

The Deluge:
On the Shoulder of Night

By Kirk Smith

CAST OF CHARACTERS

YOSANOAH: (yoSHAHnoah) Known as Noah, an olive farmer, then a carpenter, then a sailor.

ALIAH: (ahLIah) His wife, who becomes a gardener and then a bird.

SHEM:

JAPHETH: (JAFfith) ~ Their children, represented by puppets.

HAM:

ALIAH:

SETTING:

Home.

NOTES ON PRODUCTION:

No specific historical period should be represented. Instead, be guided by concepts like vital, organic, primitive, and dark. The music sounds bottomless, natural and clear.

The puppets may be simple or elaborate. In addition to puppets, they might also be considered totems, effigies or even sculptures.

(Pre-set lights down. YOSANOAH lights a candle, looks at the audience, and speaks.)

NOAH

This is how we got quiet and cold.

(The OVERTURE begins and YOSANOAH turns to survey the stage. Other lights come up. ALIAH enters and they move together, dancing, enacting scenes – a prelude of earlier events from their life. Over the course of several minutes they begin to set up their house, each placing props, moving furniture if there is any, and carving out a bit of space on the stage for themselves. MUSIC fades out.)

NOAH

It started raining, you know. And it didn't stop for several weeks. I bet we lost . . . oh, I don't know, thirty birds. Some sheep. And some other important stuff. It just, well, everything was wet. It just got wet and started to rot. And then pretty much all we talked about was. . . the water. Cause, you know, there was water in everything. All in our thoughts, in our dreams, there was just water in everything. At first we tried to enjoy it. Then we tried to protect ourselves from it. Then we tried to collect it - tried to use it. Then we tried to ignore it. Then we got sick of it. We tried to learn to live with it but we couldn't. I mean we did, but it wasn't easy. But it wasn't easy before that either. And it hasn't been easy since. When you've got something like that in your life, something that's just unbelievable, like you've never come across and can't even really believe, well you usually get more religious. Spiritual at least. And you begin to read more of - whatever you have at hand that deals in that sort of thing. You begin to see the world in a more simple way. Wet and dry. And you begin to think about building boats to carry you over the water and towers that you could live in above the rain. You begin to think about confession and prayer and you just get more holy, and more aware - of holy things. Every word, every voice, everything you ever knew, just sounds completely different in the rain.

(ALIAH's voice is heard in the background singing softly.
The melody echoes one we heard in the OVERTURE.)

ALIAH

Boats to carry you over the water. Towers to live in above the rain. Boats to carry you over the water. Towers to live in above the rain...

NOAH

You can kind of tell when it's lettin' up some and so you go out then. When it's still real wet but dryer than it was before - or than it probably will be in an hour or so.

NOAH (CONT.)

You begin to appreciate those kind of things. And like that we got along. Gradually we lowered our expectations until we were all right with just about anything that happened. But it wasn't much of a life, you know, just ground down like that. Not ever surrendered, but just beaten down like that to almost nothing.

(YOSANOAH goes to the window and stares out into the dark for a moment. RAIN MUSIC plays gently. He crosses to ALIAH, to help her with something, but just for a moment. We see that they have a deep bond but things aren't well between them.)

Pretty soon we got to where we started calling the big storms wet and the little ones dry, the huge storms big and the big storms little. And just nearly freezin was tolerable so cold was warm, and pretty soon it gets confusing and you get the idea that there's almost no way to tell the difference anymore. Wet, dry. Her, me. Happy, unhappy. Can't ever really tell where the one ends and the other begins. It's like that here - been that way for some time. We're both just walking around pretending to be alive.

(YOSANOAH gathers up his outside clothes and begins to dress, tightly wrapping his sleeves and neckline to keep the water out. To ALIAH)

I'm gonna go out and see how high it is. Any leaks?

ALIAH

No.

NOAH

None at all?

ALIAH

No.

(YOSANOAH exits. ALIAH picks up a small wooden flute and plays an unusual melody. She stops suddenly as a large clap of THUNDER sounds just outside the house. YOSANOAH enters, wet, with an armload of strange stuff. He chooses a spot on the floor and begins to spread out his things before undressing.)

ALIAH

What are you doing?

NOAH

I'm figuring out this storm. That's what I got all this stuff for.

ALIAH

(noticing his assorted collection)

How high is the water out there?

NOAH

High.

(Proudly, he removes an old rope, several gourds, and a stone from the pile.)

But not too high to measure. We're not beaten yet.

ALIAH

Not yet.

(She smiles.)

NOAH

What?

ALIAH

I like your outfit.

(Irritated, YOSANOAH removes his outside gear and turns back to his work. ALIAH crosses to the bedside and picks up her flute. She begins to play again – the same slow melody. A moment later YOSANOAH starts making noise with his tools, setting them down more roughly, scraping them across the floor and so on, competing in a completely different rhythm and tone. They each get louder and grow more insistent until ALIAH abruptly stops and goes to bed. Sheepishly, YOSANOAH puts down his instruments and crosses to the bed)

NOAH (to ALIAH)

All the water weighs you down, you know? I'm always wet and I can't stand it. Weighted down and practically helpless. I can't really work anymore it's – well it's too heavy out there. And it's cold. But it feels all right in here.

(Suddenly YOSANOAH remembers, and pulls a very small bunch of grapes from his pocket.)

I found these while I was out. And I've got an idea for something special!

(He quickly assembles a makeshift olive press and squeezes the grapes carefully, collecting the juice in a little cup. He adds another ingredient or two and then pours the cup's contents into a larger pitcher on a nearby shelf where he notices an old measuring tape. Gathering up the tape he begins to measure his right foot. ALIAH watches intently.)

ALIAH

What are you doing?

NOAH

I'm shrinking you know.

ALIAH

I don't see it.

NOAH

Don't you see that nothing fits anymore? My clothes don't fit. My-

ALIAH

I think your clothes are just wet.

NOAH

Yeah. But I'm smaller. I'm getting smaller. I just, I can feel it. It's overwhelming.

ALIAH

You might want to take a break... from your work.

NOAH

Yeah, well the rain might want to take a break too.

ALIAH

(Confounded)

NOAH

(Putting on his outside clothes)

I'm not beaten yet.

(YOSANOAH exits. Noticing a leak, ALIAH crosses to the bed. Slowly, she extends her hand and lets the water fall into it. MUSIC begins. ALIAH sits down on the bed, beneath the leak, and enjoys the water. She moves, and it continues to fall, drop after drop, all over her. After a minute or so the leak subsides and she lies down.)

ALIAH

I lay my head gently on his pillow
where some of the thoughts he left there lingered
wingèd and waiting for me.

I lay my head gently on his pillow
where some of the love he left there lives
wingèd and waiting for me.

I find some hope here.
A road finds me.
The night is open
and I see
who we are.

(YOSANOAH enters during the last few moments of ALIAH'S song. Still completely covered, he watches her a while. Uneasy about her song, and the bed now being under a leak, he pulls his cover a little tighter, crosses to his area, and begins to dig through some things. The MUSIC fades. He finds a blanket or an old tarp or something, and after a moment of thought, he removes his outside clothes, makes the found thing into a hammock and stretches it up.)

NOAH

You see who we are... how about who we were?

ALIAH

What?

NOAH

You said before that you see who we are - how about who we were?

ALIAH

Aren't we still the same?

NOAH

I don't think so, no. No. I'm not the same.

ALIAH

You're just the same. You're the little ghost Yosanoah who stole chicken bones and wooden beads from my father and then ran home as fast as he could and hid them in secret boxes under his bed.

NOAH

I had nightmares.

ALIAH

You still do.

NOAH

It's different.

ALIAH

No it isn't. You're the same little thief only you grew up.

NOAH

I stole your heart.

ALIAH

And where did you hide it? Where do you keep it?

NOAH

It's a secret.

ALIAH

(She eyes him suspiciously.)

You haven't forgotten have you?

NOAH

No.

ALIAH

I hope not.

NOAH

It's safe don't worry.

ALIAH

(She crosses to a pile)

Is it in this bundle of stuff.

NOAH

(Stopping her)

No!

ALIAH

Be careful with it okay? It's my heart.

NOAH

I will.

ALIAH

The little thief Yosanoah.

NOAH

Not so little anymore.

(YOSANOAH climbs into his hammock and tries to fall asleep. ALIAH crosses to the bed, which now belongs to her. Just as YOSANOAH nods off, a huge clap of THUNDER wakes him. He crosses to the shelf to get something to drink. He picks up the pitcher of wine, but ALIAH, now pregnant, interrupts him.)

ALIAH

Don't drink that.

NOAH

What?

ALIAH

Just wait a minute, wait until I can check it. It's old; it might not be any good.

(She takes the pitcher from him, smells it, and then hands it back.)

It's fine.

NOAH (curious)

Okay. Thanks.

ALIAH

I'm going to have a baby.

NOAH

Okay.

ALIAH

I thought you should know.

NOAH (uncomfortable)

What shall we name him?

ALIAH

Him?

NOAH

It. I mean "the baby".

ALIAH

I don't know. Let's think about it for a while.

NOAH

Good idea. That's good.

(Unsure of what more to say or do, YOSANOAH returns to work. He crosses to his pile of strange stuff which now includes a measuring stick, some simple beakers, a few leathery olive leaves, an almanac of some sort, and another strange thing or two. ALIAH crosses to the bed and, reaching beneath it, pulls out several handfuls of dirt and an olive branch. She looks for other leaks in the roof and carefully places a small mound of dirt and a seed or two from the branch beneath each new leak.)

NOAH

Just as I started to get this storm drawn up I started having other thoughts. New solutions, like angels, made their way into me. And as has been the case lately, they came in twos. I listened, and I heard the rain there on the one side like a good angel, and the rain there on the other like a bad one. They're both calling out to me in some natural language that I don't quite understand. And they've each got relative merits, I suppose. But I don't know. Wet. Dry. Happy. Unhappy.

(A leak develops above YOSANOAH and several large drops of water fall right down his back. He quits his work, frustrated.)

ALIAH

(Kneeling by one of her gardens and only vaguely interested)

Is something wrong?

NOAH

Yeah. There's a lot wrong. You been outside?

ALIAH

Yeah I've been outside.

NOAH

How'd you like it? Cold isn't it? Wet too. Not very nice out there is it?

ALIAH

(Turning to YOSANOAH, maybe standing)

No it isn't. It isn't very nice in here either.

NOAH

(He stares at her disdainfully.)

ALIAH

I don't know how I can help you.

NOAH

I don't want any help. I'll figure it out by myself.

(YOSANOAH returns to his things. ALIAH goes back to planting.
After a few moments he turns to look at her. Suddenly interested,
he crosses to where she works now at another little pile.)

What are those?

ALIAH

Gardens.

NOAH

Inside? You think that helps? I'm trying as hard as I can to figure out how to keep the water out and here you are just... inviting it in.

ALIAH

It came in on its own. I didn't invite it.

NOAH

Yeah but you give it reason to stay.

(beat)

You're turning the house inside out. How are we even gonna know the difference if you fill the whole place with water and dirt? I mean, it's hard enough as it is.

ALIAH

It's not the whole place. It's only here and there, wherever you don't stop the leaks.

NOAH

Oh. Well, I'm behind a little on the leaks that's true. But I've got other things now. Inside work.

ALIAH

Yeah. You have your work and I have mine.

NOAH

(to the audience)

And like that we got along.

(ALIAH turns back to her garden, breaks a few small pieces off the olive branch and buries them in the soil. YOSANOAH grabs a stool or something to stand on and tries to fix a couple of the leaks. As he pokes and stretches up toward the ceiling a leak springs directly above him spitting water in his face. Angry now, and momentarily defeated, he searches for something to dry off with. Wary of another conflict, ALIAH returns the olive branch to its place under the bed and exits into the Olive Grove. YOSANOAH goes to the window to watch her but can't see a thing. He turns back toward the audience.)

NOAH

I heard the voice again this morning, the whispering one. It said only one word, split two ways: Go.

(YOSANOAH looks around his house.)

Go.

(ALIAH enters wet, with a small olive branch, and carrying an old saw.)

ALIAH

Is this yours?

NOAH

No. Where'd you get it?

ALIAH

Outside, in the Olive Grove.

NOAH

What were you doing in the Olive Grove?

ALIAH

Working.

NOAH

Working on what? You can't work out there; it's too wet.

ALIAH

I was just looking after the trees. Habit.

NOAH

Right.

ALIAH

Well, here.

(She hands him the saw.)

NOAH

(He holds the saw like a kid with something new,
inspecting it from every angle.)

You want to know about a saw, you look at the teeth. The teeth'll tell you what its done in its life. It's all written right here, like a diary. This saw's old, but it's strong. There's a lot of work left in it, a lot of cutting yet in this old devil.

ALIAH

Did you see the handle?

NOAH

What?

ALIAH

Read what it says on the handle.

NOAH

(YOSANOAH searches the handle for a moment, then reads)

“Somewhere the stories begin.”

(beat)

That's strange.

ALIAH (nods)

I'm going back out. Are you hungry? I'll bring you-

NOAH

Green olives? I don't think so. No.

ALIAH

(Holding a branch, she puts an olive in her mouth and shrugs.)

Okay.

(ALIAH exits.)

NOAH

A green olive straight off the tree, you've never tasted anything so bitter. She's eaten them that way since she was a little girl; the bitter doesn't bother some people. Her father was the same way but I never could understand it.

(YOSANOAH starts fooling with the saw and begins to make some noise. Gradually he begins beating on other things and hopping around. He's fully immersed in a moment of wild abandon when ALIAH enters.)

ALIAH

Hey, are you okay?

NOAH (caught)

Uh, yeah. Yeah. I'm okay. I'm good.

(To the audience)

There's something about an emergency that makes a man want to beat on things and build stuff!

(YOSANOAH begins unwrapping his papers, discovering plans and drawing diagrams. ALIAH is still right behind him, but he doesn't notice.)

NOAH

Aliah! Aliah? I need my...

(His voice trails off as he finds a piece of string and begins to measure himself again.)

ALIAH

(Looking directly at YOSANOAH who, engrossed in his work, doesn't even hear her.)

At once I'm there, so close to a human fully realized and about to break free, but helpless. And it's just the same for me. I speak when I'm not struck dumb by confusion.

(She watches him a moment longer, then crosses to the bedside.)

NOAH

(Noticing the hammock while searching for more string. To audience)

I know she's keeping something under the bed. Something... living.

(ALIAH returns, unseen by YOSANOAH, carrying a baby boy puppet)

I don't know just what it is, but I won't sleep over it. I strung up a hammock you know, just in case.

ALIAH

Just in case of what?

NOAH

Whatever. What's that?

ALIAH

That is your son. I call him Shem.

NOAH

(YOSANOAH looks closely at the small puppet.)

Shem then.

(There's an awkward pause. Abruptly, he turns back toward his work, packing and unpacking papers. Disappointed, ALIAH crosses to the bed

with SHEM and lays down to rest, under the leak. YOSANOAH, unnerved, cannot work. He wanders around the room stopping for a moment to hover over one of the gardens. He stares intently at one of the small plants sprouting up through the soil. He touches it.)

ALIAH

Don't touch it.

NOAH

I won't.

(ALIAH sits up and gives him a look.)

I'm just looking.

(She lets him look a moment.)

ALIAH

Let me see yours.

NOAH

My what?

ALIAH

Let me see your work. You've seen mine now let me look at yours.

NOAH (hesitantly)

All right.

(They cross to a bundle of papers and tools, all wrapped tightly in various scraps of fabric that protect and keep them dry. YOSANOAH takes out a few rough pages and ALIAH looks at them for a long time.)

It's a tower.

ALIAH

I see that.

(She looks carefully over several ridiculous pages.)

It's very tall.

NOAH

And it's dry.

(She sets down the pages and looks at him directly.)

It's above the storm, the top is.

(Gathering confidence)

It goes all the way up see, and there are stairs in the heart of it, a spiral leading to the top. Or a ladder. I'm not sure which but I dreamt of a great long ladder on which angels climbed. They could go up and come down at will, between heaven and earth, and I thought if we just got up above this whole-

ALIAH

What's it made of?

NOAH

It's... made of wood.

(Perceiving a threat, ALIAH crosses to the bed and hangs SHEM up on a special stick or branch.)

ALIAH

It'll never work. You'll never finish.

(He takes the papers and starts packing them up again.)

You couldn't stand to be wet out there for the time it would take to build it.

(He stops.)

Besides, it's too small. There's only room for one person.

(They stare at each other for a moment.)

NOAH

You're right. It'll never work. That one must've been the Bad Angel.

(He returns to packing. She returns to the bed. To the audience)

She was right. So we just stayed and I found new ways to pray.

(He finishes packing up the papers and turns to ALIAH.)

We only have a certain amount of time here, you know? I mean I'm no weather prophet but I know how much water we can take. Not much more.

ALIAH

I'm going to back out for a little while. I mean... I'm going back out for a little while.

NOAH

To work?

ALIAH

Yeah.

(ALIAH exits.)

NOAH

What am I doing? I'm not sure. God may have abandoned us. It might be up to me now. That's hard. That's very hard. "Somewhere the stories begin" it's true, but you don't expect they begin with you. But they do.

(beat)

Those olive trees are like roots, like her, like extensions of her, like her arms, like her children. And in this grove, in this house, here in her arms, I found a home for years, a safe place, cultivated by the Ancients, pre-historic, something made that could sustain us. But now the matter is water. Water that covers everything with a kind of power that you can't measure. And in that deep sound all I hear, everything, is one word: go.

(ALIAH enters completely wet and pregnant. She goes to the bed for a few seeds from her olive branch. YOSANOAH watches her for a moment and then begins to sketch out his second plan. MUSIC starts as he grows more and more intent on his work. ALIAH plants new seeds.

YOSANOAH graphs and measures and scribbles. Each continues their separate task with greater focus and energy and the gardens grow wildly while the second plan evolves. Suddenly, YOSANOAH slams down his measuring stick, breaking the spell.)

There! It's done.

ALIAH

This is some unnatural story, some ghoulish legend where I swim. And damned in ponds broken off from the night sky, I recognize that my feeling for it sinks as if standing on fishes.

(ALIAH goes to the bed and carefully gathers up another boy puppet and offers it to YOSANOAH.)

This is Japheth your second son.

NOAH

Okay, Japheth.

(ALIAH turns and places JAPHETH alongside his brother.)

Aliah?

(She stops and looks at him.)

I want to show you something.

(He motions her over toward something peculiar.)

ALIAH

(looking at it)

What is it?

NOAH

The Good Angel.

ALIAH

It looks like a coffin.

NOAH
It's more like a buoy to me, a beacon.

ALIAH
Your imagination loves to discover shapes in rising smoke.

NOAH (frustrated)
It's a boat --

ALIAH (interrupting)
I see what it is.
(after a moment)
I'm not leaving.

NOAH
You're joking.

ALIAH
I'm not leaving. I mean that. I like it here.

NOAH (disgusted)
Come on --

ALIAH
No. I like it here. This is my home.

NOAH
You'll die if you stay here. You know that don't you?

ALIAH
You'll die if you go. You know that don't you?
(beat)
So what's the difference?

NOAH
You'll die sooner.

ALIAH
Yeah.

NOAH
And I'll be alone.

ALIAH

(after a moment)

What's it made of?

NOAH

It's not. It's not made! It's just an idea. It isn't anything. Is an angel made? Where was all this water made? Same place as the tears I bet! Who made me afraid – to stay here – to father something? And you indifferent? Some things are not made! They breathe life into themselves because they have to exist. And they do. They do - so that the people who are a part of them can go on.

ALIAH

(Silence)

NOAH

For this 'good angel' I need a little wood.

ALIAH

Where will you get it?

NOAH

I'll find it in my heart.

ALIAH

No you won't, you'll cut it out of mine.

NOAH

(Silence)

ALIAH

Won't you? Say it!

(He crosses to the pitcher where their wine is stored.)

NOAH

I'm thirsty.

ALIAH

That wine runs red in your veins - but you're no sailor. You're just a man.

NOAH

No. I was a man. Now I'm a carpenter. And someday, I'll be a sailor.

(YOSANOAH gulps down his wine.)

ALIAH

Stop being holy. It'll be a hundred times better for both of us.

(ALIAH exits with JAPHETH and SHEM.)

NOAH

There are things that you should never say, and I'm the kind of person who says them when I should just stay quiet.

(He shrugs and pours another measure of wine.)

Ah well. Look at me, a beating heart hung with these hands, tuned for labor, and a strong back. What can I do? This flood belongs to God, both the water and the longing. The dead and the living too are God's.

(YOSANOAH puts on his outside clothes and picks up the saw.)

Into the rain then with a rusted out and rotten saw to haul some wood upon his back.

(Raising the saw.)

The story begins.

(ALIAH enters, wet again, pregnant, and carrying the children. She and YOSANOAH pass near the door and stop. YOSANOAH eyes the children, suspiciously.)

ALIAH

Don't worry; they're dry.

(YOSANOAH exits.)

For now.

(ALIAH holds the children close and kneels, tending one of her gardens.)

Your home is a flat land between two large rivers, at the foot of the Mount of Olives, west of the Dead Sea. I only tell you this so you will know. So this will always be your home. So if your roots must reach across the water, under mountains of wishes, through stars, then they will. Because you have a home now. And you can carry it always in your heart. This flat land between two rivers, this is your secret history.

ALIAH (CONT.)

Remember, a river flood sweeps downstream, but a tidal wave grows upward, ocean from ocean, and then away. As for your birth, rain alone could never have caused such a serious rise in the Sea.

(ALIAH stands and brushes the dirt from her hands, then crosses to the bed. YOSANOAH enters, lays down the saw, removes his outside clothes, and takes a long drink of wine. ALIAH presents him with a third boy puppet.)

Yosanoah, this is Ham?

NOAH

Ham? Another baby?

ALIAH

Another boy.

NOAH

He looks good, but I was... well I was hoping that he was a girl.

ALIAH

No. Ham is a boy's name.

NOAH

I know, but we already have the two boys; we could really use a girl.

ALIAH

You could really use a girl? That's why I gave you a boy.

NOAH

It would be wonderful if we had one. If Ham were a girl...

ALIAH

He isn't.

NOAH

Okay. What?

ALIAH

I didn't say anything.

NOAH (sincerely)

You were thinking. What were you thinking?

ALIAH

Can you hear what I'm-- you're afraid.

NOAH

I told you that I was afraid.

ALIAH

And you're angry with me.

NOAH

I only said that I was afraid!

ALIAH

You don't have to say it. You're angry with me about the baby I gave you.

NOAH

It's another mouth to feed.

ALIAH

It's a family!

NOAH

It's not! It's not a family without a mother.

ALIAH

I'm the mother.

NOAH

Not if you're here.

ALIAH

I'm the mother!

NOAH

Not if you're here!

ALIAH

Wherever I am, whatever I am, whatever you think, it doesn't matter; none of that matters. They are the children, and I am the mother. And there is a family.

NOAH

I know what you're thinking.

ALIAH

Good, I won't have to speak to you again.

(ALIAH turns away, and crosses to the bedside. Unfazed, YOSANOAH returns to his area, speaking to the audience while reviewing his second plan, gathering scraps of wood and drinking a cup of wine.)

NOAH

That olive wood is hard and close-grained. It's good for building because it's strong, and almost watertight. When I finish I'll anoint it with live oil – from the olives – to seal it against spirits and to calm the water. The rest I'll use to make some soap, which we'll need for the trip. And for the lamps, I'll probably use a lot of it in the lamps. And the leftover fruit we'll eat.

ALIAH (to the audience)

You wait; he'll pour it all into the sea at the first strong tideway - just to calm the waters. And with no food and no lamps and no soap he'll be starving, dirty, in the dark.

(THUNDER crash. YOSANOAH looks up from his work and then to ALIAH, who looks at him for a moment and then away.)

NOAH

She stopped talking a while back. Just to hurt me. And she won't go along with anything.

(He looks at ALIAH again. She won't look at him or speak.)

I'm prone to nightmares you see, and bad prophecy in general. The worst ever – I was going deaf. But slow. Over about a week or so I suppose. It was awful because I could tell. I could hear the sounds getting further and further away. And I was getting further away from the sound, and from the world, and from everything familiar. Like I was just sinking deeper into myself, into a private silence - where only I could live. And all I could think about was you know what. All I could think about was that I would never ever again hear the sound of her voice. And then what? I'll tell you what: she went and quit talking. She did it just to hurt me.

(YOSANOAH sits, his back to ALIAH)

ALIAH

You don't listen to me anyway. You don't even hear me. You don't like what I say so you stop your ears to it. There is a man shaped hole in my heart where you used to be.

(She turns quickly and trips over a compass or something causing a loud crash. YOSANOAH stands.)

(Insincerely)

I'm sorry. The absence of pleasure makes me clumsy.

(YOSANOAH remains still, standing, but will not look at her.)

Turn around.

(no response)

Turn around.

(nothing)

God damn you, turn around!

(YOSANOAH turns violently slapping her to the floor.)

NOAH

What the fuck you think I'm trying to do?

(ALIAH stands and looks at YOSANOAH but doesn't speak.)

Oh no. I'm sorry.

ALIAH (slowly)

Wet, dry, happy, unhappy--

NOAH

I'm so sorry.

ALIAH

Where does the one end and the other begin?

NOAH

(Sinking to the floor beside her.)

Oh God I am sorry.

ALIAH

Not ever surrendered, just beaten down like that to almost nothing.

NOAH

Aliah, I'm sorry I hurt you. I'm sorry.

ALIAH

I know.

(They reach out tentatively toward one another - and embrace, the instant they touch. After so long apart, their passion is sudden and overwhelming. ALIAH pulls away after a long kiss, and gently wipes YOSANOAH's face and lips.)

Kissing you is like hearing music that I really love.

NOAH (sheepishly)

You must like the taste of tears.

ALIAH

I do, they taste to me like life.

(YOSANOAH nods)

I dreamt last night that we were stars, and we had some kind of collision. It was the first real thing I'd felt in a long time.

NOAH

We'll be stars then.

ALIAH

I feel more like myself than ever before.

NOAH

I love you so much.

(ALIAH smiles.)

When did you decide to stay?

ALIAH

I didn't decide to stay. I was here. I am here. You decided to go.

NOAH

That's true.

(ALIAH waits for an explanation.)

Something burst open – not just in the heavens - in my heart.

ALIAH

I understand.

NOAH

I just woke up different one day-

ALIAH

In your hammock?

NOAH

Yeah.

(They laugh.)

I've never felt this bad. It feels all right though.

ALIAH (dryly)

Suffering makes you feel safe because you know it so well.

NOAH

I guess so.

(He looks around the house.)

This'll all be gone tomorrow. It'll just wash away.

ALIAH

Then I have one more day to be myself.

(beat)

Come here. I want to show you something.

(They cross to one of the small gardens on the floor.)

This is your tree, this one here.

NOAH

I like it. It looks like me.

ALIAH

Yeah. It's a strong tree.

(beat)

And there's something else.

(ALIAH crosses to the bed and returns with a baby girl puppet which she offers to YOSANOAH.)

NOAH

She's amazing. What's her name?

ALIAH

You name her.

NOAH

Okay, I name her Aliah.

ALIAH

You can't name her that.

NOAH

Why not?

ALIAH

It's my name.

NOAH

Yeah.

(to the baby)

Come on Aliah, you gotta meet your brothers.

(MUSIC begins very softly as YOSANOAH places the new puppet carefully with the others. He puts on his outside gear, gathers the children and steps into his area, which now resembles a boat. He turns to look at ALIAH, who now stands at a distance.)

And there she stood, all peaceful - not smiling exactly, but happy atop our chimney. Like she would curl and rise smoke-like at any second. Like she could close and rise, a dream out of reach. I looked back as long as I could, as long as I dared, before my heart broke.

(He steadies himself.)

She stayed.

(MUSIC transforms, the deluge comes.)

ALIAH

I know what the wind carries, dust that sings the seeds I've sown.

I know what the wind carries, branches in my mouth.

And it will carry me

Over a cloud, over a cloud, into the sun.

Here I come.

I know what the wind carries, pages of notes from home, and hammocks.

I know what the wind carries, memories. Memories of falling.

And it will carry me

To land in the sunshine

Over a cloud, over a cloud, into the sun.

We flood. And a rainbow comes.

ALIAH (CONT.)

I know what the wind carries, choices, their voices like sirens singing to me.
I know what the wind carries, a woman whole and free, watching her spirits.

Carry me. Carry me. Carry me.
Over a cloud, into a star, into the sun.
A white bird come.

Like a stone, alone on the shoulder of night.

(Lights down on ALIAH. YOSANOAH is huddled alone.)

NOAH

We were underway a day I guess when I looked down at the world, made totally of ocean, and I wondered about her. I wondered if she'd suffered, if she reached for me, or still wanted me. I sat there in the bow, on my monument, alone. The last man. And I cried and cried. I mean I cried. My tears were like the rain! I couldn't stop from adding to the already endless ocean. And after several years at sea I was haggard. Lonesome and covered in salt I learned to love that water. And I forgot how to feel time passing.

(beat)

There on the water I found despair. And we spoke, because we were trapped there. Like never before, I looked across that dark in every direction but found nothing. No hope, no obstacle, nothing to keep, nothing to conquer. Nothing. Just trapped there, not by the world but by myself. And every wave called out to me but I couldn't move. Until I knew my time had come - and I fell. Or I jumped. I'm not sure which. And it don't matter to the Sea. But I came bobbing right back up to the surface. So down again I dove, and I tried to take a breath, but up again I rose eluding death. It occurred to me then, I float. I stayed, hung there in that salty foam for a little while and then I got mad, and then I started crying again - but only for a minute.

NOAH (CONT.)

Over the waves I heard your voices. Laughing. That made me feel a lot better. So we went for a little swim together and we sailed on. And that's the story of your mother.

(beat)

I wish I could draw so I could remember the lines of her dark beautiful energy so crooked and perfect and absolute.

(MUSIC begins - a gentle, steady pulse, quiet - like a lighthouse beacon. YOSANOAH softly blows out the candle, and looks up as a WHITE DOVE comes winging through the space, carrying in its mouth the olive branch from under the bed. YOSANOAH watches for a moment, and the lights fade.)

THE END