

FAMILY THERAPY

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INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - DAY

EARTH and HUMANITY sit on the couch, each taking an armrest and leaving quite a bit of space between them. EARTH has a somewhat ageless look to her - she could be 40, she could be 70, she could be several million years old. She wears flowers woven through her hair, which curls like jungle vines around her face. Her clothes are made of natural fabrics, her feet bare, her purse gigantic. HUMANITY is young enough to be EARTH's adult child, their hair neatly styled, clothes constructed of man-made materials, perhaps with a subtle leaf pattern. A box of tissues rests on a side table next to the couch; EARTH clutches a dampened tissue in her hand. She bursts into tears.

HUMANITY

Do you see what I'm dealing with?
She keeps pulling this rising water
levels shtick to get my attention.
She's impossible!

EARTH

Oh, that's very mature, trying to
get the family therapist to side
with you.

(indicating the audience,
as if they are the
therapist)

You know who you sound like?

HUMANITY

Not this again...

EARTH

What? You were such a sweet kid,
until you met that slimy little-

HUMANITY

Mom!

EARTH

That Snake was a bad influence on
you! Why couldn't you hang out with
Dog? Dog was always your best
friend!

HUMANITY

You think Dog would've just left
the fruit of Knowledge alone? He's
always barking up the wrong tree!

EARTH

Fine, you still could've stuck with
Chicken, she'd never engage in that
kind of risky behavior. Or any of
the other oviparous animals, they

(MORE)

EARTH (cont'd)
wouldn't have pushed you to leave
the nest like Snake did.

HUMANITY
You really would've preferred I
spend my time with Platypus?

EARTH
What's wrong with Platypus?

HUMANITY
Where do I start? He's a
duck-billed, beaver-tailed,
milk-sweating weirdo!

EARTH
(to the audience)
I went through an experimental
phase, they can't all be peacocks
and pandas. That's why I made
Australia...

HUMANITY
So not ANYONE would've been better
than Snake-

EARTH
I never said that! Ech, even Emu
knows to stand up for themself when
someone's leading them astray. Do
you think Snake could've won a war
fair and square?

HUMANITY
You just don't like Snake because
he didn't live up to the dinosaurs.

EARTH
Always with the dinosaurs. You
never even met them.

HUMANITY
I know they're your favorites - why
else would you preserve their bones
for all these years?

EARTH
Sweetheart, I don't have favorites,
how many times do we have to go
through this?
(to the audience)
Besides, they're the one who dug up
the bones and put them on display.
That's sibling rivalry, no?

HUMANITY

Hey! I thought we weren't supposed to try and diagnose each other.

(to the audience)

Isn't that what you said?

(back to EARTH)

Once again, I'm the only one following the rules.

EARTH

Rules? You want to talk about rules? This all started with your little rebellious phase.

(to the audience)

We were doing just fine, everything was perfect, everyone lived in harmony, everyone was a vegetarian, and then this wise guy decides to eat from the Tree of Knowledge and gets two tickets outta Paradise. Now you don't call, you don't text, and when are you gonna stop giving me grandchildren? I know you're supposed to be fruitful and multiply, but I've only got so much room, slow down.

HUMANITY

Don't start with the overpopulation thing again. Ma, you can't trust everything you hear on the grapevine.

EARTH

I just worry about there being enough space for all of you. My poor core couldn't take another extinction.

HUMANITY

Am I my brothers' keeper?

EARTH

Well, you did build all those zoos...

HUMANITY groans in exasperation, burying their face in their hands.

EARTH

Oy, what's the matter? Do you have a headache? Are you getting enough potassium?

EARTH starts pulling fruits, vegetables, and nuts from her giant purse.

EARTH

Do you need vitamin B? D? C?
Whatever you need, sweetheart,
here. Tsk, all that processed junk
isn't good for you. You know you
can always come home for a real
meal, yes?

HUMANITY

(with a sigh)

Thanks, Mom.

EARTH

Of course, my little Earthling.

HUMANITY

Uch, come on. Nobody calls me that
anymore.

EARTH

I heard someone use it just last
millenium! That funny doctor on
television, the one who sometimes
uses vegetables as accessories -
now there's a snazzy dresser-

HUMANITY

So should I start calling you Sol
III, since I heard it on Star Trek?

EARTH

"Sol"? They're really just
categorizing us by distance from
that old star? Tsk, classic sun,
always has to be at the center of
everything.

HUMANITY

Doesn't feel great, does it?

EARTH

But I never called myself that!
Ach, I never understood why you
felt the need to change your name.
"Humanity," "Mankind," "Homo
Sapiens" - and you thought you were
so clever with that one! What, are
you ashamed of your roots?

HUMANITY

Of course not-

EARTH

(to the audience)

Kids! They figure out evolution and
poof! They forget that it all comes
back to me!

HUMANITY

Yeah, everything comes back to you. You make it all possible, you're the center of gravity, poets wander off into the woods to talk about you and then we've gotta write essays about roads and staying gold and-

EARTH

And who provides the paper for all those essays and poems, hm?

HUMANITY

Everyone writes on computers now!

EARTH

(to the audience)

See? They act like they don't need me at all anymore. This industrialization phase these last couple centuries/

HUMANITY

/It's not a phase, Mom!

EARTH

Sometimes I could just up and leaf!

HUMANITY

I knew it! (to the audience) Let the record show I'm not diagnosing her, but this is totally where I get my attachment issues. I always knew she preferred those early days of creation, the quiet times before I was formed, her little last-minute addition who messed everything up, right? Everyone else knew their place, and I upset the natural order with my curiosity and chaos!

EARTH sits, shaken like the San Andreas, before responding slowly.

EARTH

I think someone's projecting...

(to the audience)

Am I using that right? (beat) No? What's the word for "I think you have a fundamental misunderstanding of how I feel and you've clearly had big feelings about it for a while, we should talk about that"?

(MORE)

EARTH (cont'd)
 (to HUMANITY, shifting
 carefully closer on the
 couch)

I would never wish you away. As for chaos, where do you think you got that from, hm? "Natural order," what a load of fertilizer. You weren't around for it, but all this started with mayhem, entropy, tohu va'vohu. We need your chaos, that little spark that makes you do things like help gigantic wounded elephants or make the desert bloom or run into forest fires to save koalas who are loopy off eucalyptus. I don't dream of a time before you: I dread a time without you. Maybe I don't mind it so much when you send some billionaires off into space, but otherwise... You've been pulling away since Eden.

(acknowledging audience)

Sorry, right, "I" statements. I feel like you've been pulling away since Eden.

HUMANITY

What do you want from me? I can't just go back to prancing around wearing nothing but leaves-

EARTH

The leaves came later, you used to not care if you were wearing anything at all! But if you need some fig sprigs to feel comfortable, that's fine, sweetheart. I can get give you all the leaves you need.

HUMANITY

And shelter? Do you imagine it'll be fine just sleeping out under the stars all the time, an eternal camping trip?

EARTH

Yes!

HUMANITY

No! Mom, in case you haven't noticed, the weather isn't perfect all the time these days, not even in, I don't know, San Diego.

EARTH starts crying again. HUMANITY hands her another tissue.

HUMANITY

Look, Ma, I'm all grown up now. You can't-sorry, I feel that you can't keep treating me like a naive little species. That doesn't mean I don't love you. I've just got my own interests now. I don't freak out and think the world is ending whenever it gets dark or rains - I figured out electricity and umbrellas, and also that you should not put those two things together. I figured out how to reproduce - don't get me wrong, I appreciate the time you tried to give me The Talk, but it turns out the shaped-out-of-clay, breathed-into-with-a-spark-of-creation situation was a one-time thing. It normally involves a lot less dirt and a lot more words I won't repeat in front of my mother. I've made vaccines, not just for me, but for Dog and Cat and Rabbit and a bunch of the others so they wouldn't get sick. Yeah, I go to space sometimes, but have you seen the pictures I take of you from up there?

EARTH

(sniffing and
straightening up a
little)

You do know how to get my good side.

HUMANITY

See? I love you, Mom. I just, I wish you would stop trying to dig up the past and be happy with who I am now. I mean, back then I couldn't do anything for you but make daisy chains and give animals silly names (I'm still sorry about Boobies. In my defense, they are very silly birds, and I was still figuring out the whole bodily awareness thing. You know how kids are). Look, I know I've messed up in the past, you've put up with a lot from me-

EARTH

I don't know why you keep drilling up oil and then putting it back in the wrong places. Should I have given you echolocation? Would that have helped? I'm sorry.

HUMANITY moves closer on the couch to stop her with a gentle hand on hers.

HUMANITY

No, Ma, that's not on you. And I've got radar and commercials about cleaning ducklings with dish soap now.

EARTH

What?!

HUMANITY

Not to eat them! To fix the oil problem that I caused in the first pl- we're getting off topic. I'm trying to be better, is what I mean to say. Isn't that a good thing, to be able to maybe contribute? To be more than a confused kid figuring out that "fire hot," to maybe be, I don't know, a partner?

HUMANITY stops and looks down at where their hand touches EARTH's, then droops, reflecting on all they've just said about themselves, all the ways they've messed up. Pulling away.

HUMANITY

Who am I kidding? I'm just one species, what can I do for you?

EARTH

Wait, sweetheart-

HUMANITY

(to the audience)

I'm sorry, maybe this was a mistake, we shouldn't have come here. Jacob and Esav said you really helped them, so I thought maybe we should try it, but (getting up to go) I'm just kidding myself, aren't I? After all I've done to mess things up, why should you trust me to help? Why did I think I could? To err is, well, (gestures to self) you know.

EARTH catches HUMANITY's hand.

EARTH

Just wait, one second. Take a breath - here, (she exhales deeply) have some oxygen.

They breathe together. HUMANITY doesn't sit back down, but they don't try to leave again, either.

EARTH

I feel (glances to audience with a look that says "eh, see, I'm getting the hang of it") like you're selling yourself short. And, if I remember the invention of capitalism correctly, you're not supposed to do that, no?

HUMANITY laughs a little despite themselves.

EARTH

I haven't been fair with you. I thought if I just waited out the rebellious phase, you'd come back to me and everything would be like it used to be. But that shouldn't have been the goal. You were right - there's so much more you can do now, and that's wonderful! Sure, you're just one species, but what a species you are! I mean, who else would've thought of therapy, hm? No offense to therapy animals, they're very hardworking, but I wouldn't go to Fish for a diagnosis. A ride, maybe, at least according to Jonah and that story about the little puppet boy and his father and I think there was a donkey involved somehow? Or was the donkey with Jonah? No, he was upset about a tree, which I think he was perfectly justified about but everyone made a fuss-

HUMANITY

(laughing, a little more warmly)

Ma.

EARTH

Right, sorry, I'm spinning myself in circles.

EARTH gently pulls HUMANITY's hand, guiding them to sit back on the couch, this time with the two almost shoulder-to-shoulder.

EARTH

You were a great kid. But you're even more amazing now. You'd be a fantastic partner.

HUMANITY grabs EARTH into a huge hug. They both sniffle and turn back out to the audience.

HUMANITY

That's our time? I thought we had a whole hour?

EARTH

What's a therapeutic hour? How is changing what an hour means therapeutic? That's just more stressful, no?

HUMANITY

Mom!

EARTH

Sorry, sorry.

HUMANITY

Thanks, doc. And you should have our insurance info- (beat) No, I'm sure your receptionist said on the phone that you take Blue Star Blue Field.

EARTH picks up the fruits/vegetables and shoves them back in her purse, stands to go.

EARTH

You've gotta be kidding me, we're not paying that much out of pocket! You barely said anything! (She takes HUMANITY by the hand and starts to exit) Come on, sweetheart, I bet Snake knows a good lawyer.

BLACKOUT