

GIFT OF FORGOTTEN TONGUES

a work in progress
August 2013

Fengar Gael
135 West 70th Street (2 C)
New York, NY 10023
646-707-0903
E-mail: Fengar@aol.com

Author's Agent:
Bruce Ostler
Bret Adams, Ltd.
448 West 44th Street
New York, NY 10036
Phone: (212) 765-5630
bostler@bretadamsltd.com

*“Language school.
Here languages learn how
To get used to foreign lips, to a dark palate,
To a laughing mouth and a crying mouth.
Languages learn and will never end,
Like yearnings.”*

Yehuda Amichai

*“One language dies every fourteen days.
By the next century nearly half of the languages spoken on Earth
will likely disappear as communities abandon native tongues
in favor of English, Mandarin or Spanish.”*

Russ Rymer

“The limits of my language are the limits of my world.”

Ludwig Wittgenstein

CHARACTERS

FELIX MILLMORE, a college professor; early forties

FERNELLE MILLMORE, his linguist savant daughter; sixteen

DOCTOR LOUISE WEAVER, a research geneticist; mid-thirties

CELIA LABERINTO, a mutagenically evolved female; eighteen

CLAUDE MAZEUR, a mutagenically evolved male; twenty

TIME

the past and present of the possible future

PLACE

Cambridge, Massachusetts. A stylized set serves as the Pathway Detoxification Clinic and Felix Millmore's distorted memory of five locations: his home, an office, a laboratory, hospital, and underground research station.

PROLOGUE

(The tinkling of a music box fades as lights reveal the Pathway Detoxification Clinic where FELIX MILLMORE, a disheveled man in his forties, sits in his robe, addressing an audience of alcoholics in a group therapy session.)

FELIX

Greetings fellow teetotalers! My name is Felix, and it's my turn to fess up, to admit I'm lost and will stay lost till I stop boozing. But how else could I have made the world's boundaries dissolve? Liquefy! How else could I have found Fernelle riding rafts of tongues down the great glottic Rivers of Babel? Fernelle with her glossaries and grammars, Fernelle to the future perfect; Felix in the present tense, very tense, and sinking quickly to the past imperfect. My doctors say, "Be brave, Felix! Relive the storm!" So I'm groping through the fevered flux, through the tongue twisting tempests to the beginning of the end when Fernelle was hired to translate the untranslatable!

SCENE 1

(FELIX remains in the clinic while FERNELLE, a faddishly dressed girl of sixteen, is seen in an office, delivering a box of C Ds and flash drives to DOCTOR LOUISE WEAVER, an attractive woman in her mid-thirties.)

FERNELLE

Audio files one through three are mostly Russian, Yiddish, and Italian, except half the verbs are sub-branch Scandinavian and Icelandic. I put them through the computer and they translate into Dante's Divine Comedy. Files four and five are fifty percent Polish and thirty percent Slovak with some Swedish verbs and -- get this -- forty-seven Old Cornish nouns. They translate into Great Expectations.

DOCTOR WEAVER

Incredible.

FERNELLE

My computer's got sound spectrographs that isolate words on every frequency. I converted the files and arranged them forwards, backwards, in hundreds of random alphabets, sequences, and if it's a code, I can't crack it. So far it all boils down to your basic Indo-European smorgasbord. So what's this all about?

DOCTOR WEAVER

No questions, please, Fernelle.

ERNELLE

But who are the glots?

DOCTOR WEAVER

Glots?

ERNELLE

Polyglots. Multilinguals. When can I meet them?

DOCTOR WEAVER

Never. And please don't ask me again or I'll find another translator.

ERNELLE

Not like me you won't. There's only nine linguist savants in the whole world. Only three are women and only two outclass me and they're Japs.

DOCTOR WEAVER

Good for you.

ERNELLE

I knew all eight hundred and fifty words of Basic English by the time I was two. Basic Spanish, French, German, and Greek by four.

DOCTOR WEAVER

Really?

ERNELLE

Most kids have to hear a word seventy times before it sticks. I only have to hear it twice.

DOCTOR WEAVER.

I'm impressed.

ERNELLE

Look, I figure one female, one male, of multi-national origins, but into obscure vernacular -- and the accents! Christ, you can smell the salami! So what kind of doctor are you?

DOCTOR WEAVER

A very busy one.

ERNELLE

You're medical, right? Your stationery's from the Meshkin Institute. Felix says...

FERNELLE
...it's hypnosis.

FELIX
It's hypnosis;...

FERNELLE
...some kind of subliminal learning experiment.

DOCTOR WEAVER
From now on please keep everything confidential. I don't want you discussing this with anyone, understand?

FERNELLE
Felix is my dad. Look, it doesn't matter what I tell him 'cause he's dipso and forgets. He's smart though; he says if it's not hypnosis, then...

FERNELLE
...it's genetics.

FELIX
It's genetics;...

FELIX
...they're tweaking the neural language genes. You scale the walls between words, Fernie, but these glots are passing straight through!

FERNELLE
I've got a good ear, but...

FERNELLE
...these glots are artists.

FELIX
These glots are artists,...

FELIX
...hyperglots and beyond. They'll make linguists like you obsolete.

FERNELLE
Soon every asshole will learn Sanskrit while they sleep.

FELIX
So why are they paying you to translate?

FELIX
Why?

FERNELLE
Why...

FERNELLE
...don't they translate themselves or use Google and those instantaneous translation programs? It's because I've got something they still don't have, right?

DOCTOR WEAVER

Give me back my files. I'm afraid I'll have to find someone less inquisitive.

FERNELLE

No, no! Please, look, I'll do anything, anything! It's my motor mouth -- a bad case of logorrhea, right? Fuck! We could use the cash. It's Fee, I mean Felix. He's tenured, but compulsive. His money gets poured into hopeless causes, and he'd forget where to piss if I didn't steer him to the pot. Look, I don't want you to get a bad impression, but you've got to let me in on this. I mean, if it's hypnosis, I'll go under. I won't tell a living soul. The truth is, there's some dialects in the Sino-Tibetan and native Indian families I can't lock into, but with me around, you'll get translations on the spot, simultaneous like the U. N., not Turco-Tartar or if they pull any Old Egyptian on me,...

DOCTOR WEAVER

All right.

FERNELLE

...and my Mongol dialects need work.

DOCTOR WEAVER

I said all right.

FERNELLE

Really?!

DOCTOR WEAVER

Really.

FERNELLE

Fan-fucking-tastic!!

SCENE 2

(A music box lullaby is heard as FELIX continues addressing his therapy group.)

FELIX

She chose the crudest, lewdest lexicon: slang. Her psychiatrist said her gifts overwhelm her, and it's her way of expressing despair. I tried to explain how language is despair -- the best words imply abandonment. Take a mature, intense Monte Bello Cabernet. I speak because it's woefully absent, no longer flowing past my palate into my bloodstream, making me wise. Instead I offer up the words, and believe me, they're a damn poor substitute. Anyway, Fernie feels that all the more because she's dealing with more

FELIX (cont'd)

substitutes. I ought to know. I spent my life stoking that little brain furnace, spoon feeding the alphabet from the age of six months till she could name everything she ate, plain and scrambled: tapioca, ocatapi, piocata, tiopaca, ha, ha! And then there were those music boxes and Uncle Roy's old Swedish records with the needle getting stuck so her first sentence was "hämta mina galoscher": fetch my galoshes!

(FERNELLE is glancing at her computer in Doctor Weaver's office.)

FERNELLE

They've covered all nineteen original linguistic families, including the two oldest living languages: the Hadza of Tanzania and Khosian of Southern Africa. They've translated The Epic of Gilgamesh in Burmese and Navaho; Hamlet in Hindi; and Faust in Farsi. Everything's collated. Looks like the glots are making a real crap shoot of history. These last files are Moby Dick in Min from China and Telugu -- that's Indian. You can taste the curry.

DOCTOR WEAVER

You'll be pleased to know I've arranged a meeting.

FERNELLE

No shit?! When?!

DOCTOR WEAVER

First you'll have to sign this contract promising to keep everything you see and hear absolutely confidential.

FERNELLE

So I can't tell Felix?

DOCTOR WEAVER

No, not anyone, not ever.

FERNELLE

No problem.

DOCTOR WEAVER

I realize it's unrealistic to require secrecy from someone so young, but I'm offering you a research assistant's salary. And I'm afraid you'll have to postpone the rest of your sophomore year. I need you tomorrow, full time. In fact, I'd like you to move to a room above my laboratory.

ERNELLE

No way, José! I mean, I don't mind leaving Harvard. The dorks there hate my guts, but Fee will freak if I'm not around to fix meals and keep the place half human. You don't understand how dependent he is.

DOCTOR WEAVER

He's a poor security risk.

ERNELLE

Why? Nobody believes an alkie, and what an oinker! When he's plowed, he prowls. He's had six girlfriends since mom croaked, and two trips to the basket weaving farm. Trust me, I'll keep quiet, but he's all the family I've got. Fee's the one who collected the music boxes. You know about my music boxes? I was on T V, and Science Digest ran a cover story on linguists.

DOCTOR WEAVER

Sorry, I missed it.

ERNELLE

Fee thinks his music boxes made me what I am. He says they affected my neural plasticity and gave me the...

ERNELLE

...gift of a thousand tongues.

FELIX

Gift of a thousand tongues,...

FELIX

...you're blessed, Fernie. You can catch and hold...

ERNELLE

(overlapping Felix) I can catch and hold...

ERNELLE

...any utterance.

FELIX

Any utterance.

FELIX

You have the pluperfect pitch of an echo, echo, echooooo....

ERNELLE

(overlapping) I have the pluperfect pitch of an echo.

FELIX

Ladies and gentlemen! The Amazing Polly Polyphony! Endowed with the greatest receptors and repositories of human speech ever created: two wedged trumpets turned by wheels of wax into ears. Note the devilish points, the conch spiralling down to a keyhole. Peek in and see Acousticus dancing through her labyrinths! Kissing her cochleas! Pinching her pinnas!

FERNELLE

(pulling at her ears) Look at my pinnas;...

FERNELLE

...two perfect quarter moons.

FELIX

Two perfect quarter moons!

DOCTOR WEAVER

Remarkable. But why -- when the whole world of language is accessible to you -- do you choose a kind of vulgar vernacular?

FERNELLE

Because I'm obscene, zotig, grosero, and Fee says I'm perched on my own twisted limb on the tree of speech.

DOCTOR WEAVER

But don't you aspire to climb somewhat higher? To the limb of poetry or song?

FERNELLE

I'm not a fucking sideshow, but even from down here, I'll have my doctorate in linguistics by eighteen. I plan to design apps for texting obscure dialects, but I also want to track endangered languages like Siberian Tofa which only has thirty speakers, and Euchee, Wintu, and Amurdak have less than ten, and when they croak, who's going to remember they were ever spoken much less track their nuances?

DOCTOR WEAVER

Yes, well, in the meantime, see if you can track the nuances in your contract, then report to me at this address tomorrow morning.

FERNELLE

Will the glots be there?

DOCTOR WEAVER

Yes.

FERNELLE

Do they know I'm coming?

DOCTOR WEAVER

Oh, yes.

FERNELLE

What did you tell them? I haven't been at my best lately.

DOCTOR WEAVER

I told them the same thing I'm telling you: brace yourself.

(DOCTOR WEAVER departs.)

FERNELLE

Fuckwit.

SCENE 3

(FELIX is seated, a beer in his hand. FERNELLE approaches as he speaks to his therapy group.)

FELIX

Curiosity's a human impulse, so while imbibing my breakfast beer, I inquired: About the glots, Fernie: who are they?

(In Doctor Weaver's laboratory stand the two mutagenically evolved humans: CLAUDE MAZEUR and CELIA LABERINTO. They are bald, glistening, their bodies forming a sculpture with their limbs intertwined. THEY utter fragments of words in extended harmonies.)

CLAUDE and CELIA

Riiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiii...

FELIX

The glots, Fernie, what are they like?

FERNELLE

I'm not supposed to say. *(pause)* Creepy, real fucking creepy.

FELIX

Be specific.

FERNELLE

You won't believe it.

FELIX

Try me.

FERNELLE

Well, they're like skin heads but stretchy and sweaty, so they look kind of slimy, like eels.

FELIX

Homo amphibios!

FERNELLE

Just picture two mannequins assembled by some psycho in a pretzel factory.

FELIX

Homo geminius!

(DOCTOR WEAVER observes CLAUDE and CELIA who move gracefully, while remaining intertwined.)

CLAUDE and CELIA

Aaaahhhhhh...

FERNELLE

The weird thing is they hum. At first I thought they might be speaking Piraha, an Amazonian dialect with subtle tones so they scrap vowels and hum whole conversations, but it's too random. Weaver sits gawking for hours, or she paces, stalking them like a horny drill sergeant. Lately, they're active, but last week they only moved one fucking inch. She says they're in a trance, like those monks in Tibet. She's making...

DOCTOR WEAVER

I'm making...

FERNELLE

...a chart.

DOCTOR WEAVER

...a chart...

DOCTOR WEAVER

...of their usual postures and motions as well as those they rarely use. For example, they rarely face south or raise their left hands above their shoulders. The male is Claude Mazeur: French, caucasian; age twenty.

FERNELLE

We were right, Fee, about them being guinea pigs. When Weaver told me, I stood there speechless -- if you can believe it.

DOCTOR WEAVER

(displaying a chart) Look, C-one is Claude's center; C A and C B are his radii. This arrow points to his movement along the circumference. There! He's just stopped on tangent P. The female is Celia Laberinto: Mexican; age eighteen.

THE MUTAGENS

Muuuuuuuuuuuu...

FERNELLE

Weaver said their immune systems were completely destroyed by the deadliest strain of the...

FERNELLE

...Nuphrasia nine virus.

DOCTOR WEAVER

Nuphrasia nine virus...

DOCTOR WEAVER

...is a death sentence. It means their kidneys weren't filtering blood; their lungs were collapsing; their brains shrinking, degenerating -- even their taste buds had atrophied, so naturally they volunteered. Nearly eight hundred people volunteered.

FELIX

A lottery of the desperate. What's Weaver like?

FERNELLE

An uptight Yuppie wonk with all the charisma of live-culture yogurt. I can tell she has wet dreams of a Nobel Prize, but she's not the prodigy type -- more of a draft horse.

DOCTOR WEAVER

I chose these two randomly from sixty whose central nervous systems had been significantly affected.

FERNELLE

Her first name's Louise. She started as part of team of genius geneticists, until they got grants to split and work their cures in separate corners.

CLAUDE and CELIA

Veeeeeeeeee...

FERNELLE

Her project was a drug extracted from...

FERNELLE

...Rhizophora Avicenna.

DOCTOR WEAVER

Rhizophora Avicenna,...

DOCTOR WEAVER

...also known as the mangrove. I used it in conjunction with somatic gene therapy and electro-convulsive therapy. I studied and prepared them for three weeks before their initial treatments. When I was ready, I told them I was recording the entire project.

FERNELLE

Weaver's a posterity freak, so she's got closed circuit cams everywhere -- they can't even piss in private. Everything stored on hard drives, but she keeps some stuff on flash sticks and disks she plays on her computers.

FELIX

Borrow the disks, Fernie! I want to see them.

FERNELLE

No way; you already know too much.

FELIX

I'm very suspicious of all this secrecy business. As your father, I have a responsibility to see that you're not involved in something unethical.

FERNELLE

If you're so responsible, then where the fuck were you last night?

FELIX

At a reception for new faculty.

FERNELLE

Did you pass out again?

FELIX

No, I scored. There's a new blond Hispanist in the department. She's translating Lope de Vega's pastoral romances.

FERNELLE

Christ, I can't believe they haven't canned you.

FELIX

They love me; they talk about me non-stop.

FERNELLE

It wouldn't be so bad if you'd just tell me where you're staying.

FELIX

I'm sorry, sweetheart; I'm an inconsiderate bastard. Forgive me...?

FERNELLE

(she sighs) Okay. Now, why don't we trade that beer for some coffee.

FELIX

Fine. Now can you get me some of those disks?

FERNELLE

Maybe. They're stashed in her desk.

FELIX

Good girl! Feel my pulse! The suspense is sending my blood pressure through the roof!

SCENE 4

(The Meshkin Institute Hospital: CLAUDE and CELIA as their former selves have hair and are lying in adjacent beds. DOCTOR WEAVER aims her camera as the lighting dims. Meanwhile, FERNELLE and FELIX remain at home, seated and staring straight ahead as if watching a large screen. FERNELLE inserts the disk, and thumb taps the remote control.)

FELIX

So Fernelle lifted the disks. It seems Doctor Weaver had invited her patients to extemporize. She said,...

FELIX

...you may be speaking your last words.

DOCTOR WEAVER

You may be speaking your last words.

FERNELLE

That's the way they were: real turd brains, formerly from slumsville -- pathetic.

(CELIA address the camera, speaking with a slight Mexican accent.)

CELIA

Hello, chica.

ERNELLE

That's Celia, a cook in a diner in Boston. Two years ago she goes back home to Juarez, gets hepatitis, and they treat her with contaminated blood, so finally her symptoms surface and she figures she's dead meat.

CELIA

Hey, doc, can this be my last will and testament?

ERNELLE

She's got a kid. It's mostly in her...

ERNELLE

...glands.

CELIA

Glands!

CELIA

Look! Big as golf balls. I pray for you, Isabel, that you are safe from this. I wish I could see you for real, baby, but your father thinks I am contagious, son of a bitch. Do not let him touch a nickel of my savings. Everything goes to you, and my stuffed iguanas to Carlos for being the only one to visit.

(Now CLAUDE addresses the camera.)

CLAUDE

J'ai merde. (*I fucked up*)

ERNELLE

Then there's Claude.

CLAUDE

C'est nul ici. (*This place sucks.*)

ERNELLE

It's amazing somebody didn't shoot him, put him out of his misery. He was the lead singer in a gay band, The Eight Balls. He was also very careless about his intravenous drugs and who he humped.

FELIX

Whom.

ERNELLE

First the tumors attacked his liver, then his lungs, then his bladder. The day before Weaver zapped him, he woke up blind.

CLAUDE

If you cannot see and pee, they must kill you. Je t'en supplie, (*I'm begging you*) if your cure do not work, you kill me, lady, kill me! Merde! (*Shit!*)

(As FERNELLE taps the remote control, CELIA and CLAUDE freeze.)

FERNELLE

Well, there they are: Tweedles Dum and Dee.

FELIX

Why them? Why did Weaver choose them?

FERNELLE

For their medical histories. They had nada in common except they went to the same school to learn English. Weaver said they were uneducated, uncultured, and had no interests other than T V, computer games, and their next meal -- not that they could taste it. They were so sick she figured their lives weren't worth living much less saving. Then everything changed.

(CLAUDE and CELIA sleep as FERNELLE taps the remote.)

FERNELLE

That's Weaver the Wonder, the one with a broomstick up her anus.

FELIX

Is she married?

FERNELLE

Just to her work. She thinks she's fucking Watson and Crick rolled into one big cheese...

FERNELLE
...Louise.

DOCTOR WEAVER
Louise...

DOCTOR WEAVER

...Weaver. October seventh: 8:20 p.m. Subjects asleep following transfusions of stem cells in conjunction with Rhizophene Trixanthion, and a current of five amperes.

FERNELLE

She had induced an extended dream state. 'Course they looked like a fucking nightmare.

(CLAUDE has a spasm; CELIA follows.)

DOCTOR WEAVER

11:47 a.m.: Commencing magnetic field scan on subject: Mazeur. Graph indicating epileptic spikes. Subject Laberinto same with additional rupturing of thalamus. Note incipient alpha and theta wave frequencies, but irregular. Both subjects: blood pressure decreasing, temperature falling, vascular instability, tissue mascerating. Question: Should I attempt hemodialysis? Too late. Question: Should I begin massive dextran infusions? No, too late, too...late.

FERNELLE

She told me she wanted to split, but decided to stay and watch them turn into popsicles.

DOCTOR WEAVER

Death imminent. After the autopsies, I want the brains extracted intact.

(A pulsating strobe light focuses on CLAUDE and CELIA evolving as FERNELLE speaks.)

FERNELLE

I'm fast forwarding through the two days that Weaver said they were comatose, but in a dream state, above the usual torpor. You know the condition, Fee.

FELIX

Ha! I'm in it now!

(By the time the strobe ceases, CLAUDE and CELIA are completely bald.)

DOCTOR WEAVER

October tenth: 1:10 a.m. Both subjects show hypopigmentation and extensive alopecia. Field scanner indicating neurological activity in brain furrows usually dormant; decrease in oxygen consumption, carbon dioxide elimination; new extensions of telomeres...

(CELIA sits bolt upright, her eyes wide open!)

CELIA

Las luces!

DOCTOR WEAVER and FELIX

(gasp!)

DOCTOR WEAVER

Subject awake! Subject Laberinto awake. 1:12 a.m.

CELIA

Las luces...

DOCTOR WEAVER

Subject speaking Spanish: "las luces."

FELIX

She said "the lights."

DOCTOR WEAVER

I don't understand, no hablo Espanol.

CELIA

Siempre. Te amare para siempre.

FELIX

She's saying, "Forever, I'll love you...."

FELIX

...forever."

FERNELLE

Forever.

DOCTOR WEAVER

Subject instructed to...to rest.

(CELIA falls asleep.)

DOCTOR WEAVER

Pupillary dilation; epidermis cool; subject asleep. Situation is...

FELIX

...a miracle!

DOCTOR WEAVER

...unprecedented. Subjects indicating peripheral vasodilation; neuron scan indicating neurons...multiplying.

FERNELLE

Here's where she sees it, on the genetic decoder: Celia's...

FERNELLE

...DNA...

DOCTOR WEAVER

DNA...

DOCTOR WEAVER

...molecules reorganizing themselves,...

DOCTOR WEAVER

...spiralling, coiling,...

FERNELLE

Spiralling, coiling...

FELIX

Like mattress springs!

DOCTOR WEAVER

...mutating.

FELIX

Spronged!

(On “spronged” CELIA and CLAUDE sit bolt upright simultaneously as DOCTOR WEAVER jumps back. THEY speak in neutral unaccented tones, in the throes of sensual rapture.)

DOCTOR WEAVER

Subjects have regained consciousness. *(to Celia and Claude)* How...how do you feel?

CELIA

Lavender...

CLAUDE

(to Weaver) You are full of abiding beauty.

DOCTOR WEAVER

Well, that’s very...kind. Let me take your blood pressure.

CELIA

I am proceeding through yellow.

DOCTOR WEAVER

Subjects delirious.

FELIX

Fascinating.

(CLAUDE and CELIA make swimming gestures, fluttering their fingertips over each other’s bodies.)

DOCTOR WEAVER

Subjects core temperature rising; heartbeats weak, highly vulnerable to ventricular fibrillation. Are you...cold?

CLAUDE

When I was a sea horse.

DOCTOR WEAVER

When you were what?

DOCTOR WEAVER

A sea horse...?

FELIX

A sea horse!

DOCTOR WEAVER

I'm going to rewarm you externally then inject reserpine to decrease sludging and improve microcirculation. Celia, why...why are you touching each other?

CELIA

Sunspots. Cold spots. Grays seeking.

DOCTOR WEAVER

What grays? *(pause)* Are the grays the tumors? Can you sense the tumors?

CLAUDE

Radiant inner violet.

DOCTOR WEAVER

Violet? Where? Where does the violet come from?

CELIA and CLAUDE

You.

DOCTOR WEAVER

Me? How does the violet come from me?

CELIA and CLAUDE

Quivering.

FELIX

Quivering?

(FERNELLE snaps off the T V, blacking out DOCTOR WEAVER, CLAUDE, and CELIA.)

ERNELLE

And that, my dear Fee, was their last word of your basic conversational English. Then they went into six weeks of the international pasticcio I've been translating. By the third week, all the researchers at Meshkin wanted in on the action and grants for messing with genes. But Weaver works alone, so she went to their families who were so totally grossed they gave her custody.

FELIX

Custody...?

ERNELLE

They're hers! She's their legal guardian; the Mutes belong to Weaver!

FELIX

You call them "the Mutes"?

ERNELLE

Yeah, 'cause Weaver says they're mutagenically evolved. She's moved them to the private lab in her house. I'm the only one who knows, but the bad news is she made our introduction too fucking late -- the dipshit!

SCENE 5

(FELIX continues speaking as ERNELLE enters Doctor Weaver's private laboratory where CLAUDE and CELIA are posed, interlocking their limbs.)

FELIX

We had viewed their Genesis: Phase I, but Fernie made her entrance too late. They had already entered Phase II:...

FELIX

...they stopped speaking!

DOCTOR WEAVER

They stopped speaking,...

DOCTOR WEAVER

...not a word since last week. Only N V C: non verbal communication, and sometimes that strange humming. It may seem futile, but I'm drawing diagrams of their movements and measuring their sounds. (*pointing to three locations*) I've installed cameras to track everything, and over there are more files that still need translating. We can leave now -- unless you'd like to stay a little longer.

ERNELLE

No thanks, I don't get off on freak shows.

DOCTOR WEAVER

They're not deaf, you know, but they are freaks in a way: They maintain a lower internal temperature; they've lost their hairy covering; their brains and craniums are larger; their larynges distended. They're also hypersensitive in tactility, hearing, vision, smell and taste. They even play with their jello, using it as a prism and refractor of light.

FERNELLE

Whatever gets you off.

DOCTOR WEAVER

My intention had been to strengthen their immune systems, make their T cells resistant to the Nuphrasia virus. Instead I may have made them immune to whatever prevents the human species from evolving spontaneously. Evolution usually takes centuries, but ontogenetically speaking, they've progressed dozens of generations in a few weeks.

FERNELLE

So how come they know all these languages?

DOCTOR WEAVER

They've tripled five segments of the FOX P2 gene which controls language. It may have given them para-sensory access to mnemonic tracks where language sounds are trapped. They might even have access to our minds and memories, and could teach us about our own potential -- through you. You're our vital link.

FERNELLE

Thanks, but I'd rather split and be the missing link. Oh, shit! They moved! Look, I wanted to do this when I thought they were glots, but Christ, you can't even tell the man from the woman! Oh, right, he's the one with the balls.

DOCTOR WEAVER

You'll get used to them, and remember: when they emerge from their trance periods, they still have to eat and bathe -- just like us.

FERNELLE

Do they link up in the tub or do you hose them down?

DOCTOR WEAVER

They shower.

FERNELLE

Do you put down a dish -- like for hamsters? Oh, Jesus! They're moving again! I'm getting bad vibes. Sorry, I can't help it -- they make me want to barf buckets.

DOCTOR WEAVER

I can set you up in a private room.

FERNELLE

What if they escape? I'd croak if they touched me.

(DOCTOR WEAVER gestures to a file cabinet.)

DOCTOR WEAVER

Here's where I keep the language flash drives and disks. Everything is chronologically arranged. The last half will be tough, maybe impossible. They were speaking so fast, it sounded like triple-time Chinese.

FERNELLE

Thank Christ they finally shut up.

DOCTOR WEAVER

Do you always say everything you think?

FERNELLE

Come on, admit it: they're slime balls. Did you see their eyes? All glassy like frogs. I'll bet their last tape plays "ribbit, ribbit, ribbit."

DOCTOR WEAVER

It's strange, listening to you, I'm actually feeling protective.

FERNELLE

Just keep them where they are, thanks.

DOCTOR WEAVER

Don't worry. Except when I sleep, they're rarely out of sight.

FERNELLE

You leave them alone at night?

DOCTOR WEAVER

Yes, that's when they slither into the neighborhood and start hybridizing with the native species.

FERNELLE

Is that your idea of a joke?

DOCTOR WEAVER

Actually, they fold on to each other like two deflated dolls. Then they drop into the deepest delta ever recorded. *(handing Fernelle some disks)* Here. Maybe you'll come across some passages on empathy.

FERNELLE

Look, if you're going to fucking lecture, I'm out of here. I'm independent and like things loose. I'm not like other people.

DOCTOR WEAVER

Neither are they. You might have a lot in common.

FERNELLE

(mumbling) Up yours, hypocrite.

DOCTOR WEAVER

What did you say?

FERNELLE

Look, I've changed my mind. This is just too fucking weird.

DOCTOR WEAVER

I should never have trusted you.

FERNELLE

(starting to leave) Good luck finding another linguist!

DOCTOR WEAVER

You don't have to see them ever again.

FERNELLE

That's the idea.

DOCTOR WEAVER

(grasping her arm) Now, listen Fernelle, I hired you in good faith -- despite your age and in experi...

FERNELLE

Hands off, lady! You heard me -- sayonara!

(As FERNELLE stomps off, CELIA and CLAUDE curl up, emitting a sorrowful groan.)

CLAUDE and CELIA

Awwwwaaaaaaaaaaaaahhhh...

SCENE 6

(FELIX continues addressing his therapy group.)

FELIX

I was spellbound, listening to Fernelle describe these evolved creatures -- semi-sober, mind you -- and suddenly I was high, euphoric! Because this was the most exciting thing to happen to the human race since the dry martini, since blank verse, since I last ravished Rosalee! She was my wife -- till she took a sabbatical from life and resigned me to my poetry, my pricksongs, and my teaching -- or was it preaching? Not that it mattered. I was positively brilliant at projecting my image: Old Swillmore Millmore. Every campus needs a widowed souse for its solipsistic self-promoters to ply their pity on: "Poor old sot pot Swillmore. Once showed such promise; wanted everything he wrote, everything he poked, to have purpose, a prospect, a magnificent climax!" Ha, ha!

(FERNELLE enters as FELIX turns to her.)

FELIX

Just think, Fernie: now there's this new coupled consciousness in the universe declaiming five million years of continual intelligence, continual awareness, and you! My own daughter stumbles upon them, and lo! They're wordless, maybe lost, but where? Where? *(to Fernelle)* Get me more files! Of how they are now.

FERNELLE

I can't. Besides, there's nothing to see. They just stand there posing; then they re-pose, and sometimes they hum.

FELIX

That's right, they hum! How?

FERNELLE

It's stupid; it's boring. Nobody talks.

FELIX

Show me!

FERNELLE

I can't. My larynx is too narrow.

FELIX

Come on, Fernie, give it a try.

FERNELLE

But it's always different. The two of them do it; they're a duet.

FELIX

Please, Fernie, for me...?

FERNELLE

(sighing) Oh, Christ. *Ahhhhhhhhhh...*

FELIX

That's it! They're not wordless. There's resonance, reverberation! Do it again! Encore!

FERNELLE

Ahhhhhhhhhh...

FERNELLE

...Ahhhhhhhhhh...

FELIX

Ahhhhhhhhhhhh...

FELIX

Wonderful! Could it be a cryptic alphabet? Are there any others?

FERNELLE

Something like *riiiiiiiii...*

FERNELLE

...riiiiiiiii...

FELIX

Riiiiiiiiiiii...

FERNELLE

And *muuuuuuuuuuu...*

FERNELLE

...muuuuuuuuuuu...

FELIX

Muuuuuuuu....

FELIX

Think of it, Fernie: all living creatures produce sounds. Our molecules move in unique vibrational frequencies, and when we merge with others our vibrations synchronize, they resonate. That's poetry, Fernie, that's music!

FERNELLE

Trust me, they'll never make the top ten.

FELIX

Fernie, honey, listen, listen carefully: you, Fernelle Millmore, have been chosen! Chosen by Fate to introduce our great linguistic future to the world!

FERNELLE

If only they'd regressed. Apes I could handle.

FELIX

Fernie, darling, you've got to change your attitude.

FERNELLE

Beam down, Fee. They're zombies, in a trance -- bongo, bongo!

FELIX

So are we all. How else do we come under the spells of Hitlers, Husseins, Osamas...

FERNELLE

Bourbon, vodka, gin!

FELIX

Touché -- especially the gin.

FERNELLE

Look, even if they're everything you say, even if they could track all the languages ever spoken -- living and dead -- they can't be reached. They're alienatos -- in their own world.

FELIX

Roust them out! Be brave! Adventurous! Explore consciousness, establish a relationship!

FERNELLE

I can't! Aren't you fucking listening?! They're switched off, N V C: non verbal crap.

FELIX

But they're not non-verbal! They're expressing something, a private idiom, a secret vernacular, a mother tongue! When I studied the Kabala, there were theories about a primal proto-language of sounds. Maybe they're penetrating the barriers between words and objects; maybe they'll deliver us from false interpretations, about life, about love, even about death.

FERNELLE

That's pretty far fetched -- even for you, Fee.

FELIX

Maybe they know if consciousness survives death. Please, Fernie, learn from them; get close, touch them.

FERNELLE

No way! I'd puke up my major vitals. Anyway, I can't 'cause I quit.

FELIX

(pause, stunned) You what?!

FERNELLE

I quit -- yesterday. If you stuck around here more, you'd know what's happening.

FELIX

But...but why?

FERNELLE

Weaver's a self-righteous bitch.

FELIX

That's it? She's a bitch so you quit?!

FERNELLE

Yeah.

(FERNELLE starts to leave, but FELIX follows.)

FELIX

Listen, you little fool, this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity! *(pulling her arm)* Come back here, damnit! Sit down! *(pause)* Where the hell did you get those boots?! Christ, sometimes I think all you kids care about is the prevailing bad taste! When are you going to tear yourself away from the screen and cultivate some real curiosity? Some vibrant interest in the world?! Haven't I tried to civilize you?

FERNELLE

Yes, daddy.

FELIX

Don't get smart!

FERNELLE

And don't forget who does the cooking and laundry and keeps things "civilized" around here!

FELIX

Alright, alright! But don't you forget who gave you that sharp tongue, not to mention a liberal education. Now you have a chance to make a spectacular success, and you blew it! How?! Did you have one of your tantrums? (*he sighs*) Are you ever going to grow up?

FERNELLE

Like you, Fee? Is drinking your way of being "grown up"?

FELIX

(*pause*) I'm a lush, I know, and you take good care of me, but now I'm returning the favor. I'm right on this, trust my instincts. Ask Weaver to take you back.

FERNELLE

No!

FELIX

Go back and apologize, then ask if I can be your assistant. Tell her I'm teaching French poetry from the Troubadours to Francois Villon, and don't forget my class in Conversational Spanish and Portuguese. Look, just tell her I'm brilliant.

FERNELLE

You're not supposed to know!

FELIX

Tell her I beat it out of you; tell her I was blotto, boiled! No, no, don't. (*pause*) Weaver seems intelligent. If I can't appeal to her good sense, then perhaps as a woman...?

FERNELLE

No way! She's a blandland technocreep who thinks you're a burn out.

FELIX

Then *defend* me! Tell her I'll be the project chronicler. She needs a libertine scholar's experience, a poet's perceptions.

FERNELLE

You're a translator, Fee, and a teacher. You haven't written a poem of your own since before I was born.

FELIX

(*pause, stung*) True. But I've got rhythm! I can still read a poet's metrical map till his beat becomes my beat and we're -- hup hup! -- high stepping so thunderously, we drown out the death rattle! Ha, ha! You got those ears from me, little girl! Your mother couldn't carry a tune. No, no, there was an exception: (*singing*) "*Listen to the mockingbird; listen to the mocking...*"

ERNELLE

(covering her ears) Please, Fee...

ELIX

We're blessed, Fernie. Our ears hold sounds indefinitely, especially the vowels. Those long stressed beauties latch on like the loops in your lobes, and add all the sparkling diphthongs and triphthongs, and soon you're so bedaubed you fall to your knees with gratitude for just being able to listen. *(he sighs)* Oh, Christ, I had such dreams for myself, but drinking's my art form now...

ERNELLE

Oh, stop! You're such a cliché!

ELIX

True, but there's comfort in clichés. *(he sighs)* It's a damn shame. Through you I might have witnessed the transcendent: the destiny of humankind. Who knows? They might have inspired a whole new set of metaphors, a whole new canon of myths.

ERNELLE

You're such a dreamer, Fee; they're nothing like you think. You saw them "before". We never got to know who they were, so how can I give a shit about the "after"? Besides, they could croak any minute.

ELIX

How sad. *(pause)* Oh, please, Fernie, go back and try to communicate.

ERNELLE

Yeah, into a vomit bag.

ELIX

Embrace them. Make the quantum leap. Love them, Fernie, love them.

ERNELLE

I can't, I just can't.

ELIX

Try.

ERNELLE

No, *you* try! You're always pushing me, but you never push yourself!

ELIX

(pause) Alright then...let's strike a bargain.

ERNELLE

This better be good 'cause I hate groveling.

FELIX

What if I stop drinking? Go back to Weaver's, and I'll join a program and really stop.

ERNELLE

(pause, stunned) You're kidding?

FELIX

Nope. From this moment forward: total abstinence!

ERNELLE

It means that much to you?

FELIX

Yes, god help me, it does. Touch them, Fernie, kiss them.

ERNELLE

Christ, I'll suck their fucking tonsils!

FELIX

No more Swillmore Millmore, he'll be missed.

(ERNELLE kisses FELIX and departs as HE speaks to his therapy group.)

FELIX

So Fernie returned to Weaver's while I started experimenting with A A's Zen Method of letting go to let God -- which didn't prepare me for chucking the belief systems of Western Civilization down the drain with my last bottle of gin.

SCENE 7

(At night in Doctor Weaver's laboratory, CLAUDE and CELIA are lying spooned together in deep sleep. ERNELLE enters, moving cautiously closer, then sits.)

ERNELLE

Jambo, salut, hola, amigos. I don't know if you're asleep or playing possum, but Felix thinks you've got all the answers, so he wants me to suck up to you, be buddies. This could be the ideal relationship: I do all the talking; you do the listening. Anyway, I'm the whiz-kid getting rich from translating. Check out my earrings -- real gold. Weaver

ERNELLE (cont'd)

thinks you're telepathic so maybe you know I haven't been having the friendliest feelings towards you. Actually, I'm not the friendly type. Fee says we super brains have it rough. People feel ambivalent about us, and it sucks if you're a girl. Most of us crap out and go dumb by junior high so boys will crave our tits. The stupid turds hate me -- except for this guy in our building with a motorcycle and a crack habit who gives me rides. Fee would have a shit-fit, but he made me tough, made me focus myself. 'Course I'm pig ignorant compared to you. I'm having trouble with some of the tapes, but you didn't fool me with the Kupeno or Chulym. *(she yawns)* Christ, it's getting even harder to tell you apart. I call you the Mutes which drives Weaver up the wall. She says I have no respect and Fee thinks you're the greatest act to come along -- ever. He's doing for you -- complete strangers -- what he's never done for me, not that he thinks I'm not worth it, but he knows how moody I can be. Of course, he can be a selfish bastard, sulking and forgetting to wash until some woman says a kind word and he thinks he's god's gift. I never meet his "dates" 'cause one good look at his freak kid and they make for the door. Still, Fee's got a big heart and he's kind and gentle and hates violence, and if I weren't around to disappoint him, maybe things would be easier. Sometimes, when he's zoned and staring at the walls, I see how lonely he is and wish I could hold him like he used to hold me. He'd cradle me in his arms and say he was my father, mon pere, mi padre, mein Vater. He says I should love you. Well, I don't love anyone much, except maybe...

ERNELLE

...Fee.

CLAUDE and CELIA

Feeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee

(CLAUDE and CELIA unfurl, springing to life, spinning towards ERNELLE who leaps to her feet! CLAUDE clamps his hand on Fernelle's left shoulder, and CELIA on her right and continue singing "Feeeeee" as the lights dim to black).

ERNELLE

Holy shit!

SCENE 8

(FELIX stands, speaking from the clinic as DOCTOR WEAVER approaches ERNELLE in the laboratory. Meanwhile CLAUDE and CELIA are posed in conjoined figurations.)

FELIX

They called me because...

ERNELLE

(to Doctor Weaver) They called for Felix! They did!

FELIX

...because I was facing my shadow,...

ERNELLE

They said, "*Feeeeeeeeee.*"

FELIX

...was forsaking the putrefication of excess, oh, glorious excess!

ERNELLE

I don't know why!

FELIX

Now I was ready to tip the glass, pour our the spiritus -- transformed!

DOCTOR WEAVER

You're sure?

ERNELLE

Yes, yes. At first it was just Fee, but then it was Felix.

CELIA and CLAUDE

Feeeeeeeeee...

ERNELLE

Christ, they're at it again. Open your ears!

DOCTOR WEAVER

It did sound like...

ERNELLE

Fee! Fee!

DOCTOR WEAVER

Were you dreaming about him?

ERNELLE

No, no, I was *talking* about him! Right here -- to the Mutes! Your cameras recorded everything! I just came out to...to make friends.

DOCTOR WEAVER

Really? I thought they repulsed you.

FERNELLE

They do, but I promised Fee. I mean, I told him I'd get close if he...

DOCTOR WEAVER

You *told* him?!

FERNELLE

He beat it out of me!

DOCTOR WEAVER

Who else have you told?!

FERNELLE

No one, I swear! Neither has Fee. Fee's the one who made me come back here. He said I should care about them, so I figured it was safest while they slept. I introduced myself, and when I mentioned Fee, they sprang apart, touched me, and curdled my fucking blood!

CELIA and CLAUDE

Feeeeeeeeee...

FERNELLE

Oh, Christ, listen! Could Fee...? Could Fee come here? Please!? He's going straight; that's our deal. I kiss up to the Mutes and he sobers up. Isn't this the first thing they've ever asked for? Look, I've been translating and never -- never! -- have they wanted so much as a favorite pop tart. I think they deserve...

CLAUDE and CELIA

Feeeeeeeeeeeeeeee...

DOCTOR WEAVER

But why? Why would they want a sick, irresponsible man like that? How long has he been an alcoholic?

FERNELLE

Ten years. When I was six, mom choked on a chop, and he's been pretty much soused ever since.

DOCTOR WEAVER

By now he has incipient cirrhosis, slow reaction times, impaired memory...

FERNELLE

That's my dad you're dissecting, so go fuck yourself!

DOCTOR WEAVER

Well, at least you have some sense of loyalty,...

FERNELLE

Up yours!

DOCTOR WEAVER

...and you're intelligent enough to see that there are hundreds of people more psychologically balanced, more physically fit -- us for instance. *We* contribute.

FERNELLE

Yeah, but *we* don't like them. Felix loves them!

DOCTOR WEAVER

Don't be absurd; he doesn't know them!

FERNELLE

But he *wants* to! You never even call them by their names! You don't have one ounce of real feeling for them! At least they make me puke.

DOCTOR WEAVER

Don't you dare tell me how I feel! What do you think it's like -- keeping them indoors day after day like caged animals. My experiment's left them more isolated than their disease. Even if they're brilliant beyond comprehension, they don't communicate.

FERNELLE

That's 'cause you don't understand them. For you they're freaks, targets for your denied hostility towards everyone who isn't like you!

DOCTOR WEAVER

Speak for yourself, Fernelle, and save the theories for your psychiatrist.

FERNELLE

Who told you I have a psychiatrist?!

DOCTOR WEAVER

You left your pills in the kitchen.

ERNELLE

Those are tranqs -- for cooling my jets which is better than having all the passion of that
tofu shit you eat.

DOCTOR WEAVER

Please, let's stop bickering! We have too much work to do. *(pause)* Now, first we have
to be absolutely certain they're not saying something else. Fee as in "feel." Maybe
they're in pain.

CELIA

Feeeeeeeeee...

CELIA

....lixxxx!

CLAUDE

Lixxxxxxx!

ERNELLE

I'd say that was fairly clear, wouldn't you?

DOCTOR WEAVER

Maybe it's a place.

ERNELLE

Right: Felix, Arizona.

DOCTOR WEAVER

Where's Felix now?

ERNELLE

Still in treatment, but they'll let him out to visit.

DOCTOR WEAVER

Did he really beat you?

ERNELLE

No, never. Disappointed?

DOCTOR WEAVER

How much did you tell him?

ERNELLE

Everything. He idolizes them. He thinks they'll tell him about death.

DOCTOR WEAVER

(pause) You care for him very much, don't you?

FERNELLE

Sure, but it's never made much difference till now. The Mutes put a fire under his ass.

DOCTOR WEAVER

Your father's a lucky man, Fernelle. You may be impertinent, but you're very...devoted.

FERNELLE

You're such a dork, Lulu. Can I call you Lulu?

DOCTOR WEAVER

No.

FERNELLE

You're about a seven, maybe eight in the looks department, and you're smart. If Fee comes, he might put the moves on you. He'll con you into giving a guided tour of your heart then dump you like a dog. I've seen it a hundred times. He's always screwing around -- even when mom was alive. I think she could have stopped herself -- from choking -- but she wanted out. Fee and I talked too much, and Fee drank and fucked too much, and she wanted some peace so she bellied up.

DOCTOR WEAVER

(pause) I'm sorry.

FERNELLE

Why? She's better off.

DOCTOR WEAVER

Is that what you think?

FERNELLE

If that's what I said, then that's what I think.

DOCTOR WEAVER

Fernelle, I...I want you to know that if you ever need a place, you're welcome to stay here -- as long as you like.

FERNELLE

Never happen. I do fuck-all and drive people crazy. You'd be drinking Drano in a week.

DOCTOR WEAVER

You haven't been so difficult. The truth is you're a very diligent worker, and I look forward to your coming. So do they. You should see their neuron currents change whenever you enter the room. Sometimes they're so spectacular, my squids can't measure them, and though they seem indifferent to me, I...I find them...fascinating. In fact, they're all I ever think about.

ERNELLE

'Cause you made them, and besides, they're proof that we can continue to evolve. Fee says some of the wankers running the country still think they're descended from Adam and Eve. Maybe the Mutes want Fee 'cause he's smart, a professor. He was hired because of his poems and translations, but he's branching out into Shakespeare and the Jacobians. He doesn't believe in specializing.

DOCTOR WEAVER

Like me? I suppose I'm too obsessed, too organized and disciplined to attract their interest, and even you're predictable. They're the spontaneous ones. You never know how they'll move or what new sounds they'll make.

ERNELLE

Or when they'll rip out your heart. Are you jealous?

DOCTOR WEAVER

No, I...I'm just tired. I should be grateful they've finally said something we actually understand.

ERNELLE

Then let's bring Fee here.

DOCTOR WEAVER

I'm sorry, but I...I just don't trust him.

ERNELLE

Hang up your pride, Lu. Let him come.

DOCTOR WEAVER

It's too risky.

ERNELLE

Look, you heard them. They distinctly asked for...

ERNELLE

...Fee.

CLAUDE and CELIA

Feeeeeeeeee...

(CLAUDE and CELIA continue chanting “Feeeeee,” while spinning wildly across the laboratory.)

FERNELLE
Jesus!

DOCTOR WEAVER
All right! All right!

(FELIX leaps triumphantly, his fist in the air!)

FELIX
...lixxxxxx!!!!

CLAUDE and CELIA
...lixxxxxxxx!

DOCTOR WEAVER
Tell him he can come!!

SCENE 2

(FELIX speaks while approaching the laboratory where CLAUDE and CELIA stand entangled. FERNELLE and DOCTOR WEAVER are observing them.)

FELIX
Can anyone know the size of your soul? Can anyone see beyond your published posturings to the deep, dithrambic depths? I was never really convinced I had more than a jigger’s worth of wind, but they chose me. Me! *(pause as he nears Claude and Celia)* When I first saw them, I was trembling, thinking how they’re even more extraordinary in the flesh, and they seemed to be anticipating my entrance. *(sniffing)* There’s a scent: vanilla extract!

(FERNELLE sniffs.)

DOCTOR WEAVER
We need to know what they want. They haven’t uttered a single coherent word in thirty-seven days. Then suddenly, your daughter started chattering and they called...

DOCTOR WEAVER
...Fee.

CELIA
Feeeeeeeeeeeeee...

CELIA
...lixxxx!

CLAUDE
Lixxxxxxxx!

FELIX
Yes, yes, that’s me. I’m Felix. *(pause)* Could they mean another Felix?

CLAUDE

Milllllllll...

CLAUDE

...mooooooooooor!

CELIA

Mooooooooooor!

FELIX

Ha! That's me!

DOCTOR WEAVER

Why you, Mr. Millmore? What makes you so special?

FELIX

Well, perhaps because I'm a linguist -- not in Fernie's league, of course, but I translate poetry, so I'm attuned to certain semantic universals. I also possess a relatively open, curious mind -- what's left of it.

FERNELLE

He thinks they're the Second Coming.

FELIX

Ha! The truth is, I found it rather heartening -- the idea that our species was still capable of evolving. I thought we might have stopped, like crocodiles. A hundred million years and they're still crocks! Ha! I found them full of hope.

FERNELLE

He's already doing it. He's talking like they're not here.

FELIX

Was I? I didn't mean to be rude. (*to the Mutagens*) I'm sorry, but I...I find you quite... disconcerting. I mean, you're not old but not so young; not extremely male or female; not European, Asian, African or Hispanic. You're ageless, raceless, androgynes who smell like vanilla and threaten every presupposition about identity we have! (*turning to Weaver*) Yes, my dear doctor, you're an alchemist, a sorceress!

DOCTOR WEAVER

Are you...religious?

FELIX

Spiritual. Champagne in fluted crystal can be spiritual, don't you think? As for god: mine came with too much sin and subordination. He also sanctified poverty, oppression, took both sides in wars. Sometimes I miss him, but it's time the world moved beyond my god -- and all the others as well.

DOCTOR WEAVER

I agree, but where will it move to?

FELIX

They're the ones to ask.

DOCTOR WEAVER

I've tried, but they've stopped speaking to me. We're hoping they'll speak to you.

FELIX

Well, I'm honored. Greetings! (*pause, silence*) I don't want to let you down, Fernie. I came here bursting with all the important questions. Of course, they've been asked before and they could be the wrong questions, but damn! I can't think of a single...

FERNELLE

You were going to ask about language.

FELIX

Ah, yes! (*facing Claude and Celia*) About your private lexica which are obviously immense, and your personal idiolects -- well, you seem to communicate in morphemes with pitch and cadence, so I...I wondered if you're breaking down languages? A fellow named Chomsky theorized that all languages had a basic universal grammar embedded in our genes, but maybe you're in the process of creating a whole new one...?

DOCTOR WEAVER

Is that what you think they're doing?

FELIX

I really don't know, but -- my god! -- imagine if they did. We wouldn't misinterpret each other's meanings because we'd all understand exactly what was being said. As a translator I can tell you that all translations are imperfect. We often miss the humor, the ironies and metaphors. Right now there's approximately seven thousand languages, but nearly 90 percent of us speak only English, Mandarin and Spanish. The rest are doomed and dying -- one every two weeks. Of course sometimes dead languages are revived -- like Hebrew -- and there's a few being born like Tok Pisin from New Guinea...

FERNELLE

Chill, Fee! We don't need a fucking lecture.

FELIX

Oh, was I...?

ERNELLE

You're nervous. Fess up, now that you're here, what do you *really* think?

FELIX

Well, I...I'm fascinated, but I still don't know what to do.

ERNELLE

But your impulse is to haul ass to the closest bar and disappear down a bottle, right?

FELIX

Something like that. *(pause)* You were right, Fernie. They do seem interchangeable. I mean, I can't tell if that's his arm or her knee, but my god, they're incredibly graceful. I mean, *you're* graceful. You hear a music we can't even fathom.

(CLAUDE and CELIA pirouette across the room!)

CLAUDE and CELIA

Paaaaaaaaaay...

FELIX

(gasps!) Jesus!

ERNELLE

Oh, shit, they're dancing all over the shop!

FELIX

Why? Why are they...spinning?

DOCTOR WEAVER

They won't tell us. I've spent hours trying to decipher my charts.

(CLAUDE and CELIA stop, then sway.)

CLAUDE and CELIA

Cooooooooooooooooo...

DOCTOR WEAVER

They generate a composite of waves associated with deep delta sleep plus overlying beta signals which means wakefulness. My sound field processor indicates that beneath all the jumbled languages there might be subliminal messages, but I'm still hoping Fernelle's translations will help explain their behavior.

ERNELLE

So far it's still a linguistic hodgepodge, only now Aristotle's getting mixed with baseball scores, weather reports, riddles, rap, and the last file had a recipe for Yak butter -- in Hottentot! Listen.

(FERNELLE brings forth a portable audio player with recordings of CLAUDE and CELIA speaking several languages simultaneously. After a few moments, SHE lowers the volume.)

FERNELLE

Usually, I pick out a few coherent lines, then the computer sorts out the text -- if it is a text. You'll notice they're talking faster and faster, and sometimes the pitch could splinter a tooth. But there's nothing earth shattering, no new inventions, no miracle cures, nothing of themselves. (*turning off the audio player, addressing Claude and Celia*) So maybe you're storing up all the words ever spoken. That way, when you finally do have a message for us fuckers here on Earth, it will include everything ever said.

FELIX

Yes, yes! Think of our minds: hoppers of random conversations, texts, and Internet trivia. Maybe we're all being feather-dusted for the most precise semantics, most sensitive syntax, rhythms, accents! They're processing everything, fathoming the universal mind to form the universal thought to form a universal tongue from every language ever spoken!

DOCTOR WEAVER

I used to think their sounds carried meanings, but if they're never the same, how can we possibly interpret them?

FELIX

We have to listen with new ears, doctor! Apparently, they need a poet's perceptions.

DOCTOR WEAVER

But why not a superior poet? No offense, but why not a healthier, more productive poet?

FELIX

It's not inconceivable that I have other qualities they find...admirable. I know what you're thinking, but even an insatiable thirst has some merit.

(Suddenly, CLAUDE and CELIA open their mouths, chanting in harmony.)

CLAUDE and CELIA

Time much there is not.

FELIX

What...?

CLAUDE and CELIA

Fernelle we need, Fernelle's resonance for Felix, for the powerness thrust.

(CLAUDE and CELIA surround FERNELLE, touching her shoulders.)

FERNELLE

Oh, Christ.

(FERNELLE, CLAUDE and CELIA collapse simultaneously into lotus-like positions, singing in harmony.)

FERNELLE, CLAUDE, CELIA

Qweeeeeeeeeee...

FELIX

Good God! Fernie, wake up! *(to Weaver)* Do something!

DOCTOR WEAVER

Shush! Step back!

FERNELLE, CLAUDE, CELIA

Whhhaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa...

(FERNELLE, CLAUDE and CELIA lower their heads, then sway slowly throughout the following dialog.)

FELIX

Look, they've taken Fernie! They touched her and they...they've put her in a trance! Look at her eyes! What if they've stolen her mind, her consciousness, her soul! Did you hear me, woman?!

DOCTOR WEAVER

Shhhh, please lower your voice. They go into these cataleptic fugue states all the time, but they come out of it.

FELIX

Oh, Christ, I'm anxious, palpitating. Give me some tranqs. No, no, don't! Listen, do you remember what *they* said? About Fernie, about her resonance?

DOCTOR WEAVER

I think they meant a kind of energy. They need Fernelle's energy, I think they mean the emotional energy that comes from her feelings for you.

FELIX

What will they do with it?

DOCTOR WEAVER

I don't know.

FELIX

But how...?

DOCTOR WEAVER

I don't know.

FELIX

Damnit, woman, what do you know?!

DOCTOR WEAVER

I know it's Fernelle they want. *Her* vitality, not yours. Maybe you weren't asked here to save the human race, after all. Maybe you're just a catalyst.

FELIX

Don't be so smug, lady. We're a team, my kid and me. And if these semi-sapiens of yours don't bring her back pronto, I'm calling the cops!

DOCTOR WEAVER

Oh, really? And what are you going to say?

FELIX

Everything! I'll spill the whole can of beans!

DOCTOR WEAVER

Go right ahead, Mr. Millmore, try explaining this to the police -- to anyone. For some things there are no words.

FELIX

You just haven't found them!

DOCTOR WEAVER

Neither will you. You'll sit here like me because there's nothing we can do but wait.

FELIX

(pause, he sighs) So I waited with Weaver the Warship, wondering how do you report a lost soul? How do you explain that two mutant members of the species have abducted Fernelle Millmore's spirit and are soaring through the solar system?

(FELIX and DOCTOR WEAVER become frozen in time as the lighting shimmers.)

SCENE 10

(FERNELLE, CLAUDE and CELIA rise together to play their soul-selves, chanting and spinning in slow motion.)

FERNELLE

(to Claude and Celia) Christ, I'm eyeballing my eyeballs! Is that Fee and Weaver rattling the room? They're human kaleidoscopes, but you're the brightest. Who are you anyway?

CLAUDE

Huuuuuuuuuuuu...

CELIA

In my human state, I am Celia
Laberinto, then was Mai Fong,
Tai Fong, Ho Fong.

CELIA

Cliiiiiiiiiiiiiiiii...

CLAUDE

In my human state, I am Claude
Mazeur, then was John, Susan,
and a succession of ten Indians
named Hassan.

CLAUDE

Ummmmmmm...

CELIA

Now I am become the light,...

CELIA

...become the sustenance...

CLAUDE

...become the sustenance,...

CLAUDE

Whheeeeeeeeeee...

CELIA

*...become contained in every stone, every
blade of wheat, every singing sparrow.*

CELIA

Ahhhhhhhhhh...

CLAUDE

I am become your mother, father,...

CLAUDE

...sister, brother...

CELIA

...sister, brother.

CELIA

Ahhhhhhhhhh...

CLAUDE

*We lead each other's lives and our
meld in...*

CLAUDE
...creatrix.

CELIA
Creatrix.

CELIA
Earrrrrrrrrrrrr...

CLAUDE
 We leave to dwell at Gordius, fusing
 our consciousness in...

CLAUDE
...creatrix.

CELIA
Creatrix,...

CELIA
 ...you will receive us.

CLAUDE
 You will receive us.

FERNELLE

What do you mean “receive you?” Look, in case you haven’t noticed, I’ve already got my hands full. See that deep needy well that’s supposed to be my dad?

CLAUDE

We spin an Aura of Urrrrr around the Earth.

CLAUDE
Fernnnnnnnnnnn...

CELIA
 Help us transcend through fusions.

CELIA
Fernnnnnnnnnnn...

CLAUDE
 Here resonates our...

CLAUDE
 ...gift to you.

CELIA
 Gift to you.

(FERNELLE stands as her mother is heard singing.)

FERNELLE’S MOTHER’S VOICE

*Listen to the mockingbird,
 Listen to the mockingbird,
 Listen to the mockingbird,
 And she will lead you...*

FERNELLE, CLAUDE, CELIA

...hoooooooooooooome...

(FERNELLE, CLAUDE and CELIA harmonize and slowly return to their former lotus-like positions:)

SCENE 11

(FERNELLE, CLAUDE and CELIA raise their heads.)

FELIX

Fernie? Oh, Fernie, honey, are you alright?

FERNELLE

(touching Felix's face) Fee? Is that you? Am I back?

FELIX

Yes, yes!

DOCTOR WEAVER

What happened?

FERNELLE

If only you could see yourselves. From out there, we're all made of millions of neon microdot crystals, only we're dancing, with one galactic orgasm after another.

FELIX

Really?

FERNELLE

It's indescribable hog heaven and mom's in it too.

FELIX

Rosie?! You saw Rosie?

FERNELLE

I flashed back to when she baked, and the whole house smelled like fudge.

FELIX

The vanilla; that's the vanilla!

FERNELLE

She was wearing the lavender dress with seahorse buttons, and Fee -- she was singing!

FELIX

Oh, Fernie...

DOCTOR WEAVER

Tell me everything!

FERNELLE

(pause, then slowly) At first I felt a thousand hot prods taking a private tour of my boobs which were full of jumping beans. Soon my entire body was being corkscrewed then taffy-pulled, then finally, I was kneaded into a wet wad of dough and shot through a cookie press aimed straight at the sun. Later I sailed out of my skin into animals

FERNELLE (cont'd)

and plants. I considered going insane, but instead drank light through my mangrove leaves.

CELIA and CLAUDE

Fernelle flying through the vortex of lower flora vibrations.

FERNELLE

I saw the moon through a monkey's eyes.

CELIA and CLAUDE

Fernelle passing through higher fauna vibrations.

FERNELLE

They told me who they'd been in earlier lives, and now they're planning to leave to fuse their minds, then download what they know into mine. Then they're going to surround the Earth with an Aura of...

FERNELLE

...Ur.

THE MUTAGENS

Urrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr...

DOCTOR WEAVER

An aura of ur...?

FELIX

Could they mean the primordial "Ur" of the Ur-sprache?! Ancient theologians believed in a primal vernacular, a musical vulgate before speech was scattered into separate words. So maybe they're recreating a mother tongue, trying to find the parent language of every bastard in the world. Imagine all our lips shaping beautiful, sensuous words dovetailing, even penetrating the substance of the things they represent. They're resurrecting the Tower of Babel only they're crowning it with a single holy tongue that could mean the end of terrorism, torture, wars, miseries, and misunderstandings of every conceivable kind!

FERNELLE

I'm going with them.

FELIX

(ignoring Fernelle) Imagine: a Saudi conversing with an Eskimo; a Pole with a Palestinian; a Mexican with a Hutu chief. We'll all speak a global language and there'll be no need for translations!

ERNELLE

They said in two weeks we have to move to Gordius.

DOCTOR WEAVER

That's our research station. It's near here but underground, so they must need complete isolation. They'll be free of geomagnetic fields and solar particles not to mention sound waves and radio frequencies.

FELIX

Great, then I'll go with you.

CLAUDE and CELIA

Nooooooooooooo....

ERNELLE

I'm afraid they only want me.

FELIX

Why? I thought we were all in this together. (*pointing to Weaver*) What about her?

ERNELLE

Sorry... It's only for a few months.

FELIX

Months! You can't just leave your home, your studies!

ERNELLE

I *have* to go; I want to! I'll be fine.

FELIX

Well, I won't. I'll be sick with worry, and you know how miserable your old man gets when he worries.

DOCTOR WEAVER

And how thirsty. Don't let him blackmail you.

FELIX

Screw you, lady! She's *my* daughter, not yours, and don't try to turn her against me! (*to Fernelle*) Ever since you started this project, you've grown more insolent, and you're never home.

ERNELLE

Look, life with you is a real treat, but it's nice to touch down someplace disinfected. I mean, we even eat meals at the same time at the same table on china that's not chipped with folded napkins...

FELIX

I'll buy china! I'll fold napkins! Christ, I'll even make meat loaf!

ERNELLE

Look, Fee, the real reason I come here is that it's easier to be myself. When I'm home, I'm always worried about you.

FELIX

So now you're going to worry about *them*?!

ERNELLE

I think that's why they asked you here -- so I can be sure you're safe and don't have to worry.

FELIX

You're not my nanny; you're my daughter! (*pause*) I liked things better before -- when I was in charge. Who's having this dream, Fernie, who?

ERNELLE

Please, Fee, don't take it so hard. They don't want Lu either, and look! I'm not afraid to touch them! (*poking them playfully*) Maybe I've made that quantum leap you talked about. I'm actually beginning to love them. You heard me: amor, amour...

FELIX

Just don't think I'm going to disappear like some extinct dialect! I have my rights! I'm sticking around, ladies; I'm going to be the witness! The witness!!

ERNELLE

...amore...liebe...laska...
ljabov...lyoo-bof...karlek
...ahov...hob...

(Blackout.)

SCENE 12

(A music box tune is heard as lights reveal CLAUDE and CELIA whispering Chinese language sounds. THEY stand face to face, fanning their fingers, exploring each other's bodies while FELIX, FERNELLE, and DOCTOR WEAVER watch.)

FELIX

One week later I was observing homo-scientificus-mutatis giving Fernie and Weaver the recipe for a total technocreep as they appeared to be making an ectopic fusion of themselves. *(to Fernelle)* Come on, sweetheart, tell us what they're saying.

FERNELLE

I can't.

FELIX

Well I can: Add two equal lumps of primordial muck from male and female. Stir in blood, bile, curd, turd, and the digitized contents of every library and text message in the world and *(he sniffs)* a dash of vanilla!

FERNELLE

You're making an ass of yourself. *(to Doctor Weaver)* Now you know why I'm the way I am. *(to Felix)* Look, why don't you go back to detox before you jump the fucking wagon!

DOCTOR WEAVER

It's beginning!

FERNELLE

Oh, Christ...

FELIX

Oh, my god...

(FELIX, FERNELLE and DOCTOR WEAVER watch enthralled as translucent strips of fabric appear to emerge from the CLAUDE and CELIA'S hands, wrapping around their intertwined bodies as THEY chant.)

THE MUTAGENS

Wahhhhhhhhhh...Minnnnnnnnn...Crayyyyyyyyyyyyyyy...

FELIX

What's happening?!

DOCTOR WEAVER

They're forming the creatrix.

(Once the MUTAGENS are covered, CLAUDE reaches out to touch FERNELLE'S head, then withdraws.)

FERNELLE

Their fusion requires silence. *(to Felix)* That means you should leave.

FELIX

Ah, so they're mute again? How cunning. The World Renown Metamorphosed Future of Mankind presents: a dumb show! In the beginning was the word; in the end -- not even a bzzzzzzzzzzzzz.

DOCTOR WEAVER

The lab's off limits for the rest of the week. Let's go, Mr. Millmore.

FELIX

I refuse to leave the premises!

DOCTOR WEAVER

Fine. You can use my library and sleep on the sofa bed upstairs, but you can't be bothering us or I'll have you forcibly removed.

FELIX

Hah! You have me removed and I'll call the F. B. I., the C. I. A., and text every fucking news network and tweet-geek in the country! Fernie says you're bucking for a Nobel Prize, but the implications of turning your own species into a freak show -- hah! They'll come after you with a poker not a prize!

DOCTOR WEAVER

Mr. Millmore, if you're through...

FELIX

Stop threatening me, lady! And stop making me feel like a fossil! Call me "Felix" for chrissake!

DOCTOR WEAVER

I'd rather not.

FELIX

Then call me "Doctor." No, don't. "Mister" will do nicely. And you're "Mizzz." Miz Doctor Weaver the Wonder -- wonderful spunk.

DOCTOR WEAVER

Please leave.

FELIX

Wonderful legs. Now Fernie, in case they're not listening, give the Mutes a message: tell them I've reconsidered. This Aura of Ur is a bad idea; it's wrong to create a universal language at the cost of so many others. After all, when a language dies, doesn't its culture die? Aren't all its people diminished, all their histories -- not to mention their miracle cures, and recipes.

FERNELLE

But that's the point! The Mutes won't let them be forgotten. That's why they're tracking them. Then we'll find a way to write them down and store them forever. Now please, Fee, leave us alone.

DOCTOR WEAVER

Yes, good night, Doctor Millmore.

FELIX

Good night, ladies.

(FELIX kisses FERNELLE on the cheek and departs.
then reappears, speaking in a whisper.)

FELIX

I pretended to toddle off to bed, but instead lingered to eavesdrop, and soon Fernie and Lulu were clucking like two peahens -- about me, of course, ha, ha.

FERNELLE

Felix knows you don't like him -- though most women do, especially his gullible students. Of course, you're older, deeper in the forest as they say.

DOCTOR WEAVER

Thanks. (*pause, staring at Claude and Celia*) You have to admit they don't seem capable of providing any genuine conversation, so it could be lonely for you. I keep wondering what they're actually going to do. How do you make an Aura of Ur?

FERNELLE

Blow it out your ear, ha, ha! Sorry. Maybe they'll spray it, spit it, shit it! Who cares? It's totally awesome!

DOCTOR WEAVER

I imagine millions of of electrokinetic fibers being spun and knitted over the planet like a giant tea cozy. *(pause)* Do you ever wonder if Felix is right? I mean, we keep assuming this aura of theirs will be good, but what if it's not?

FERNELLE

Jesus! How can you say that?! *(pause)* Fee says you're living out your immortality trip through the Mutes -- like they're your kids.

DOCTOR WEAVER

Maybe, but they don't carry my genes. Of course they do carry my dreams, and years of hard work, isolation and sacrifice. Those "Mutes" as you call them are my triumph. In some ways they they mean as much to me as you mean to Felix.

FERNELLE

(pause) Fee underestimates you. You have more passion for your work than he ever had for his. He calls himself a poet, but he's only published two wafer-thin books. His real vocation is teaching -- and tippling. Too bad you're incompatible.

DOCTOR WEAVER

Don't be absurd.

FERNELLE

Don't you like him at all?

DOCTOR WEAVER

No.

FERNELLE

He doesn't like you either. He says you scientists fathom the universe, but what's the point if nobody decorates it? It's his moon too.

DOCTOR WEAVER

He can have it -- the moon, the stars, the whole universe!

FERNELLE

Right, you're cool 'cause you know what dick-heads people can be. Fee said the Mutes would inspire new myths and metaphors. Well, they're evolving a whole new consciousness with new perceptions. Why aren't you proud and...happy?

DOCTOR WEAVER

Because I've been...excluded.

FERNELLE

Yeah, but you're not -- not really. Listen, when I was travelling with the Mutes, I could feel the spaces between us dissolve like our lungs were breathing the same air at the same time, all of us on the whole fucking planet.

DOCTOR WEAVER

How nice for you, but I've never felt connected; I've always been alone -- until now. That's why I'll miss them -- and you most of all.

(Pause DOCTOR WEAVER smiles and FERNELLE embraces her as lights dim.)

SCENE 13

(In the laboratory, CLAUDE and CELIA are swathed in more layers, chanting softly while DOCTOR WEAVER and FERNELLE observe and FELIX speaks.)

CLAUDE and CELIA

Dwaaaaaaaaaa, whaarrrrrrrrrr; rrrroooooommmm,...

FELIX

Three days later, the Mutes started crooning again, and Weaver the Wonk granted me permission to enter the sacred sanctuary to observe their progress. I'm afraid I was still feeling hostile, wishing I could put the little fuckers in a cage.

CLAUDE and CELIA

Lahhh...

FERNELLE

Look, Fee: Claude's been drawing marks that look like the beginnings of a new alphabet, a mixture of Roman, Arabic, Kanji, and shorthand. Next Tuesday we're scheduled to leave.

FELIX

Tuesday?! Well, let me check my dance card. I certainly wouldn't want to miss your bon voyage. *(pause, staring)* Christ, they're ugly, like larvae in a cocoon.

FERNELLE

I think they're beautiful. They've nearly finished their neural assimilation. Ceil's so sensitive, she shows me how I feel even before I feel it. When I'm gloomy, she's gloomy; when I'm high, she's high. And Claude has such a beautiful sadness, you can't help loving him.

FELIX

Oh, yeah? Ask him if he pokes his joy stick into Ceil.

FERNELLE

You're disgusting!

FELIX

I'm serious.

FERNELLE

(pause, she sighs) They hug each other a lot, but they're so advanced they go straight from lips touching to the big dissolve.

FELIX

How convenient.

DOCTOR WEAVER

Their fusion's made them so physically close, they seem more like one person than two.

FELIX

Half male and female? There's always been dualities: good, evil; light, dark; the male: combative, the female: receptive. The organ of one side will eventually penetrate the organ of the other, making the "she" subordinate. It's the keystone of civilization.

DOCTOR WEAVER

We've observed that their consciousness is synergetic, intrinsically balanced, oscillating between the sexes -- always shifting shapes.

FERNELLE

Like Proteus, Fee, they go with the flow, so why can't you?

(Suddenly CLAUDE and CELIA begin chanting Latin.)

CLAUDE and CELIA

In nova fert...anumus dicere...

FERNELLE

Listen, Felix. They're quoting Ovid.
 "I tell of bodies changed into new
 forms. Before the sea was, and the
 lands, and the sky, the face of
 Nature showed the state of men
 called Chaos.

CLAUDE and CELIA

*...formas corpora.
 Ante mare et terras...
 ...et quod tegit omnia...
 ...caelum unus erat toto...
 ...naturae vultus in orbe...*

FELIX
...quen dixere chaossss...

CLAUDE and CELIA
...quen dixere chaossss...

FELIX
 I taught you that! So what are they trying to say?

DOCTOR WEAVER
 We don't know, but last night we heard whistlings, so it's possible they're also tracking the language of birds.

FELIX
 Really? Gee, maybe later they'll move on to mews and barks -- ruff, ruff!

DOCTOR WEAVER
 They could become the repository of sounds for all civilizations, all species.

FELIX
 All travesties! P. T. Barnum, eat your heart out! He's got nothing on you, Doc.

FERNELLE
 Oh, button it, Fee!

DOCTOR WEAVER
 If only we could make you see what we see.

FELIX
 Well, you can't. My retinas are still focused, Doctor, and they're holding on to reality! Sorry, ladies, but I'm leaving -- to puke up my breakfast!

FERNELLE
 Fee!

CLAUDE and CELIA
Feeeeeeeeee...

(FELIX departs.)

SCENE 14

(Evening in the laboratory where CLAUDE and CELIA are sleeping. FELIX enters with a bottle of gin in hand.)

FELIX
 That night I couldn't sleep. I felt a moral obligation to rescue Fernie from the freak show, so I thought we'd have a little party, just the three of us. (*pause, toasting Claude and Celia, then taking a swallow*) You know, sometimes I don't think you're real. I mean,

FELIX (cont'd)

rationalizations have been known to materialize, but this! This gets the prize: the most demented, most narcissistic excuse for a child leaving the nest ever devised. Yes, I refuse to accept Fernie's departure for any reason other than to save the species through universal speech! That's right, you're all just featured players in a paranoid delusion except -- damn -- I can see you! Speak to me. *Riiiiiii. Looooooo.* What does it mean? What's the password? What's the future? No more diversity, no more speaking in tongues? All of us monoglotted, monocultured, monochromed drones? *(pause, taking another swallow)* Christ, you're so close I can't tell you apart. Hey, Claude, do you poke your thing into Ceil when Weaver isn't looking, or do you just ejaculate woooooords? Are you like lovers or brother and sister? Maybe father and daughter, like Fernie and me -- before Weaver the Witch put a wedge between us. Poor Ceil, I can still see your face and you look just like Fernie when she's sulking. *(to Claude)* And you! Stop being so damn smug! I know that sneer. Hah! I use it on my students all the time. *(poking them with the frying pan)* Hah! I saw you flinch! I know you see...

FELIX

...me.

CLAUDE and CELIA

Meeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeaarrrrrrrhhhyiiiiiii...

(CLAUDE and CELIA howl, still joined, and spinning from FELIX who stops them, wielding the gin bottle.)

FELIX

Hah! Stay put, you fuckers! Good, good, I just want you to know who's in charge: me! I'm the boss! It's *my* dream, and the dream has no right to be drowning the dreamer!

(DOCTOR WEAVER rushes in, wearing a bathrobe.)

DOCTOR WEAVER

Stop it!! Stop!! What the hell are you doing?!

FELIX

Well, if it isn't our female Frankenstein to the rescue.

DOCTOR WEAVER

Put that down! What have you done?!

FELIX

Nothing.

DOCTOR WEAVER

How dare you?! My god, you could've killed them!

FELIX

Bullshit, they're too shifty.

(FERNELLE enters in her pajamas as DOCTOR WEAVER inspects CLAUDE and CELIA. Henceforth, CLAUDE mirrors some of Felix's gestures, and CELIA mirrors some of Fernelle's.)

FERNELLE

What's going on? *(to Felix)* What are you doing here?

DOCTOR WEAVER

He's been drinking; he tried to kill them!

FERNELLE

What...?! Jesus! How *could* you?!

FELIX

I just wanted to...to chat. I only had a nip, but oh, Fernie, I already miss you.

FERNELLE

Don't touch me! Go away! *(to Weaver)* How are they?

FELIX

Forget them and listen to me: please, don't risk your life, your splendid career, your whole future for some megalomaniacal scheme.

FERNELLE

Leave me alone!

FELIX

I brought you up to graduate cum laude, to hobnob with linguists in Cairo, to translate Pashto for the C.I.A.,...

FERNELLE

You brought me up in a leaky raft on Booze River! Well, land ho, daddy-o! It's time I gave you a news flash: you're a drunk, chauvinistic ego-maniac, and I'm not going to Gordius for the Mutes. I'm going for myself because I'd rather be with them than live on the edge of a nervous breakdown with someone poisoned inside and out!

FELIX

You ungrateful little bitch! I ought to kick your arrogant ass! Who the fuck do you think you are?!

ERNELLE

Nobody much, but I'm out of here, and I'm coming back a new me: smarter, braver, and maybe with a ruby in my nose, and if you can't take it, I'll find some geek like Lulu who likes me just the way I am!

FELIX

(grasping her arm) Don't leave, Fernie.

ERNELLE

(wrenching free) Let go, damn you. I hate you! Hate you! Hate! Hate! Hate!

(ERNELLE runs off. Pause as FELIX sits, shaken and DOCTOR WEAVER stands aside.)

FELIX

Help me, doctor. What's happening here? *(pause)* Her psychiatrist says I project my anxieties. I certainly hope so. I hope you and your hairless hybrids are nothing but projections, little monster mirages on my oasis of fear. You'll all dissolve when I wake up! *(shaking his head)* Am I awake?

DOCTOR WEAVER

I'm afraid so.

FELIX

Pinch me.

DOCTOR WEAVER

Pinch yourself! Grow up, Mr. Millmore. We're all of us very much alive -- as alive and real and complicated as you. I know that's difficult to comprehend, but it happens to be true.

FELIX

Fuck you, Weaver. What's your problem?

DOCTOR WEAVER

My problem is Fernelle. I want her to grow up and make a life of her own with responsible people who care about her and will nurture her incredible gift.

FELIX

Look, sometimes we let each other down, but she needs me, and I need her.

DOCTOR WEAVER

Right, like a king needs fawning servants to control till they're incapable of expressing their own sense of...of joy.

FELIX

Joy?! You think Fernie's joyless? Oh, sister, have you got it wrong. She's so brimming with joy, you can hear it in every word she utters, and not just the sound and meaning, but the propulsion, the joy of enthusiasm! That's from the Greek, "en theo": to be filled with god, and god -- if there is a god -- has to be a linguist!

DOCTOR WEAVER

Fernelle may have enthusiasm, but she's also very...tense.

FELIX

Yes! It's part of her internal density! She's a passion packed battery, simmering with unspent energy!

DOCTOR WEAVER

From an unspent childhood!

FELIX

You heard them, Weaver. When they said they need Fernie's feelings, they meant love: Fernie's love for Felix. I inspired those feelings. Now that's something, isn't it? Have you inspired such feelings? Have you?

DOCTOR WEAVER

(pause) Has Fernelle?

FELIX

Of course!

DOCTOR WEAVER

Then why were you willing to stop drinking for them but not for her? Why is that?

FELIX

I...I never thought of it that way. *(pause)* Poor Fernie...you don't think I love her.

DOCTOR WEAVER

You really want to know what I think? I think you're a narcissistic dilettante who prefers idols. Real people aren't good enough for sacrifice.

FELIX

(pause) You're right. I don't like most people, but at least I don't mangle them, turn them into "homo-mutatis". Let's face it, Doc, we're both beset by devils.

DOCTOR WEAVER

Yes, but one of them is hurting your little girl, and it's yours!

FELIX

You think...

DOCTOR WEAVER

Yes!

FELIX

Then make me one of yours. I'm serious, that formula you concocted -- I want it. I want to be a mutagen!

DOCTOR WEAVER

What...?

FELIX

Inoculate me! Against myself! Cure me, Doctor, make me a mutagen!

DOCTOR WEAVER

No! Absolutely not.

FELIX

Please, I'm so tired of Felix.

DOCTOR WEAVER

You heard me: no!

FELIX

Look at me, Louise: I'm everything you say and worse: an incurable lush with a bad case of species chauvinism. You could call me "homo hostilis."

DOCTOR WEAVER

Oh, shut up!

FELIX

I saw the disks! I know you can do it!

DOCTOR WEAVER

Never! Never again!

FELIX

If you won't, maybe they will. (*approaching Claude and Celia*) Come on, make me one of the guys, make me a...

FELIX
...rat!

CLAUDE and CELIA
...raaaaaaaahhhhhh....

FELIX

Make me a...

FELIX
...cat!

CLAUDE and CELIA
...caaaaaaaahhhhhh....

FELIX

Make me a...

FELIX
...Muuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuu...

CLAUDE and CELIA
...muuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuu...

(FELIX dives headlong into CLAUDE and CELIA who envelope him into the creatrix fabric.)

FELIX
Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!!

DOCTOR WEAVER
Oh, my God! Oh, no....

(CLAUDE and CELIA chant loud animal sounds, from birds, cats, dogs, and horses, while making gestures that suggest wings, tails, horns, hooves and webbed feet.)

CLAUDE and CELIA
wrrrrrhhh, meeeowww, rufffff, prrrrrr...

DOCTOR WEAVER
Felix! I...I can't see you...

CLAUDE and CELIA
...prrbrrrrrrrrr...

DOCTOR WEAVER
Oh, please, please let him go!

CLAUDE and CELIA
Rhhhhhhraaaaaaaaaaaaaa...

(CLAUDE and CELIA release FELIX who tumbles to the floor. DOCTOR WEAVER helps him stand.)

DOCTOR WEAVER

Felix, are you all right? Here, sit down, let me get you some water.

FELIX

(pause, breathless) So much for your quantum leap; they're backsliding into the swamps! I...I had visions of gargoyles with...with huge watery eyes, fanged teeth, webbed feet, and a tail. At first they were human, then apes, and in a matter of seconds they were swimming in the primordial...

FELIX

...soup.

CLAUDE and CELIA

Sooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo...

DOCTOR WEAVER

Take a deep breath. *(pause)* Maybe they're projecting what they've gone through. We see them as the future, but you saw their past!

FELIX

(shivering) A Darwinian nightmare! *(taking a long swallow of water)* What's really appalling is that while they were human, they looked like us. I mean, Celia looked like Fernie, and Claude looked like...like me.

DOCTOR WEAVER

Yes, I know; they mimic your gestures and expressions.

FELIX

(turning to Claude and Celia) Look, whoever the hell you are, if you do make your Aura of Ur, please spin out a language that doesn't carry this...

FELIX

...pain...

CLAUDE and CELIA

Paaaaayyyyyyyyyyy...

(DOCTOR WEAVER touches Felix's shoulder to comfort him, and HE clasps his hand over hers.)

DOCTOR WEAVER

Listen, Felix, I've set up a video conferencing system between Gordius and my laboratory. If you want, if you promise to stay sober, you can stay here to observe.

FELIX

Thanks. *(pause)* You finally called me "Felix." *(pause, observing Claude and Celia)* I think I know why they're drawn to Fernie and not us. Because there's no translation between her heart and her...

FELIX
...words.

CLAUDE and CELIA
Wooooorrrrrrrr....

FELIX
Listen to them. Do we ever reach each other? Can any language really communicate all the nuances, all the fears and longings that lurk in our hearts?

DOCTOR WEAVER
Maybe that's what they're trying to accomplish; maybe this aura of Ur will be like radiant rainbows, spectrums with sound waves permeating our minds.

FELIX
Ha! Or maybe they're shaking up Ur cocktails. Then they'll drink them down and piss out whole new oceans to drown in.

DOCTOR WEAVER
I like my rainbows better.

FELIX
So do I, but sometimes I wonder if their real virtue was that they dispensed with language altogether.

DOCTOR WEAVER
But would you really want to live without words?

FELIX
No, but I could. *(pause)* I could live without words, without poetry, even without sex and booze, but I'm not sure I can live without Fer...

FELIX
...nelle.

CLAUDE and CELIA
...Neelllllllllll...

FELIX
(pause) You know, Louise, when I was there, when I was part of them, I...I actually wanted the wings. *(he sighs)* Oh, for a pair of falcon wings! Fernie would forgive a falcon anything.

DOCTOR WEAVER
Oh, Felix...

(DOCTOR WEAVER pats FELIX'S shoulder, then HE turns to embrace her and THEY kiss.)

SCENE 15

(Dim lights reveal Station Gordius where CLAUDE and CELIA, conjoined within the creatrix, are posed by FERNELLE who sits, staring at her video-computer screen, speaking to DOCTOR WEAVER who is seated in front of her computer screen. FELIX stands nearby.)

FELIX

Days later, Fernelle was at...

FELIX

...Station Gordius.

FERNELLE

Station Gordius...

FERNELLE

...to Station Weaver. Oh, Lulu, Oh, fuck this mother-fucking hole! I suggest you inspect them closely and tell me what to do 'cause...

FERNELLE

...we're having a very bad night.

FELIX

We're having a very bad night,...

FELIX

...because the unforeseen had happened and chaos had triumphed.

FERNELLE

The trip down here left them totally fried. I can't believe this crappy place; a person could go fucking beserk! I wish I had a beer and someone to dance with. *(pause)* So how's my Fee? I feel like trash for yelling the way I did. He's either very pissed off or sulking.

DOCTOR WEAVER

He's right here.

FELIX

(leaning towards the screen) That's right, sweetheart, and I'm not pissed, just sorry I...I slipped up. Please, just take care of yourself.

FERNELLE

I...I thought there'd be radical melding by now, but fuck! What if they've overloaded their circuits and turned into bipolar wrecks? Poor Ceil's definitely depressed. Sometimes Claude puts his arms around her like he's going to smother her, then they both squirm like they're embarrassed. Christ, maybe they can't take this intimacy anymore than I can, 'cause it looks they've shut down the shop. What the fuck's happening...?

(DOCTOR WEAVER and FERNELLE freeze as FELIX turns to speak.)

FELIX

What was happening was that they hadn't shut down; they were conserving their energy.

(As FELIX speaks, CLAUDE and CELIA slowly rise, chanting, then swiftly envelop FERNELLE in the creatrix)

CLAUDE and CELIA
Ouuuuuuoooooooouuuu...

DOCTOR WEAVER
Oh, god, oh, no...

FELIX

They snatched Fernelle so quickly she didn't have a chance to scream. They smothered her in silence for five hours, twenty two minutes, and twelve seconds. I noticed that when they turned their faces towards the camera Claude still resembled me so I asked Louise to *(turning to Doctor Weaver)* tell me what you see?

DOCTOR WEAVER

The same thing you see: Claude looks like you and Celia looks like Fernelle. They can morph to mirror your faces, so they must be as fascinated by you as you are with them.

FELIX

But look at Claude's hands: they're mutating into claws -- vultures claws.

DOCTOR WEAVER

Yes, and their arms are distending...

FELIX

Coiling around her helpless body, and they're both growing wings, but I can't tell which are his and which are hers. God, she has to escape! Get out of there, Fernie, get out! Out!

(Frantic electronic bleeping is heard on Doctor Weaver's computer as CLAUDE and CELIA still clinging to FERNELLE, are twisted and howling in agony.)

CLAUDE and CELIA
Owwwwwwwwwwww, burrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr, kahhhhhhhhhhh...

FELIX
Oh, Jesus, now what?!

DOCTOR WEAVER
Their vital signs are failing...

(FERNELLE crawls out from under the creatrix.)

FELIX
Thank Christ.

DOCTOR WEAVER
Oh, no, their hearts...

DOCTOR WEAVER
Fernelle, are you all right?!

FERNELLE
We're desperate here. They're trying to break apart, but it's killing them.

CLAUDE and CELIA
Mahhhhhhhhhhh...

DOCTOR WEAVER
They haven't much time...

FERNELLE
Oh, Christ, they're separating at their knees, their soulders..

FELIX
Ruuuuunnn!! Run away!

(CLAUDE and CELIA grasp FERNELLE'S hands.)

CLAUDE and CELIA
Runnnnnnnnnnnnnnn...

FELIX
Let her go! Let her go!

(Lights flicker and a mist shoots out from between CLAUDE and CELIA as THEY split apart in slow motion spasms, separating while chanting tones of the Ur-sprache. Simultaneously, FELIX mimics CLAUDE's gestures and sounds, and FERNELLE mimics CELIA's.)

CLAUDE, CELIA, FELIX, FERNELLE
Quaaahhhh, Quoouuuuuuuuu, Phiiiiiiiiiiii, Feeeeeeeee, Fernnnnnn...

(CLAUDE and CELIA collapse in separate areas as FELIX and FERNELLE fall to their knees, covering their ears. DOCTOR WEAVER'S monitor makes the beeping sound of two expired hearts.)

DOCTOR WEAVER
Detachment and death occurred instantaneously at 8:57 P.M.

FERNELLE

The whole place smells like...

FERNELLE

...fudge.

FELIX

Fudge...

EPILOGUE

(Back at the clinic FELIX appears in the robe he wore in the “Prologue” while FERNELLE remains in the dim light of Gordius.)

FELIX

I told the doctors that Fernelle has written a poem titled “The Amazing Adventures of Polly Polyphony.” Imagine that -- my daughter a poet! Of course she’s been influenced by a shipwrecked pedant losing his grip. The poem’s in free verse and begins with two Mutagens...

FELIX

...leaving their bodies.

FERNELLE

Leaving their bodies...

(CLAUDE and CELIA’S soul-selves rise and surround FERNELLE.)

FERNELLE

...for unknown dimensions accompanied by a hundred green balloons and the sound of seven thousand languages spoken simultaneously.

FELIX

She focused on...

FELIX

...how heroic they were.

FERNELLE

How heroic they were;...

FERNELLE

...how they were willing to transform the world by transforming themselves.

FELIX

Of course I often wondered if it was all just delirium, especially when she told me how...

FELIX

...they passed.

FERNELLE

They passed...

FERNELLE

...straight through me; became part of myself.

(FERNELLE stands, mouthing the words as CLAUDE and CELIA touch her throat from both sides, their faces turned away as THEY speak through Fernelle.)

CLAUDE and CELIA

We then are the "I" speaking, consumed by our metabolism, we germinate anew in Fernellllllle.

FERNELLE and the VOICES of CLAUDE and CELIA

Weave a new universe of Urrrr, weave word webs of ecstasy, weave sorrow, weave joy, weave us always...

FERNELLE

...in the depth of my heart.

(DOCTOR WEAVER enters.)

FELIX

She concluded the poem with Louise waving farewell as she boards a train to New York to film a documentary.

FERNELLE

They're calling me the hyper-glotted girl wonder who speaks in forgotten tongues and is creating a universal language.

FELIX

She says she still feels the presence of a ghost in a lavender dress...

FELIX

...with seahorse buttons.

FERNELLE

With seahorse buttons...

FERNELLE

...singing, "*Listen to the mockingbird...*"

FELIX and FERNELLE

*...Listen to the mockingbird,
Listen to the mockingbird,
And she will lead you...*

FERNELLE, FELIX, DR. WEAVER and VOICES OF CLAUDE and CELIA
....hoooooooooome."

(A high soprano is heard an octave above the rest. The
harmony crescendos, then fades with the light.)

End of Play