

TIMBERLAND

By  
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Draft 3

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“The end of every civilization begins with the end of the forests.”

Jared Diamond, *Collapse*

“Scratch an environmentalist and you find loss.”

Joan Dunning

## TIMBERLAND

### CAST OF CHARACTERS

HANNAH: mid 20s, female

FOSSIL: early 20s, male

MERCER: 30s, male

OAKLEY: 30s, female

NEEDLES: 20s, male

BEN: later 20s, male

SAYWER: 50s, male

MOTHER: 40s, female

### SETTING

The tree canopy, 200 feet off the ground in a Redwood grove in Humboldt County. The forest floor. Various locales.

### TIME

Present day.

### NOTE on PRODUCTION:

While this play is set, primarily, on a tree-sit platform, the Redwood tree itself should be evoked more than replicated: a column of hemp rope, a curtain, etc. Whatever you choose, make it be beautiful.

The constraints of Hannah's existence shouldn't be overlooked. Consider keeping Hannah on the platform for the entirety of the play (save for Act I, Scene 7).

The Audience "Question Askers" in Act II, Scene I may be plants or may be silent questions to which Sawyer responds.

## SCENE 1

The Redwood canopy.

HANNAH on a 6 X 8 wooden platform, braced off a tree-trunk, 200 feet in the air. A second, smaller platform rests behind, on another branch, with plastic buckets and bins. Climbing shoes and a harness dangle.

This is the Aurora Tree Sit.

A taut climbing line hangs off the side of the platform. Next to it, a pulley. Traverse lines run out from the tree into the audience and off-stage. Two branches stretch outwards.

Hannah wears a stocking cap and grimy thermals. She is barefoot. She writes on crude pads made from the interior panels of cereal boxes. Before her, a collection of specimen. Next to her, a tape recorder.

A stillness.

She presses record.

HANNAH

Today, I went exploring. In the cave where Aurora's trunk splits, I found an earthworm in the carpet of duff. Three inches long, thick as a finger and coral pink. 180 feet off the ground. How did he get here? I couldn't find him in the Hartwell. So as of yet: Undescribed. He's an explorer. Just like me. Scientists have found copepods in the fern mats up here. Microscopic ocean shrimp alive in the canopy. A hundred miles from the Pacific. From home.

(beat)

People say to me, you don't belong in Aurora. But life is not belonging. Life is brave.

From below, the sound of physical struggle. Someone on ascent.

FOSSIL (early 20s, sinewy, boyish) lifts himself onto the platform. He rolls onto his back, crowding the platform.

FOSSIL

(Hands in the air)

WOOT!

(stopping a stopwatch)  
 22 minutes, 13 seconds. I'm all gecko now.  
 (wiggling fingers at her)  
 Check out my suckers.

HANNAH

You're late.

Hannah steps over him, detaches a line from Fossil's harness. She runs it through the pulley and lifts. This movement is strong, certain.

FOSSIL (CONT'D)

The first time, took me half a day to get up here. I had to Tarzan over from Auntie--  
 (blesses himself)  
 Rest in peace old girl--  
 (beat)  
 One safety and then jump. Balls out. And such.

HANNAH

(pulling weight)

The pack feels light.

FOSSIL

We ran into some unforeseeable financial circumstances.

HANNAH

You bought pot.

FOSSIL

Am I in trouble?

HANNAH

You said you'd be here yesterday.

FOSSIL

I did?

HANNAH

I'm out of water.

FOSSIL

(serious)

Why didn't you call?

HANNAH

I thought I was clear.

FOSSIL

Look, It's a circus at the base. Ten dudes with djembes needed rides up the logging road, Feral's car broke down, and I had my court date and... you're out of water.

HANNAH

They cut inside the boundary. You see? On the left?

Hannah lifts a pack up onto the platform.

FOSSIL

(Whistle.) Whoah. When?

HANNAH

Yesterday morning.

FOSSIL

It's close.

HANNAH

Really close.

FOSSIL

They're upping the take.

HANNAH

They never stopped.

FOSSIL

It's hard to see the clear-cuts from the floor.

HANNAH

All I do is see them.

Hannah opens the pack. Dried goods, water in Nalgene bottles, etc.

HANNAH

So what'd you bring?

FOSSIL

Dried cranberries. For your fiber dealie. And Luna bars but they're two dollars each, so eat them with a knife and fork.

She removes a metal locking device.

HANNAH

What's this?

FOSSIL

A black bear. In case Coast Lumber tries anything this weekend. You can use it to lock yourself to the platform. Very home-brew. Very tactical.

HANNAH

They won't come for me.

FOSSIL

Redwood Festival? Sounds like a bull's-eye to me.

Hannah removes a tupperware, colorfully designed.

HANNAH

Hey Madge is back.

FOSSIL

She made these weird yellow brownies.

HANNAH

They're blondies.

She reads a card.

HANNAH

"Soldier on, you angel of the trees."

FOSSIL

She misspelled soldier.

HANNAH

Your eyes are better.

FOSSIL

They're still fucked up. Feels like sand in my tear duct.

HANNAH

You need to see a doctor.

FOSSIL

They're not on the barter system.

HANNAH

You don't know what's in pepper-spray.

FOSSIL

Chili powder's what's in pepper-spray.

HANNAH

But the police swabbed it in.

FOSSIL

I was there Hannah. I know. You were up here. Listening. On the cell.

Hannah goes quiet.

FOSSIL

(with a mouthful)

What? I said the brownies were good.

HANNAH

Just take care of yourself.

FOSSIL

Because I'm it, right? I'm all you've got. It's me or it's down to where the rest of us live. Which won't be the end of the world. Maybe this is the time. The weekend, the Festival. Everybody looking. You've been up here a year. I can't do this forever.

Hannah turns from him. She gets a plastic bucket and jar from the platform above. The jar swills with what looks like urine. It is.

HANNAH

I double-bagged the solids. After last time.

FOSSIL

Food and water come up, food and water go down.

Fossil takes out a joint and light it.

HANNAH

I can't pour them out with all the people at the base.

(beat)

I don't want you smoking up here.

FOSSIL

What? I'm taking in the 360.

HANNAH

It's dangerous.

FOSSIL

(kung fu move)

It hones me.

HANNAH

It's stupid.

FOSSIL

Stupid is you not wearing your safety harness.

(he hands it to her)

Wear it.

(she puts it back)

HANNAH

What did Oakley say about the videotape?

FOSSIL

There's nothing. There's a thing behind a thing. Attack of the Angry Gray Smear.

HANNAH

You're kidding.

FOSSIL

You can hear the helicopter, but you can't see anything. Just branches whipping around and you saying "Oh my god Aurora help me help me" right into the mic.

Hannah fetches the video-camera out of a sealed box.

HANNAH

What happened?

FOSSIL

Well, before that, there's a half-hour of Animal Planet. You feeding peanut butter to a flying squirrel.

HANNAH

It's broken.

FOSSIL

No, it's on manual. You've got to take it off manual.

HANNAH

Fuck.

FOSSIL

What did you say?

HANNAH

I said Fuck.

FOSSIL

I'm finally rubbing off.

HANNAH

(enough of him)

Don't you have something to do down on the floor?

FOSSIL

Actually, I do. But first, I've got to pack down your buckets of urine and shit and hope they don't rain like last time. Because last time I had a problem with that. Then I'm supposed to scare up another \$60 bucks for your next supplies because I'm broke. If any of your gear goes now, we're screwed. Then I try to see a doctor so I can cry again, assuming I'm not in jail by tonight. So yeah, the DayRunner is pretty booked.

HANNAH

That logging helicopter was right there. The wind almost ripped the platform off.

FOSSIL

Were you wearing your harness? See if you were wearing your harness...

HANNAH

We could have had them. That videotape was the only evidence we had of Coast Lumber violating code. You should be disappointed.

FOSSIL

I am disappointed. But I'm not up here with you to focus the lens, or re-charge the cell or make you wear your basic safety protection. I have to let go or I'll go crazy.

HANNAH

So let go.

FOSSIL

I'm taking off. After the protest.

HANNAH

Where?

FOSSIL

Up the coast. Clear my head.

HANNAH

But Aurora needs you.

FOSSIL

The tree needs me. This sit needs me. (beat) What about you? You need me?

HANNAH

When are you coming back?

Pause. He doesn't see what he's looking for.

FOSSIL

I'm not.

LIGHTS.

## SCENE 2

Crowd sounds.

The floor. The base of Aurora. Climbing lines dangle to the ground. A pack leans against the base. Ferns and pine-needles suggest ground-level. The Audience is the protest crowd.

MERCER enters with a bullhorn, muddy boots. Walkie-talkie clipped to his belt. A blue slash wraps around Aurora's trunk.

MERCER

(on bullhorn)

Do you see these marks? These blue marks? That's how Coast Lumber marks the logging boundary. Millennium Grove will NOT be protected by the Watershed Deal. In two months, what you're looking at will be moonscape.

(points bullhorn up Aurora)

Hannah? Fossil coming down?

HANNAH

(on walkie-talkie)

He's leaving now.

MERCER

(on bullhorn)

Do you want to say something? I'm going to try to put you over the megaphone.

Mercer holds walkie-talkie up to the bullhorn to be amplified.

HANNAH

(walkie-talkie, through bullhorn, big feedback)

Izzwantzzztozzzthankzzzeveryonezzz--

MERCER

(walktalkie)

Hannah, that's not working. Let's try the cell.

HANNAH

(walkie-talkie)

Cellphone needs a recharge.

MERCER

(into walkie-talkie)

OK, Minor technical whoops--

(into megaphone)

Minor technical delays folks. Hang tight.

He tries to turn it off. It emits random squawks and noises.

OAKLEY enters. Muddy boots, nose ring.

OAKLEY

First rule with the toys: ask me before you start pressing buttons.

(takes bullhorn, turns it off)

Coast Lumber trucks are coming up.

MERCER

How's the blockade?

OAKLEY

Amazing. But nuts. But amazing. An Earth momma from Arcata drove up in a Winnebago and took the wheels off. By herself. God, I love lesbians. (beat) There must be two hundred people down there. Another hundred heading up--

MERCER

Can we cope with those numbers?

OAKLEY

(in bullhorn)

Let Coast Lumber come and get us. And if we're stuck up here, I've got a huge propane tank in my truck. We've got fuel. We can feed you people.

MERCER

(nervously)

We're going to jail aren't we.

OAKLEY

We covered this.

MERCER

I need another beta blocker.

Oakley FISHES a pill from her pocket.

OAKLEY

They're not Tic-Tacs. Don't jelly on me.

(beat)

Look at this.

Oakley hands Mercer a piece of paper.

OAKLEY (CONT'D)

Found it on my windshield this morning. Right up the logging road.

MERCER

“Get Down. The Mattole Militia.” This is a death threat.

OAKLEY

Pretty bold to come this close to camp. It means they're here, right now. Among us.

MERCER

We need to tell the police.

OAKLEY

At least the cross-hairs are fake. The jackasses know their Photoshop.

(beat)

Did you hear Hannah on the radio this morning?

MERCER

Yeah. She was great.

OAKLEY

(suspicious)

How did they get her number? We were going to run everything through the office.

MERCER

Who wants the office when you can have the girl in the tree?

OAKLEY

We are a consensus organization Mercer. No spokespeople, no figureheads. We make decisions together. Does that mean anything, or are you just “Oakley’s talking now--blahblahblah”

MERCER

I’m listening.

OAKLEY

Hannah is all anybody sees and she’s not even a part of Earth Action.

MERCER

Look, I know you’ve been on this longer and I’m not allowed to talk sometimes. But she’s articulate, she doesn’t smoke pot, which itself is a headline.

She's every kid out there who rips up the plastic rings from their six packs because dolphins are screaming. Hannah brought these people.

OAKLEY

We're paying her cellphone. We built the platform.

MERCER

Fossil built the platform.

OAKLEY

Everybody's just snowed by her breasts and her "my spirit got me up here" stuff. We don't even know that much about her.

MERCER

How can you be snowed by her breasts over radio?

NEEDLES enters, unnoticed. Suspenders, jeans, baseball cap. On the front of his t-shirt: "SPOTTED OWLS". On the backside: "TASTE LIKE CHICKEN."

OAKLEY

I've got reps coming from the Native American tribe whose name I can never remember. I've got that scientist from Humboldt State on the salmon issue. A bus of dockworkers from Oakland shows tomorrow, and they don't know they'll be sleeping on a tarp. Are you going to tell them that?

(beat)

You going to tell them you dropped them off the press release? And put Hannah's number right in the middle?

(beat: she's nailed him)

Don't hide things from me. Ever. Again. We're trying to connect the dots and these are big dots.

MERCER

Oakley, I'm not//

OAKLEY

//Let me finish. This is a long thought. We can't have one big dot out there, flapping, on her own.

NEEDLES

Piece of advice?

MERCER

Excuse me?

NEEDLES

You got way too many people here with no clue.

MERCER

Who are you?

OAKLEY

Brian Needum.

NEEDLES

Needles. Sounds cooler.

OAKLEY

He works for Coast Lumber.

NEEDLES

Contract these days. Everybody is.

MERCER

How'd you get up here? We blocked the access road.

NEEDLES

Yeah, well, I made the road.

Oakley shows him the death threat.

OAKLEY

You going to tell me who left this on my car?

NEEDLES

I don't know what the hell that is. Girl's not my problem. Girl's your problem.

OAKLEY

What do you want?

NEEDLES

You kids//

OAKLEY

Kids?

NEEDLES

//You talk about endangered species so much, thought you'd like to see one in person.

Oh yeah which one is that?

MERCER

Lumberjacks.

OAKLEY/NEEDLES

You know that one?

NEEDLES

I'm just surprised you haven't put it on a t-shirt like all your other big thoughts.

OAKLEY

See the ying-yangs over there with cigarettes and maybe more than cigarettes? We've got tinder box conditions. They ash wrong, the whole place will go (fire sound).

NEEDLES

We'll deal with it.

OAKLEY

She does nothing.

NEEDLES

This is you dealing with it?

The rope dangling off Aurora starts to COIL quickly on the ground.

A branch snaps.

OAKLEY

What the hell?

Fossil FALLS.

Sound of a helicopter.

Hannah looking over the edge of the platform.

A silhouette of a FIGURE on the second platform.  
Hannah slowly turns to look...

LIGHTS.