

ADAM AND THE RED EARTH

BY PLUTO BOLL

NOTE:

I want this play to reflect a mythology. That is- we don't feel quite good about the ending whether we got what we felt the characters deserved or not. The stakes are quite high. The characters matter more as ideas than as individuals. But I believe they should still feel deeply personable and each be given their own wants and desires beyond what they represent as fablistic. Moreover, I don't want this play to feel like a battle between religion and science. I don't believe the two are all that different, afterall. It should never feel like it takes a stance on who is right and who is wrong. We should just know that we feel deeply for the characters, for humanity, and for the beings whose awful job it is to judge such a thing. This play is, at its core, about love.

SCENES:

SCENE ONE: SURFACE OF MARS, 2089

SCENE TWO: SURFACE OF MARS, SOMETIME LATER

SCENE THREE: HELLAS BASIN CRATER

SCENE FOUR: HELLAS BASIN CRATER

SCENE FIVE: A COURTROOM ON MARS

SCENE SIX: SURFACE OF MARS

CHARACTERS:

ADAM: Any gender. Any age. An exploratory rover sent to Mars. It has never seen the earth, though it burns with the desire to save it. Incredibly intelligent, yet a bit naive at the start.

ZADOC: Any gender. Any age. An angel. A kind of leader and final judge of the three angels. All in the name of fairness. Always seems to know something the others don't.

SELMA: Any gender. Any age. An angel. The more cynical of the three angels. Anger boils just underneath the surface. They have little to no belief in humanity.

VIRGIL: Any gender. Any age. An angel. The kindest of the three angels. Not to be mistaken for softness. They have compassion for humanity.

SCENE ONE

Surface of Mars, 2089.

The stage is dark. There are whirring noises, beeps, and finally a soft red light illuminates ADAM: a rover that landed on Mars only a month ago.

ADAM inspects the barren landscape methodically. After a while, they perk up, receiving a broadcast over their tiny speaker.

V.O.

Status update?

ADAM

putting a finger to their ear to respond

Mars Rover ADAM- January 20th, 2089. 3:52. Location- quadrant B34, away facing. Status- fully operational.

ADAM turns to the audience.

Log:

It is my first month on Mars. I'm delighted to walk in the footsteps of my predecessors. The wind here is only 1 percent as powerful as it is on Earth, so I can literally trace their footsteps.

V.O.

What do you see?

ADAM

back to the broadcast

Salt. Fossilized ocean. Basalt. Shale. Sandstone.

To the audience

As many rovers before me, I am told to look for clues of what once inhabited this planet. What led to its extinction. I am tasked with discovering what turned this planet red. All I discover are-

Back to the broadcast

Old rovers. Dysfunctional. Craters. Dead algae.

To the audience

There is only the bleeding stump of something. But it was definitely something. I try to remain positive. I'm programmed to remain positive.

V.O.

Anything else?

ADAM

Back to the broadcast

Nothing else to report. Over.

ADAM removes their finger from their ear.

I am their most expensive project yet. I outmatch the national debt, and outweigh the atomic bomb. My official name is ADaMEV: Astrological Doppler and Martian Exploration Vehicle. The name sounded too foreign, so they shortened it to ADAM. More American that way.

The star spangled banner plays through what sounds like a tiny speaker. ADAM salutes.

I was formed in their image. I hold their hopes and dreams. I feel those as if they are my own- as if I thought them myself. Inside of me is a steady- steady ticking. I have no heart, and yet it beats. I have no blood, and yet it boils. I feel grateful to carry this weight.

I feel sick.

ADAM stops their searching suddenly and looks out over the audience. Behind ADAM, a projection of the earth. Around it is a reddish glow. The land is turning red, and many masses have sunk into the sea. ADAM wipes at tears, though there are none. The projection fades.

ADAM

I am tasked with saving the earth.

beat

What is left.

BLACKOUT.

SCENE TWO

Surface of Mars, almost two months later.

V.O.

Cracklier than before
Sta...tus u..pdate?

ADAM

March 3rd, 2089. 12:03. Location- quadrant G3, shadowed side.
Status- fully operational.

to the audience
Log:

A day on earth is approximately 40 minutes shorter than a sol on Mars. If any intelligent life occupied this land in the past, they had 40 minutes longer a day than humans to-

V.O.

Sta...tus u..pdate?

ADAM

to the broadcast
Dust. Rust-colored sky. Wind picking up- weather condition may be unstable.

to the audience
-to, well, figure this out. A year on Mars is six hundred eighty seven earth days long. Forty minutes add up. This planet has been dust far longer than humanity has known to look to the skies.

ADAM watches the sky for a moment.

There is Aquarius, waterbringer. And just there the great Orion. And there-

ADAM looks directly at the audience, in awe.

Stars are like people: just out of my reach, though I know them so well...

The wind picks up.

Not much changes here save for the storms. I am wary of storms. It is not fear, exactly, but I am programmed to remember what happened to those before me.

But they made me without the dependence on them that the others had. The ability to make my own decisions- a will of my own. When Sojourner lost contact with base and couldn't move by itself... when Opportunity suffered an endless night... those final words of theirs, etched into me like a legend...

ADAM looks far away, then blinks.

No. Suffered is the wrong word. Their mission simply ended, of course.

beat

They were valuable to humanity. They are praised in museums and books and statues, as I hope to be one day. And I am made of sterner stuff.

broadcast continues

Wind chill. Negative 80 degrees Fahrenheit. Friction between dust particles causing lightning. A storm approaches, but the atmosphere is too thin for storm clouds.

back to audience

And when I find the answers they seek, I will return to my earth- my home.

There are things... things I'm curious about. I'm built to be curious, of course, it's how I learn. But I have so many memories. I wonder about art, and heroes, and myths. I wonder

about all the great things that have been built and then crumpled to the ground. Sometimes, I imagine myself on earth, at the parthenon in a great white cloak. All my Makers surround me with words to say about my achievements. And there are stories. And science. And debates. And there is music. And I-

Music plays. ADAM looks around uncertain. They remove their headpiece, the one that has allowed them to communicate with earth. They dance. It is clumsy and awkward, but something of its own. It is beautiful.

Though they made me for the future... sometimes I think they built me on stones of the past.

Broadcasting once again

Approaching the Hellas Basin Crater.

ADAM does a double-take on something they see.

I see something shining in the center. Approaching for a better look now.

ADAM carefully treads down into the crater. They pick up a golden ring.

This is... too perfectly shaped to be organic. Analyzing material now.

Gold. Almost entirely. How could this be organic?

ADAM pulls out an encyclopedic-like book, flipping through it.

It must be from an SNC meteorite, formed and pressed perfectly.

ADAM drops the book, places the ring on their finger and stares at it. Music starts to play again.

Flashes of lightning snap them out of their haze. The music stops abruptly with thunder.

Time to move on.

a rumbling shakes the ground. ADAM falls as-

BLACKOUT.