

CLIFF. And what did the derricks say, Rose?

ROSE. Stop making fun of me.

CLIFF. Did the derricks ask you if you needed a lift?

ROSE. You may think it's funny but I was the last one to see them alive last summer. There was only seven of them in the world and the zoo had four of them. I used to walk there every night just to watch them stand so still in the water. And they walked so graceful, in slow motion. And they have legs as skinny as my little finger. Long legs. And there was only seven in the world because they killed them off for feathers for ladies hats or something. And one night a gang of boys came by with radios to their ears and cursing real bad, you know, F, and everything. And I was, you know, ascaed. And they started saying things to me, you know, dirty things, and laughing at the birds. And one kid threw a stone to see how close he could splash the birds, and then another kid tried to see how close he could splash the birds, and then they all started throwing stones at the birds, and I started screaming STOP IT! and a stone hit a bird's leg and it bended like a straw and the birds keeled over in the water, flapping wings in the water, and the kids kept laughing and throwing stones and I kept screaming STOP IT! STOP IT! but they couldn't hear me through that ugly music on the radios and kept laughing and cursing and throwing stones, and I ran and got the zoo guard and he got his club and we ran to the place of the birds but the kids were gone. And there was white feathers on the water. And the water was real still. And there was big swirls of blood. And the birds were real still. Their beaks alittle open. Legs broke. Toes curled. Still. Like the world stopped. And the guard said something to me but I couldn't hear him. I just saw his mouth moving. And I started screaming. And the cops came and took me the hospital and they

gave me a needle to make me stop screaming. And they never caught the gang. But even if they did, what good's that? They can't make the birds come alive again.

CLIFF. (*Long pause.*) Yeah, well. I'm really sorry to hear about it. But the fact of the matter is . . . it's a rough-tough world out there, and like everything else, if the birds can't hack the jive, maybe it's better they're not around gettin in the way because if you want to survive you got to be rough and tough right back.

ROSE. But they don't have a way to be rough and tough.

CLIFF. Then maybe it was meant to be for 'em to bite the dust.

ROSE. That's mean.

CLIFF. That's life.

ROSE. That's not life.

CLIFF. That's the way Niagra Falls.

ROSE. You're just as bad as them.

CLIFF. I'm not them. I'm me.

ROSE. You stick up for them, you mise well be them!

CLIFF. Hey, did I kill the birds? Did I?

ROSE. You mise well if you stick up for them!

CLIFF. But did I kill the fuckin birds?

ROSE. NO! (*Pause. Apologetic for screaming.*) No. (*Pause.*) I think you should go.

CLIFF. Yeah, me too. Afterall, you don't want it to get around you hang out with bird killers. Well, kid, it was nice.

ROSE. You think they fixed your truck?

CLIFF. No. Wasn't meant to be.

ROSE. I hope you get the new job.

CLIFF. As they say when you can't stop your rig— them's the breaks.

ROSE. What kind of job is it?

CLIFF. Testing parachutes.

ROSE. What kind of job is that?