

Hester
No ones getting on top of you, Bully.

Bully
He'll put the ring on my finger and I'll have me uh white dress and he'll get on top of me—

Hester
No ones getting on top of you, Bully, no ones getting on top of you, so shut yr mouth about it.

Trouble
How she gonna have babies if no one gets on top of her?

Hester
Dont *make* me hurt you!

*Hester raises her hand to Trouble who runs off.
Bully starts crying.*

Hester
Shut the fuck up or I'll give you something to cry about!

The kids huddle together in a knot.

Hester
Jabber/Bully/Beauty
Hester
Jabber/Bully/Beauty
Hester

(Rest)

Hester
Bedtime.

Beauty
Its too early for bed—

Hester
BEDTIME!

*They hurry off.
Hester goes back to contemplating the sky.*

Hester
Hester
Hester

Hester
Big dark thing. Gods hand. Coming down on me. Blocking the light out. 5-fingered hand of fate. Coming down on me.

*The Doctor comes on wearing his "SPAY" sandwich board.
He watches her looking up. After a bit he looks up too.*

Doctor
We've scheduled you in for the day after tomorrow. First thing in the morning. You can send yr kids off to school then come on in. We'll have childcare for the baby. We'll give you good meals during yr recovery. Yll go to sleep. Yll go to sleep and when you wake up, whisk! Yll be all clean. No worries no troubles no trials no tribulations no more mistakes. Clean as a whistle. You wont feel a thing. Day after tomorrow. First thing in the morning. Free of charge. Itll be our pleasure. And yours. All for the best. In the long run, Hester. Congratulations.

*The Doctor walks off. Hester is still looking up.
Chilli walks in with his picnic basket on his arm.
He pauses to check his pocket watch.
Hester lowers her head.*

The sight of him knocks the wind out of her.

BEGIN

Hester
Oh.

Chilli
Ive been looking for you.

Hester
Oh.

Chilli
Ssbeen a long time.

Hester
I—I—.

Chilli
No need to speak.

Hester
I—

Chilli
Yr glad to see me.

Hester
Yeah.

Chilli
I been looking for you. Like I said. Lifes been good to me. Hows life been to you?

Hester

Ok. —. Hard.

Chilli

Hester

Hester

I was with the Welfare and I seed you. I called out yr name.

Chilli

I didnt hear you. Darn.

Hester

Yeah.

(Rest)

I woulda run after you but—

Chilli

But you were weak in the knees. And you couldnt move a muscle.

Hester

Running after you woulda gived you away. And Welfares been after me to know the names of my mens.

Chilli

Mens? More than one?

Hester

I seed you and I called out yr name but I didnt run after you.

(Rest)

You look good. I mean you always looked good but now you look better.

(Rest)

I didnt run after you. I didnt give you away.

Chilli

Thats my girl.

(Rest)

Welfare has my name on file, though, doesnt she?

Hester

From years ago. I—

Chilli

Not to worry couldnt be helped. I changed my name. Theyll never find me. Theres no trace of the old me left anywhere.

Hester

Cept Jabber.

Chilli

Who?

Hester

Yr son.

Hester

Chilli

Chilli

Guess what time it is?

Hester

He takes after you.

Chilli

Go on guess. Betcha cant guess. Go on.

Hester

Noon?

Chilli

Lets see. I love doing this. I love guessing the time and then pulling out my watch and seeing how close I am or how far off. I love it. I spend all day doing it. Doctor says its a tick. A sure sign of some disorder. But I cant help it. And it doesnt hurt anyone. You guessed?

Hester

Noon.

Chilli

Lets see. Ah! 3.

Hester

Oh.

Hester goes back to contemplating the sky.

Chilli

Sorry.

(Rest)

Whats up there?

Hester

Nothing.

Chilli

I want you to look at me. I want you to take me in. Ive been searching for you for weeks now and now Ive found you. I wasnt much when you knew me. When we knew each other I was—I was a shit.

(Rest)

I was a shit, wasnt I?

Hester**Chilli****Chilli**

I was a shit, agree with me.

Hester

We was young.

Chilli

We was young. We had a romance. We had a love affair. We was young. We was in love. I was infatuated with narcotics. I got you knocked up then I split.

Hester

Jabber, hes yr spitting image. Only hes a little slow, but—

Chilli

Who?

Hester

Jabber. Yr son.

Chilli

Dont bring him into it just yet. I need time. Time to get to know you again. We need time alone together. Guess.

Hester

3:02.

Chilli

Ah! 3:05. But better, yr getting better. Things move so fast these days. Ive seen the world Ive made some money Ive made a new name for myself and I have a loveless life. I dont have love in my life. Do you know what thats like? To be alone? Without love?

Hester

I got my childr—I got Jabber. hes my treasure.

Hester**Chilli***(Rest)***Chilli**

Im looking for a wife.

Hester

Oh.

Chilli

I want you to try this on.

*Chilli takes a wedding dress out of his basket.
He puts it on her, right over her old clothes.
Hester rearranges the club, still held in her belt,
to get the dress on more securely.*

Hester

I seed you and I called out your name, but you didnt hear me, and I wanted to run after you but I was like, Hester, if Welfare finds out Chillis in town they gonna give him hell so I didnt run. I didnt move a muscle. I was mad at you. Years ago. Then I seed you and I was afraid I'd never see you again and now here you are.

Chilli

What do you think?

Hester

Its so clean.

Chilli

It suits you.

*Hester gets her shoes.***Hester**

I got some special shoes. Theyd go good with this. Jabber, come meet yr daddy!

Chilli

Not yet, kid!

(Rest)

Lets not bring him into this just yet, K?

*He fiddles with his watch.***Chilli**

14 years ago. Back in the old neighborhood. You and me and the moon and the stars. What was our song?

Hester**Chilli****Hester**

Huh?

Chilli

What was our song?

*(Rest)**Da dee dah, dah dah dee dee?***Hester**

Its been a long time.

Chilli
Listen.

Chilli plays their song, "The Looking Song," on a tinny tape recorder. He sings along as she stands there. After a bit he dances and gets her to dance with him. They sing as they dance and do a few moves from the old days.

Chilli
Im looking for someone
to lose my looks with
looking for someone
to lose my shape with
looking for someone
to-get-my-hip-replaced with
looking for someone
Could it be you?

Im looking for someone
to lose my teeth with
looking for someone
to go stone deaf with
looking for someone
to-lie-6-feet-underneath with
looking for someone
Could it be you?

They say, "Seek and ye shall find"
so I will look until Im blind
through this big old universe
for rich or poor better or worse
Singing:

yuck up my tragedy
oh darling, marry me
let's walk on down the aisle, walk on
Down Down Down.

Cause Im looking for someone
to lose my looks with
looking for someone
to lose my teeth with
looking for someone
I'll-lie-6-feet-underneath with
looking for someone
Could it be you?

Theyre breathless from dancing.

Chilli
This is real. The feelings I have for you, the feelings you are feeling for me, these are all real. Ive been fighting my feelings for years. With every dollar I made. Every hour I spent. I spent it fighting. Fighting my feelings. Maybe you did the same thing. Maybe you remembered me against yr will, maybe you carried a torch for me against yr better judgment.

Hester
You were my first.

Chilli
Likewise.

(Rest)

He silently guesses the time and checks his guess against his watch. Is he right or wrong?

Chilli
"Yuck up my tragedy."

Hester
Huh?

Chilli
"Marry me."

Hester
Chilli

Hester
K.

Chilli
There are some conditions some things we have to agree on. They dont have anything to do with money. I understand your situation.

Hester
And my—

Chilli
And your child—ok. *Our* child—ok. These things have to do with you and me. You would be mine and I would be yrs and all that. But I would still retain my rights to my manhood. You understand.

Hester
Sure. My—

Chilli

Yr kid. We'll get to him. I would rule the roost. I would call the shots. The whole roost and every single shot. Ive proven myself as a success. Youve not done that. It only makes sense that I would be in charge.

Hester

—K.

(Rest)

I love you.

Chilli

Would you like me to get down on my knees?

*Chilli gets down on his knees, offering her a ring.***Chilli**

Heres an engagement ring. Its rather expensive. With an adjustable band. If I didnt find you I would have had to, well—. Try it on, try it on.

*Chilli checks his watch. As Hester fiddles with the ring, Bully and Trouble rush in. Beauty and Baby follow them.***Bully**

Mommie!

Hester

No.

Trouble

You look fine!

Hester

No.

Beauty

Is that a diamond?

Hester

No!

Baby

Mommie!

Hester**Bully/Trouble/Beauty/Baby****Bully**

Mommie?

*Hester recoils from her kids.***Chilli**

Who do we have here, honey?

Hester**Bully/Trouble/Beauty/Baby****Chilli**

Who do we have here?

Hester

The neighbors kids.

*Chilli goes to look at his watch, doesnt.***Chilli**

Honey?

Hester

Bully, wheres Jabbar at?

Chilli

Honey?

Hester

Bully, Im asking you a question.

Chilli

Honey?

Trouble

hes out with Miga.

Chilli

So you all are the neighbors kids, huh?

Trouble

Who the fuck are you?

Hester

Trouble—

Chilli

Who the fuck are you?

Bully

We the neighbors kids.

Chilli**Hester***(Rest)***Chilli**

Honey?