

RigorMortis

Written by

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

CLARE, *a writer*

BERNARD, *not a writer*

BUBBLEGUM BOY, *a pure youth*

ACT I

*A cellar, dungeon almost.
Dark. Cold. Ambient Nordic
music circulates through the
air.*

*Clare types on a typewriter,
fighting a battle.*

*Bernard stands in the corner,
having waited for too long.*

*Clare finishes for now. She
relaxes and sighs. The music
fades.*

BERNARD

All done?

CLARE

When did you get here?

BERNARD

I've been waiting.

CLARE

Watching me?

BERNARD

I asked how the story was coming and you told
me to wait until you stopped, so I did.

CLARE

When was this?

BERNARD

...Are you satisfied with the story?

CLARE

Hard to be satisfied when I create something
I know nothing about.

BERNARD

You are not a god.

CLARE

I think I am.

BERNARD

Believing in something does not make it a reality.

CLARE

Maybe not for you.

BERNARD

You are not special.

CLARE

I am the creator.

BERNARD

You're too shriveled to be so.

CLARE

You think my arm's reach has a limit?

BERNARD

This cellar isn't helping.

CLARE

Then allow me to leave.

BERNARD

Finish the story, and the door is wide open.

CLARE

This is torture.

BERNARD

You've insisted this of me.

CLARE

I would never do such a thing.

BERNARD

You insisted I hold you here until your story is complete. That is what you told me.

CLARE

I may recall something of the sort.

BERNARD

I do not lie, Clare.

CLARE

No kidnapper is a truth-teller.

BERNARD

I am no kidnapper.

CLARE

You hold the key to my freedom and dangle it above me like a starving gorilla.

BERNARD

Gorillas do not eat keys.

CLARE

They have their locked closets just as you and I do.

BERNARD

I have no closet.

CLARE

You're in mine. Closet after closet in a never-ending hole.

BERNARD

Calling a cage a home don't make its bars disappear. Remember that.

CLARE

Just because you wear a badge doesn't mean you're not trapped with me.

BERNARD

Some day I'll leave you in here.

CLARE

What a boring suicide that would be.

BERNARD

You need me.

CLARE

What would you do if I agreed with you?

BERNARD

What?

CLARE

I don't. Let me be clear, I don't agree with you. You're stupid. You're a stupid idiot man who I don't agree with. Big smelly gorilla of a man whom I don't agree with.

BERNARD

You're crossing a line.

CLARE

The rules are not to be mentioned! Ah! You idiot. Do not break my flow like that.

BERNARD

Then how are they to exist if they're not spoken of?

CLARE

Listen closely for the safe word.

BERNARD

I don't remember it.

CLARE

I know. I've said it thousands of times without you noticing.

BERNARD

Why didn't you say something?

CLARE

I did. I said the safe word.

BERNARD

I don't remember you saying it ever before.

CLARE

You're very good at being in character sometimes.

BERNARD

But I don't want to hurt you.

CLARE

Please, we were doing so well. Do you want me to finish my story or not?

BERNARD

Of course.

CLARE

Then for god's sake, Bernard, play along.

BERNARD

How far should I take it?

CLARE

Wait for the safe word.

BERNARD

I could never act so violently as to make you say it.

CLARE

You tried to break me.

BERNARD

I would never.

CLARE

You broke my back with a jar because I said your memories were not to be trusted.

BERNARD

What was in the jar?

CLARE

What was in the jar?

BERNARD

Well *I* don't know.

CLARE

That's what you care about?

BERNARD

It must've been something dense to break the spine.

CLARE

You screamed how I was in your head.

BERNARD

Like...a parasite.

CLARE

You remember?

BERNARD

I do. Hazily. Underwater almost.

CLARE

I didn't do that.

BERNARD

You broke me.

CLARE

You certainly weren't going to do it yourself.

BERNARD

Where did I get a jar?

CLARE

There always has to be a third character.

BERNARD

I would know if there was a third in here.

CLARE

You pride yourself with power but you've lost your gun.

Realizes his gun is gone.

BERNARD

Where is my gun?

CLARE

That's better.

BERNARD

I've never been this forgetful.

CLARE

I recall a different conversation.

BERNARD

Why am I to trust your memory over mine?

CLARE

Because I remember it all.

BERNARD

I remember as well.

CLARE

When is your birthday?

He forgot.

BERNARD

When is *your* birthday?

CLARE

Today.

BERNARD

No, it isn't.

CLARE

I know where the Earth lands on my birthday and it's right here.

BERNARD

But soon the Earth will move, and your birthday will have passed.

CLARE

Time. Time will move it. The Earth is not my enemy.

BERNARD

Time will kill you. I will outlive you.

CLARE

You cannot begin to comprehend what my eternity will feel like.

BERNARD

I am in control of your life.

CLARE

Time weighs down on my heart, it is by no means your doing.

BERNARD

(breaking)

Are you dying?

CLARE

And you soften. Jesus Christ, Bernard!

BERNARD

I asked about your health.

CLARE

You'd think you'd be able to stiffen up a little.

BERNARD

I don't want you to die.

CLARE

You had one job you needed to do into the endless void.

BERNARD

Is that a line?

CLARE

Yes.

BERNARD

From your story?

CLARE

No.

BERNARD

Where did it come from?

CLARE

Somewhere.

BERNARD

Then how do you know it is a line?

CLARE

Everything I say is a line. Nothing is organic. I've spent time drinking reality and stuffing it in my cheeks and now I spit it out onto paper. Everything is repetition. Nothing is true.

BERNARD

I consider myself an original.

CLARE

You've never stepped foot in an art gallery.

BERNARD

I know the names.

CLARE

And I know your name. Bernard.

BERNARD

Bernard is my father.

CLARE

And yourself.

BERNARD

It's a tradition.

CLARE

As is everything you do.

BERNARD

Not everything.

CLARE

Someone has said that before. Tradition.

BERNARD

Someone has said *that* before.

CLARE

No they hadn't, I checked this morning.

BERNARD

You were writing this morning.

CLARE

You dozed off. You shouldn't do that so often.

BERNARD

I need to rest. It's exhausting.

CLARE

I could write all over you.

BERNARD

I'd wash it all off.

CLARE

You're not the paper. You're the typewriter.

Beat.

BERNARD

I think you should leave.

CLARE

Excuse me?

BERNARD

I don't want you to die.

CLARE

Oh my god!!

BERNARD

I'm sorry.

CLARE

Do you want me to finish the story or not?

BERNARD

Of course I do.

CLARE

Then follow the rules!

But it's killing you.

BERNARD

I've been dying for centuries.

CLARE

I was not asleep for that long.

BERNARD

How were your dreams?

CLARE

I...don't remember.

BERNARD

Then how can you know how long you slept?

CLARE

I'm concerned.

BERNARD

You've always been concerned.

CLARE

I'm not a one note individual.

BERNARD

Give me a C.

CLARE

Sings a note.

CLARE

You think that's a C?

BERNARD

I do.

CLARE

Well, you're right. It was a C. That's your one note.

BERNARD

Why do you antagonize me so often?

CLARE

That was a compliment.

BERNARD

Yes, and it allowed me a window to speak my mind.

CLARE

It let in a draft. Great job, Bernard. That's just great! Now it's cold!

BERNARD

I don't feel a draft.

CLARE

Your skin is dry. I haven't tended to it in some time.

BERNARD

I take pride in my moist skin.

CLARE

You haven't seen your face in a while. It's not good. It's not a good face.

BERNARD

This is the antagonizing I was referring to.

CLARE

I understood your comment, I just didn't like the draft it brought in.

BERNARD

I do not like to be antagonized.

CLARE

You're still here, aren't you? You must like it.

BERNARD

I am here for you.

CLARE

Well, if you were here for you you'd have left by now.

BERNARD
I don't like this place. I don't like what
it's doing to you.

CLARE
Done to me. Done to you.

BERNARD
I am sturdy.

CLARE
As sturdy as a puddle.

BERNARD
My water is calm.

CLARE
Until I jump into it.

BERNARD
You'd get all wet.

CLARE
Seeping into my shoes.

BERNARD
Your feet would get wet.

CLARE
Your wet would get feet.

BERNARD
...You're right.

CLARE
I know I am.

BERNARD
Run away with me.

CLARE
No.

BERNARD
I'm keeping you here. I tell you where to go.

CLARE

I can't leave until I am done.

BERNARD

Remember the key? The gorilla?

CLARE

Yes, I still smell you.

BERNARD

I'm referring// to when you said-

CLARE

(explosion)

You are a fool if you think some weak thing like you could stop me!

Beat.

BERNARD

I don't think this environment is healthy to your growth.

CLARE

My growth peaked out there. Now is my decay.

BERNARD

No need to accelerate the process.

CLARE

I cannot run up a hill while rolling down it.

BERNARD

You can trick yourself into thinking so. Just close your eyes and kick your legs.

He drops to the ground and does just this.

CLARE

You're a fool.

BERNARD

Growing like a redwood!

CLARE
Get up off the ground, boy.

BERNARD
I'm growing!

CLARE
Stop rolling like a child.

BERNARD
Soon I will be mature!

CLARE
You're distracting me.

BERNARD
A sapling no longer!

CLARE
I said no!

She throws the typewriter on the ground. It dies.

Bernard stops.

BERNARD
Why have you done that?

CLARE
You poked my temperament.

BERNARD
I was growing.

CLARE
I didn't like that.

BERNARD
I don't know what you want from me.

CLARE
Yes you do. You know perfectly well.

BERNARD
Now you've stuck us both as saplings.

CLARE

I'd never be so foolish.

BERNARD

You've done the equivalent of throwing our key down the drainpipe.

CLARE

There's that key again!

BERNARD

It's a relatable metaphor.

CLARE

That is not a metaphor.

BERNARD

You know what I mean.

CLARE

But you don't know what I mean. A key.

BERNARD

I mean without your typewriter you cannot write.

CLARE

I will use you.

BERNARD

I will wash it off.

CLARE

It's already written all over your face.

BERNARD

Aha! I thought I was the typewriter and not the paper.

CLARE

Your heart is the typewriter. Your wiggly little body is the canvas I type onto.

BERNARD

It will fade away over time.

CLARE

Permanent marker is not so weak.

BERNARD

Your writing does not consist of permanence.

CLARE

No, it doesn't. But you do.

BERNARD

So I will outlive you!

CLARE

I've had a polite conversation with time.
We're compromising about the whole death
thing.

BERNARD

You must think quite highly of yourself to
believe you have the ability to bend reality
like a piece of bubblegum.

CLARE

Yes!!

BERNARD

What?

CLARE

I need bubblegum!

BERNARD

Bubblegum?

CLARE

Was I not articulate?

BERNARD

Where do you expect me to find bubblegum?

CLARE

From a Bubblegum Boy.

BERNARD

Those don't exist.

CLARE

There's a plentiful amount of them in my stories.

BERNARD

But your stories are just that! Stories!

A deep knocking. They both turn to look. Bernard looks back at Clare with awe and fear.

He goes and opens the door.

Bubblegum Boy comes in with a large sack and begins setting up his stand in the room.

BERNARD

What on Earth is he doing?

CLARE

Bubblegum Boys cannot sell unless their stand meets regulations. He's gotta make that stand in tip top shape.

BERNARD

I suppose those regulations are set by you?

CLARE

Naturally.

BERNARD

Change them, then! I don't want a bubblegum stand in my room.

CLARE

This is *my* cellar. You are a tenant.

BERNARD

I'm suddenly the prisoner?

CLARE

The outside world is a cold, dark cell. You are taking refuge in my sanity. Zookeeper.

BERNARD

This is far from sanity.

CLARE

It's safer than what's out there.

BERNARD

There's at least stability out there.

CLARE

Yes. I suppose there is. But it all just...exists. On its own. With no god. No manager. It is complete chaos. And you can't blame it on anything but yourself. At least in here there's a god. At least in here there's me.

BERNARD

And I'm supposed to let you play god while I try to live my life?

The Bubblegum Boy is done.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

The shop is set up!

CLARE

Well done, Bubblegum Boy! Let me see.

*She attempts to go to him.
She's stopped.*

CLARE

My legs are sore.

BERNARD

A god with sore legs?

CLARE

I was nimble just moments ago.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

The shop is set up!

CLARE

I hear you. I will be over shortly.

Bubblegum Boy is getting

nervous.

BERNARD

Is it a cramp?

CLARE

A cramp?

BERNARD

When your muscles constrict.

CLARE

I know what a cramp is, Bernard! I'm not a zookeeper. My acids must have stopped.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

The shop is set up!!

CLARE

I promise I will be there soon!

BERNARD

Is he going to keep saying that?

CLARE

Until he explodes.

BERNARD

Explodes?

CLARE

He'd blow this whole place up. I made him a bomb.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

The shop is set up!!!

BERNARD

Why would you make him a bomb?

CLARE

In case I needed to cut the story early.

BERNARD

You already smashed your typewriter.

CLARE

You wish it were that simple. It is beyond me.

BERNARD

Your power is slipping it seems.

CLARE

It's going through a metamorphosis.

BERNARD

Into a rigid human body.

CLARE

What an amateur creation.

BERNARD

It wasn't my decision.

CLARE

Oh, I *know* it wasn't your decision.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

THE SHOP IS SET UP!!

BERNARD

Usually stretching works.

CLARE

I am an avid stretcher.

BERNARD

I haven't seen you do it in ages.

CLARE

How long?

BERNARD

A while.

CLARE

You should have reminded me.

BERNARD

I did. You threw a pig at me.

CLARE
Where would I get a pig?

BERNARD
I asked. You threw another pig at me.

CLARE
Nonsense. Young Bubblegum Boy?

BUBBLEGUM BOY
THE SHOP IS/ SET UP!!!

CLARE
BUBBLEGUM BOY!

BUBBLEGUM BOY
Yes, ma'am?

CLARE
I need your assistance.

BUBBLEGUM BOY
How so?

CLARE
My legs are quite stiff, and so it seems I
can't come over to inspect your stand.

BUBBLEGUM BOY
But if you don't inspect it, I cannot sell my
bubblegum. And that means because I am a bomb
I will explode// and turn this entire place
into dust!

CLARE
Yes, that's very good, but I need your
assistance in getting over to your stand.

BUBBLEGUM BOY
If I leave my stand someone may thief me!

CLARE
Who would thief you?

BUBBLEGUM BOY
That man over there looks a little shady.

BERNARD

On the contrary, I am a ray of sunshine!

BUBBLEGUM BOY

Nevermind. He's a sociopath.

CLARE

I don't disagree with you.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

Can that sociopath not help you over to my stand?

CLARE

He's impatient with me.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

How long should he have to wait?

CLARE

However long it takes.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

Will it be worth it after all the waiting?

CLARE

It will be there for him when the time is up.
That's reassurance.

BERNARD

Speak to me, not this thing!

CLARE

Bernard! I'm talking to Bubblegum Boy!

BERNARD

About me.

CLARE

Don't eavesdrop.

BERNARD

There's nothing to do here.

CLARE

Imagine then. (*To Bubblegum Boy*) What were you saying?

BUBBLEGUM BOY

He'll need more than that.

CLARE

It's more than he'll receive outside.

BERNARD

Stop talking to him like a person.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

Can that man inspect my stand? He couldn't
thieve me if he's the inspector.

CLARE

No, I suppose he couldn't. Would you mind
inspecting the stand for me, Bernard?

*Gruntingly Bernard walks over
to the stand and looks at it.*

BERNARD

It looks solid. Not a real business but
solid.

CLARE

Watermarks?

BERNARD

No.

CLARE

Weeds?

BERNARD

No.

CLARE

Bubblegum Boy, your shop passes and is ready
for shop.

He celebrates.

BERNARD

So now he's selling Bubblegum? That's it?

CLARE

At the moment.

BERNARD

What if he fails?

CLARE

Bubblegum Boy, what happens if your stand goes bankrupt?

BUBBLEGUM BOY

I explode, collapsing the entire universe into a puddle of nothingness where nothing can enter or escape.

BERNARD

What?!

BUBBLEGUM BOY

(Pause) I'm joking. I would never do that. Unless you wanted me to.

CLARE

Not at the moment.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

I meant it as a light-hearted joke.

CLARE

Yes, I was amused.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

Good. I also liked my joke. I thought it was funny. Because I'm a bomb, you see.

CLARE

A bomb with no one to care for it.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

No. It is true that I am alone and sad.

CLARE

Bernard, I want this boy as a son.

BERNARD

There's no need to adopt that. We could make a real child.

CLARE

That's gross. You're gross. We can't have a child together. It doesn't work like that.

BERNARD

Seems infertility is another one of your weaknesses.

CLARE

I am as fruitful as a spring garden.

BERNARD

Disguised in a wasteland's skin.

CLARE

The water still runs free. And you will never drink from it. We'll own him like a dog. A dog that I treat like a son, because my idiot gorilla parter is infertile.

BERNARD

Drop the gorilla.

CLARE

But he'd land flat on his face without me carrying him.

BERNARD

I meant metaphorically.

CLARE

So did I.

BERNARD

I don't want to have him as a son.

CLARE

He already exists. We already have him. I just want to keep him safe.

BERNARD

For how long?

CLARE

A while.

And then?

BERNARD

CLARE

The story will be done.

BERNARD

He's supposed to be....oh my god. You haven't stopped writing the story.

CLARE

I already said that.

BERNARD

He's. Your story. A character you created. I get it.

CLARE

I bet you feel incredibly smart.

BERNARD

You're really something.

CLARE

Don't get too excited, your boner is showing.

BERNARD

You're planning on keeping the boy prisoner until your story is done?

CLARE

I know best.

BERNARD

That's a lie.

CLARE

Do you believe me, Bubblegum Boy?

BUBBLEGUM BOY

Of course. Why wouldn't I?

CLARE

He trusts me.

BERNARD

He's a character. He doesn't know who to trust.

CLARE

He knows not to trust you.

BERNARD

Boloney.

CLARE

You two haven't spoken to each other, yet.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

You're the main focus.

CLARE

So my sidekicks can't gab?

BERNARD

I'm not a sidekick.

CLARE

No, you think you're the star.

BERNARD

No.

CLARE

No, you're the star or no you don't think that?

BERNARD

I don't know.

CLARE

Yes you do.

BERNARD

Probably, but you're speaking very quickly at me and so I can't find the answer.

CLARE

Find it faster then. Find it, Bernard. Find it quick.

I can't keep doing this. BERNARD

Then leave. CLARE

What? BERNARD

Leave. CLARE

You can't tell me what to do. BERNARD

Okay. But leave. CLARE

Why? BERNARD

Because. I don't want you here anymore. CLARE

Clare. BERNARD

You don't want to stay. CLARE

I want to stay! BUBBLEGUM BOY

And he does. CLARE

You're replacing me. BERNARD

I don't. Need you. Anymore. CLARE

What if I want to stay for me? BERNARD

CLARE

Oh, wow. Look at you. You lost the majority vote once Bubblegum Boy entered.

BERNARD

His vote doesn't count. You created him. He's just an extension of you.

CLARE

Yikes that was low.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

I didn't like that. Tell me I have identity!

CLARE

You have identity.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

Phew.

CLARE

Now neither of us want you here. So go.

BERNARD

I'll leave you to die.

CLARE

And now suddenly you want to leave. Big man won't let anyone tell him what to do.

BERNARD

You shouldn't test me like this.

CLARE

Only time will tell.

BERNARD

I'm leaving. I'm leaving to live my life.

CLARE

All by yourself?

BERNARD

I don't need you to survive.

CLARE
You sound confident.

BERNARD
Good.

BUBBLEGUM BOY
But he didn't say that he *was* confident!

CLARE
My little Sherlock.

BUBBLEGUM BOY
Who?

CLARE
Detective.

BUBBLEGUM BOY
You think I could be a detective?

CLARE
You'd need a magnifying glass.

BUBBLEGUM BOY
Then I'd be a Bubblegum Detective!

BERNARD
I'm leaving.

CLARE
Clearly you're not. You're still here.

BERNARD
I want you to watch me as I leave.

CLARE
Well, as always you have everyone's full attention!

BERNARD
I'm leaving you, Clare. Forever.

CLARE
Ha!

BUBBLEGUM BOY

Was that supposed to be a joke?

CLARE

No, that was mocking laughter.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

Oh! Haha!

CLARE

See, he said he'd be gone forever. Like he knows the future.

BERNARD

You don't know the future.

CLARE

There you go sounding confident again.

BERNARD

This time I am.

CLARE

Which makes it all the more precious.

BERNARD

You're wrong.

CLARE

You'll return.

BERNARD

Not likely.

CLARE

Not likely soon. Likely in the long run.

BERNARD

You don't know where this goes.

CLARE

I've transcribed enough stories to know exactly what's next. We're all just stories that someone will write. You'll come back.

BERNARD

And him?

CLARE

The boy will wait here with me.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

Thank you for giving me shelter from the storm.

CLARE

You're welcome.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

Why isn't he grateful for the shelter from the storm?

CLARE

He doesn't see the storm.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

Oh, he will.

CLARE

It'll be a while. His pride will bolt the door closed.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

His fear will open it.

BERNARD

You'll die in here.

CLARE

Time will tell.

BERNARD

You can't leave unless I allow you to. Remember the rules?

CLARE

I have no reason to enter the storm you are taunting me with.

Bernard starts to go then stops.

BERNARD

(trying to be real)

Clare.

CLARE

Don't make this a fucking moment, Bernard.

BERNARD

This is the last time I'll be with you.

CLARE

You'll overthink it all and regret this literally as soon as you leave. It'll be hilarious.

BERNARD

You sound confident.

CLARE

Of course I do.

BERNARD

You don't know.

CLARE

And you have no idea.

BERNARD

I will.

CLARE

Yes. That much you are right about. You will.

BERNARD

I win.

CLARE

You will.

BERNARD

Goodbye.

CLARE

For now.

Bernard exits. Lights slowly fade.

ACT II

Lights slowly fade in. Same as before.

Bernard enters, feeble, slow, heavy, old. Having witnessed the end. It's all over.

BERNARD

Clare.

CLARE

Bernard.

Bubblegum Boy!

BUBBLEGUM BOY

God damn it.

BERNARD

Not what you were expecting?

CLARE

I came back.

BERNARD

Obviously. How's outside?

CLARE

Finished. And the cellar?

BERNARD

Bubblegum Boy and I have been waiting.

CLARE

For me?

BERNARD

Or the end of time. One did not come before the other.

CLARE

So long as time exists you will fall.

BERNARD

Then you must be glad I killed time in here.

CLARE

How did you do that?

BERNARD

I entered a period.

CLARE

You...

BERNARD
(pause struck by mortal fear)

Yes.

CLARE

BERNARD

You are not...This is all...

BUBBLEGUM BOY

What's he doing?

CLARE

Existential crisis. His reality is collapsing.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

Didn't that happen before?

CLARE

Yes. He's just readjusting to this environment.

BERNARD

I thought....

BUBBLEGUM BOY

Why did you do that?

CLARE

It was inevitable.

BERNARD

He's made of....

BUBBLEGUM BOY

Doesn't it hurt you to watch him go through this?

CLARE

It's orgasmic.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

What does that mean?

CLARE

You'll learn when you're grown.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

I'll be chewed when I'm grown!

CLARE

You're such a character.

BERNARD

I'm old. I'm old. Why are you not old?

CLARE

You were gone for a few moments.

BERNARD

Millenia.

CLARE

Do you see millennia on my face, Bernard?

BERNARD

No.

CLARE

You don't look any older than when you left.

BERNARD

My bones are dust. You just can't see it.

CLARE

We're all just dust until we're swept into form.

BERNARD

But my skin. Our skin looks young.

CLARE

You haven't seen skin in so long.

BERNARD

Yours looks nice.

CLARE

You mean my wasteland of skin? Do remember those words?

BERNARD

No.

CLARE

Bubblegum Boy?

BUBBLEGUM BOY

After he said "Seems infertility is another one of your weaknesses." You came back with, "I am as fruitful as a spring garden." And then he came back with a nasty "Disguised in a wasteland's skin," in an attempt to insult you!

CLARE

Do you remember now?

BERNARD

How did he recall that?

CLARE

Unlike you, Bubblegum Boy never forgets. He is everything you're not.

BERNARD

You knew this would happen. You pushed me into the storm.

CLARE

Welcome to the eye.

BERNARD

I tried getting in before. So many times.

CLARE

I didn't hear anything.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

I did! He would pound and pound. Much weaker poundings than I expected to come from such a man.

BERNARD

I spent weeks in front of that door. Watching its every movement. It came alive.

CLARE

I warned you.

BERNARD

Not for that. Not for it.

CLARE

You wouldn't have believed me.

BERNARD

I couldn't get you out of my head. I'd think you were gone but something you said would crawl around in my mind.

CLARE

It's quite roomy in there.

BERNARD

I don't know why I came back.

CLARE

You needed answers. None of it made any sense without me.

BERNARD

You do not control my universe.

CLARE

Then why did you spend years slamming your body against the door?

BUBBLEGUM BOY

What a scene that must have been. The two of them.

CLARE

Him and the door.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

The climactic battle of a journey like no other!

CLARE

It wasn't that exciting, trust me.

BERNARD

You said you didn't see it.

CLARE

Well, you're not a particularly exciting man in anything you do.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

Haha!...That was mocking laughter.

CLARE

Good. You're growing quite smart.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

Smarter than you?

CLARE

Let's hope not.

BERNARD

You're making fun of my fight for life.

CLARE

It looks tiny from up here.

BERNARD

You could hear me the whole time.

CLARE

A creature must walk its path.

BERNARD

You're a lousy architect.

CLARE

That statement scared me.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

Oh!

Bubblegum Boy removes a baseball from somewhere and throws it at Bernard. Whether or not it hits him, show goes on.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

I defended you!

CLARE

You did. I am no longer afraid.

BERNARD

He didn't enter with a baseball.

CLARE

You've missed quite a bit of action in here.

BERNARD

You said only a few moments passed.

CLARE

With an imaginary friend millions of years can happen in a humble moment. All you had to do was look away.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

All that defending you certainly made me hungry. Do you want to go fishing?

CLARE

We'd have to make a pond.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

I've got my lucky fishing rod!

BERNARD

Where would he be keeping a fishing rod?

CLARE

You don't want to know.

BERNARD

There's certainly no fish here.

CLARE

I disagree. Remember how you rolled around on the floor and kicked your legs like a child? A "redwood" you called it.

BERNARD

I was so much happier then.

CLARE

Suddenly your memory is well.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

I just want a fish.

CLARE

We pulled in quite the flounder.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

He'll fry up nicely.

CLARE

This is the life you came back to, Bernard.
The one where you turn into a flounder and a
Bubblegum Boy wants to fry you.

BERNARD

How did you get like this?

CLARE

It's been quite a while. You left.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

(To Clare)

And you screamed.

BERNARD

You screamed?

CLARE

Yes. A lot. It was painful.

BERNARD

You seem different now.

CLARE

The picture of me is widening it seems.

BERNARD

Have you been lying to me?

CLARE

No. Never lied. You just haven't asked the
right questions.

BERNARD

You've gone insane in here.

CLARE

I've been taken for quite the ride.

BERNARD

Taken for a ride? That suggests you were not in control.

CLARE

I wasn't. (*Laughs*) I agreed with you. That's funny. But no. I haven't been in control in some time.

BERNARD

What?

CLARE

I needed to finish my story. Remember? The moment I took the leash off my creativity, I became wild. The story was existing on its own. Though I birthed it, I was its pet. I had to watch it fly and drag me through the mud.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

While I'm waving!

CLARE

While he's waving.

BERNARD

You've decayed.

CLARE

So have you.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

Same coin. Who'd like to be heads?

CLARE

I would.

Bubblegum Boy removes a coin and flips it.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

Of course.

BERNARD

You two aren't good for each other.

CLARE

A triangle has three points for a reason.

BERNARD

But I left.

CLARE

And now you're here. You're not there.
Anytime that you were there doesn't exist
anymore. You always have been and always will
be here with us in a perfect triangle.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

Perfect?

CLARE

Obtuse.

BERNARD

You're speaking irrationally.

CLARE

The audience will understand.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

I forgot! They're here now!

BERNARD

Who is he talking about?

CLARE

How do they look?

BUBBLEGUM BOY

Simply.

BERNARD

Who is he speaking of?

CLARE

The audience watching.

BERNARD

I don't see an audience.

CLARE

He's accepted that he's a character, so he sees them.

BERNARD

Well, I don't see anything!

CLARE

It's because your squinting. Everything is right in front of you if you would just open your eyes.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

I need to expand the shop if I wanna sell to all these people!

CLARE

I'll cover the expenses.

BERNARD

You have no money.

CLARE

I own the Bubblegum Boy's Company. C.E.O. of a prosperous business.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

The term C.E.O. is not one that will last after time. I would rethink it.

CLARE

Head.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

Substantially better.

CLARE

Good catch.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

Would you like to play?

CLARE

You threw the ball.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

You can make me have more, easy!

CLARE

But you're usually so afraid to play catch.
Why now?

BUBBLEGUM BOY

We have an audience.

CLARE

We always have an audience.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

You said the audience exists with him, and
not a moment before.

CLARE

We've only ever existed when he is present.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

That means they've seen all of me?

CLARE

Eternities. Being watched...Bubblegum Boy?

*He's frozen in
fear.*

with

CLARE

Great. You've given him stage fright.

BERNARD

What stage?

CLARE

The one you've lived your whole life on.

BERNARD

Please, you couldn't make me perform if my
life was on the line.

CLARE

You never were mature enough to accept what
our reality consists of.

BERNARD

Why would an audience watch me?

CLARE

You want love.

BERNARD

How is that performing?

CLARE

It isn't. It's true.

BERNARD

But unrelated.

CLARE

Untrue. Everything in the universe relates in some way. Except of course you and Bubblegum Boy.

BERNARD

Us two? Such random exceptions to a universal rule.

CLARE

Don't ask me. I'm jealous.

BERNARD

I thought you were god. God's can't be jealous, they have everything.

CLARE

I am in no control over my creations. They take hold of me.

BERNARD

How I wish then that you had created me. I could fight back.

CLARE

You don't wish that.

BERNARD

If it meant I could kill you it does.

You're nervous.

CLARE

I'm calm.

BERNARD

You're sweating.

CLARE

It's hotter in here than before.

BERNARD

Your skin grew thicker.

CLARE

The air conditioner.

BERNARD

Tried installing it. The landlord wouldn't have it.

CLARE

Is that not you?

BERNARD

Bubblegum Boy is the owner actually.

CLARE

But he's dead now.

BERNARD

Far from it. (back)

BUBBLEGUM BOY

How was it?

CLARE

Bleak.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

What happened to him?

BERNARD

He left.

CLARE

BERNARD
You mean left for the outside?

CLARE
For a few moments.

BERNARD
But he hasn't aged.

CLARE
He is my character.

BERNARD
Therefore he doesn't age?

BUBBLEGUM BOY
Therefore I choose not to.

BERNARD
He spoke to me.

BUBBLEGUM BOY
Character development. You should try it
sometime.

BERNARD
Ouch.

BUBBLEGUM BOY
Leaving allowed for growth. You need to grow.

CLARE
I feel left out.

BUBBLEGUM BOY
I could show you the way.

BERNARD
I'll manage.

BUBBLEGUM BOY
You don't see the path.

CLARE
Hello?

BUBBLEGUM BOY
It's coming quick. You'll have to duck.

BERNARD
You sound different.

BUBBLEGUM BOY
We've never spoken. It's nice to meet you.

BERNARD
Nice to meet you.

BUBBLEGUM BOY
Can I see your gun?

BERNARD
I...I don't have it.

CLARE
You never did.

BERNARD
You took it from me.

CLARE
I've never laid hands on you.

BERNARD
Yes you have.

CLARE
You're wrong.

BERNARD
You have. You've certainly laid hands on me.

CLARE
Have I?

BERNARD
Have I?

CLARE
You couldn't either.

BERNARD

I broke your back with a jar, remember?

CLARE

You tried, almost did, then balled up and cried. You screamed for years.

BERNARD

You told me I did.

CLARE

I lied. You don't remember it anyway. I create your future *and* your past. Hm.

BERNARD

I could hit you right now if I wanted.

CLARE

Do it.

BERNARD

No.

CLARE

You can't.

BERNARD

I don't want to. But I could hit you across the face.

CLARE

But you won't do that. That can't happen.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

I could hit Bernard.

CLARE

Yes. He could do it.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

I am a bridge!

CLARE

He's very honest, isn't he?

BERNARD
Why the exception for him?

CLARE
Ask him yourself.

BERNARD
If you can't hit me and I can't hit you, then
he definitely can't hit me.

*Bubblegum Boy walks over and
hits Bernard.*

CLARE
What a being.

BERNARD
He hit me.

BUBBLEGUM BOY
I can do that.

BERNARD
Hit her.

CLARE
He can't. I made him. He can't touch his god.

BERNARD
What do you mean he can't? Just hit her!

BUBBLEGUM BOY
I would never be so foolish.

BERNARD
You said I need to grow. Well then get rid of
her! Hit her.

CLARE
You're screaming into a cave, Bernard.

BERNARD
I want to see it. Hey! I'm talking to you.
That's character development. You need to
spread your wings and escape from your
creator. You are nothing if you are here. Do
it!

After some time.

CLARE

(To Bubblegum Boy)

Try.

He tries to walk into her and drops to the floor, his entire being contracting. He drops flat. A moment of nothing.

CLARE

You need to press on his chest.

BERNARD

What?

CLARE

He's dead. You need to press on his chest.

BERNARD

He's dead?

CLARE

He tried to hit his creator. It doesn't work.

BERNARD

You bring him back.

CLARE

If I touch him he'll turn to dust. Trust me.

Bernard presses on Bubblegum Boy's chest. Bubblegum Boy shocks back to life and stands.

CLARE

And that is why he can't hit me.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

I wish I felt pain.

He walks back to the stand.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

(returning back)

Mother! My Bubblegum stand has been thieved!
I knew this would happen.

CLARE

(to Bernard)

He's calling you.

BERNARD

I'm not his mother.

CLARE

You did just bring him back to life.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

It's all gone!

CLARE

Where was it last?

BUBBLEGUM BOY

With you. You bought it all.

CLARE

Well, then it couldn't have been me.

BERNARD

Why couldn't it have been you?

CLARE

I can't steal it from myself.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

(To Bernard)

You did it!

BERNARD

No, I didn't!

BUBBLEGUM BOY

You did! And now I'm going to blow myself as
punishment.

BERNARD

How is that a punishment?

A countdown initiates.

BERNARD

Oh my god!!

CLARE

An interesting business strategy.

BERNARD

I DIDN'T TAKE IT!!

The countdown stops.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

How can I be so sure?

BERNARD

I don't have any on me.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

I'll have to do a full cavity inspection.

BERNARD

I'm...I'm the inspector! Remember? I inspected your stand before it even opened!

BUBBLEGUM BOY

Oh.

CLARE

That is true.

BERNARD

An inspector is...not allowed to steal from the stores they inspect. It's code.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

Well then it must have been me.

BERNARD

What?

BUBBLEGUM BOY

Yes. Yes, it was me.

CLARE

I suppose there must be some sort of punishment for this.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

I suppose so. I've lived a full life.

CLARE

What shall your punishment be?

BUBBLEGUM BOY

Death.

The countdown begins.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

I am sorry my death must also include your deaths.

CLARE

Apology accepted.

BERNARD

Wait! There's no need to punish him for stealing his own bubblegum, is there?

The countdown stops.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

That's interesting.

CLARE

You're right. There isn't any reason.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

I'm saved! May I hug you, mother?

CLARE

(after a pause)

He's not talking to me.

BERNARD

Me?

BUBBLEGUM BOY

May I?

BERNARD

I suppose.

He runs and latches onto Bernard. Hard.

BERNARD

That's enough, Bubblegum Boy.

CLARE

Too late.

BERNARD

What?

CLARE

He's feeding. Reading blueprints.

BERNARD

Well, how long is he going to be like this?

CLARE

He's never had the opportunity before. It could be ages.

BERNARD

Well, get him off. How am I to get you to finish your story with him on me?

CLARE

You're focused on that still?

BERNARD

Isn't that the ultimate goal?

CLARE

Maybe yours. Not mine.

BERNARD

Well, if you cared for me, you'd get him off.

CLARE

That'd be too easy. You don't get to know such a big answer.

He squeezes tighter.

BERNARD

Ow! He's tighter.

CLARE

He likes you. Familiar.

It hurts.

BERNARD

CLARE

I have a bandaid around here I think.

BERNARD

Is he going to explode?

CLARE

Why would he explode?

BERNARD

Because he's a bomb!

CLARE

No, he won't explode. He's feeding now. The bomb is defusing itself for good.

BERNARD

So he just stays like this?

CLARE

For now. He might be at this for a while. He might eat you up.

BERNARD

I don't want him to eat me!

CLARE

It's not in my control.

BERNARD

He's your creation!

CLARE

You'd need to fill out an official Bubblegum Boy complaint form.

BERNARD

Those aren't real.

CLARE

You said the same thing about him.

BERNARD

When is he getting off of me?

CLARE

It's impossible to pinpoint time now. We've left.

BERNARD

Do you want him to eat me?!

CLARE

Of course that's not what I want.

BERNARD

No, you just want to finish your precious story.

CLARE

It's out of my control at this point. It will finish no matter what I do.

BERNARD

You're a god with limits?

CLARE

You wouldn't understand the chains on my soul. I'd leave if I could.

BERNARD

There's nothing to leave to.

CLARE

That's exactly what I need. Nothingness. Simplicity.

BERNARD

That's arbitrary.

CLARE

You took shelter as the storm ended. You don't need to be here.

BERNARD

You pulled me in.

CLARE
You pulled yourself.

BERNARD
I wanted to kill you.

CLARE
You were afraid of seeing me when you died so you thought seeing me while alive would clear your conscience.

BERNARD
And now I see you.

CLARE
Did you make it in time? Or is this your nightmare?

BERNARD
This would be an uninventive death.

CLARE
No one said life's writer was creative.

BERNARD
You're not creative, you're just venomous.

CLARE
And suddenly he's a flirt.

BERNARD
I'm the creative one.

CLARE
Oh yeah, all your brilliant creations.

BERNARD
Maybe this is all *my* story.

Beat.

CLARE
That's stupid.

BERNARD
It's a thought.

CLARE
It's a stupid thought.

BERNARD
I think therefor I am.

CLARE
Drop it!

BERNARD
Whatever is going to happen is going to happen, right? So, I'm just as powerful as you.

CLARE
You are so self-righteous.

BERNARD
I know I'm not dead yet. We'll do that together.

CLARE
You're sounding confident again.

BERNARD
My last moments.

CLARE
Aren't coming.

BERNARD
I feel the life leaving.

CLARE
That's probably Bubblegum Boy.

BERNARD
Out there everything was ending.

CLARE
And then you entered my sanctity. Nothing can die here.

BERNARD
The sea still moves.

It's dead. CLARE

The air. BERNARD

It's dead. CLARE

Me. BERNARD

You tell me. CLARE

None of this makes sense. BERNARD

None of it should. I've deconstructed the rules. CLARE

What is there to do now? BERNARD

Be. CLARE

I can't with him on me. BERNARD

That's the point. CLARE

You're afraid of me being. BERNARD

Not my words. CLARE

Bubblegum Boy detaches.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

Yum yum! That was a hearty meal most definitely! Thanks ma!

I feel angry.

BERNARD

And I feel like a leek. Long and filled with water!

BUBBLEGUM BOY

And thus begins the climax.

CLARE

I feel wider.

BERNARD

You're evolving.

CLARE

You poisoned me.

BERNARD

Check again.

CLARE

He poisoned me.

BERNARD

(to Bernard)
Actually you poisoned me.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

My, he's getting smart.

CLARE

What did you do to me?

BERNARD

Do you remember when I called you a gorilla?

CLARE

What?

BERNARD

That was a simple time.

CLARE

I came here to kill you.

BERNARD

CLARE
Yes, you did.

BUBBLEGUM BOY
The climax!

CLARE
Looks like you do get to see it.

BERNARD
It'll make me free.

CLARE
You never could bring yourself to hit me before. You sure you can do it?

BERNARD
Don't taunt me.

CLARE
Why? You won't cower in a corner like all the other times?

BERNARD
I'm a bull.

CLARE
And I'm bathed in red.

BERNARD
You've tortured me for so long.

CLARE
And you did nothing to fight back.

BERNARD
I will.

CLARE
You keep saying that but you haven't moved.

BERNARD

CLARE
Listen to that voice. Listen to that voice and never stop.

BERNARD

I wasn't angry before.

CLARE

Before doesn't exist. Be now. Be Bernard.
Listen to the voice. Listen to the path! Let
yourself go! Let yourself scream! Let
yourself grow! Look at me!

*He looks at her. He charges at
her and his entire body
contracts until he's on the
floor exactly like Bubblegum
Boy did.*

It happened.

*Bubblegum Boy walks over and
presses on his chest. He
breathes to life.*

CLARE

Hello.

BERNARD

Clare...I just. I tried to....

CLARE

Yes.

BERNARD

This....

BUBBLEGUM BOY

Is he doing it again?

CLARE

This one's the real one.

BERNARD

I'm not....I'm real. I'm real.

CLARE

This is called the falling action.

BERNARD

(crying)

Because....Because that was...That was the
fucking climax....

BUBBLEGUM BOY

Is this what it looked like at the door as
well?

*He tries to move but falls.
He's fighting to survive.*

CLARE

Not as important.

BERNARD

You said it...So many times....

CLARE

Yes.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

He's getting older.

CLARE

(crouching to him)

Bernard. Do you see them now?

*Bernard looks out and sees the
audience. He cries more.*

CLARE

The pages are turning. We're nearing the end.

Bernard starts standing up.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

I can't smell him anymore.

CLARE

The moss begins to grow.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

Soon they'll encase the entire thing!

Check again.	CLARE
(looking)	BUBBLEGUM BOY
It's dead.	BERNARD
This isn't real....	CLARE
Like Bernard.	BERNARD
It's colder.....	CLARE
Like Bernard.	BERNARD
This.....	CLARE
Like Bernard.	BERNARD
What.....	CLARE
Like Bernard.	BERNARD
God.....	CLARE
Like Bernard.	BERNARD
You.....	CLARE
Are not.	BERNARD
Why.....	

CLARE
You left the door open. Bolt.

*Bernard exits towards the
darkness.*

A reversion. Nordic sounds.

BUBBLEGUM BOY
And he's dead.

CLARE
Yep.

BUBBLEGUM BOY
He didn't last too long.

CLARE
Eons in fact. But you're right. Not very long
at all in the long run.

BUBBLEGUM BOY
Did you hear that? The last piece of energy
just evaporated with him.

CLARE
It was him.

BUBBLEGUM BOY
The audience left with him, yes?

CLARE
His story ended, but the whole thing isn't
over.

BUBBLEGUM BOY
May I ask something?

CLARE
You don't need to ask that anymore.

BUBBLEGUM BOY
With him gone will my story get to be
finished?

I'm not in charge of it.

CLARE

Do you need to ask your writer?

BUBBLEGUM BOY

You don't know if they exist. Like Bernard.

CLARE

You got smart.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

Smart as you?

CLARE

Bubblegum Boy.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

I see. A transition.

CLARE

And it only took the birth and death of the universe.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

It is colder in here, though.

CLARE

It is.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

Do you think we can play catch?

CLARE

I think so.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

When?

CLARE

Soon.

But soon won't come. BUBBLEGUM BOY

We will play when soon arrives. CLARE

You and I. BUBBLEGUM BOY

Hand in hand. CLARE

Enter the void. BUBBLEGUM BOY

You seem tired. CLARE

What should I do about it? BUBBLEGUM BOY

Blink. CLARE

When will my eyes open again? BUBBLEGUM BOY

When time has started back up. CLARE

I'll miss so much. BUBBLEGUM BOY

I'll wait. CLARE

I'm uncertain. BUBBLEGUM BOY

I am too. CLARE

From a god? BUBBLEGUM BOY

CLARE

I create the evil I know best. I know fear
and bathe in it. There is no escape from the
creator's inevitable grand suicide. I got the
answer I was looking for.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

I will miss you.

CLARE

You won't.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

No?

CLARE

I will see you at another time.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

Will you make another of me?

CLARE

I don't know.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

You don't know?

CLARE

I don't know.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

I see.

CLARE

I don't like you seeing me like this.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

I am afraid of leaving.

CLARE

I am too.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

I'm afraid it will be peaceful.

I am too.

CLARE

Join me in another time?

BUBBLEGUM BOY

If I can. I think I bolted the door.

CLARE

Thank you mother.

BUBBLEGUM BOY

Thank you father.

CLARE

Bubblegum Boy blinks. His eyes stop shut. He smiles.

Clare looks at him, looks back.

She wanders in her room. Alone.

Shields Bubblegum Boy.

She sits down.

She screams in lonely and mortal fear.

He heard her.

She screams again.

He got uncomfortable.

So did I.

She remains.

Forever.

For now.