

Another Kind of Rain

SETTING: The play takes place in a flooded agrarian landscape. Only the tops of trees, barns, and hills are visible above the water. Baskets and other buoyant materials are floating on the surface. It is raining heavily.

CHARACTERS

AUTOMATIC SPRINKLER SYSTEM: A struggling farmer with artistic aspirations; friends with PROFESSOR SERPENT.

PROFESSOR SERPENT: An out of work academic and musician; depends on its friend AUTOMATIC SPRINKLER SYSTEM for support.

GENERAL SCISSORS: An general, who depends on CORPORAL HOWITZER to function in the world.

CORPORAL HOWITZER: A corporal, who is the only reason GENERAL SCISSORS gets anything done.

AUTOMATIC SPRINKLER SYSTEM rows a small boat out onto the stage, with PROFESSOR SERPENT riding in it. Both the boat and AUTOMATIC SPRINKLER SYSTEM are very rusty, so they creak as they move. AUTOMATIC SPRINKLER SYSTEM is middle-aged, but years of hard work have made it look much older. It is a farmer by profession. AUTOMATIC SPRINKLER SYSTEM defers to PROFESSOR SERPENT, because it respects SERPENT's education. PROFESSOR SERPENT is riding in the boat, but not helping row. SERPENT wears clothes that were once simple but elegant. Time in the rain has significantly damaged its clothing. Both

*characters are soaking wet. There is a fishing pole by AUTOMATIC SPRINKLER SYSTEM, and
SERPENT may be playing an instrument of some sort.*

SERPENT: (sings)

It's another kind of winter.

It's another kind of rain,

And another kind of weather,

Brings another kind of pain.

SPRINKLER SYSTEM casts its fishing line into the water.

SERPENT: There must be a more efficient way of doing this.

SPRINKLER: What?

SERPENT: I said there must be a more efficient way to pick apples.

SPRINKLER: I heard, professor. I was asking what would be a more efficient way to pick
apples.

SERPENT: I don't know, but we can indubitably devise a superior way to achieve our goals than
fishing.

SPRINKLER: What would that be?

SERPENT: I said I don't know.

SPRINKLER: Oh. If you think of anything—

SERPENT: I'll inform you, of course.

SPRINKLER: Right. Right.

They pause for several seconds.

SERPENT: Anything yet?

SPRINKLER: Not yet, professor.

There is another pause. Then SPRINKLER's line catches on something. It starts pulling on the line, trying to pull the apple from the tree. It continues to struggle during the next few lines.

SERPENT: Have you got something?

SPRINKLER: Don't know. Could be a tree limb.

SERPENT: (singing absentmindedly)

It's another kind of apple.

It's another kind of shame.

It's another kind of riddle,

But the answer is the same.

After it finishes that verse of the song, SERPENT stares awkwardly for a few seconds at SPRINKLER, who is still pulling on its fishing pole.

SPRINKLER: I wrote a poem, professor.

SERPENT: Oh?

SPRINKLER:

Tractor under waves,
Cold rain eats its metal sides.
Rust under water.

SERPENT: Well . . .

SPRINKLER: What? Be honest.

SERPENT: I don't know. It's good, but I think there are a couple of places where it could be, you know, improved.

SPRINKLER: Ok.

SERPENT: I would argue that the first verse is somewhat nongainly. It seems like you're straining against the form to get all the themes you wish to address into the poem, so perhaps it would be prudent to abandon the haiku and rewrite this poem in another form.

SPRINKLER: Ok.

SERPENT: I think attempting to portray the literal conception of a tractor rusting beneath the floodwater is compelling, but you devote your entire initial line to present explaining of that intellectual object, which consumes a large portion of the syllables that could have been dedicated to imagery. I don't know. I think this subject would be better served by another poetical genre.

SPRINKLER: So you're saying I should start the whole thing over.

SERPENT: I guess.

SPRINKLER: Ok.

There is another long pause. Suddenly, the apple comes loose, so SPRINKLER is able to reel it up to the surface. It is a large, moist-looking fruit.

SPRINKLER: Got one.

SERPENT: Sublime.

SPRINKLER takes a bite of the apple, which bursts on his face like a water balloon.

SPRINKLER: God damn it.

SERPENT: I wonder, if we could utilize a syringe to unhydrate them.

SPRINKLER: (shrugs) It's worth a try. Do you have a syringe.

SERPENT: Not on my person.

SPRINKLER: Oh.

SERPENT: I'll reconnoiter through my belongings for one precedent to our next expedition.

SPRINKLER: Do you have one?

SERPENT: I don't know.

SPRINKLER casts its line again. SERPENT starts singing a different song than before.

SERPENT:

Two and two's eleven.

Hell is closer than heaven.

There are snakes in my brain.

And I can't find the end of this rusty chain.

CORPORAL HOWITZER rows another boat onto the stage. GENERAL SCISSORS is in the prow, holding a brightly-colored umbrella. Both are dressed in threadbare military uniforms. SCISSORS's marks him out as being of a higher rank, though HOWITZER's is covered in a preposterous number of medals. SCISSORS is relatively short and carries itself with fragile dignity. HOWITZER is much larger. It looks put upon. HOWITZER stops rowing several feet away from SPRINKLER and SERPENT's boat.

SCISSORS: Damnable weather, isn't it corporal?

HOWITZER: Yes, sir.

SCISSORS: Oh well. Can't be helped. (Beat) Call to them, corporal.

HOWITZER: Yes, sir. (shouting to SERPENT) Ho, there!

SERPENT: (shouting) What did you call me?

HOWITZER: (shouting) I said, "Ho, there!"

SERPENT: (shouting) What did you call me?

SCISSORS: (to HOWITZER) What seems to be the issue, corporal?

HOWITZER: (to SCISSORS) I don't know, sir. They don't seem to understand us.

SCISSORS: I see. Row us in closer, corporal.

HOWITZER: Yes, sir.

HOWITZER starts rowing them toward SERPENT and SPRINKLER.

SERPENT: (to SPRINKLER) Who are these bellicose individuals?

SPRINKLER: (to SERPENT) I don't know.

HOWITZER stops a few feet from SERPENT and SPRINKLER.

SCISSORS: Call them again, corporal.

HOWITZER: Yes, sir. (shouting to SERPENT and SPRINKLER) Ho, there!

SERPENT: (to HOWITZER) What did you call me?

HOWITZER: What?

SERPENT: You called me a ho.

HOWITZER: (to SCISSORS) I think I see the problem, sir.

SCISSORS: What is it, corporal?

HOWITZER: That one thinks I called it a sex worker, sir.

SCISSORS: I see. You've done well diagnosing the source of the difficulty, corporal. There may be a medal for you in this.

HOWITZER: Thank you, sir. (to SERPENT) I'm sorry. It looks like you misunderstood.

SERPENT: Oh?

HOWITZER: You thought I was calling you a ho, the slang term for a prostitute.

SERPENT: That's correct.

HOWITZER: When I was actually saying ho as an exclamation to get your attention.

SERPENT: Oh. What an amusing misunderstanding.

SPRINKLER pulls up an old work boot full of water. The other characters watch as it methodically pours the water out of the boot and puts it in the bottom of the boat. Then

SPRINKLER casts its line again.

HOWITZER: Anyway, I'm sorry for insulting you.

SERPENT: Quite alright. How can we be of service to you, sergeant?

HOWITZER: Corporal.

SERPENT: Apologies.

HOWITZER: It's fine. (to SCISSORS) They want to know what we want, sir.

SCISSORS: Ask if one of them is Automatic Sprinkler System, corporal.

HOWITZER: Yes, sir. (to SERPENT and SPRINKLER) Is one of you Automatic Sprinkler System?

SPRINKLER: I am. Why?

HOWITZER: (to SCISSORS) It's the one fishing, sir.

SCISSORS: Tell it it's under arrest, corporal.

HOWITZER: Yes, sir. (to SPRINKLER) Automatic Sprinkler System, you're under arrest.

SPRINKLER: For what?

SPRINKLER stops fishing.

HOWITZER: (to SCISSORS) It wants to know why it's under arrest, sir.

SCISSORS: Tell it it's under arrest for treason, corporal.

HOWITZER: Yes sir. (to SPRINKLER) For treason.

SPRINKLER: Treason?

SERPENT: Sprinkler is the most unduplicitous individual I have the distinct pleasure of having made the acquaintance of.

HOWITZER: (to SCISSORS) They say it isn't a traitor, sir.

SCISSORS: Ask them who has been giving the enemy our movements, then, corporal.

HOWITZER: Yes, sir. (to SERPENT and SPRINKLER) Then who has been giving the enemy our movements?

SPRINKLER: Maybe your movements are fucking obvious.

SCISSORS: What did it say, corporal?

HOWITZER: (to SCISSORS) They implied that the enemy learns our movements, because you're incompetent, sir.

SCISSORS: Ask them how they dare, corporal.

HOWITZER: Yes, sir. (to SPRINKLER) How dare you?

SERPENT: Every informed citizen is cognizant of the military's movements. It's not difficult to give speculation as to licit channels whereby your antagonists might learn supposedly seclusive intelligence.

HOWITZER: Are you saying I lost my platoon to licit channels?

SERPENT: I didn't know. I'm sorry for your loss.

SPRINKLER: Yes. I am.

HOWITZER: People died, because you gave the enemy information, and you have the fucking gall to say it was our fault.

SPRINKLER: Yes.

SERPENT: Calm down, please, both of you. I'm sure, if we engage in rational dialogue, we can all come to an amicable solution.

HOWITZER: That's the stupidest fucking thing I've ever heard. You want us to dialogue the enemy to death?

SERPENT: Have you tried?

HOWITZER: Not personally. (gesturing to SCISSORS) That's a job for the higher ups.

SPRINKLER: You think they know what they're doing?

HOWITZER: You think they don't?

SPRINKLER: Yes, bunch of fucking assholes.

SERPENT: (whispering to SPRINKLER) What are you doing? How does provoking it benefit us?

SPRINKLER: I don't know.

SERPENT: Then why are you doing it?

SPRINKLER: I don't know.

SCISSORS: (to HOWITZER) Is it going well, corporal?

HOWITZER: (to Scissors) No, sir. It isn't being cooperative.

SCISSORS: Then do what you have to, corporal.

HOWITZER: Yes, sir.

HOWITZER grabs one of the oars and steps out of the boat. It walks across the water to the other boat, where it tries to pull SPRINKLER out. There is an awkward struggle, in which both oars in SERPENT and SPRINKLER's boat fall into the water and sink. HOWITZER knocks SPRINKLER unconscious with his oar, before SERPENT knocks its oar into the water too. HOWITZER hauls SPRINKLER back to its boat, where SCISSORS is waiting. HOWITZER gets in and starts using the remaining oar to row slowly away.

SERPENT: (shouting after them) You bastards! Violence is the last resort of the inarticulate, you know!

The soldiers' boat disappears off stage. SERPENT tries to paddle after them using its hands, but obviously does not get very far. Eventually, SERPENT gives up. It shouts after the soldiers.

SERPENT: You miserable, aggregate lumps of hideous, putrefying excrement! You obscene, pusillanimous, anti-rational gang of puffed-up fops! You're fucking champions at terrorizing powerless civilians, but the minute the enemy shows up you beat a perfidious retreat! You filth. You scum. You slime. You inbred offspring of affordable slatterns. You shit. You fucking pieces of fucking shit. You shit. You shit. You shit.

SERPENT is out of rhetoric. It slumps over in the boat. A few seconds pass.

SERPENT: (singing)

It's another kind of water.

It's another kind of wine.

It's another kind of river

That burns away our time.

SERPENT changes to a different song.

SERPENT: (singing)

A great while ago the world begun,
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,
But that's all one, our play is done,
And we'll strive to please you every day.

BLACKOUT