

AMERICANDREAMMACHINE**I. DREAMING**

*Large fragments make up what looks like a huge American flag at the back of the stage. Music plays as people dance. Their movements are mechanical and there is the impression that they are all part of one big machine. Deals, transactions, successes, betrayals all take place. The **DREAMER** stands separately, tied with his back to the edge of a big metal billboard. There is writing on it which is too small to read. His hands are free.*

DREAMER: I was a dreamer. I stood on the edge of a world that I believed I had a right to belong to, leaning on a billboard that read *WITH HARD WORK, DRIVE AND PASSION, IT'S POSSIBLE TO ACHIEVE THE AMERICAN DREAM.*¹ Waiting. Waiting as the ticking watches of the briefcase men made a metronome for their dance. TICK TOCK DOES ANYONE NEED A PARTNER? TICK TOCK BEATS LIFE AWAY IN CIRCULAR MOTIONS OF DAYS THAT MAKE REPLICAS OF EACH OTHER. I'm here. But everyone is already spinning and the arms of their suits join up around briefcase handles - paper chain people with no space for me. Break for me, tear up your infinity for me or I'll bring out the scissors and cut you apart, with no mercy for your thousand dollar suit. That suit could change my life. TICK TOCK TICK TOCK TICK TOCK I feel the dance is leaving my heartbeat behind. I need you to let me in. *I need it more than anyone ever needed anything. I need it to live*². Look at the billboard and look at me; I have everything. I have everything, so why ask me where I was born? Irrelevant. It doesn't matter that I am black, white, brown, red, orange, yellow, green through to violet. Or that I am a man, woman, something in between and have the sexual orientation of one who either prefers men, women, neither and both. Or even that I am of the social class that some people do and some people don't belong to. And what of my health which is perfect to a degree of brokenness that reflects my age? I'm anyone from anywhere and I have all that I need. So let me in. Let me in because all I'm doing stood here is dying and this sign's sharp edge is cutting into my back, severing my spine.

FATHER: *Only those Americans who are willing to die for their country are fit to live*³.

*FATHER steps forward and stands closely in front of the **DREAMER**. **DREAMER** reaches for his **FATHER**'s hands. **FATHER**, expressionless, takes a paper people chain and holds it open between outstretched arms.*

DREAMER: Father? Father, I thought you were dead and yet here you are. My robotic designer and creator, you're looking more metallic than ever with your grey suit and hair to match. Father, I'm still waiting, still trying. DON'T MAKE ME LOOK AT YOU - you with iron grey eyes that are rusting round the edges from tears of frustration. I hear your voice in

¹ Tommy Hilfiger - Qtd. Silverman.

² *All God's Chillun Got Wings* 209

³ Douglas McArthur – Qtd. 'Quotes by McArthur, Douglas'

my head, like the answer machine to a phone I have dialled over and over. You never pick up. Why do you never pick up? Why do you leave me with pre-recorded repetitions: *Whoever dies with the most toys wins*⁴. Toys. By the time I die, they'll all be broken. *I'm always in a race with the junkyard*⁵. Nothing lasts. We're all designed to die, aren't we?

FATHER rejoins the dance.

EX-BOSS moves forward.

Enter Mr Moneybags, my ex boss whose vision is funnelled through dollar signs. Is there something wrong? Can you not see properly? Maybe I should rip your eyes out and give them a polish for you - I'd do it for free.

EX-BOSS stands closely in front of the DREAMER. DREAMER strikes out at him, but he takes a patronisingly small step back and brings out a paper people chain that, when held between his outstretched arms, drapes onto the floor.

I was tired, all the travelling, but I could still work. You need me here. *Business is bad, it's murderous. But not for me, of course.*⁶ I won't let you fire me and compromise the business in that way HAHAHA *sixty-five dollars a week, fifty dollars a week, if I had forty dollars a week – that's all I'd need*⁷. You need me. *If I had a spot I'd slam you right in, but I just don't have a single solitary spot*⁸. Bullshit. Bullshit and fuck you. *Fuck you. That's what I'm saying. You have no idea of your job. A man's his job and you're fucked at yours*⁹. WHERE AM I? Where is the me who lived the dream? The one with the son who doesn't feel he needs to say, *'you ain't got to pay for it all at one time. You can put a down payment on it and carry it home with you.*¹⁰ I want you to be proud of me. I want to tell you *America is full of beautiful towns and fine, upstanding people. And they know me, boys, they know me up and down New England*¹¹. But it would be lies because nobody knows me – no one has heard my name. Not yet anyway. But that's all going to change. You hear me? My heartbeat is racing and I'll be dancing in no time. TICK TOCK *You wouldn't understand yet, son, but your daddy's gonna make a transaction ... a business transaction that's going to change our lives*¹². TICK TOCK I can find myself, re-find myself just like *America has rediscovered itself. Its sacred position among nations.*¹³ TICK TOCK sweet heartbeat of America. I'm on the up and no one will stop me because I'll join the briefcase waltz and when I've taken all

⁴ Casting Crowns – 'American Dream'

⁵ *Death of a Salesman* 174

⁶ *Death of a Salesman* 159

⁷ *Death of a Salesman* 179-81

⁸ *Death of a Salesman* 179

⁹ *Glengarry Glen Ross* 43

¹⁰ *Fences* 1165

¹¹ *Death of a Salesman* 145

¹² *A Raisin in the Sun* 87

¹³ *Angels in America* 1214

that I could ever want *I'm gonna build me a fence around what belongs to me*¹⁴ and lock myself and my family firmly into my American dream. We'll be safe there. STOP!

The dance pauses.

Excuse me! Can I step in here or should I go fetch my scissors?

Someone nods and produces a pair of scissors from their pocket, then hands them to the DREAMER and walks away. The dance continues. A fragment of the flag moves slightly out of place.

II. LOVING DREAMERS

Enter the LOVER. On the left side of her chest is a deep open wound revealing a heart shattered into bloody shards of broken glass. She pulls little pieces out of herself and puts them into a pill bottle.

LOVER: I am a woman who loves. The one who said *I'm not in anything I want to get out of*¹⁵. The woman whose *American dreams came true somehow*¹⁶. The woman who asked *'money is the anthem of success, so before we go out, what's your address?'*¹⁷ The woman at the centre of *the prettiest in crowd that you had ever seen .A FRESHMAN GENERATION OF DEGENERATE BEAUTY QUEENS*¹⁸. The woman who wanted *kissing in the rain*¹⁹. But *i waz missin something something promised.*²⁰*you were always inconsistent*

doin something & then bein sorry

beatin my heart to death

*talkin bout you sorry*²¹. And today I tear that heart out because it's

finally broken apart and I can feel the shards exploding within my chest, cutting me up from the inside out, leaking poison into my stomach – I'll be *puking American dreams*²². Spreading pain via my blood – blood which looks blue through the skin, but we all know as red because we've all been cut. Infiltrating my womb with drugs – my child will be *born addicted to pills. A baby who does not dream but who hallucinates*²³, just like I do. Because all that was once real I gave to you. *I took all my feelings, my wants and needs, my dreams...and I buried them inside you*²⁴. I thought they would be safe with you, but the love I thought would shield them did not. Your earthiness and all your insects, the parasites that live inside of you, consumed

¹⁴ *Fences* 1175

¹⁵ *A Streetcar Named Desire* 158

¹⁶ Lana Del Rey – 'Radio'

¹⁷ Lana Del Rey – 'National Anthem'

¹⁸ Lana Del Rey – 'This Is What Makes Us Girls'

¹⁹ Marina and the Diamonds – 'Hollywood'

²⁰ *for colored girls* 61

²¹ *for colored girls* 53

²² Marina and the Diamonds – 'Hollywood'

²³ *Angels in America* 1217

²⁴ *Fences* 1174

them. YOU FED OFF ME. I've said my heart is shattered. There'll be bite sized chunks here for you if you want them. Again, you have me opening up my heart to you. Imagine that. I imagine this all differently. But *imagination can't create anything new, can it? It only recycles bits and pieces from the world and reassembles them into visions.*²⁵ So when we think we've escaped the unbearable ordinariness and, well, untruthfulness of our lives, it's really only the same old ordinariness and falseness rearranged into the appearance of novelty and truth. Nothing unknown is knowable. Don't you think it's depressing?²⁶

Listen to me speak. Hear my monstrosity. Hear me. CAN I NOT HATE ANYMORE?

i usedta live in the world

really be in the world

free & sweet talkin

good morning & thank-you & nice day

uh huh

i cant now

i cant be nice to nobody

*nice is such a rip-off.*²⁷

Another fragment of the flag distorts.

III. LESSONS OF LOVE

LOVERS and DREAMERS sit in a line holding hands, facing the flag. For each couple, who can be any combination of people, an image of the American dream-house, car, family, money - appears. After they speak, they pull each other into a painful embrace.

DREAMER: *I have worked very hard to become good and you want to destroy that. You want to destroy me, but I am not going to let you do that*²⁸.

LOVER: *What about me? When's my time to enjoy life?*²⁹

DREAMER: *Life sucks shit. Life...just sucks shit.*³⁰

LOVER: *He works for a company thirty-six years this March, opens up un-heard-of territories to their trademark, and now in his old age they take his salary away.*³¹

DREAMER: *I am not an assimilationist!*³²

LOVER: *What's all dis dressin' up and graduatin' an' sayin' you gwine to study to be a lawyer?*³³

²⁵ *Angels in America* 1215

²⁶ *Angels in America* 1215

²⁷ *for colored girls* 38-9

²⁸ *Angels in America* 1217

²⁹ *Fences* 1174

³⁰ *Angels in America* 1214

³¹ *Death of a Salesman* 163

³² *A Raisin in the Sun* 68

DREAMER: *When the hell did I lose my temper? I simply asked him if he was making any money.*³⁴

LOVER: *He's just trying to be like you with the sports.*³⁵

DREAMER: *There you are. Man say to his woman: I got me a dream. His woman say: Eat your eggs.*³⁶

LOVER: *I laughed and treated it all as a joke, called him a little boy and laughed.*³⁷

DREAMER: *I've fallen in hate.*³⁸

LOVER: *You must not dislike people 'cause they well off, honey.*³⁹

Two more pieces of the flag falter. It is now clearly ruptured.

IV. DREAMING THE DELUSION

Darkness. Then - a starry galaxy.

DREAMER: Follow your dreams is cancelled today⁴⁰. The star you chose to wish on is gone, away, dead. Dead but its light tricks your hopeful heart – THE SPEED OF LIGHT IS TOO SLOW FOR DREAMERS. It keeps twinkling to you, but this beauty is an illusion made of invisible imperfection. His star is burning bright, but yours, mine is dead.

The galaxy disappears. There is a wash of brilliant white light which gradually concentrates itself on the flag.

I'm not a dreamer. I'm not hard working, driven and passionate for this; the one dream I'm supposed to have. I can't be black, white, brown, red, orange, yellow, green through to violet; or man, woman and something in between; or love men, women, neither and both. It can't not matter who I am that dreams. Simplicity is offensive: *Do this and that happens. Only it don't.*⁴¹ I matter, as an individual, as a specific case. You don't even know my name. *People, people, we are the same. No, we're not the same.*⁴² Something is being played here and the rules aren't as easy as: *in America there are no barriers to success - no matter what color you are, no matter where you're from, no matter how much money you have.*⁴³ QUIET. Damn,

³³ *All God's Chillun Got Wings* 203

³⁴ *Death of a Salesman* 133

³⁵ *Fences* 1166

³⁶ *A Raisin in the Sun* 57

³⁷ *A Streetcar named Desire* 141

³⁸ *The Hairy Ape* 159

³⁹ *A Raisin in the Sun* 64

⁴⁰ Banksy – 'Follow Your Dreams Cancelled'

⁴¹ *All God's Chillun Got Wings* 224

⁴² Public Enemy – 'Fight the Power'

⁴³ Obama Qtd. 'Obama's November 7, 2007, speech on the American Dream'

was it somethin I said? Pretend you don't see so you turn your head. Race scared of its shadow, does it matter?⁴⁴ How can it not? Dreaming injured this country and the people of this country. Dreams that were founded on religion, slavery and those who *had thought to pick off the wealth of the new country and then return rich to England. They were a band of individualists.*⁴⁵ And what about this dream now of *2.3 children, white picket fences surrounding a split-level house with a dog and cat, and a station wagon or a minivan to take the kids to sports practice?*⁴⁶ Some people get that, but the dream is married to capitalism – both have a mutual desire for MORE; that new thing that will make life even better. The dream is a rainbow that, beautiful, moves back with every step that is taken towards it. For most, there isn't enough sun to catch the grey clouds' raindrops and spin them into spectrums of opportunity. If I dream, I open myself up to disappointment in life, myself and everything. I believe in *the fallacy that 100% of the population can have higher living standards than 90% of themselves.*⁴⁷ And I depreciate myself: *I'm not married, I'm not in business, I just – I'm like a boy*⁴⁸. I might as well still be in school chanting the national anthem because life is still ahead of me and I'm still chasing after it, my chest tighter and tighter with every stride, *all the pain amplified by the fact I can't get by with my 9 to 5.*⁴⁹ And I won't notice I'm a fool and that everyone around me is saying it. I won't wake myself up – Who are you? Come on, tell me who you are? You're just another American who is *wilfully ignorant of the big red, white and blue dick that's being jammed up their asshole every day*⁵⁰, screaming with thrilling agony, 'I WANT YOU TO FUCK ME, HURT ME, MAKE ME BLEED'⁵¹ *Red Hardiness Valour White Purity Innocence Blue Vigilance Perseverance Justice.*⁵² 'KEEP GOING. INFECT ME. I DON'T CARE. I DON'T CARE'⁵³ The American flag with its fifty starry states and thirteen stripes of colonies will exploit my body from the outside in inside out and keep me as a jar for its dream dust. And I'll be one of millions of individualists all fucked over by a glistening system that we can't help but harbour desire for. Maybe I'll get lucky and be screwed right into the dream; become one of the cogs that wind up America's mechanical heart. I'll joke about my *0% interest in people*⁵⁴ and wear a tailored suit: 'shit, wow, I'm like my skin is it startin' to work to my benefit now?'⁵⁵ - I'm looking feeling fucking great. But I still can't shake the addiction, the desire for something more, even if more means less; *I always wished for this, but it's almost turning into more of a nightmare than a dream.*⁵⁶

⁴⁴ Public enemy – 'He got game'

⁴⁵ *The Crucible* 227

⁴⁶ Shawn E

⁴⁷ Jules1967

⁴⁸ *Death of a Salesman* 139

⁴⁹ Eminem – 'Lose Yourself'

⁵⁰ George Carlin Qtd. Wutdaflek

⁵¹ *Angels in America* 1222

⁵² 'History of American Flag'

⁵³ *Angels in America* 1222

⁵⁴ Banksy – '0% Interest In People'

⁵⁵ Eminem - 'White America'

⁵⁶ Eminem Qtd. 'Interview with Eminem: It's Lonely at the Top'

*Lights dim further as the **DREAMER** lays himself down on the floor directly in front of the flag. An alarm clock rings loudly. He speaks as if he is both doing the waking up and being awoken.*

Wake up. Wake up.
 Nightmare dream
 Ephemerality defines those things.
 Wake up
 Dead man, there's a surprise for you
 DEAD MAN
 WAKE UP
 Hey
 Hey
*Somebody wins the Cadillac this month*⁵⁷
 I'm awake
*P.S. Two guys get fucked*⁵⁸
 What?
 Two guys.
 What the fuck?
 Yeah.
 Well who's getting fucked?
 Now-
 Come on, tell me, who's getting fucked?

*For all the dreams we've dreamed
 And all the songs we've sung
 And all the hopes we've held
 And all the flags we've hung,
 The millions who have nothing for our pay –
 Except the dream that's almost dead today.*⁵⁹

I don't want to dream anymore. I don't want to close my eyes ever again even to blink just in case I fall back asleep. *I swear...it's not a world of men...it's not a world of men.*⁶⁰ And there are no angels in America.⁶¹

He draws the scissors out of his pocket and a spotlight falls on him as the rest of the stage disappears.

⁵⁷ *Glengarry Glen Ross* 15

⁵⁸ *Glengarry Glen Ross* 15

⁵⁹ Hughes

⁶⁰ *Glengarry Glen Ross* 63

⁶¹ *Angels in America* 1230

I relinquish my dreams my life my body here. I dash my life away through my skin. See the red seep through white sleeves as my blue blood drains the dreamer's life away. *A hell exists on earth? Yes. I won't live in it.*⁶² And so I end here, a torn American flag that will be strung up in the papers as an example of failure. I don't want to dream anymore. I don't want to live die feel anymore. *I want to be a machine. Arms for grabbing Legs to walk on, no pain no thoughts.*⁶³

VOICE: The American dream is *THAT DREAM OF A LAND IN WHICH LIFE SHOULD BE BETTER AND RICHER AND FULLER FOR EVERYONE*⁶⁴.

DREAMER: *FUCK YOU - with the freest of speech this Divided States of Embarrassment will allow me to have, fuck you.*⁶⁵

The flag falls, in pieces, down on top of him. He struggles and then, shaking, wraps himself up in it as his blood seeps through it.

*I'm just playin' America, you know I love you.*⁶⁶

V. LONELY PEDESTAL

*The stage is dark but for the stars. It is possible to see a large shadow of the Statue of Liberty. As the light grows a little brighter, we see the **LOVER** as a tiny figure on top of a great pedestal. The torch is a smashed lantern, the crown a cheap tiara and she wears a torn 'I heart NY' t-shirt. **DREAMERS** are piled at the base of the pedestal. Amongst them are several stacks of fake American dollars, each of which are held between the hands of several desperate individuals.*

LOVER: This is Lady Liberty speaking. From the lonely pedestal that many say is more impressive than me. I understood that my body would stand somewhere else, but not everyone can afford freedom and liberty doesn't choose which world she enlightens. So I stand and *sing the national anthem while I'm standing over your body*⁶⁷:

*'O say does that star-spangled banner yet wave,
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?'*⁶⁸

But no sound comes out as I am not what I seem. This *crown for an empress*⁶⁹ is but a *rhinestone tiara*.⁷⁰ I have a secret steel frame that protects no internal organs. **NO HEART IS MINE. NO COUNTRY IS MINE.** But they still look up to me *American queen is the*

⁶² *Glengarry Glen Ross* 24

⁶³ *Hamletmachine* 821

⁶⁴ James Truslow Adams Qtd. 'Redefining the Dream'

⁶⁵ Eminem – 'White America'

⁶⁶ Eminem – 'White America'

⁶⁷ Lana Del Rey – 'National Anthem'

⁶⁸ Key

⁶⁹ *A Streetcar Named Desire* 134

⁷⁰ *A Streetcar Named Desire* 134

*American dream.*⁷¹ Their green tinted hands reach for me. *Money is life. Once upon a time freedom used to be life – now it's money. I guess the world really do change.*⁷² They die at my base, their once hopeful fists that hammered on name-labelled doors gently twitching away. Their dreams the dreamers died and I, I, *I took the blows in my face and my body! All of those deaths*⁷³. But I feel nothing. *Forgive me, dear. I can't cry.*⁷⁴ I think I wish it could be over. Let me die out. Exorcise this place of the perpetual heartbreak my image has inspired. Is that my own impossible American dream? You can always kill yourselves, but I'm here until the waves wash me under. Liberty, not alive enough to die, will stand alone here forever.

sing her song of life
 she's been dead so long
 closed in silence so long
 she doesn't know the sound
 of her own voice
 her infinite beauty.⁷⁵

Stillness. Lights up. No one moves yet.

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⁷¹ Marina and the Diamonds – 'Hollywood'

⁷² *A Raisin in the Sun* 73

⁷³ *A Streetcar Named Desire* 126

⁷⁴ *Death of a Salesman* 222

⁷⁵ *for colored girls* 4

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