

BIRDS IN THE MOON

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Music by Mark Grey

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Characters

Bird-Mother: A woman who appears in a desert with her child.
Both have wings.

Ringmaster: A scavenger tired of himself.

Musicians: Musicians in working clothes.

Bird-Child: Unnamed, unseen, only heard.

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Very succinct specs in this libretto regarding Music or Image. Mainly text and non-verbal actions on stage. (*Didascalia*)

Act 1 – Scene 1 – Prologue.

In the desert, or at least, in a desert or deserted region. It may well be that, around the vicinity of the scene, there are signs of a more prosperous and humid past. In this arid and dusty place, stands parked a circus carriage built upon the base of a shipping container. When the front part of the container opens, it displays all sorts of decorations and props for the purpose of a modest itinerant circus show. Outside, the shipping container is decorated with motifs that refer to the moon and its magic, with ornate letterings advertising a promised passage to the moon.

*The container remains closed during the day until the sun sets and the **Musicians** begin to prepare the stage for their next performance.*

*Once the stage is set, an old Master of Ceremonies (the **Ringmaster**) makes his first appearance, looking at the scene with a certain condescension and authority. He looks tired and old. One of the **Musicians** places a chair at the center of the stage and a suitcase full of clothes. The old **Ringmaster** gestures to indicate dust that needs sweeping and begins his primeval and most beautiful ritual of preparing and dressing for the show .*

*The **Musicians** begin to tune the instruments, rehearsing the first Fanfare.*

*The volume/noise from the ads and the music intensifies: it's what we call **The Fanfare**.*

Act I – Scene 2 – The Ringmaster.

Ringmaster:

*Quietly and parsimoniously, the **Ringmaster** begins first undressing, folding his clothes neatly upon the chair, and then dressing up with his old and brightly colored **Ringmaster** outfit. Once he is fully dressed, he looks around for something, quasi-comically, because his sight is not very good.*

The mirror!

*(The same **Musician** enters with a small mirror, the **Ringmaster** keeps looking).*

Where have you hidden my makeup?

*(**Musician** puts his hand into the pocket of the **Ringmaster's** outfit, pulling out a small makeup bag).*

Give it to me ! *(Snatching it from the **Musician's** hand).*

Go away! Go, go, go!

*(**Musicians** start practicing a melody, with obvious reluctance and without too much rigor. The old **Ringmaster** listens while putting on his makeup, looking back toward them in despair).*

If you play as if you were starving, you will starve!

Musician 1:

But we are, kind of starving... *(Showing an empty whiskey bottle. The rest join in, joking and complaining).*

Ringmaster:

Oh, shut up about it! (*Ringmaster changes tactics*) My friends. My dear, dear friends. You have to play with *bravado*. With energy. “*Con duende*”. There is always, always, someone listening. They might be crossing beyond the boulders, so we need to be louder! You’ll see. You’ll see. (*Ringmaster looks around, at the horizon, looking for signs of people approaching.*)

Musician 2:

There is literally no one crossing tonight. I say we cut straight to the game. (*Showing a deck of cards*)

Ringmaster:

(*Angry again*). If you only played your instrument as well as you lose at cards!! If you insist with this attitude, only the vultures will come! You need whiskey? Earn it!

Musician 1:

He’s got a point, though.

Ringmaster:

All good things come to those who wait.

Or are you idiots hiding gallons of gas somewhere?

No?

No one?

No. That’s what I thought.

So.

It’s only a draught. The river will roar again and it’ll bring all kinds of peoples and opportunities, and commerce and dollars.

We remain. Case closed.

You’ll get your whiskey.

You have no business instinct at all. No vision!

There will be – li-te-ra-lly – no one else around to take our business.

So, we remain.

All good things come to those who wait.

And that is the end of it.

Musician 3:

Mmmmh ... a vulture, though. Roasted.

Musician 4:

Yes, that'd be a big roast!

Ringmaster:

Silence! We're starting in ... 3 minutes. Let me hear your *Moonlight Intro*. - The **Ringmaster** moves the chair to the center-front of the stage. He sits down. Soft music plays in the background.

Aaaaaahh. Uuuuuhhh. Eeeee. Pop, Pop, Bop, Top.

They're Their There. They're Their There.

Shaaaash. Sheesh.

Sca-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-le. Sca-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-le.

- *Attempting to sing scales, failing, looking toward the Musicians, who are laughing. The Musicians start to play something very soothing. Ringmaster does vocal exercises, until he falls asleep on his chair -*

Sss shshshshsh sssss

Glassssssss. Claassssss.

Thooooorn.

Mooooorn.

Mooooourn.

Mooooore.

Mooo oo...re.

Sssss. Psshhhh...sh....s....ss..s.....

The Musicians stop playing. They let go of their instruments and start making themselves comfortable. One of them is already dealing cards for a game. This is obviously something they have done before. As they silently

*start the game, a strange figure disrupts the scene. **Bird-Mother** enters. As she hesitantly approaches, we can see she has two long and beautiful bird's wings. On seeing her, the **Musicians** are suddenly prompted to play their Overture to the Show.*

Ringmaster:

Springing up immediately upon hearing the opening music.

Oh, dear, come near, come near!

This way to the fabulous *Moon cruise*.

Come in and see for yourself!

You pay to get out, never to get in!

***Bird-Mother** approaches the stage*

Laaadieeeeeez and Gentlemeeeen! - *Looking at her, quizzically* -.

Creeeeatures of all sorts!

Tonight, before your very eyes,

Only to-night!

A fabulous secret will be revealed

Only to-you!

Not a magic act!

No cheating, no tricks!

What everybody demands,

but everybody fears!

What is it?

Bird-Mother:

(She always sings) Water?

Ringmaster:

Water...Water? Oh, but it's not water! – *Fake, loud laughs* -.

It is...The truth!- *This is the prompt for the **Musicians** to play their next tune -.*

Before your very eyes, you are about to learn a truth...
...un-learn-a-ble.

Does God exist? I never met him.

But, Oh. Oh, It must!

Because there is a Paradise.

- *Some stage trick -.*

Skeptical? Step up, come and see.

- ***Bird-Mother** climbs up the steps with his help -.*

There is a place for the downtrodden....

Bird-Mother:

Downtrodden...

Ringmaster:

A place where the lost, are found.

Bird-Mother:

Lost...

Ringmaster:

A place with no borders, no orders,

No self-centered hoarders nor panic disorders

A home where the folk are freed from their warders!

Bird-Mother:

Home! (*She is tired, fidgeting, not understanding the set-up, looking around*)

Ringmaster:

With green grass and tulips, and parrots and turnips,

And free-flowing bubbliies, and juices and more!

Where money is paper, where money is useless:

No lunars have it, no lunars need it.

A place where one can finally rest

And the rest - you must see for yourself!

(Pointing at an artifact, or a door, or a trick).

Bird-Mother:

Water, please!

Ringmaster:

And water, water galore.

A home for your kind. For a ten-dollar note,
the moon could be your next abode!.

*Bird-Mother collapses on stage. The **Musicians** stop playing and circle the bird-woman, with a bottle of water and a hand-fan to revive her. The **Ringmaster** mutters some angry words whilst approaching the circle. **Ringmaster** and **Musicians** are trying to find pockets to pick, looking for something of value. There are none. **Ringmaster** sits, discouraged, besides the circle of **Musicians** still trying to revive her. The bird-woman recovers, oblivious of all the **Musicians** around her. She drinks more water from the bottle but stops at mid-drink, remembering to save some for later. She clutches the bottle while she starts singing.*

Ringmaster:

*(To the **Musicians**)* Ok, let her be. Leave her alone. Make room!

*(The **Musicians** retreat, disappointed but resigned)*

So, not a music enthusiast. But when you feel better,
As we were attempting to introduce earlier... I might have something to your interest. Please drink, drink.

*(**Bird-Mother** drinks more. He prompts a **Musician** to bring more bottles. She takes them all, clutching them hard)*

Please, they're all yours. Drink, drink.

Bird-Mother:

(After some more desperately drinking, regaining her breath, her voice, singing)

Where am I? I must have drifted.

... the warm wind brought us here...

Ringmaster:

Us? - *Looking around for another creature –*

Who's with you?

Bird-Mother:

(Bird-Mother considers, looks sideways at something, lies)

I am lost.

(Pointing deliberately up to the sky)

It's a trail we've been following for generations.

I needed to stop for water. Food.

I have no strength left.

There's a long way ahead of me.

I need to sleep. To eat.

Thank you for the water. *(Not letting go of the bottle)*

Ringmaster:

(Looking around, searching the horizon for other creatures like her)

Yes. Yes. Water. So precious these days.

Bird-Mother:

I will repay you, somehow, before I am strong enough to leave.

Ringmaster:

Sure. *(strategizing, thinking)* Sure.

(Bird-Mother stands up, relatively recovered. She moves to go and Ringmaster stops her)

Wait. Have I offended you?

Bird-Mother:

No.

Ringmaster:

I get it. You're thirsty and hungry and in a hurry.

It's a damn dry place, this one is.

But.

The water, here, it's all mine. (*Looking at the **Musicians***) Ok.
Ours.

There is a tiny, small and not so cold water spring just
behind our truck.

Of course, we guard it night and day. Pointless to say.

You see, it is the only, or the last, source of water for
miles.

Luckily for you, you just need to ask ME, for more.

We will come to an agreement. No doubt.

Bird-Mother:

(*Pause*)

I must eat to resume my journey.

Ringmaster:

(*Laughing*) Sure you do.

You need me for that, too.

Bird-Mother:

(*She nods and tries to leave, slowly*)

Ringmaster:

(*Playing the victim*) Please lady. Sit down here, with me.

I'm getting older. My knees.

(*Sitting down on his chair and inviting her to sit on the floor*)

Oblige an old man.

(*She sits down, looking around as discreetly as she can*)

Thank you.

Now. About repayment. If you leave, how will you repay
me?

Any money?

Bird-Mother:

No. Never had any.

Ringmaster:

Mm. And you say you have to go far?

Bird-Mother:

Yes.

Ringmaster:

Is someone waiting for you, dear?

Bird-Mother:

.... No.

Ringmaster:

But you want to leave as soon as possible?

Bird-Mother:

Yes.

Ringmaster:

And you need food and water to do that. Am I right, dear?

Musician 1:

You're repeating yourself.

Ringmaster:

Quiet! Not you, dear. Please answer. You need food?

Bird-Mother:

Yes.

Ringmaster:

And yet you are lost and alone in a place with no food,
and no water. Other than ours.

Bird-Mother:

I understand now.

Ringmaster:

Smart lady. But you don't have any money or valuables
to pay for it.

Bird-Mother:

This is the truth.

Ringmaster:

Yet you sing beautifully.

Bird-Mother:

Thank you.

Ringmaster:

*(To the **Musicians**) Play number three. (**Musicians** play. Listening and letting himself be taken by the music, gesturing with his arms, as if he was a bird flying overhead, moving rhythmically and humming, inviting her to join in) La la la, la la la...*

Bird-Mother:

*(She starts slowly, but beautifully, to sing. Her singing is so captivating that after some few bars the **Musicians** stop playing to hear her voice, alone)*

Ringmaster:

*(To the **Musicians**)*

Do we share a business vision, now?

(Happy, springing back to his feet, suddenly 20 years younger, full of energy)

I told you we'd come to an agreement!

Good things come for those who wait.

You can rest for tonight.

You start tomorrow.

Bird-Mother:

Start?

Ringmaster:

You will sing for me. You will sing with us.

In exchange, I will give you all the water you need.

And food. Not much diversity of it, but no scarcity either.

Bird-Mother:

And then, I can leave?

Ringmaster:

Of course you can leave, anytime. As soon as you repay us.

(Pointing at a gun, or a bow, or something threatening.)

Do we need to doubt each other?

Bird-Mother:

No. No. I need to rest now. I will come back tomorrow.

Ringmaster:

Sure, sure.

Your imagination is your preview of life's coming attractions!

So they say.

(Bird-Mother retreats, slowly, facing the Musicians and the Ringmaster, retreating farther and farther until the lights turn off and we go to black)

Act 2 – Scene 1 – Lullaby.

*A dim light illuminates a corner of the stage, a hiding place (if possible?). Throughout **Bird-Mother's** monologue/aria, we do not see who she is speaking to, we never see a complete figure, merely one or two hands of a child. **Bird-Mother** has been awake all night, with her child, and will be awake all day, with the **Ringmaster** and Co. We might hear the child's voice here, if we need to, but we never see the child.*

Bird-Mother:

Quiet, now. The sun is rising quickly.
Hush, now. We'll meet again tonight.
Every night, until our bellies will be full
and our thirst quenched. Sleep tight.

Dream of our flight to the moon.
In her craters we will build our new lives.
Our steps on her sands will confirm
our salvation, our birthright.

Hide here throughout the day,
Warm and silent, you'll be safe.
You deserve it, my fearless daughter.

You have shown your mother
the skills of a hawk.

Soon you'll be flying faster and farther.
I promise, your strong little wings
will reinvent the art of flight
for all bird-kind.

*The **Ringmaster** enters looking older and disoriented, wearing his old pajamas and a sleeping cap, with an oil lantern. He cannot see **Bird-Mother** and her child, he can only hear her. He is following the sound of **Bird-Mother's** lullaby, trying to physically grab it, find it, own it. She does not see him at all for the remainder of the scene, only the audience will see how unknowingly and dangerously close he is to the mother and child.*

Quasi recitative

But now, my child, sleep tight.
I am close by and when the sun sets
we will eat again, and train again
and we'll feel much stronger.

They don't know we know
the moon is awaiting.
Now, let go. I love you.
Sleep all day long. Make no noise.
The sun rises. Silence!

***Bird-Mother** leaves her child and exits the stage.*

Act 2 – Scene 2 – Theories and Laws.

*Once silence falls, the **Ringmaster** remains, sniffing the air, repeating some of **Bird-Mother's** words as he remembers them. He seems to be dreaming or hallucinating (he doesn't seem to know the difference). He is mimicking **Bird-Mother's** singing, although the result is an out of tune, cranky, saloon-like desperate song. Some sentences seem to have the power of reinvigorating him, so he repeats them, not quite as a mantra but as an inspiration, an aspiration, a maneuver towards a new-found faith.*

Ringmaster:

Looking at his own arms in astonishment.

...the skills of a hawk. Ready for the moon.

A hawk. To the moon.

I could be flying faster and farther.

... your strong little arms ...

will reinvent the art of flight

for all mankind!

*We hear a child laughing and stopping abruptly as soon as silence falls. Long pause. **Ringmaster** looks around him, half paranoid, half angry.*

Was I dreaming of bird-like wings? What a lunatic.

Lunatic!?

Looking at his own arms in disappointment. He looks upwards to a fading moon. And then around him, again, exploring, puzzled, curious.

What if?

What if my flesh was to transgress the laws of science as we know them?

What if my bones, so light now, with the help of some feathers /

I am lighter than ever before /

What is science but a bunch of unprovable, improbable theories?

He picks up his sleeping hat and lets it fall to the ground.

All lies but one law: Gravity.

He picks up his hat from the floor

My skin will dry out here. As lonely as tumbleweed.

Pushed. Sullied with murky rain. Shoved all around. But if I could fly. Where would my wings take me?

*Some noises come from behind the truck, announcing that the **Musicians** are awake and working. The **Ringmaster** exits, quickly, before he is seen in his pajamas. **Bird-Mother** enters, following the **Musicians**, who are getting ready to rehearse.*

Act 2 – Scene 3 – A different kind of deal.

*The **Musicians** take their seats, pull on their robes and do whatever they need to start rehearsing.*

Musician 1:

Lady, ma'am. You, birdie! (*Laughter*) Show us what you can do.

***Bird-Mother** agrees, nervously, and takes a step forward, towards them.*

Ready?

*They (the **Musicians**) start playing, not very enthusiastically at first, until **Bird-Mother** starts to sing (no words, only "birdsongs"). For the first few bars, **Bird-Mother** sings shyly, insecure. But as the **Musicians** 'tag along', unwillingly following her wherever her voice goes, she starts leading them towards a kind of "sound" or "music" that feels fresh and new to them. The more they follow, the more she leads, her voice growing fuller, her back straighter, her volume louder, her wings start to unfold until they are fully extended, showing the stunning colors and rich beauty of her feathers. There is a seduction to her singing and in her appearance, as birds appear in their mating rituals, (inspired by the lyre bird for this scene). She is bewitching them, showing virtuosity and challenging the **Musicians** whom, transfixed, fall under her spell. Slowly, one by one, unaware of the ensemble, they stop playing to enjoy the pleasure of listening solely to her voice, until there is only one instrument playing, and her voice. Finally the last instrument stops, and they all look and listen to **Bird-Mother's** sudden sad gradation, filling their hearts with longing and a thick, piercing sense of helplessness. A very solemn moment. Silence. The **Ringmaster** disrupts the scene.*

Ringmaster:

Exaggeratedly clapping and making a big fuss

Oh! Brava! Brava! Brava!

How moving! Please! A chair!

My legs are failing! Oh! The sadness!

Did you hear?

Mimicking her last phrase

Violin! Play the end again!

Hurry! Play, play! Mmmmh, yes!

La-la-laaaaaaaaaaaa!

Ah, that very last -aaaaah!

Look at them! Ohhh! They cannot find the right words either!

You bewildered them all!

Clapping again, euphorically Brava! Brava!

The Musicians join in, standing up, clapping. A rare moment of positive collective emotion.

Enough! Stop! Stop! I leave you alone with her for five minutes and the world changes. If I didn't know you, drunkards, I might think you even seem to own souls.

That was indeed a sad spectacle and not because the bird screeched like a parrot!

So you can sing better than the best, right?

Oh, missy, missy, missy.

You can play them, alright.

But tell us now, tell us all.

I heard you singing different song before the sun rose.

You were talking to someone.

Bird-Mother:

No.

Ringmaster:

Do you know what she was saying?

You don't, because you were either sleeping or drinking
or fantasizing, which to you is altogether the same kinda'
booze.

But I heard it. I heard you.

I thought I was dreaming. But I never dream.

You were talking about the moon. For real!

Do you know something we don't?

Answer!

Bird-Mother:

Pointing to where the moon should be.

It's only a point on our map.

Ringmaster:

Whose map? Yours and who else?

Bird-Mother:

No one else, and everyone else.

For my kind. We fly towards the moon.

Musician 1:

You fly to the moon?

Bird-Mother:

Towards her.

Ringmaster:

To go where?

Bird-Mother:

No one really knows.

Ringmaster:

Liar!

Bird-Mother:

It's not something one learns

It has never been written.

It is **the thing** we know.

We fly, high and low

For days, weeks, months,

we follow the icy trace
propelled by her currents
and whirls, through rain or snow.
We are always going.
We don't know where we'll be arriving.

Ringmaster:

But I heard you clear and crisp.
To the Musicians
She knows more than she seems.
She was talking about someone else's wings.
And lands. And stepping on its sands.

Musician 1:

Oh! wow!

Musician 2:

Sands?

Musician 3:

What did she actually say?

Musician 1:

I think he's had too much to drink.

Musician 4:

I'm telling you, this is not good whiskey!

Musician 2:

Who was she talking to?

Musician 5:

That's funny! Don't we sell tickets to the moon?

Musician 1:

She's a beautiful singer, I think we could make money.
And get some good whiskey. What if she's a bit crazy?

Musician 3:

Who isn't?

Ringmaster:

Shut it!

I come from a long line of sniffers.

Musicians:

Laughter.

Ringmaster:

Idiots! Leave now! Shoo, Shoo!

Musicians leave, backstage, peeping every now and again from behind the curtains.

Never mind them. They know nothing about lineages.

Or families.

He gets closer to her, snatches one of the brightest colored feathers

But you do.

He smells the feather.

You were not soliloquizing.

That was pure communication.

Bird-Mother:

I sing...

Ringmaster:

Don't talk. Just listen.

I will find whatever you are hiding.

Once I find it, I can be bitter.

Or I can be sweet.

Or I can look the other way.

But there is something you must do, a price, for my blindness.

You can talk, now.

Bird-Mother:

What can I do for you?

Ringmaster:

Take me with you.

Bird-Mother:

Bring you? Where?

Ringmaster:

Where are you going?

Bird-Mother:

You are too heavy.

Ringmaster:

Then, show me your routes.

Bird-Mother:

They're drawn in the airstreams.

Ringmaster:

Then give me your feathers.

Bird-Mother:

My coat? But I...

Ringmaster:

All of your plumes.

He discreetly and slowly takes a rope from his pocket. He hides it from her, until he will be close enough to restrain her with it.

Bird-Mother:

Scared, but with some bewildered laughter

What for?

Ringmaster:

I will land on the moon.

Bird-Mother:

You want to fly?

Ringmaster:

You'll teach me. Will you?

Bird-Mother:

No. It's not possible.

You are mad.

My wings are ...

Ringmaster:

Tied.

***Bird-Mother** tries to run away or fly away, but **Ringmaster** pulls the rope tight.*

But the rope could be long.

Long enough.

Bird-Mother:

More food. And blindness.

Ringmaster:

And plenty of water. For two.

I can smell it.

Bird-Mother:

Please don't hurt/

Ringmaster:

Interrupting

/Never. I don't see why I should.

Do you?

Act 2 – Scene 4 – Wait.

*Evening or night. Full moon. **Musicians** are already playing. A dress rehearsal is about to start. The **Ringmaster** will lead, with Bird-Mother joining now and then. They are singing completely different songs/tunes weirdly harmonizing together. (This is not a musical direction, it is only a dramatic expression of where the characters are at that moment:*

***Bird-Mother** starts afraid and weak, insecure; the **Ringmaster** starts frantic and aiming for the grandiose, the final high, sustained note he will never sing (anti-climaxing like Stravinsky!). As the scene develops and the **Ringmaster** is showing more and more carelessness and delusion, **Bird-Mother** gains strength and it is her voice we hear at the end. **It's a slow transition of power/weight**). Bird-Mother is finishing sewing a big pair of wings. She is emaciated. The **Ringmaster** is pacing around her, nervously, impatiently, every now and again checking on the wings, interrupting **Bird-Mother's** sewing. He has decided that his flight (take-off), will be part of the show. Generally, throughout the libretto, **Bird-Mother** sings and the **Ringmaster** speaks. In this scene, the **Ringmaster** will sing more and **Bird-Mother** will talk more, switching roles. (He doesn't need to be a good singer)*

Ringmaster:

Carrying a bag with food and water and swinging it before her eyes.

It's time. This must be yours. For both of yous...

Bird-Mother:

She drops what she is doing and fetches the bag from him.

Singing. It's almost ready. Please. Let me finish.

Ringmaster:

Hurry up.

Rehearsal is starting in two minutes.

Wait for your cue.

Bird-Mother:

Singing

Just some more blue.

Ringmaster exits to put the place in showtime-mode. (Opening curtains ?).

Bird-Mother:

Taking the bag with food and water to the edge of the stage, as far as the rope tied to her ankle lets her. She is staring into the darkness. She sees someone and smiles. She leaves the bag on the floor where we cannot see it and steps back. Singing.

Stop!

Don't come closer. These animals are hostile.

Shhhhh! Don't make a sound!

Eat slowly.

Playing with the rope,

Can you see? it's longer now.

And I can pull myself back to my place with it!

It doesn't hurt.

I could stay here all day watching you eat.

You look so much healthier.

She reacts to something her daughter does, laughing.

Yes! Your feathers are shining!

I am so proud.

Ringmaster:

His voice, rehearsing. Music starts. Ringmaster seems to be mocking his own presentation of the show.

Idiots of the world, Willkommen, Bienvenidos,

Bienvenue, Benvenuti, etcetera, etcetera.

Welcome flight-less beetles, unredeemable snakes!

Unsung scorpions and innocent creatures hiding in dark crevices...

I'm getting *the-hell-outta-here before you all!* Ha!

Taking a long breath

Ok. Let us begin with the whole rigmarole.

Bird-Mother:

To her child

Shhh!

You must soon be ready.

Look at the moon.

Soon it will be full,
and it will be time for you
to lead the way.

Trace our long-lost flock,

- You will find them where and when the moon sets in
the north -.

You know the best course!

Test the airwaves, aim high.

You are strong.

And I.

I will follow.

But first, brave explorers need plenty of food.

I will bring it to you, once more,

Then it will be your time to go.

Not now. Not yet. Wait, so.

Wait, so.

Wait.

End of scene and Act 2, overlapping with Act 3 Scene 1

Act 3 – Scene 1 – Rehearsal.

@Debbie: We could see flashbacks of the Ringmaster as soon as he starts talking about him.

Ringmaster:

Pacing up and down, thinking, mumbling, anxious, he starts rehearsing his opening, going over the words and movements as memorized but not fully finishing every movement, quickly and quirkily, excitedly, impatiently.

Laaadieeeeeez and Gentlemeeeen!

Creeeeatures of all sorts!

Tonight, before your very eyes... we

To himself

No. No. Bigger.

Starts again

Laaadieeeeeez and Gentlemeeeen!

Only tonight!

And revealed to you exclusively,

No cheating, no tricks!

Pure magic!

To himself

No. I don't like the word "magic".

Only tonight!

Revealed to you exclusively!

No cheating, no tricks!

Pure reality!

To himself

Yes, pure reality!!!

Tonight, black will be white.

Tonight, squares will be round.
Truths will be lies. Sand will be water.
To himself
Blah, blah, blah.

Bird-Mother:

To herself
Tonight his noise will be my music.

Ringmaster:

Singing
Tonight, I! I! I! will break the
Law, of gravity!
Yes!
You will doubt everything you know.
Everything your daddies told you.

Bird-Mother:

To herself, speaking
I must not falter.

Ringmaster:

Singing
Because tonight, this lonely man
Bitten by age and wrinkled by thirst,
Crushed by rejection and stabbed by anger,
Hollowed by fear and replenished with spite,
Abandoned by beauty, grace, grandeur!

Bird-Mother:

To herself
I must move faster

Ringmaster:

Singing
Tonight this man before you,
Will embark on the primeval mi-gra-tion,
Embryonic des-ti-na-tion!

E-le-men-tal re-lo-ca-tion!

Bird-Mother:

To herself

Use your imagination,

Make him jump or make him slump!

Ringmaster:

An exodus reserved for the best flying birds.

*Cue for **Bird-Mother***

Bird-Mother:

***Bird-Mother** enters with the set of wings in her hands and wearing a cape over her own shoulders.*

Tonight we will see an elderly body fly.

Ringmaster:

To the moon!

*The **Musicians** start playing a faster tune whilst the **Ringmaster** drops his circus outfit to demonstrate the truthfulness of his intentions, standing half-naked, turning feverishly like a whirling dervish to show there are no tricks, mechanisms or secret artifices on or around his body. **Bird-Mother** stops him and helps him put on his wings.*

Ringmaster:

*While **Bird-Mother** adjusts the wings to his body or arms.*

Ha! Better than yesterday!

This is it, yes, hurry. This should take only five seconds!

Pushing her away.

Ladieeeeeees and Gentlemeeeeen:

No one will fly better than I.

The music accompanies the crescendo.

Bird-Mother:

A very physical scene for both as they start the “Flying Dance”.

Remember.

Singing

Drag. Lift. Thrust.

The three laws of flight.

Ringmaster:

The air is a fluid.

Bird-Mother:

Move your wings through it.

Ringmaster:

Drag is the force of the high wind,

Bird-Mother:

Lift the angle of the wings.

Thrust is the third law:

Ringmaster:

The power, the courage,

The fearlessness!

Bird-Mother:

Thrust cannot be learnt.

It must be in you.

Ringmaster:

Pointing at the top of the trailer

Now, the ladder! Boys! *To the Musicians*

Faster, faster, animoso!

Ringmaster climbs to the top of the trailer

Drag, lift, thrust!

I can feel it. It's taking me.

The moon is full.

Drag, lift, thrust!

I have it in me.

But I am a different animal.

I am jumping.

I am fleeing from this wasteland

And will not turn back.

*The **Musicians** stop playing and all turn to look toward him.*

Bird-Mother:

If you want to fly high,
You have to feel the wind's thrust...
In your back.

Ringmaster:

Do I have to turn this way? *Pointing outside the lit range of
the stage.*

Bird-Mother:

*Staring at the **Musicians***
Yes, turn around!
***Musicians** return to their positions and resume playing.*

Ringmaster:

I will fly.
I know I can.

Bird-Mother:

Is the thrust in you?
Can you feel its force?

Ringmaster:

Yes! Yes!
Maybe I should try.

Bird-Mother:

Fly. Fly. Fly!

Ringmaster:

But will it work? Will it ever work?

Bird-Mother:

It must!

Ringmaster:

Stopping suddenly and turning back towards her
You want to kill me.

Bird-Mother:

No!

Ringmaster:

You all want to kill me!

Musicians:

No!

*The **Musicians** change to a sweeter music, enticing him to jump.*

The music plays a big role in creating an atmosphere of “flying is possible”, of wishful thinking, of “magic”.

Bird-Mother:

I can smell your fear.

- It happens to the best of birds -.

Your wings are not steady. You are not ready .

Maybe tomorrow?

Musician 1:

Soft

Jump.

Ringmaster:

Arietta

There is a place for me,

There. You see?

I have a reservation!.

The moon is full and is waiting.

New faces. New names.

New cutlery for crab-cakes!

New reservoirs of fame.

Musician 2:

Soft

Fly.

Ringmaster:

A new missus. A new smile.

My own black teeth turning white.

Rivers, cascades of white wines.
Maybe new friends are waiting and my new lover is
expecting.

Musician 3:

Soft
Jump!

Ringmaster:

Maybe I am a father, a good father, a Dad.
Maybe no fingers are pointing behind my back!
Maybe I have new crocodile leather shoes,
Or maybe all fingers are pointing, because I, am back?

Musician 4:

Soft.
Float!

Ringmaster:

28 days of temperate sunlight in white soft sands,
For the one and only flying human...
Oh. Isn't that a great part?

Bird-Mother:

There are 28 days of darkness,
In both sides.

Ringmaster:

Don't call it darkness. Call it shade.
We're talking about paradise.

Bird-Mother:

I'm not a murderer. You can't fly!.

Ringmaster:

You know, deep down, I can.
Listen! (*To the music*)

Musicians:

Crescendo.
Jump.

Fly.
Float.
Flow.
Go!

Bird-Mother:

The music is fooling you.
You're only a man.

Ringmaster:

The first man in the moon.

Bird-Mother:

A lonely man in the moon.

Ringmaster:

The **only** man in the moon!

Bird-Mother:

It may rain soon! I can smell people far away... they are
coming to see you.

Wait!

She starts climbing the ladder, to stop him, or dissuade him.

Ringmaster:

To Bird-Mother

Back off!

*He pushes the ladder away with his foot. Ladder and
Bird-Mother fall to the ground.*

This is my moment!

Bird-Mother:

Wait!

Musicians:

Crescendo.

Jump.

Fly.

Jump.

Float.

Jump.

Flow.

Jump.

Go!

Ringmaster:

Ladies! Gentlemen!

I loooove goodbyes.

FAREWELL EVERYBODY.

*The **Ringmaster** takes a deep breath and jumps. He tries to move the arms /wings vigorously. For a moment, it seems to the audience that he is indeed somehow suspended in mid-air. But like in cartoons, after a few seconds, he falls, dramatically, crashing against the ground. The sound of **Ringmaster's** body hitting the floor silences everything and everybody around. The light changes to a white, nude hospital-like atmosphere. Fantasy fell with him, and everything around him now seems bare, devoid of charm, in stark contrast to the previous scene. **Ringmaster** is not moving. After a spell, **Bird-Mother** slowly removes herself from the scene, careful with the rope still around her ankle. The **Musicians** are frozen, looking at the still body of the **Ringmaster**. Lights fade to dark in total silence.*

Act 3 – Scene 2 – Farewells.

Somewhere around the environs of the trailer, near the unlit area of the stage, Bird-Mother arrives with food and water. She makes a birdcall and waits for a response.

Bird-Mother:

To the air around, to the darkness around her, she sings a birdcall. No answer. Another birdcall. No answer. She starts singing.

I know you are here.
I can smell you near.
I know you are afraid
to leave without me.
But I hear you, breathing.
I will always hear you.
No matter how far you go.

You will not be flying alone.
I am in you. Our heartbeats
are one rhythm. One movement.
One song.
You are going to a new home.

I will be listening for you,
day and night while I gather my
strength.
I will listen hard,
I will. But you must go now.
You must do it for me.

We hear birdsong, some unintelligible reply.

I promise. Can you see me?

Look at me. I promise.

I will follow.

Go now.

We hear wings rustling. Bird-Mother looks above her.

@Debbie : Could we see a bird's first flight alone here, flying across frontiers, borders, perhaps? Pure freedom?

Drag. Lift. Thrust!

The three laws of flight.

The air is a fluid.

Move your wings through it.

Lift the angle of the wings.

Thrust is the third law:

The power, the courage,

Go!

*We (could?) see the little bird as it flies away towards the moon, on the screen. By doing so, we have time to change back to the previous set in which the **Musicians** are gathered around the body of the **Ringmaster**, stealing his wallet, his nice shoes, etc. **Bird-Mother** gets closer to the body, on her knees. The **Musicians** take a step back, but are still lurking around.*

Bird-Mother:

He is breathing!

*The **Musicians** react with a mixture of fear and shame and go straight back to their instruments yet keeping the **Ringmaster's** stolen things. **Bird-Mother** takes him on her lap, tending to him maternally.*

Bird-Mother:

Can you hear me?

Ringmaster:

With great difficulty

Wa...ter.

Bird-Mother:

*To the **Musicians***

Please, bring me some water.

Musician 1:

No water left. Only whiskey.

Musician 2:

And it's not real whiskey.

Bird-Mother:

Please, hurry.

***Musician 1** brings her a bottle of a muddy liquid and goes back to his instrument, never turning his back. **Bird-Mother** bottle-feeds the **Ringmaster**.*

Ringmaster:

Music. Music!

***Musicians** improvise. **Ringmaster** opens his eyes.*

You.

Bird-Mother:

You.

Ringmaster:

You've killed me.

Bird-Mother:

You've killed both of us.

She unties her cape around her neck, showing her skeletal, featherless wings.

Ringmaster:

I have changed my mind.

I am not ready to leave.

Bird-Mother:

Then, stay.

Musician 1 leaves his instrument and approaches the scene, dubitative. He pulls a knife from his pocket. Bird-Mother fears the worst. Ringmaster laughs, painfully.

Ringmaster:

With them fools?

For what? For love?

Ringmaster tries to force a laugh. He coughs. Musician 1 kneels down and cuts Bird-Mother's rope tied to her ankle. He leaves the knife in her hands, and goes back to his instrument. The rest of the musicians pat him on the back and offer him bad whiskey and resume playing.

Ringmaster:

While I was lying here,

I saw a bird flying to the moon.

A beautiful bird.

A fast bird.

A free bird.

I thought it was me.

Bird-Mother:

I saw her too.

Ringmaster:

It's the first time

In my life

That I tried to break a law
And failed.

Bird-Mother:

I broke all my laws. But one.

Ringmaster:

I felt your wings
as one long extension of my will.
They will forget your face.
As I am forgetting mine.
I am afraid of the silence.

*We see the **Musicians** standing up and looking (perhaps towards the screen, or towards the horizon). They have heard footsteps, people approaching, or cars, noise coming from not so far away.*

Listen!

Bird-Mother:

Listen!

Musician 1:

Listen!

Bird-Mother:

Can you hear?
Someone is finally coming.
We must start the show
In less than five minutes.
Are you ready?

Ringmaster:

I am ready.
*The **Ringmaster** lifts his hand, pointing at something with his finger, they sing.*

There is a place...
for the downtrodden...

Musicians start playing. Ringmaster stops breathing.

Bird-Mother:

A place where the lost are found...

Bird-Mother retrieves the wings from the *Ringmaster's* arms and body, puts them on, and covers *Ringmaster's* body with her cape. We slowly lit the audience area and they (audience) are now part of the show: They are the newcomers, the crossers. *Musicians* and *Bird-Mother* react to seeing the audience for the first time and start their '*circus*' music. *Bird-Mother* sings, now free, from centre stage.

Finale

Bird-Mother:

Laaadieeeeeez and Gentlemeeeen!

Creeeeatures of all sorts!

A fabulous secret will be revealed

Only to you! Not a magic act!

No cheating, no tricks!

For there is a place for the downtrodden

A place where the lost are found.

A place with no borders, no orders,

No self-centered hoarders nor panic disorders

A home where the folk are freed from their warders!

With green grass and tulips, and parrots and turnips,

And free-flowing bubbliies, and juices and more!

A place where one can finally rest

And the rest - you must see for yourself!

(Pointing at an artifact, or a door, or a trick).

The End