think?

MARK: You never told me.

CLOE: Why are we so afraid to say what we feel? Afraid to hug someone, and hold them, and tell them that they are important to you?

MARK: This doesn't justify what you did.

CLOE: What kind of life were you living? You were afraid to tell the world about the things that you believe in. And so was I. Why? Why are we afraid of our faith? Why are we afraid to let our children pray in school? Why do we even bother living like that?

MARK: You can't change things by ending life. What were you thinking, Cloe?

CLOE: I have read the bible.

ZIG: Cover to cover I have read the bible.

MARK: It's a book about life, not death.

GOV: You ruined her life. The little girl with her is my granddaughter.

CLOE: It is beauty.

ZIG: Shit! It's all shit! The parting of the Red Sea? The Fall of Man?

GOV: Listen to me!

ZIG: None of it ever got me any respect.

GOV: She's four years old. I want you to imagine her laying flowers on the coffin.

MARK: Why can't you realize how wrong you are?

CLOE: I have this dream. It's our dream. It comes back to me, night after night.

MARK: I can never dream again.

CLOE: Listen. I'm asleep. I feel warm. The world around me is soft and light. A tingly feeling begins at the tip of my toe.

ZIG: There's this feeling in the pit of my stomach.

MARK: I can never feel anything again.

CLOE: It travels up my calf, through my leg.

GOV: Apologize for what you did to her.

MARK: I can never walk again.

ZIG: It's there. Always there. It's always been there.

CLOE: Soon my entire body is tingly. I feel a million little stars all bursting through my skin to dart out into the soft night air.

MARK: I'll never see the stars in the sky again.

CLOE: Soon a million tiny fireflies are dancing in my mind. An explosion of lightening bolts through my soul.

MARK: All that I have left is my soul.

CLOE: Mark listen to me.

ZIG: I've prayed. I've asked him to make it go away.

CLOE: I feel free. I feel pure.

ZIG: He's never answered me. He's never made these thoughts go away.

CLOE: I am the mud of the Earth.

GOV: Shut up! You owe me silence. Now shut up!

CLOE: I am the leaves on the tree.

MARK: What am I now? What becomes of me?

CLOE: Mark, I am everything wondrous and simple all in one shining package.

ZIG: I am everything awful and disgusting and wrong in this world.

CLOE: An exultation of exhilaration. And I open my eyes.

GOV: Do you even know why you did it?

MARK: What do you see, Cloe? What could you possibly see?

ZIG: What kind of a God abandons his creations? Does he deserve respect for that?

CLOE: I just see. For the very first time, I see.

GOV: Were you just blindly following commands?

CLOE: I see a beautiful garden. There are flowers all around me. Blue. Pink. Yellow. White.

MARK: Are there any dried roses?

CLOE: I pick the little white ones, Mark. I pick them for you. I put them in my hair. Innocence. I stand up. My feet press down into the cool green garden of clovers. I'm naked, but I don't feel it.

MARK: What are you trying to tell me?

CLOE: I feel alive. I feel something that neither of us ever felt. I begin to walk, underneath a peach tree, past a row of strawberries. This little animal runs past me, but for the life of me I can't remember it's name.

MARK: I can't take anymore of this.

CLOE: Mark I see you! You're standing off in the distance. I start to walk towards you. Broad stripes of sunlight crisscross your brow. And then you start to walk towards me.

MARK: Cloe-

CLOE: We don't need to talk now that we are in this world. I can see your thoughts and you can see mine. And Mark you love me. You really love me. And I love you. And you know it. You know it, Mark. You know that I love you.

MARK: Please stop this.

CLOE: We reach one another. We touch. We embrace. We kiss.

MARK: Please. Just tell me that you're sorry. I need to hear that.

CLOE: This light begins to form around our bodies. Clenched together we begin to glow. Our bodies merge together and we become one being.

MARK: Stop it!

ZIG: If he can allow so many people to be hungry and sick and cold and alone and dying in this world then my killing one person is not wrong.

MARK: Stop it.

ZIG: Blame him.

MARK: Stop it.

ZIG: Not me.

MARK: Stop it!

CLOE: And then I wake up...

GOV: You are insane.

ZIG: I've killed one person. One! How many has he killed?

CLOE: ... and I realize that it's all just been a dream.

GOV: Would you stop talking around me!

MARK: Your dreams don't justify what you've done.

ZIG: What am I supposed to say? Am I supposed to beg you for forgiveness?

CLOE: Look at this world!

GOV: Yes.

CLOE: All of these problems! All of our inhibitions!

ZIG: Well I won't. I don't want your forgiveness.

MARK: Reality isn't ever as perfect as our dreams.

ZIG: Do you really want to know why I killed you?

CLOE: Mark, I killed you because you weren't actually living life.

ZIG: It wasn't because my mother never loved me or my father never hugged me.

CLOE: What's the point to life if you never tell the people you care about how much you love them?

ZIG: It wasn't revenge because I wet the bed until I was ten years old.

MARK: I'm sorry, Cloe. But it still isn't right.

ZIG: I killed you because I could. Because when I held that gun in my hands, that raw steel, I feel power.

GOV: You took another human beings life. That's not power. You want respect? You want to be remembered? There are so many ways that you could have changed society, but instead you became a cancer that needs to be removed.

CLOE: Do you love me? Right now? Right in this instant? After everything that I did can you tell me that you love me?

MARK: I was afraid to. So were you.

ZIG: Have you ever held a gun?

GOV: No.

ZIG: Have you ever smelled a gun?

GOV: No.

ZIG: Have you ever aimed a gun?

GOV: No.

ZIG: Have you ever taken a life?

GOV: No.

ZIG: You really should try. The feeling is rather unique.

CLOE: I'm not afraid to die, Mark.

ZIG: An exultation of exhilaration.

CLOE: I've lived such a sad life, afraid of honesty and sincerity and faith.

GOV: There were so many things that I had left to do.

MARK: No, Cloe. Your problem wasn't that you feared faith. It's that you had too much.

CLOE: I've been embarrassed to be honest, Mark. I pray to God everyday that something might happen to change that.

MARK: Cloe, I love you. I always loved you. Does that make a difference?

CLOE: I don't know. I want this world to still have hope.

ZIG: Let me ask you a question.

MARK: Can you see how wrong you were when you took my life?

ZIG: Do you think God is a powerful person, or persons, or things, or whatever the hell you believe in?

GOV: Of course I do.

ZIG: I can understand why. After all, he created life on Earth, didn't he? But with the smallest movement of my finger, I can take that life away.

GOV: Not for much longer.

ZIG: Who really holds the power? Who really deserves to be respected? His job is done. We're all here, aren't we? Well, my job has just begun.

GOV: You think that you are so clever. You think you hold the world in the palm of your hands. You're wrong. In a few days no one will even remember that you ever existed. All of the meager things you had will be gone. You will be left with nothing but your fear.

ZIG: I have no fears! When I get strapped down to that table and my veins get poked with those needles I intend to laugh at everyone. You think that they hold the power because they can take away my life? They can kill me but they can't kill the disease. At the end of the day you won't be coming back to life. Your granddaughter will have only a few pictures and a tomb stone to remember you by. Who has respect now? Who has the upper hand? Me! I do! Me.

GOV: My granddaughter will be crying over my grave for years to come. Who's going to bring flowers to your tombstone?

ZIG: I have respect! I have respect! I have respect!

GOV: You don't have respect! People who change society have respect. Right now there is a room full of people watching the clock and counting down the moments until they get to watch you die. They can't wait to see you squirm on that table. You're afraid. I can tell. I can see it on you. I can smell it on you. I hope that you piss your pants from fear.

ZIG: I am not afraid! I'm not afraid of that needle! I'm not afraid of anything! And I'm not going to offer you an apology. I'm not going to offer God an apology. God never listened to me before. No one ever listened to me! Why would he listen to me now?

GOV: Apologize Zig. Just say that your sorry.

CLOE: Before I was locked up I visited your grave. I set a dried rose beside your headstone.

MARK: A dried rose?

CLOE: Just one single, dried out, white rose. I set it down there and walked away.

MARK: Why?

CLOE: I left it there for the wind and the rain, the sun and the snow. I left it there for everything. For hope.

MARK: That's nice. I like that.

CLOE: Maybe someday a small gust of wind will pick it up so it can fly away. Maybe it will soar through space for an unknown time, only to land somewhere far away.

GUAR: It's time.

GOV: Apologize.

MARK: We're running out of time.

CLOE: I was thinking that maybe the little dried rose would get buried during the ages, deep within the Earth.

MARK: Please tell me what I came here to hear.

JAIL: It's time.

CLOE: It would stay there, down in the ground. Safe and protected from everything.

GOV: Please...

MARK: Cloe-

CLOE: Mark this is the last thing that I'm going to get to say. I need to say it.

MARK: Okay.

CLOE: The rose would stay there. It would listen to our lives. And maybe one day that little dried rose would hear us. It would know that we have solved all of the horrible problems that shroud our lives. The rose would feel safe. It will be ready to grow once again. It will push it's way back up, through the mud, through the ground, and it will live once again.

GOV: Just say that you're sorry. That's what I want to hear.

ZIG: No! There was no mercy in the past. There will be no mercy now. There will be no mercy for anyone. Everyone will die at my hand! Everyone. Everything.

GUAR: It's time.

GOV: Zig, you're finished. There is nothing else that you can do anymore. Just apologize.

JAIL: It's time.

CLOE: Thank you.

ZIG: We are all looking for our chance to be heroic, but when that opportunity never comes we are left searching for another way to be seen the way we want in other people's eyes.

(CLOE begins to walk towards the JAILER.)

MARK: Cloe-

CLOE: I'm sorry.

MARK: Cloe...I love you. Right now. In this instant.

CLOE: There's a lot riding on that little dried rose. I hope it's up to the task.

GOV: When you get there Zig...

CLOE: I'm counting on it.

GOV: ... just apologize.

CLOE: It's these foolish dreams that we need to hold onto the most.

(CLOE and ZIG exit off with JAILER.

MARK and GOVERNOR exit off with GUARDIAN.

Blackout.)

CURTAIN

