

SAMPLE:

The Deluge:  
Divining A Night Raft Drunk  
By  
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THE DELUGE: PART II  
DIVINING A NIGHT RAFT, DRUNK

CAST OF CHARACTERS:

YOSANOAH: (yoSHAHnoah) An old sailor who drowns, and then turns into a star.

SHEM:

JAPHETH: (JAFFith) ~ The adult sons of Yosanoah. Somehow they become trees.

HAM:

ALIAH: (ahLIah) The grown daughter of Yosanoah. A mountain rises from the spot where she enters the ocean.

THE SEA: Their antagonist, who never speaks, but remains all around.

SETTING:

The deck of a boat at sea, and then a raft.

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 musicians who furnished the score for Part I should play the roles of SHEM and JAPHETH. In Part II they perform the songs and music onstage. Ham does the singing, unless otherwise indicated. The songs (words and music) are already written. Additional music, live and/or recorded, should be used to underscore specific scenes throughout the piece.

The same puppets are used in both parts of the play. They may be simple or elaborate. In addition to puppets, they might also be considered totems, effigies or even sculptures.

Part I and Part II of the play, though bound by common characters and an ongoing story, are stylistically, and conceptually distinct. The production design must acknowledge the differences while providing the unity needed to connect the two.

PART II:  
DIVINING A NIGHT RAFT, DRUNK

(Pre-set lights down. In black we hear ALIAH's melody, from Part I, played softly. As it fades out, a light comes up on YOSANOAH standing alone on the deck of a boat. He is old, a weathered sailor. THE SEA sits opposite him, like a witness.)

NOAH

I'm drowning in air now. I find the wind, and feel her currents just as cruel and even colder than the watery pull I left so long ago.

(beat)

But I still believe in the strange power of living stories.

(Lights up on the rest of the boat. HAM enters carrying puppets that represent the four children and places them carefully around the stage.

THE SEA begins to move also, throughout the space, in part defining what is boat and what is water.)

HAM

The Sea draws on every living thing - a long thick mark on the face of Noah and a line on the body of his Sons. The Sea put creases in their clothes when it rotted out their hammocks. And it put a purpose on their backdrop, the boat. They say the Sea works his art on the backs of drowned men. And by now every sailor ever set foot in that winey mix be good and sick of the smell and the taste. But not one ever got tired of the way it looked - or the way it sounds. The Sea, our rival now, surrounds.

(beat)

So nothing now holds back the night and upon our light a great and heavy darkness falls. Slow, like a slow going boat gently sinking from the surface, we drift into our story.

(aside)

Already we are boldly launched upon the deep.

(YOSANOAH crosses to a storage area, pours himself a measure of wine, and drinks it while HAM speaks.)

Yosanoah was a man of the moon. And he knew his deck in the dark, even drunk. Very, very rarely would he ever come across an unfamiliar board in the boat he built. After all, he hauled those boards upon his back. Hauled them up out of a forest and all upon his back - he drug them over hills to be built into a boat. So, as I say, he knew the wood, he knew the weight, he knew the boat and he was sure of his way, even drunk, in the dark, on a water rocked by waves. And he went slowly in a storm but he was certain. And in a calm, when he went quickly, he went surely, just as surely and as certain as before.

NOAH

And when I know what I want - well then I take it. And when I know what I should do, well then I just do it!

(ALIAH enters and YOSANOAH smiles. She sits with him to drink. SHEM enters, when mentioned. First he collects the puppet that bears his likeness, then goes to prepare a music area, perhaps even tuning up an instrument or two.)

HAM

Now when your father is called Noah and you are the eldest son, you are responsible. And you remember the weight of the boards vividly, even after all those years at sea with nothing to eat. You remember the weight of the wood and you wait, and you want to give it up. But you don't. Even unnerved and a little ambitious, you won't.

(JAPHETH enters during the following paragraph. He too collects his puppet, which clearly has no mouth. He crosses to SHEM, sits comfortably and begins to play along with the gentle sounds now made by THE SEA.)

And it's only a little less intense for the middle child who is, by his nature, introspective and abysmal. Intimate first with the forest of his instrument, and then with his older brother, Shem. He is a sailor, like his father. Strong and honored. Named Japheth.

(beat)

He doesn't ever speak.

(HAM gathers up his puppet.)

So the youngest one inherits the job of telling and I am the third born, the cursed and last of these three brothers. My name is Ham. And in the midst of this weird, all backward favoritism, I found my father famous and hard to hate. Though he was difficult and solemn, and black, he always tried to keep his shadow off our backs.

SHEM

He's a man who had a lot of visions. Don't forget about that.

HAM (to the audience)

He's a man of many visions.

SHEM

Remember those drawings and charts and all those sketches and maps.

HAM

(Offering SHEM the floor)

Did you want to . . .

SHEM

No. I'm just, you know. He's our father.

HAM

Yeah. I think that is totally clear.

HAM (CONT.)

(ALIAH deliberately crosses in front of HAM to her puppet. It is, by far, the most impressive of the four.

That's Aliah. She's named for our mother.

(SHEM has joined YOSANOAH who's busy refilling his cup.)

SHEM

How did she die?

NOAH

Who?

(SHEM looks at him as if to say "you know who I mean")

How does anyone die?

(SHEM doesn't answer.)

ALIAH

(from across the space)

Suffocation.

NOAH

(looks at ALIAH for a moment and then back to SHEM)

Yep.

SHEM (to the audience)

This tight accuracy is a true and real one, and it comes from our guts. But there was a lot we didn't know then. Like we didn't know that a family traveling together through a canyon just a few miles from a great mountain divide would get stuck in the snow. And for seventy days they would most of them starve to death. And write it down. And that some of them lived by eating the others. For a while, at least, they lived.

NOAH

But we heard them singing didn't we? We heard their voices singing in that mountain air, thanking stars for what they had. So they ate one another, they lived how they lived. They were cold. We're wet.

HAM

(under his breath)

They never really got warm again I'll bet.

(YOSANOAH acknowledges HAM)

NOAH

Shem, go below and get your brother a blanket.

(SHEM exits.)

Japheth, you go too. Keep him down there awhile.

NOAH (CONT.)

(JAPHETH exits. to HAM)

You, come here.

(HAM crosses to YOSANOAH)

I love you.

(HAM lowers his head.)

HAM

Should I leave you alone?

(YOSANOAH nods. HAM crosses to get out of his way.

YOSANOAH unrolls a bundle of papers and begins to make notes.

Before long ALIAH is looking over his shoulder.)

NOAH

(gently trying to discourage her from hovering)

These are secret writings.

ALIAH

(even more interested)

Oh, really?

(She moves to have a closer look. YOSANOAH relaxes and lets her read a little.)

It doesn't make any sense to me.

NOAH

You're not reading it right.

ALIAH

I'm starting on the left and moving horizontally; it still doesn't mean anything to me.

NOAH

Well, that's because it's a secret, like I said.

ALIAH

You're the only one who understands it?

NOAH

I hope not.

ALIAH

(teasing him a little)

It could be.

NOAH

Could be. It's a risk.

(ALIAH rubs her hand across the pages, inspecting them.)

ALIAH

Part of the problem is that your paper here is filthy.

(She licks her thumb and rubs a particular spot or two.)

It's hard to tell which ones are the marks you made when it's so dirty.

(YOSANOAH, very concerned, quickly looks at the paper.)

NOAH

Oh, that? That's from the birds, that's not dirt.

(ALIAH shoves the paper back to YOSANOAH, disgusted)

ALIAH

You let the birds shit all over your important work?

NOAH

No. Birds land on the pages of my work to heal it – when it's struggling and where it's wounded. Then later, when you open it, birds fly out again.

(ALIAH starts to speak but YOSANOAH quiets her with a gesture.)

They do it by standing on the words, and touching them ever so gently. And by finally reading it right. Those birds are born healers.

(Concerned about YOSANOAH's strange response, ALIAH looks toward HAM.)

HAM (to the audience)

A great deal escapes us, and we no longer understand our own actions.

NOAH

(rolling up his papers)

I understand my actions. You're the one who's confused.

(HAM looks away)

Look at me.

(HAM looks at him.)

You went and forgot how to listen to irrational stories and find your way through enigmatic ramblings.

(leaping suddenly toward HAM)

Fill yourself with wonder, Ham! What's private in your heart? How can you speak about that? How can you feel it, and share it with someone else?

HAM

I try.

(beat)

I do.

NOAH

Good. You're a good . . . boy.

(YOSANOAH nods, reaches out and touches HAM's shoulder and then exits. SHEM and JAPHETH enter with a blanket for HAM. Just as HAM reaches for the blanket THE SEA splashes him in the face. Annoyed, HAM dries his face with the blanket and ignore the trespass.)

tries to

HAM

I didn't know what it felt like then to fall into a thousand feet of salt water and not float. I didn't know there could be so much life, and so much breath, down there in that depth.

SHEM

That's true. And we knew next to nothing of our sister. She lives here on the boat . . . but somewhere else completely.

HAM

(continuing his story)

In the old days a mouthful made me cough and throw it up and climb back onto the boat. 'Cause I didn't like that dark down there - I didn't like that water. The Sea we always called The Other. It was not me. And it was not the boat. But it was us, he said, it was in us.

(imitating Noah to his brothers)

It runs red in our veins, and salty, it remains.

ALIAH

Did he really say that? Or did you just make it up?

HAM (defensively)

I just made it up - but he says stuff like that all the time.

ALIAH

No, I know. I'm impressed. It's really good.

HAM

Oh.

ALIAH

(doing her own imitation)

It runs red in our veins and salty--

HAM

I get it.

HAM (CONT.)

(ALIAH turns away from HAM. THE SEA begins to churn and move, making it's own strange music. ALIAH listens, rapt, and stares at the water.)

You really like the water, don't you?

ALIAH

Yeah, I do. I love the sound of it.

(HAM signals JAPHETH and SHEM and they begin to play. Their music matches, in mood and tempo, the sound of THE SEA. ALIAH smiles broadly. After a moment, YOSANOAH enters dragging an old, worn-out rope. He listens to the boys play, enjoying their sound. He tries to coil his rope but it won't roll up right; either it's no good anymore, or he's a little drunk. Finally he just lays it down and the music fades. ALIAH exits.)

NOAH

That's good. It's good. But play a real song now, with some words. And remember, while you're playing at least, a song's only worth the breath you spend on it.

HAM (to the audience)

Most of our chores were not so straightforward.

SHEM

(to JAPHETH and HAM)

Devotion number three - psalm of the sea.

HAM (singing)

I woke up three times from that dream last night  
From three separate depths I did ascend.  
It makes me wonder what you mean, awake  
By devotion, what do you mean, pretend

Well you sent me here.  
It's not just anywhere, is it?  
And you could take me.  
What do you want to do?

I hear a lot out here.  
So tune the oratorio  
I'll clear my ears.  
You must want to share  
With every person everywhere.

I watch the power over me  
Connect it to the ocean floor  
Ocean floor beside, or undone  
But close enough to fill everyone

We need a light out here  
I refuse your way to go  
When you won't hear me  
Divine my share  
But I'm over water everywhere

(Music fades.)

NOAH

What are you doing here Ham? What are you asking for?

HAM

I don't know; I'm not sure exactly.  
(HAM looks briefly at his brothers.)  
Help, I guess.

NOAH

From me?  
(ALIAH enters soaking wet.)

ALIAH

Hey.

NOAH

What happened to you?

ALIAH

Leaks.

NOAH

Where?

ALIAH

All over back there. I stopped a few of them.

HAM

With your head?

NOAH

Japheth, put the instruments away. Shem, go with your sister and do what you can with the leaks.

(to HAM)

You help me.

(HAM follows YOSANOAH to several crates, which they drag from their places, pry open, and begin to unpack.)

HAM

What are we doing?

NOAH

We're working

(YOSANOAH heaves several things over the side, into the arms of THE SEA.)

HAM

Yeah, uh . . . why are we throwing away our food?

NOAH

We're saving the boat.

(Throws another package off the boat.)

And it's not all the food.

HAM

It's food though.

NOAH

Yeah it's food and a lot of other things that are useless at present and currently unnecessary.

HAM

(not really helping very much)

We'll need food though, eventually.

NOAH

We need to save the boat right now!

(SHEM and ALIAH enter both completely wet.)

Move that pile there. Get rid of everything extra! Get it off the boat, throw it overboard!

(SHEM and ALIAH throw several things over, including HAM's blanket.

JAPHETH picks up a bundle of YOSANOAH's papers.)

Keep that! That stays, but get rid of the rest. This is evolution!

(aside)

Most of that stuff is cursed anyway.

HAM (to SHEM)

What did he say?

NOAH

I said get to work! Now do as I say!

(YOSANOAH grabs some scraps of fabric or clothes or something and exits to stop the leaks. Their urgency dissipates. JAPHETH crosses to the music area and ALIAH exits.)

HAM (to the audience)

So we did. And eventually we finished. The boat was lighter and we stopped the leaks, but the food ran out, and then it got dark. And night time out here is always the worst. It gets colder and everything moves and you notice it more. Spirits love the nighttime because it's easier to fly quickly and everything creepy gets even louder. And it's lonely.

(SHEM begins to search through a chest for food.)

And in the night I know they all have strange thoughts about their hunger - and how to conquer it. At least I know I do. And it's dark now.

(JAPHETH exits.)

You look below you, black, beside you, black, and black on the other side too. Above you - it is the same. Surrounded.

(to SHEM)

Is there anything left?

SHEM

(Irritated, he slams the lid.)

No.

(regaining his composure.)

I'm sorry what did you--

HAM

Is there anything left? To eat?

SHEM

No. There's nothing left to eat.

HAM

Nothing?

SHEM

No.

(sincerely)

There's rope.

(HAM looks at SHEM incredulously.)

We can use it.

HAM

To hang ourselves?

SHEM

To catch some fish.

HAM (sarcastically)

Good idea. You could tie a little loop there at the end and just sort of catch them there in it. Just sort of... rope them as they swim through the loop. Yeah, that'll work.

SHEM

You could help, somehow, you know? You could try--

HAM

I do try; I'm trying now. Really. I'm trying to make sense of our situation here and we are in a very bad shape.

(YOSANOAH enters.)

Things are very bad. This is all bad. Goddammit I'm hungry!

(YOSANOAH prepares a spot on the floor to sleep. Either he doesn't notice HAM or he ignores him. He begins to pray. The brothers prepare their beds as well.)

NOAH

Stay with us here, God; for the day is gone and evening is at hand. And as we sail, kindle our hearts and awaken our hope that we might know you once again, as we have in the Word and . . .

(glancing toward HAM)

in the breaking of bread.

HAM

Hungry!

(YOSANOAH signals SHEM to begin his prayer.)

SHEM

God . . . please . . . bring us safely into the morning hours. Give us a peaceful night and a perfect end. Defend us from . . . from all the perils and dangers of this night. Keep track of those who work, or watch, or weep. And . . . give your angels charge over those of us who . . . who can sleep.

(SHEM looks to JAPHETH; he nods. JAPHETH looks to HAM.)

HAM

I bet I haven't eaten in a hundred days, at least.

(SHEM and JAPHETH silently express their disappointment in HAM. All finish their beds, lie down, and try to sleep. YOSANOAH moves away from the group, refills his wine and stares at THE SEA, who stares right back at him. After a moment he finishes the wine, gets some more and gathers his papers. He makes a mark or two and then stops, looking intently at his sons for a little while. ALIAH enters.)

ALIAH  
Are you working?

NOAH  
Me? No. No, I'm not.

ALIAH  
What are you doing?

NOAH  
I was going to make something. And then I . . . just didn't.

ALIAH  
How come?

NOAH  
I don't know. I'm too tired. Drunk.  
(They both smile in a sad sort of way.)  
You should be sleeping.

ALIAH  
I can't. I feel trapped in there. It's hard to take a deep breath in such a small space.

NOAH  
I thought it was kind of cozy. When you were little you felt safe in there.

ALIAH  
Now I feel safe out here.  
(They look up at the sky.)  
It's cloudy isn't it?  
(YOSANOAH nods.)  
That's why it's so dark.

NOAH  
Yeah.

ALIAH

(Studying YOSANOAH's face.)

You know, you look really old.

(They each laugh a little.)

NOAH

I'm grieving. You know? I'm mourning all the lost things. Everything. Even little things.

(ALIAH reaches for a large store of wine.)

It's all gone

ALIAH

You're drunk.

NOAH (nods)

Just like I said.

(beat)

When I first saw you, you had no protection. My eyes stayed on your mouth. You were a brand new power. You're old too, like a mountain, now.

(YOSANOAH remains looking at ALIAH for a few seconds and then looks up into the sky and calls out sadly.)

I miss you.

(to ALIAH)

I miss you, too.

(YOSANOAH kisses her, and then sinks to his knees awkwardly. ALIAH helps him. SHEM is awake and watching silently.)

ALIAH

It's okay. You're okay.

NOAH

No I'm not.

ALIAH

You are.

NOAH

I'm not okay; I'm not. I know. Help me, over there. I don't want them to see me.

ALIAH

(looking at SHEM, who sees everything)

No one sees you. It's okay, no one sees.

NOAH

I don't want them to know.

ALIAH

They don't know. Just lie down. Lie down now.

NOAH

Okay.

(YOSANOAH lies down to sleep.)

ALIAH

(to SHEM)

Go to sleep.

(ALIAH exits. SHEM goes to sleep. THE SEA stirs a little as time passes. YOSANOAH wakes and crosses to the large store of wine. He finds that it's still empty. He looks around for more, or something else to drink, but finds nothing. Finally, he turns to go lie down again. THE SEA, watching him cross, splashes him gently in the face. And then again, landing salt water right in his mouth.)

NOAH

(A little surprised)

Tastes just like wine. Well, a little like wine.

(He reaches over the edge, has a nice long drink, and sits back to talk.

THE SEA watches him closely.)

The sea spoke, and all the pale phantoms began to weep. The sea looked through them, saw that they were only phantoms and laughed while they disintegrated. But the weeping went on. The sea spoke again and said, you sailors, you're like prophets, you all share the same memories. What you find down there that's deep will stay. But still their weeping didn't stop. And the waves went on, lapping right up on and sometimes even over their heads. I'd like to find some land.

(THE SEA begins to move more threateningly.)

I would. I'd like to find a little land and let them live!

(A storm is building. YOSANOAH notices and begins to prepare for it gathering buckets and rope.)

The very night on which he was betrayed there was a storm. In the rain he took the bread that he had and he broke it, and gave it to his friends and he said take it, eat it, it's my body and I give it to you. Then after supper he took his cup and he passed it. Drink it, he said, it's full, drink it. This is my blood and I give it to you. Do it now, he said, do it now, and remember me.

(YOSANOAH fixes his gaze upon the audience; he's going to drink up THE SEA.)

Drink it!

(YOSANOAH fills bucket after bucket with water from THE SEA, drinking as much as he can while he works. THE SEA, beginning to resist, splashes YOSANOAH violently.)