

jet of blood

by ANTONIN ARTAUD

translated by George E. Wellwarth

CHARACTERS

THE YOUNG MAN	THE SEXTON
THE YOUNG GIRL	THE WHORE
THE KNIGHT	THE JUDGE
THE NURSE	THE STREET PEDDLER
THE PRIEST	A THUNDEROUS VOICE
THE SHOEMAKER	

THE YOUNG MAN: I love you, and everything is beautiful.

THE YOUNG GIRL (with a strong tremolo in her voice): You love me, and everything is beautiful.

THE YOUNG MAN (in a very deep voice): I love you, and everything is beautiful.

THE YOUNG GIRL (in an even deeper voice than his): You love me, and everything is beautiful.

THE YOUNG MAN (leaving her abruptly): I love you. (Pause.) Turn around and face me.

THE YOUNG GIRL (she turns to face him): There!

THE YOUNG MAN (in a shrill and exalted voice): I love you, I am big, I am shining, I am full, I am solid.

THE YOUNG GIRL (in the same shrill tone): We love each other.

THE YOUNG MAN: We are intense. Ah, how well ordered this world is!

A pause. Something that sounds like an immense wheel turning and blowing out air is heard. A hurricane separates the two. At this moment two stars crash into each other, and we see a number of live pieces of human bodies falling down: hands, feet, scalps, masks, colonnades, porches, temples, and alembics, which, however, fall more and more slowly, as if they were falling in a vacuum. Three scorpions fall down, one after the other, and finally a frog and a beetle, which sets itself down with a maddening, vomit-inducing slowness.

(Shouting as loud as he can.) The sky has gone mad! (He looks at the sky.) Let's get out of here. (He pushes The Young Girl out before him.)

Enter a knight of the Middle Ages in an enormous suit of armor, followed by a nurse holding her breasts in both hands and puffing and wheezing because they are both very swollen.

THE KNIGHT: Leave your breasts alone. Give me my papers.

THE NURSE (crying shrilly): Ah! Ah! Ah!

THE KNIGHT: Shit, what's the matter with you?

THE NURSE: Look! Our daughter—there—with him!

THE KNIGHT: Bah! There's no girl there!

THE NURSE: I tell you, they're screwing each other.

THE KNIGHT: What the hell do I care if they're screwing each other?

THE NURSE: Incest.

THE KNIGHT: Old woman.

THE NURSE (plunges her hands into her pockets, which are as large as her breasts): Pimp! (She throws the papers at him.)

THE KNIGHT: Bitch! Let me eat.

The Nurse runs off. The Knight gets up again and pulls an enormous slice of Gruyère cheese out of each paper. Suddenly he coughs and chokes.

(His mouth full.) Eh! Eh! Show me your breasts. Show me your breasts. Where did she go to?

He runs off.

THE YOUNG MAN (re-enters): I have seen, I have learned, I have understood. Here are the public square, the priest, the cobbler, the street peddlers, the threshold of the church, the red light of the whorehouse, the scales of justice. I can't any

A Priest, a Shoemaker, a Sexton, a Whore, a Judge, and a Street Peddler enter like shadows.

I have lost her. . . . Give her back to me.

ALL (in various tones): Who, who, who, who?

THE YOUNG MAN: My wife.

THE SEXTON (very sexton-like): Your wife. . . . Phooey! Clown!

THE YOUNG MAN: Clown! You're talking about your wife, maybe!

THE SEXTON (tapping his forehead): That may be true.

He runs off. The Priest leaves the group and puts his arm round The Young Man's neck.

THE PRIEST (in a confessional tone): To what part of your body would you say you refer most often?

THE YOUNG MAN: To God.

The Priest, put out of countenance by this answer, immediately starts talking with a Swiss accent.

THE PRIEST (with a Swiss accent): But that doesn't go any more. We don't listen to that sort of thing any more. It's necessary to ask such things of volcanoes and earthquakes. We others feed ourselves on the dirty little stories we hear in the confessional. And that's all there is—that's life!

THE YOUNG MAN (very impressed): Ah, yes, there we are, that's life! Oh, well, it all goes down the drain sooner or later.

THE PRIEST (still with his Swiss accent): But of course.

Night suddenly falls. Earthquake. Thunder shakes the air, and lightning zigzags in all directions. In the intermittent flashes of lightning one sees people running around in panic, embracing each other, falling down, getting up again, and running around like madmen.

At a given moment an enormous hand seizes The Whore's hair, which bursts into ever-widening flames.

A THUNDEROUS VOICE: Bitch, look at your body!

The Whore's body appears completely nude and hideous under her dress, which suddenly becomes transparent.

THE WHORE: Leave me, God.

She bites God's wrist. An immense jet of blood shoots across the stage, and we can see The Priest making the sign of the cross during a flash of lightning that lasts longer than the others.

When the lights come up again, all the characters are dead and their bodies lie scattered over the ground. Only The Young Man and The Whore are left. They are eating each other's eyes.

The Whore falls into The Young Man's arms.

THE WHORE (with a sigh as if she were at the point of orgasm): Tell me how this happened to you.

The Young Man hides his face in his hands.

The Nurse comes back carrying The Young Girl in her arms like a parcel. The Young Girl is dead. The Nurse lets her fall to the ground, where she is crushed flat as a pancake.

The Nurse no longer has any breasts. Her front is completely flat. At this moment The Knight comes out and throws himself on The Nurse, shaking her violently.

THE KNIGHT (in a threatening voice): Where have you put it? Give me my Gruyère!

THE NURSE (cheerfully): Here you are. (She lifts her dress. The Young Man tries to flee but freezes at the sight like a petrified marionette.)

THE YOUNG MAN (as if suspended in mid-air and with the voice of a ventriloquist's dummy): Don't hurt Mummy.

THE KNIGHT: Accused woman! (He covers his face in horror.)

An army of scorpions comes out from under The Nurse's dress and swarms over his sex, which swells up and bursts, becoming glassy and shining like the sun. The Young Man and The Whore flee.

THE YOUNG GIRL (reviving as if dazzled): The virgin! Ah, that's what he was looking for.

CURTAIN