

ACT I            SCENE 1 A small, blonde woman (AUDRA) in classic safari gear – khaki shorts, white shirt, boots, etc. is sitting in a director's chair set downstage right. Upstage left is a minimalist set in darkness – the frame of a window with a bed below. A man (ROGER) is sleeping in the bed, the other side is empty.

A large black dog (FORTINBRAS) is lying on a braided rug at the foot of the bed.

AUDRA:            (speaking) You want to know my story? Okay, I'll tell you. My name is Audra. And I'm a Weather Zombie. (beat) Oh, you want more. Fine. It's like this.

*AUDRA stands up and steps out of her boots and shorts. The white shirt likely belongs to ROGER. It falls to her knees once it's no longer tucked in. She continues speaking as she crosses to the bed and gets in it.*

AUDRA:            Fortinbras knows the storm is coming before I do. Before either of us does. He's got a weather sense that way. We named him after the dog in *A Wrinkle in Time*. It was my favorite book when I was a kid, and it was Roger's favorite, too. And that's just one of the things that drew us together...

*FORTINBRAS rises from his rug and scents the air. Then he goes to Audra's side of the bed and nudges her.*

AUDRA:            (sleepy) No, Fort. Go back to sleep.

*FORTINBRAS jumps up so his front paws are on the bed, and his nose is in AUDRA's face. He barks at her. A warning.*

AUDRA:            It's not breakfast time, Fort. It's too early. Roger, make him stop.

ROGER:            (sleepy) Go to bed, Forty. It's too early.

*FORTINBRAS is insistent. He whimpers and barks.*

*A flash of lightning – not the Dracula-kind, the flat kind – brightens the space beyond the window.*

AUDRA:            Oh, shit. Storm's com – Owwww! (She sits up in the bed.) Oh, owwww. (She raises her knees and props her elbows on them holding her head in her hands.

ROGER:            (instantly awake) Headache? So fast?

AUDRA:            (through gritted teeth) Mother of all motherfucking headaches. (beat) I think my head's gonna explode.

*There is a flash of lightning and a rumble of thunder and this continues increasing in intensity. Fortinbras directs his attention to the window, barking in response, as if he could chase away the storm.*

AUDRA: Or implode. I'm never sure which one's correct. (whimpering in pain, but escalating in sound) Shit-fuck-ow-shit-ow-fuck-make-it-stop!

ROGER: (gently) Take your meds, hon. I'll get you cold water. (He pushes back the covers)

AUDRA: (whining) They make me into a zombie.

ROGER: (rational) Better zombie-wife than screaming-in-pain wife. Take. Your. Meds.

AUDRA: What if I eat Fortinbras? You know I went after Peaches last time.

ROGER: Fortinbras won't let you do that. *I* won't let you do that.

AUDRA: What if they don't work?

*Another crash of thunder. Another flash of lightning. Another round of barking. Lather. Rinse. Repeat.*

ROGER: What if they do?

AUDRA: Get a big glass.

*ROGER leaves the bed and disappears into the shadows, returning with a large glass of water, which he hands to AUDRA. He sits with her, on her side of the bed, and reaches past her for a big bottle of pills. Shaking out two, he holds them in his palm, for her to take.*

*AUDRA looks at the pills for a long moment. Reluctantly, she takes one, swallows it, makes a face conveying the fact that they are uncoated, and bitter, washing it down with several sips of water. Then she repeats the process with the other pill.*

*ROGER puts the lid back on the bottle and passes it to AUDRA who puts it back on the bedside table.*

ROGER: Drink up.

AUDRA: (grateful) You put lemon in it.

ROGER: Regular water makes you puke.

AUDRA: I know. I mean. Thank you.

*More lightning and thunder. It's getting louder and closer. FORTINBRAS lays his head in AUDRA's lap.*

AUDRA: Yes, thank you, too.

*ROGER goes back to his side of the bed and AUDRA settles herself under the covers again. FORTINBRAS jumps onto the bed and curls up at the foot of it. Guarding.*

*All is quiet.*

SCENE 2: The same bedroom, the same night, a few minutes later, the storm is in full force. Lightning strikes inside the room.

AUDRA: (muttering) Ozone. Tastes... tastes likes ozone.

*FORTINBRAS whimpers.*

ROGER: (sitting up) That was close. (beat.) It'll move away soon, though.)

*Thunder rumbles and it sounds sort of like cranky old men.*

AUDRA: (sleepy, altered) Stop knocking. No, no, we're... no, sorry, sirs. We're not interested in vacuums or blenders today. Maybe next year. Or never. Are your brains fresh?

ROGER: Hon, wake up.

AUDRA: Why?

ROGER: You're doing it again. Talking to the thunder.

AUDRA: It's trying to sell us stuff we don't need.

ROGER: O – kay.

*AUDRA sits up in bed and ROGER wraps his arm around her shoulders. The dog lifts his head, decides it's not worth moving, and goes back to sleep. The storm continues.*

AUDRA: How long has it been?

ROGER: Fifteen minutes.

AUDRA: Half-way to working. Can't they work faster?

*Her face is pale, drawn. Her eyes are hollow, tired. She rests her head against ROGER's shoulder and lets her hand fall to rest on his thigh. He is grounding her against the storm outside and the one inside her head.*

SCENE 3: The same bedroom, Seventeen minutes later.

AUDRA: How long?

ROGER: (as if she's been asking this every three minutes) Thirty-two minutes.

*There is a final lightning flash and a little rumble of thunder, but it's faint, the storm is over.*

AUDRA: Pop. Pop. The bubble popped.

ROGER: No more headache?

AUDRA: Uh-uh. No more brain, either. (sing-songy) I need a new brain. One that works when it should. One that won't crave cats. One that feels so good. I need a new bra-ain.

ROGER: Ah, I see we've reached the boudoir cabaret part of the evening. Sleep, sweetie. Fort and I will keep you safe.

AUDRA: (tired) You won't let me leave the bed?

ROGER: We won't. Not before morning.

AUDRA: And you'll make sure Mrs. Fletcher's cats are safe tomorrow?

ROGER: I promise, I'll go over to her house with a bag of organic, fair-trade, catnip chews and make her swear to keep them inside all week, just in case.

AUDRA: Remember when I used to love storms?

ROGER: You will again, someday.

AUDRA: Remember when they happened because of normal climate patterns and not because my brain is all wonky?

ROGER: Sometimes, they still do.

AUDRA: Remember when we danced naked in the rain because it was romantic and not because we were washing raccoon blood away?

ROGER: Is it weird if I tell you it was still romantic?

AUDRA: Maybe a little. (beat. Yawn.) Maybe a lot. Tired.)

ROGER: Shhh. Sleep.

*Blackout*

SCENE 4: AUDRA is back in the director's chair, back to her crisply-dressed self, and FORTINBRAS is near her with a service dog harness on.

AUDRA: I really have the best family. Roger kept me safe that night. He holds me together through all my migraines just like he did when this all first started. It's not always easy.

Sure, some nights I can just go back to sleep, but other nights my dreams are full of how I got this way – the trip when Roger and I were volunteering as grad students planting trees in Costa Rica because it would get us out of our student loans. The bug that bit me – no entomologist managed to identify it. No doctor or chemist or virologist has ever nailed down the strain of dengue fever that altered my chemistry.

And I am... seriously... *altered*. I mean, other people get migraines when it's stormy but I get storms when I have migraines, and then I crave animal flesh - it doesn't have to be brains, really - that's just a gimmick – when the meds finally take the headache away.

And I'm not kidding about the cats. There was this one night when Roger took Fortinbras with him on a camping trip and I was home alone – I was picking old Mr. West's calico out of my teeth for *weeks*.

I sympathize with other migraine sufferers. I do. But the reality is, while they may *say* their migraine meds turn them into zombies... mine really do.

*BLACKOUT.*

FIN