

SEED

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CHARACTERS

Seed the next generation of an experiment
Gardener an apocalyptic gardener
Cyril a fruitless tomato plant

PLACE AND TIME

Here and Now

Lights up in a wasteland.

GARDENER

To the audience:

Do you hear that?

Nothing.

People and their squabbles. The earth and its squabbles—squabbles—everywhere. Just look at this place. Nothing—as far as the eye can see.

Beat.

Last time we had a boy but—didn't work out. Always going around—naming things. *Mine*, he'd say. Everything—*bis*.

Fucked like a bunny. Multiplied like a bona fide jackrabbit.

Babies—everywhere—*wanting* mouths—half-grown teeth, tiny hands—

The earth quakes.

Sorry, babel!

We don't say the name anymore. She doesn't like it when I say the name.

Poor thing, she has such terrible nightmares now.

It was a shame—what we had to do—for our family, you see.

I wash my hands of it.

Beat.

Only life is important—the proper kind of life.

Sometimes you have to end life to bring life.

Beat.

Her turn this time. Me and my mess: she doesn't trust me to come up with *things* anymore.

Baby girl—yes. Beautiful, bubbling baby girl.

Thank you—we are very happy about it—*proud* about it.

Me and my hubby. Isn't that right, Hubby?

The earth quakes.

Beat.

She doesn't like it when I call her that.

We're very hopeful this time. I don't know what we'll do if it doesn't pan out.

Probably—

The earth quakes.

Aw Hell—do you hear *everything?! No, no, I wouldn't touch a hair on her little baby head, babel!*

Not quite *human* as it were. But almost.

Better, she thinks. Time to inspect a few things.

Sounds of tectonic plates shifting and reforming. Lights reveal a girl lying motionless on a pile of trash bags and a cellophane puddle. Gardener plays some notes on a harmonica. He does so again, this time breathing life into the girl.

GARDENER

Hiding from her:

Empty your pockets! Empty your pockets, or everything will fall out!

He chortles. She panics upon hearing his voice.

SEED

I wasn't given any pockets.

GARDENER

Appearing:

No pockets? How am I supposed to prepare a girl who doesn't even have pockets? How else will she carry all our burdens?

SEED

Beats me.

Gardener inspects her.

GARDENER

What a curious little mission she is... Better you handed me an apricot or fig. No, this seed won't do.

SEED

I'll have you know I'm the best seed ever to be planted.

GARDENER

Well then! This is the waiting game. Wait and see if she will grow?

SEED

Grow?... I'm going to GROW?... I think I've heard stories about this...

GARDENER

Imagine: branches so long you can touch the sky with them... Or maybe you'll just curl up and die. It's a matter of light, of course. And seeing as we are hidden in the dark, I don't see a way for you to reach it.

SEED

Stretching herself out on the ground:

I don't need the light just yet.

GARDENER

I have planted every seed ever planted, and yet this one here tells me how to do my job!
What incredible hubris.
Not the hubris of a plant, no doubt.
Then—will she be—an animal?

He chortles again.

SEED

Animal? What's that?

GARDENER

An animal is a thing that *does*.

SEED

Can an animal jump? Can an animal dig? Can an animal swim? Oh, WATER. Make me a fish!

GARDENER

A *fish*. A seed who knows not animal, and yet she knows fish? What other words have you, little one, hmm? Do you know the word for—color?

SEED

Examining the word:

Color...

GARDENER

Or sound? Do you know that one?

She nods.

You have dreamt many things, I'm sure. So curious, what comes on the hard drive. So empty and yet so full...

A rumbling begins.

That's my cue.

SEED

Where are you going?

GARDENER

It's time for you to come out. Great missions lie ahead.
Our dearest succession—it will be a bumpy ride!

The rumbling grows.

SEED

What missions?

GARDENER

Life is such a terrible delay sometimes.

SEED

I don't like this.

Gardener tidies himself up.

GARDENER

When you feel the walls shake, that's when you to stay safe and I'll come find you. This is a very crucial stage in your development.

The rumbling sounds become elevator music, which plays during a blackout. When lights rise, we are inside of an alleyway dumpster—home to Cyril. Trash bags are scattered. One wriggles around as Seed wakes up. She finds the opening, beginning to regain consciousness. She emerges to Cyril's inspection.

SEED

Ah!

CYRIL

"Ah!" You are very surprising... Don't eat me. I'm rotten.

SEED

What—are you?

CYRIL

I asked you first.

SEED

No you didn't.

CYRIL

You tossed out too? What do you do?

SEED

What do *you* do?

CYRIL

I turn carbon dioxide into oxygen that other organisms breathe. I also make tomatoes, sometimes... Old lady was upset I wouldn't drop fruit, *squished* me down the trash shoot and—*poof!*—into the dumpster. Get some OK sunlight though. My name's Cyril.

SEED

Seed.

CYRIL

That's very irregular. Your roots don't touch the ground. What kind of plant are you?

SEED

I forget.

CYRIL

You're like a little one of them.

SEED

What are they?

CYRIL

Big ones of you. You don't see many now. It's where all this stuff comes from.

SEED

I've seen plenty of things like you. Every time I dream.

Cyril begins inspecting her intrusively.

Hey, what are you doing?!

CYRIL

I'm inspecting you.

SEED

What are you doing that for?

CYRIL

To determine your qualities.

He continues.

I have some bad news.

SEED

I knew it. I'm dead.

CYRIL

Please excuse me for saying so, but—I don't think you're a plant at all.

SEED

I'm not?

CYRIL

You are actually an animal, if I have my definition's right.

SEED

An animal... is a thing that does.

Seed begins to gather materials for a bed.

CYRIL

Make yourself at home.

*She tests it, and in the mess finds
a partly eaten Skittles bag. OR: some Skittles
fall down into the bin, followed by their
empty wrapper. Seed picks it up and reads,
"Skittles... 'Taste the rainbow'".*

CYRIL

You can taste a rainbow?

SEED

I wonder what a rainbow tastes like ...

They each eat one.

CYRIL

Spitting it out and coughing in disgust:

Rainbow?!

SEED

Joyfully:

Rainbow!

CYRIL

The way it—erupts in your mouth!

SEED

Like a waterfall ...

CYRIL

Like—FIRE!

SEED

Like WATER! ... water ... I need ...

Cough.

... water ...

She collapses into a cellophane water puddle.

Are you dead? **CYRIL**

Pause.

Hello, are you dead?

SEED

Her face half-submerged:

I think so.

Beat.

Am I?

No response.

Hey.

CYRIL

Yes?

SEED

Am I swimming?

CYRIL

No... What do animals do?

SEED

Animals... grow! Oh, please please please please please—I wanna GROW!

CYRIL

Can animals grow?

SEED

Animals grow all the time. Some animals get bigger than plants. Like, elephants, and giraffes, and walruses.

CYRIL

Who told you that?

SEED

Nobody told me.

CYRIL

Such funny words... All right. Let's grow then.

*Cyril stands very still and photosynthesizes.
Seed mimics, awkwardly reaching out her arms.*

SEED

I don't think this is working.

CYRIL

You're supposed to do it for longer.

Beat.

SEED

Why do you stay in this dinky place?

CYRIL

It's safe here. Won't know where I am if I go.

SEED

I'll go with you. I'll tell you where you are.

CYRIL

You don't even know where you are! Out the cracks in the metal, you used to be able to see dandelions, an apple blossom tree in front of the Radio Shack. It rained some, and then one day the birds left, and then the bees. When the bees left, everything else left. You should stay here.

SEED

Something feels very strange about this place. I don't think I'm supposed to be here at all.

CYRIL

Where are you supposed to be?

SEED

How else will she ... carry our burdens ... I wonder what he meant by that.

*Seed hears helicopters and gunfire in the distance.
It grows closer.*

I know that sound... He said this was going to happen... Cyril, we have to hide.

CYRIL

I'm attached to the ground.

SEED

You're not attached anywhere. Just pick up your feet and move.

CYRIL

I don't have any feet!

Seed secures a hiding space.

Cyril looks up.

Beat.

What's that?

Planes pass overhead. Cyril watches them in awe and wonder. The sight of them pleases him immensely.

That's the first one of those I've ever seen... Isn't that something.

The sound of a bomb dropping.

Overjoyed:

And that's the second... and it's FLYING!

An explosion blasts dust everywhere. The plant disappears in a flurry of debris and smoke. When we can finally see, we find that we are underground, and that a single ray of light bleeds through a hole in the ceiling.

SEED

Coughing up debris:

Why am I seeing these things?

Crying:

WHY IS THIS HAPPENING TO ME?!

The Gardener enters, humming a happy tune and wearing a janitor's uniform. He sweeps up some of the mess with a broom.

Dad.

*She rises and approaches him,
but he appears unable to see or hear her.*

Dad?

Beat.

You look like Dad.

Smells him.

You smell like Dad.

Pause.

Beat.

But you're not Dad, are you?

Beat.

Are you a friend, or an enemy?

Beat.

I don't want any enemies. I've made enemies already, I think. I don't want any enemies.

GARDENER

No, little one. I am not your enemy.

SEED

You can hear me.

GARDENER

I can hear you.

Seed hugs Gardener.

SEED

What about Cyril?

GARDENER

This just won't do. Nothing will grow here the way things are now.

He puts down his broom and gets another.

He hands that broom to the seed.

Take this.

She takes it.

Gardener continues sweeping.

SEED

But what about Cyril?

Beat.

GARDENER

You must know loss to understand life.

This is what you're here to do, isn't it?

SEED

I don't know.

Gardener chortles.

GARDENER

Yes. Yes, it's what you're *supposed* to do.

He chortles again, then coughs painfully.

SEED

Sweeping:

You have a terrible cough.

GARDENER

That's what years of breathing dust will do to you. You've got to be careful when you're dealing with such a mess... You're a very young little beastie, aren't you? I suppose you don't know yet what happened. That's probably good.

SEED

Please tell me.

GARDENER

Observing the ceiling:

The weather's been a little strange, hasn't it?

SEED

Are you a planter?

GARDENER

If I am a planter, that would make you a plant, is that right?

SEED

I think so.

GARDENER

You are no plant.

SEED

I'm an animal.

GARDENER

If you think a person is the same as an animal, then yes. You are an animal.

SEED

I'm—

Silence.

—I'm a person...

GARDENER

Indeed. Indeed you are. A very special person at that.

Puts down the broom.

Smokes a cigarette over the debris.

You really should have emptied your pockets. Now look at everything that's fallen out.

SEED

You mean—this is all—because of me?

GARDENER

No. You are because of it.

SEED

So what do I do now?

GARDENER

You keep sweeping. One of these days somebody or other will show up to give you a hand. And when that day happens—

Beat.

—well, when that day happens, we'll just have to see how you fare then.

Gardener exits. Long silence. The seed pokes at a few spots on the ground with the broom and mixes the Skittles around curiously. She begins sweeping gently as lights begin to fade.

SEED

To herself, smiling:

A person...

She stops sweeping to imagine.

Think of all the things a person could do...

She continues sweeping.

Blackout.

End of play.