

how. I don't know why. But I did love you. I do love you. I resented your marriage; maybe because I wanted you; maybe I wanted you all these years; I couldn't call it by a name but maybe it's been there ever since I first knew you—

**KAREN**, *tensely, grips arms of chair*: It's not the truth. Not a word of it. We never thought of each other that way.

**MARTHA**, *bitterly*: No, of course you didn't. But who says I didn't? I never felt that way about anybody but you. I've never loved a man— (*Stops. Softly*) I never knew why before. Maybe it's that.

**KAREN**, *carefully*: You are tired and sick.

**MARTHA**, *as though talking to herself*: It's funny. It's all mixed up. There's something in you and you don't do anything about it because you don't know it's there. Suddenly a little girl gets bored and tells a lie—and there, that night, you see it for the first time, and you say it yourself, did she see it, did she sense it—?

**KAREN**, *turns to Martha. Desperately*: What are you saying? You know it could have been any lie. She was looking for anything—

**MARTHA**: Yes, but why this one? She found the lie with the ounce of truth. I guess they always do. I've ruined your life and I've ruined my own. I swear I didn't know it, I swear I didn't mean it— (*Rises, crosses upstage left. In a wail*) Oh, I feel so Goddamned sick and dirty—I can't stand it anymore.

**KAREN**: All this isn't true. We don't have to remember it was ever said. Tomorrow we'll pick ourselves up and—

**MARTHA**: I don't want tomorrow. It's a bad word.

**KAREN**, *who is crying*: Go and lie down, Martha. And in a few minutes, I'll make some tea and bring it to you. You'll feel better.

**MARTHA**, *looks around room, slowly, carefully. She is now very quiet. Moves, turns, looks at Karen*: Don't bring me any tea. Thank you. Good night, darling.

## CURSE OF THE STARVING CLASS

by Sam Shepard

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### ACT I

The action of this odd but actually quite naturalistic play takes place in the kitchen of Ella and Weston and their son and daughter, Wesley and Emma. The family owns a run-down farm in the western United States. Ella, who mostly eats, has plans to sell the farm behind her husband's back, and dreams of using the money to go off to Europe. Weston, who mostly drinks, tried to kill her the night before when she locked him out of the house. He smashed in the front door, but left when she started screaming for the police. Emma, dressed in a white and green 4-H Club uniform, is having her first period. She decided (just minutes before the excerpt below begins) to leave home on a horse, intending to ride down the freeway to California. She made this decision when she learned that her mother ate the chicken that she had been saving for today's 4-H Club demonstration, and that her brother urinated on the charts she had prepared for her talk ("How to Cut Up a Frying Chicken").

As the scene begins, Ella has eaten everything in the house and is staring into the empty refrigerator. Emma enters, covered with mud. She is holding a horse's rope halter.

**EMMA**: That bastard almost killed me.

*Ella shuts refrigerator and turns toward Emma.*

**ELLA**: What happened to you?

**EMMA**: He dragged me clear across the corral.

**ELLA**: I told you not to play around with that fool horse. He's insane, that horse.

**EMMA**: How am I ever going to get out of here?

**ELLA**: You're not going to get out of here. You're too young. Now go and change your clothes.

EMMA: I'm not too young to have babies, right?  
 ELLA: What do you mean?  
 EMMA: That's what bleeding is, right? That's what bleeding's for.  
 ELLA: Don't talk silly, and go change your uniform.  
 EMMA: This is the only one I've got.  
 ELLA: Well, change into something else then.  
 EMMA: I can't stay here forever.  
 ELLA: Nobody's staying here forever. We're all leaving.  
 EMMA: We are?  
 ELLA: Yes. We're going to Europe.  
 EMMA: Who is?  
 ELLA: All of us.  
 EMMA: Pop too?  
 ELLA: No. Probably not.  
 EMMA: How come? He'd like it in Europe wouldn't he?  
 ELLA: I don't know.  
 EMMA: You mean just you, me, and Wes are going to Europe? That sounds awful.  
 ELLA: Why? What's so awful about that? It could be a vacation.  
 EMMA: It'd be the same as it is here.  
 ELLA: No, it wouldn't! We'd be in Europe. A whole new place.  
 EMMA: But we'd all be the same people.  
 ELLA: What's the matter with you? Why do you say things like that?  
 EMMA: Well, we would be.  
 ELLA: I do my best to try to make things right. To try to change things. To bring a little adventure into our lives and you go and reduce the whole thing to smithereens.  
 EMMA: We don't have any money to go to Europe anyway.  
 ELLA: Go change your clothes!  
 EMMA: No. *She crosses to table and sits stage right end.*  
 ELLA: If your father was here you'd go change your clothes.  
 EMMA: He's not.  
 ELLA: Why can't you just cooperate?  
 EMMA: Because it's deadly. It leads to dying.  
 ELLA: You're not old enough to talk like that.  
 EMMA: I was down there in the mud being dragged along.  
 ELLA: It's your own fault. I told you not to go down there.  
 EMMA: Suddenly everything changed. I wasn't the same per-

son anymore. I was just a hunk of meat tied to a big animal. Being pulled.  
 ELLA: Maybe you'll understand the danger now.  
 EMMA: I had the whole trip planned out in my head. I was going to head for Baja California.  
 ELLA: Mexico?  
 EMMA: I was going to work on fishing boats. Deep-sea fishing. Helping businessmen haul in huge swordfish and barracuda. I was going to work my way along the coast, stopping at all the little towns, speaking Spanish. I was going to learn to be a mechanic and work on four-wheel-drive vehicles that broke down. Transmissions. I could've learned to fix anything. Then I'd learn how to be a short-order cook and write novels on the side. In the kitchen. Kitchen novels. Then I'd get published and disappear into the heart of Mexico. Just like that guy.  
 ELLA: What guy?  
 EMMA: That guy who wrote *Treasure of Sierra Madre*.  
 ELLA: When did you see that?  
 EMMA: He had initials for a name. And he disappeared. Nobody knew where to send his royalties. He escaped.  
 ELLA: Snap out of it, Emma. You don't have that kind of a background to do jobs like that. That's not for you, that stuff. You can do beautiful embroidery; why do you want to be a mechanic?  
 EMMA: I like cars. I like travel. I like the idea of people breaking down and I'm the only one who can help them get on the road again. It would be like being a magician. Just open up the hood and cast your magic spell.  
 ELLA: What are you dreaming for?  
 EMMA: I'm not dreaming now. I was dreaming then. Right up to the point when I got the halter on. Then as soon as he took off I stopped. I stopped dreaming and saw myself being dragged through the mud.  
 ELLA: Go change your clothes.  
 EMMA: Stop saying that over and over as though by saying it you relieve yourself of responsibility.  
 ELLA: I can't even follow the way you talk to me anymore.  
 EMMA: That's good.  
 ELLA: Why is that good?  
 EMMA: Because if you could then that would mean that you understood me.

*Pause. Ella turns and opens the refrigerator again and stares into it.*

EMMA: Hungry?

ELLA: No.

EMMA: Just habit?

ELLA: What?

EMMA: Opening and closing?

ELLA, *closes refrigerator and turns toward Emma*: Christ Emma, what am I going to do with you?

EMMA: Let me go.

ELLA, *after pause*: You're too young. *Ella exits.*

## MOONCHILDREN

by Michael Weller

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### ACT 1, SCENE 3

The play takes place in a student apartment in an American university town. In outline, it is the story of a senior college year in the mid-sixties, and the time of the play runs from fall through graduation. During the course of the play the characters go through antiwar riots, love affairs, an expulsion from school, an attempted self-immolation, and the death of a parent. In this excerpt Ruth and Kathy are airing their frustrations with their boyfriends.

*Kathy is sitting at the table, staring blankly ahead. The front door opens. Ruth comes back, her clothes from the previous scene slightly scuffed. Ruth sees that Kathy is upset.*

RUTH: Hey, what's wrong? Bob here?

KATHY: No.

RUTH: Want some coffee.

KATHY: Please.

RUTH, *takes off her coat and starts making coffee*: I thought you and Bob were coming. You were on the bus and everything. I got lost when the cops charged. Man, they really got some of those guys.

KATHY: When we got there he said he didn't feel like marching.

RUTH: Why not?

KATHY: Oh, Ruthie, I don't know. I don't know anything any more. You devote two years to a guy and what does he give you? He didn't even tell me about being drafted.

RUTH: He's not drafted. For chrissakes, Kathy, that letter's for the physical, that's all. All he has to do is act queer. They're not gonna take a queer musician.

KATHY: That's what I told him on the bus. He wouldn't even listen to me until I called him Job. He said from now on he's dead, Bob is dead and everybody has to call him Job.

RUTH: Oh, come on, Kathy, he's just putting you on.

KATHY: That's what I mean. *Me*. He's even putting *me* on. Ungrateful bastard. After all the things I've done for him. *Pause*. Shit, I sound just like my mother. It's just you get tired of giving all the time and nothing's coming back. You know what I told him? I said he was the first guy I ever had an orgasm with. I mean, it really made him feel good. Now I gotta live with it.

RUTH: Hey, for real, is he really worried about that letter?

KATHY: He says he's gonna try to pass.

RUTH: What?!

KATHY: He wants to join. That's what he told me. He wants to study engineering in the army and when he gets out he's gonna get some kind of plastic job and marry a nice little plastic wife and live in a plastic house in some plastic suburb and have 3.7 plastic children.

RUTH: Bullshit.

KATHY: Ruthie, I'm telling you, he's serious. You know what he told me? He thinks the whole antiwar movement is a goddamn farce. That's what he said. I mean, Jesus, I really thought we were relating on that one. It's not like I'm asking the guy to go burn himself or anything. It's just, I mean, he knows how I feel about this war and he's just doing it to be shitty. I know what it is. He's, like, reaching out, trying to relate to me on a personal level by rejecting me but, like, I don't know how to