

Memories of A Supernatural AIDS Crisis

A play in one act

by Marc Arthur

Place

Detroit

Time

The year 2124

Cast of Characters

- Pandrion (Xe/Xem):** Troubled, insatiable, with an awkward air of dangerous curiosity, Pandrion is a Black trans cyborg with a human heart that's freshly harvested from an intergalactic k-hole. Xe is giving femme synth siren. Often caught between the cold logic of cybernetic enhancements and the warmth of human memory, despite the inherent turmoil and relentless drive for knowledge that propel xem through the cosmos, Pandrion remains steadfast in xeir quest to be the life of the party.
- Xylophlactis (he/him):** Occupies life as a kind of ghost. Fragile and archaic. Seems like he's hiding something. Has vampire fangs. Xylophlactis' movements are deliberate, almost hesitant, as if each step is taken with the burden of centuries-old trauma. At the same time, he's an entertainer, a choreographer, and a performance artist who is here to put on a great show. His very existence invites curiosity and caution, as those who encounter him are drawn into the depths of his theatrical secrets.
- Mama (she/her):** The celestial atmosphere, goddess of Detroit, keeper of time, sage of past, present, and future. She's a witch of biomedicine and mother of all the last surviving humans on earth. She's often so overcome by the beauty of Detroit that sometimes she stops the play to observe it.

Note on the Set & Lighting Design

Three disco balls of different sizes are arranged above the stage. On the upstage wall is a row of six bar lights, hung vertically. Upstage center is a sturdy metal ballet barre. Within this sparse space the supernatural world of the play is brought to life by the text first and then the lighting, which should not feel that dissimilar from the lighting you might experience at a club.

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The Pandemic Begins, Again

NARRATOR

“Memories of a Supernatural AIDS Crisis,” A play in one act. At rise, we are in Detroit. Standing against time and pestilence, this is the last surviving city on earth. It is the year 2124. and we are about to witness to a spectacle unlike any other. At rise, a utopian city where the failed textures of colonialism and capitalism are inaudible. Instead, fugitive regenerations vorpal, mimicking a virus’ pulsing life cycle. Can you hear the sound? It is a poetics of survival at the edges of borders.

PANDRION

Every day I wake up a more glorious speculation of myself than before. Oh, it’s so everything, and it feels so lived! After being dispersed across every racist regime I’ve arrived here in Detroit as a divine and illuminated glitch. I dissolve out of conventional forms and can be seen from space aflame. You find me here slithing in unfinished ketamined motions.

NARRATOR

Are you a single self or many?

PANDRION

Just me, here, right now. No darkness or antagonism. I’m a voice that emits light like Diana Ross.

She sings for a moment.

NARRATOR

You see, Detroit functions harmoniously with the scarce natural resources that were left to us. Corroded elders, steroidal surfaces, and malignant sex organs we’ve managed to redefine what beauty and gender in a social order that feels ugh so good. Really good. We keep time on our own clocks, and we are not quite human because of it. We are a civilization mostly of Black extra-terrestrials and we’re here only because we secretly collected biomedical advances that make us immune from persistent apocalypse. We regenerate year after year, decade after decade, body after body.

PANDRION

But if Detroit is a body, there is a kind of corrosion that builds up like the fishy scales of wealthy white ladies every October. Every October I feel heavy with the toxic sludge of stigmata. Belly-ish supremacy guts the biomedical reefs that once glowed so florescent in the high chaos of first knowings.

NARRATOR

And so, once a year, during the alignment of the three mirrored moons over Belle Isle, the population partakes in The Forgetting. Abandoned hospitals, now seized by powerful DJs, serve as spaces for antiviral raves. Viruses, bacteria, and pathogens are eradicated from human bodies with quantum fluctuating beats.

Music

PANDRION

Let the, let the, let the chemicals take control. Let the, let the, let the chemicals take control. Replicate my biocodes! Give my surfaces and organs that good jolt of irrigated egress!

NARRATOR

A fleeting moment when there is no suffering, a point in space where the gravitational field of immunity becomes infinitely strong. Three mirrored moons (disco balls) are to spinning. Let The Forgetting begin!

Pandrion shuts down like a robot. Music fades.

NARRATOR

Welcome Pandrion, you've arrived at the beginning, again.

Xylophylactis, Pandrion burst out laughing uncontrollably. They stumble over each other as if leaving a club after a long night of partying.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

You are dead!

PANDRION

I don't remember hah!

XYLOPHYLACTIS

How much did you take?

PANDRION

Enough that I felt the house music in my bones.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

Magical.

*Pandrion stops and questions Xylophylactis –
confused.*

PANDRION

Wait, who are you? And what's your name?

XYLOPHYLACTIS

Girl, you blacked out. We've known each other for millennia.

NARRATOR

Meet two inhabitants of this ancient city – Xylophylactis, an astronaut of human memory and Pandrion, legendary glamorite, Enthrallix of the house of revolutionary love.

*As Xylophylactis and Pandrion names are spoken
spots appear down stage that they walk into.*

Both beings relate differently to time. Whereas Pandrion, whose memory has just been erased, is here for a good time, Xylophylactis lives all the world's traumas.

*All the following lines in this scene are delivered to
audience with energy and authority.*

XYLOPHYLACTIS

I can see the dead and it torments me.

PANDRION

I just want to party.

NARRATOR

This is their love story.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

Now it begins.

PANDRION

Now it begins.

NARRATOR, PANDRION, & XYLOPHYLACTIS

The search for the memory of a supernatural crisis.

(BLACKOUT)

Hieroglyphics

Hieroglyphics series of short intimate moments between Pandrion and the Narrator that should feel isolated, like they are taking place in a timeless out of body kind of space.

PANDRION

I sense the presence of a vampire.

NARRATOR

Pay him no mind. You've lost your memory and you're learning how to see through the thick again. I'm here to guide you. And you're in no place to start conversing with the dead.

PANDRION

You sure? He...

NARRATOR

I know what you're thinking. He sparkles, yes but beware of the serpent's tooth.

PANDRION

His voice hums like soft static from before that I can't quite make out.

(BLACKOUT)

The Exquisite Pollution of Detroit

Xylophlactis and Pandrion snake around the stage as if taking a joy ride on ancient alien technology. Lighting for this scene should evoke a neon orange atmosphere that casts intense and siren twilight over the stage.

NARRATOR

It is morning. Globular clusters of biopharmaceutical waste pulse distantly in the sky. Pandrion and Xylophylactis are walking on a highway. Highways have been terraformed into pleasure enclaves. There are no cars and overgrown genetically engineered plant life emits SSRI nutrients that induce fleeting states of ecstasy.

PANDRION

Damn, you look good.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

So do you, your veins are glowing and enlarged. Your body warmed by a woman's fire.

NARRATOR

Pandrion takes a deep breath and inhales the decrepit scent of a bulging flower that screams like a newborn child.

Narrator makes this sound through strained and sporadic chirps interspersed with labored, raspy breaths.

PANDRION

These flowers have a trace of something on their petals.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

That's warm fuzzy nostalgia. I suffer in the persistent echoes of catastrophe, but the flowers, they make me more beautiful don't you think?

PANDRION

My god you are perfect. More soothing than my strongest medicine. I don't want this feeling to end.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

The highway goes on forever, we never have to get off.

PANDRION

You make me feel a hunger that announces that death is near.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

And already I have lived through wars. And echoes of wars around your beauty, my love.

NARRATOR

It begins to rain polyped remnants of trauma.

Lighting shifts to reflect this.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

We have been enveloped by toxic pharmaceutical weather.

Xylophlactis licks his finger and tastes the drops of "rain" in the air.

Abnormal bleeding, thermosensitive tear drops, or I'm not sure... this is mathematically undefined. Can you describe the force exerted on your body by the atmosphere?

PANDRION

This rain smells of rage and tragedy. Makes my blood vessels angry. Gaps of knowledge, empty spaces in my brain burp mysteriously with the history of human suffering. I tidy up and clean my apartment for a month with antibacterial gamma rays. In less than a year I've cleaned the entire city of Detroit. But then I walk through the Packard Plant on an icy night and the hot breath of a factory worker screams directly into the channels of my neocortex. I feel an uncontrollable need to spend thousands of more hours adapting and disinfecting my body to perfection and finding perfectly fitting clothes that show off my best assets.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

But the thing is, the corrugated rage of that factory worker's voice makes you more beautiful to me. I like how it forms on your body like lace and dark eyeshadow. You could start a riot.

PANDRION

It scares me, to feel the city awaken in my body.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

But babe, we must learn how to survive after a crisis. I will teach you how to hold a memory. You will become a wise and beautiful wraith like me.

PANDRION

This rain hurts my lungs, it feels like other people's pain lichened on my body. On you it's like lust. If I'm being honest though, I want to share fluids with you. Want to biodegrade with you. I am afraid of you. But I also am infatuated beyond reason. I will go with you wherever you want.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

Come, this way.

House music. Lights transition as Xylophylactis takes Pandrion's hand and guides them around the stage exploring different areas.

Remember Your House?

Lights transition. The Narrator and Pandrion are alone on stage. They look out over the audience and perform the same movements with their bodies for a minute. Then they speak.

PANDRION

I feel untraceable. Where did I come from? Who are my ancestors.

NARRATOR

Don't be scared, honey. You'll feel it, you will. Particles will form, writing will appear in a new and strange salted language, and you will construct your house along my jawline and dewy lymph nodes. I will guide you. I am your ancestor.

PANDRION

It's hard because I don't remember my body, let alone my house. Like, there's a break in the warm meaningful place of who I am. All I feel like is bacteria spewing burning glitter.

NARRATOR

I know what you mean but your memory isn't broken or damaged. It's not gone away. It will come back and as it does, you'll shape your own phyla and genus. Not everyone gets to make up their own story every year anew.

PANDRION

But loneliness of it.

NARRATOR

You will grow and gather and change and in a year from now, next October, when the three mirrored moons align once again, you can decide. You can decide if you want to partake in The Forgetting, again.

(BLACK OUT)

Flight

Xylophlactis is still leading Pandrion around the stage. Lights transition again and Xylophlactis returns to a more formal dance sequence. Pandrion turns away and takes a moment to xerself, looks around, then...

PANDRION

Wait. Wait. This doesn't feel right.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

What do you mean?

NARRATOR

Don't transgress here, Xylophlactis.

PANDRION

Everything in here is encrusted in a strange must, a kind of smog that flutters about like the left-over muck of immunity.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

Your friend here does not want me to splinter her myth of utopia. But you're catching on quick.

NARRATOR

I'm warning you.

PANDRION

What's going on?

NARRATOR

Don't say the word. Don't say it yet. She is not ready.

They sing and sound out the word AIDS without saying it in a way that is totally audible.

PANDRION

What's going on? It feels like time has blistered and I've been left behind.

NARRATOR

You're still regaining your memory.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

Here let me help you.

NARRATOR

I ask you this, Pandrion, what holds more power? Memory or forgetting?

XYLOPHYLACTIS

Very well. For now, we will move on.

They continue walking.

PANDRION

Is that how time works here? Things just disappear and we move on?

XYLOPHYLACTIS

If you had to choose any supernatural power, what would it be?

PANDRION

I'm sorry what?

XYLOPHYLACTIS

I can help you.

PANDRION

I don't know. I mean, you and I just met. That is, I think we did. I've Forgotten. I just emerged from The Forgetting.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

When it happened. When earth became fully uninhabitable, I created a technology of transformation and immortality. It depends on the salt of the great lakes that blossom calloused skin and create a zone of safety for the inhabitants of Detroit.

PANDRION

Your oxygen is unceremonious. And anyways there are so many other species in Detroit who have formed language far better than I. And well you know this is Utopia after all and there are so many exceptional moments to gather, the multitude is not broken. Just tell me what you want from me. Be honest.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

You are tender.

NARRATOR

And then the sound of drums.

PANDRION

I want to fly.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

You mean you want to be a dancer?

PANDRION

Yes, I suppose. Flying like a dancer, mid leap, my chiffon dress flowing in the air.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

What I want is to help you. Now stretch your arms out like your wings and fly. What do you see?

PANDRION

Billowing clouds of carbon are so beautiful and then...

NARRATOR

And then the sound of drums but governed by science.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

You can open your eyes now.

PANDRION

They were never closed.

Xylophlactis brings Pandrion to a ballet barre upstage center.

What is that!?

NARRATOR

He always wanted to be a choreographer not a pharmaceutical scientist.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

I'm going to teach you how to dance.

Lights shift. Xylophlactis rests his entire body on the barre then walks his fingers on the barre and drops them to the ground. Pandrion grabs the barre and twists it until it folds and hits the ground.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

You are dying and nobody cares. (growing angrier) There is silence all around. People use sinister and monstrous metaphors to describe you.

PANDRION

I'm afraid.

Lights snap to black.

Hello? Hello? I'm afraid. Can you hear me? I'm afraid.

Vibrational Archives

Two lights appear on Pandrion and the Narrator.

NARRATOR

When the first forgetting happened, it was a way to survive the vibrational wars. Detroit was a place where we had been banished, forgotten, and left for dead. I liked this idea of being forgotten and so I created a ceremony around it. I gathered all of the memories and I burned them with remaining oil that had infected the dirt. Outside our city the vibrational wars waged on, water changed to sludge and air into a cruel breath. But we persisted on the hope and promise of Detroit forever in perpetuity.

Beat.

I see the vampire's dust all around you. But your power is that you can forget him, pay him no mind.

PANDRION

I hear you. I do. But this is all so new to me.

NARRATOR

I know.

PANDRION

Why not just banish the vampire from our city?

NARRATOR

It's not so easy. You see, Xylophlactis is unafraid of biopower. Pharmaceutical governance is his expertise, and he saw a niche market among us. Before the wars we Black people had the highest rates of infection, because they wanted it that way. But when the vibrational pollution killed off the world's population, his pharmaceutical compound had the inadvertent effect of breaking our time open time, giving us a form of cybernetic immortality. And as earth became vacant, we found ourselves here in Detroit, the most perfect place on earth because you see, the salt below us chemically bonded with his drugs and created a zone of immunity. Those stunning crystal towers that surround the city and cast lesbian light on the city, that is also our safety.

Beat.

Still, we remain inherently suspicious of Xylophlactis' cures. For his is not ancestral healing.

PANDRION

So if he left, we would all die?

NARRATOR

And so, we live with a chemical archive that is luminous and crystalline. The people of Detroit all around us, they are thriving as they jit jit jit amongst glorious microfauana. But that thickness in the air, that dust, is the remnants of the horrors of vampirism.

(BLACKOUT)

Soft Technologies of Micro-control Adopt to the Form of a Body

Xylophylactis turns on a flashlight.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

Walk with me.

They walk around the stage in the dark in no particular pattern of movement.

PANDRION

Where are you taking me?

XYLOPHYLACTIS

You're nervous, I can tell.

PANDRION

What's this building?

The two face UC with the next delivery.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

It's the Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church.

Xylophylactis begins humming the melody for The Balm of Gilead – almost an introduction to the song crosses DCS and points at Narrator.

PANDRION

There is primordial warmth here, it feels familiar and safe.

Narrator crosses to center in front of Xylophylactis – creating the world around him.

NARRATOR

As Pandrion and Xylophylactis wander, the city's lymphomic architecture fluctuates around them. Buildings produce orange and yellow neon dust that evidence a record of time passing. Time passes again, but this time it moves backwards.

PANDRION

I hear beautiful music.

XYLOPHLACTIS

(Singing) There is a balm in Gilead that makes the wounded whole,
There is a balm in Gilead that heals the sin-sick soul.

During this song, Xylo points his flashlight towards DR. The area is immersed in bubbles. Eventually a magical light appears on the floor down right as bubbles dissipate. Pandrion on Xylophlactis cross.

NARRATOR

Downstage right is a pedestal holding a circular white canister. Pandrion opens the canister, dips their hand in, and takes out a handful of cream. It is greasy and loaded with prismatic superclusters of extinct hormones. They begin rubbing it on their face.

PANDRION

Power trickles delicately across my nerves, anointing my muscles and viscera with ultrasonic gender reverberations.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

The balm of Gilead is a rare medicinal healing salve first mentioned in the 1611 version of the King James Bible. It could cure all ills and was a metaphor for curing sinners.

PANDRION

I am sin itself and it burns inside me.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

What's happening to your body.

NARRATOR

Pandrion begins to appear more masculine, their jaw sharpens, and hair line recedes.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

Heart racing?

PANDRION

Yes.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

Shortness of breath?

PANDRION

Yes.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

Muscle pain?

PANDRION

Yea, and I feel horny. Do you want to try some?

XYLOPHYLACTIS

No thanks. I already feel as if I cascade through an eternity of distortions.

PANDRION

Just try some. It will help you calm down.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

I am calm.

PANDRION

No, you're not, I see visions of gay men dying around your body.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

I've already been treated—face fillers, fat transfers, and implants that keeps me as mummified as chrono-resurgent bats. (Aside to audience) The problem is, I explode into a colony of bats when I get anxiety.

NARRATOR

He has body dysmorphia from always being cast as a blood thirsty demon.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

What's happening to your body now?

PANDRION

I don't know.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

Shame?

PANDRION

All the time.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

But do you also feel powerful? Like you can conquer anything?

NARRATOR

Pandrion's body completely morphs. Breasts disappear, an Adam's apple emerges as their voice deepens.

PANDRION

My gonadotropin regulators are humming. I feel reduced to a masculine muscle mass.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

You look beautiful my F150.

PANDRION

The flowback of smelt testosterone. I hurt, I died, I fell, I dove, I ate, I got sick, I felt/

XYLOPHYLACTIS

/I fought, I flew, I bore, I forgot.

Pandrion and Xylophylactis cross down left together.

You are in a process of becoming... be prepared for anything.

Xylophylactis disappears. Narrator crosses to center stage with text of next delivery. Lights shift.

The Darkest Purple Lesion

NARRATOR

They walk towards a non-descript building with a yellow awning that reads “Club Gold Coast.” As they walk in, there is a fossilized jock strap at the base of the stripper’s poll. In the shadows across the room, a dark force lurks and metastasizes in the shadows.

PANDRION

Oh god, what’s that over in the corner? There’s something over there!

The six bar lights on the upstage wall gradually build to red during the following line.

NARRATOR

At this moment in the play, we should hear the word AIDS spoken for the first time. The stage should fill with drama, accompanied by the sound of thunder and flashes of lightening. But instead, there is a long, awkward drawn-out silence.

*Pandriion crosses up right, opens the doors.
Xylophylactis bursts through the doors up right and poses like a dramatic bat.*

XYLOPHYLACTIS

It’s just me babe. It’s okay.

PANDRION

I see a man’s frail body in a hospital bed. And it feels like my body. Not a fully human body. A cosmic web of aching wet glue, and monster parts that...

Pandriion turns away. Struggles with something.

NARRATOR

What is it?

XYLOPHYLACTIS

I was obsessed with his form. Before I saw him like this. Now I see the way his muscles have been grafted to his body. The way he carries. The false emissions that saturate you like Axe body spray.

NARRATOR

Yours is a Black dream. The air feels good on your skin.

PANDRION

My idea of beauty is changing.

NARRATOR

You're gaining control of the effects of forgetting. You're not a child being spooned medicine anymore. Move beyond protasis and into...

Pandrion takes off the silver muscle suit xhe been wearing, revealing a more femme alien outfit underneath. Xhe also take off xer wig and toss it onto the floor.

PANDRION

I'm going to transform I can feel it. Memory is burning inside my guts like I'm about to give birth. The feeling of seeing him like that in the hospital. The feelings that come up include:

NARRATOR, PANDRION, XYLOPHLACTIS

Horror, Greif, Rage.

PANDRION

But from here where I see it, those feelings are collapsed under the weight of our atmospheric conditions. In this fecund air, I'm a youthful energy source that rearranges memory. If we exist in utopia and you are my guide... Oh Narrator, I want nothing more than to know these memories. To awaken again, fungled and enlarged until the wounds split forth veins of another species that wear elegant dresses.

NARRATOR

Pandrion emits the energy of a star that's about to explode. Foamy masses of bryonic crud form on their body and they furiously wash themselves until it converts into oily opalescent jelly. It shimmers like a drag queen's sequins. They are reborn into a goddess body.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

Wait, no. I was just starting to get turned on.

PANDRION

Testosterone's surly goat looked me in the eyes, and he asked, is this the kind of man you want to be? The Balm of Gilead makes my body capable of anything, but the memory come down is intense.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

You know you are safe here. No one's gonna hurt you in Detroit.

NARRATOR

He's right. I will always protect you.

XYLOPHYLACTIS & NARRATOR

Are you flying?

PANDRION

I'm not. No. It feels like dancing. It's fun to be bionormalized like an archaic man from the 21st century, to never have to worry about anything. But I'm more myself in the libidinal public form of a woman.

NARRATOR

Xylophylactis buckles as Pandrion conforms to beauty cut from vintage porn.

PANDRION

But I can't help noticing that my breath quickens when you get close to me. The sky curds and bodies start to fungus.

(BLACKOUT)

Bad Bitches

Lights transition and the Narrator and Pandrion are alone on stage. They look out over the audience and perform the same movements with their bodies for a minute. Then they speak.

PANDRION

Do you like my new body?

NARRATOR

It looks good in that dress. Reminds me of when I was a girl wearing dresses like that from the expanding galactic marketplace. It screams goddess cyborg.

PANDRION

Do you think I could start a revolution in geologic time?

NARRATOR

Years pass and centuries fly by. I can see all the revolutions, but this is no arc of trauma.

PANDRION

Then what is it?

NARRATOR

It's why I never age, a combustion of revolutionary force that will never end. But it's May now, Pandrion, half a year since The Forgetting. You need to keep on transforming, keep changing before his memories take hold of you so tight you can't control them, can't control him.

PANDRION

You seem overly concerned to be honest. I like the way he dances. It's strange, pixelated, and hyper saturated in shades of white.

NARRATOR

I know his intentions are good but be careful honey. I told you to be careful, remember?

(BLACK OUT)

Can a Vampire See Itself in the Mirror of a Disco Ball?

Ancient light saturates the stage. Xylophylactis sits in a chair DL. Pandrion stands behind him playing with his hair. Narrator is right of them.

NARRATOR

And now, a memory of Xylophylactis' transformation.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

I arrived in Detroit in the 1980s from Sault Ste. Marie where God was a big man's fishing boat near beaver island. I was 17, intensely normal. I hated my parents. And Detroit seemed like a movie I wanted to be in.

NARRATOR, XYLOPHYLACTIS & PANDRION

(To audience) A sinking feeling of rage expanding into every crevice of my body.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

I stole Dad's truck and went to Detroit. Started squatting at a place on Cass. Everyone was on crack. I started hustling and writing poetry. Never again spoke to dad. He never came for his truck either. Detroit was dangerous. DL guys from the suburbs would come by, no longer than ten minutes each.

NARRATOR

What he wanted to say is that he felt lost. Felt strange as a white gay guy in a Black city.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

Yes, that's right, and I would count the men with a sharpie on the wall. Perforated light shining through the smashed blinds. I felt wealthy and vague. At some point I started to eat a lot more. I ate big macs five times a day and didn't get fat. My heart was fat and wet though. It pounded like an alien baby trying to get free. I noticed lesions on my skin. People said a weird cancer was going around but I felt more alive than ever. I would stay up all night for months on end clubbing and doing whatever drug was offered to me.

NARRATOR

Xylophylactis stops himself and suddenly worries he might be sharing too much.

PANDRION

But were you trash or trade?

Xylophylactis stands up from chair.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

I started to get lonely. I didn't know what was happening and I was scared. So I became a choreographer. I mean everyone was scared. We were trash and trade, but more than that we were fugitives—effortless, disgusting, masc exploding into femme, like the precursor to your genderlessness. The joy of being illegal because of our biocodes and skin colors. And was worse than the crack epidemic—we had fangs, which created a media circus.

Xylophylactis stands on the chair.

“Vampires inhabit Detroit's blight!” the papers read.

He laughs and cries. The six bar lights on the upstage wall gradually build to red during the following line.

NARRATOR

At this moment in the play, we should hear the word AIDS spoken for a second time. But the word suffocates and is muffled as someone in Detroit is gay bashed.

PANDRION

Someone is in trouble. I can hear the sound he lets out as his ribs break. They are kicking him.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

On opening night, we decide to use our own blood instead of fake blood. We cut ourselves in public. We put our bloody handprints all over the city. We are famous and everyone fears us. They make our body fluids illegal.

PANDRION

He doesn't die from the injuries. No, he shot himself because he didn't want to transform into a vampire.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

Sometimes I just get tired. About five times a day I get exhausted of being like this.

Sex in the Shadows of Utopia

A magical light slowly fades on the floor down right with bubbles. Xylophylactis crosses down right, Pandrion follows. Narrator crosses DL.

(Singing) There is a balm in Gilead that makes the wounded whole, there is a balm in Gilead that heals the sin-sick soul. Sometimes I feel discouraged and think my works in vain. But then the Holy Spirit Revives my soul again.

NARRATOR

It's the year 2100.

PANDRION

And no matter how close I may get to understanding the past—even the recent past, in some very important ways it always escapes my reach. It's why I feel so goddam lost all the time. Can I kiss you?

They start to kiss, gently.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

Ah yes, there it is. When we kiss you make my eyes glow and I see all of human suffering.

PANDRION

This gives new meaning to chem sex.

They kiss more intensely, groping each other and then Xylophylactis moves down Pandrion's neck. He is about to bite.

No. (Beat) I need to wash my hands.

Pandrion dips xer hand in the balm and washes.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

In this city, the color associated death is always several feet away.

NARRATOR

The power play between them seems to shift. The flowers of nostalgia all start to blossom again.

PANDRION

There's just something I can't get over. I'm sorry I think I'm terrified of you.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

It's okay.

NARRATOR

He feels like Jupiter sinking into a supermassive black hole.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

We can use protection.

PANDRION

For sure.

Dancing with the Ashes of Larry Cramer

Magical Balm of Gilead light fades and bubbles dissipate. Piano music. Xylophlactis dances, Pandrion crosses, takes chair, and sits DL on it. Narrator crosses DR. Lights shift to a brightly lit dance classroom. Eventually this becomes a moment of Xylophylactis teaching Pandrion a dance again. Pandrion struggles to follow along.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

Step Kick step Step kick. Again.

Music fades out.

Got it? Going on. Turn turn, and now here you are a meth'd up twink without a place to live. Got it? Now, in this moment your lover, the only person who was there for you in your entire life. And one year later, in an incredible act of rage and protest, you travel to Washington D.C. and throw his ashes over the White House fence. Okay let's try it from the top with music.

Harpicord music. Pandrion tries but struggles to do the dance as Xylophylactis throws powder everywhere. Pandrion eventually runs around the stage, trips on the chair, and becomes frustrated, stops UC. The music stops abruptly as they speak. Xylophylactis faces them, looking upstage, from CS.

PANDRION

Hold on a sec, this doesn't feel right. Can we talk?

XYLOPHYLACTIS

What is it?

PANDRION

I'm a Black trans cybernetic woman and I dunno, I don't want to be offensive or anything but like...this just doesn't feel right.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

Umm. I mean, how so?

PANDRION

I mean like, these protests you're transferring to my memory, a lot of them, they are so powerful, but they are the struggles of gay white guys and like. I just think it would have been different for me. I would have been treated differently. Arrested even...

XYLOPHYLACTIS

Sorry. I mean, I'm glad that you're starting to remember who you are.

PANDRION

It's okay. I mean, I just think that you need to chill out a bit.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

Yea, you're right. It just feels good sometimes to feel bad for myself. And I get carried away. And I should have been more considerate of your perspective.

PANDRION

Thanks. But also, the cybernetic part of me. It feels like you should know this already because it feels like you are communicating with me all the time through my cybernetic hormones.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

I feel that way too.

PANDRION

This is weird.

NARRATOR

In that moment everyone in Detroit mutates a little, not in any noticeable way. Not in a way that anyone would even say something about. But the mutation is one that leads not forwards towards a better future but brings them all closer to my ancestral land.

PANDRION

Where are we now?

NARRATOR

A museum of African beads.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

What's the first sound you hear?

PANDRION

A chorus of memories but they are all so small it just sounds like a faint feathering in the distance.

NARRATOR

The walls of the room shimmer and sparkle, like billions of little drums that are modulated and harmonized in strange waveforms.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

I know what that sound is. When I run my fingers along the walls like this, Black and brown pre-anthropocene plasma off gasses.

NARRATOR

Be careful Xylophlactis.

PANDRION

AHH this feathering sound in my ears is getting louder!!!

XYLOPHYLACTIS

You are safe here. That sound is the hope and promise of Detroit forever in perpetuity.

NARRATOR

Unlike hers, your ancestors fed on the living so that your eternal hunger and unyielding power would endure through your bloodline.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

And here I am alone, the only vampire in Detroit. I am lost, all my kin dead. Careful, Narrator. During the tuberculosis outbreak of the 18th century, people would dig up my body, burn it, believing It was I who caused the pandemic.

NARRATOR

Detroit has moved on from such cycles of stimagrca. For those who were promised hope, all the angels and arc angels were cast off and burned so hot by the sun that all the shame melted away. Look what you've done to her!

PANDRION

AHH this feathering sound, I can't stand it!!!

NARRATOR

Pandrion is suddenly in the big overgrown backyard at their old place on Littlefield Street on the Northwest side of the city. They were a window dresser at Hudson's Department Store and would find all kinds of window-dressing stuff that they brought to this yard where they built a stage for balls.

PANDRION

I'm a dancer too. I'm just not sure what kind.

NARRATOR

Kids would come there and learn how to vogue. They gained supernatural abilities from Pandrion. It's also how they learned how to protect themselves from the infection because no one else was talking about it in Detroit then.

PANDRION

No matter what I had to do to get it... steal, kill, or whatever to keep these kids alive.

Pandrion sings a few bars from Theme from Mahogany (Do You Know Where You're Going To). Xylophlactis puts a piece of fabric over Pandrion's shoulders and puts a large fan in front of them to lift the fabric into the air. House music. Pandrion struts as if on a runway and Xylophlactis follows with the fan. Eventually Pandrion ends up standing on chair USC.

PANDRION

I am elegantron. I am the legendary glamorite, the Mother Pandrion, Enthrallix of the house of revolutionary love.

Pandrion ends in a pose DC. Music fades. Lights out except for a single spot staying on Pandrion. This spot changes color. Then lights shift to the next scene.

A Detroit Kind of Rebellion

*Pandrion and the Narrator look out at the audience
as they speak in this scene.*

NARRATOR

It happens every 40 years.

PANDRION

Revolutions.

NARRATOR

I don't know why.

PANDRION

Is it possible, that the end of the world could feel so close even in Utopia?

NARRATOR

The CDC reported on a rare type of pneumonia and a cancer called Kaposi's sarcoma first in 1981. 40 years later it is the year 2021 when the Covid-19 virus would emerge through multiple variants.

PANDRION

That my rebellion is still so anxious, even as the children of Detroit all dance in my style?

NARRATOR

40 years prior to 1981 is the year 1951, segregation in Detroit surged and encouraged harsher policing in African American neighborhoods, which escalated Black Detroiters' frustrations leading up to the riots of 1967.

PANDRION

Is it possible that the Blackness at the end of the world could be so beautiful?

NARRATOR

40 years after 2021 is the year 2061. This is the year that a medical breakthrough transformed HIV so that people living with the virus were granted supernatural powers.

PANDRION

That flight is a form of conflict or rebellion?

(BLACKOUT)

Care Should Not Be Limited in a Timeless World

Narrator is still DR. Xylophlactis stands DL. They strike chair in blackout.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

Here she is in her most exquisite perfection: Pandrion the angel, Pandrion the virtuosic, Pandrion giving shade.

NARRATOR

It is September now and the cortexes of the inhabitants of Detroit are abuzz. The emtricitabine in the crystal towers charge the balm of Gilead and their immune systems are recharged with nutrient rich rhythms so that their immune systems continue to never age. They have not aged since the 1990s when this treatment was first chemically possible.

PANDRION

This is a memory of crisis that feels good. I am an angel, a siren, a prestigious bitch flying above the city.

Xylophlactis, Pandrion, and Narrator are in line across DS.

NARRATOR, XYLOPHYLACTIS & PANDRION

Once bound we were free from gender and decay. Tethered never again.

Dance sequence in which charcters phonically sound out the word AIDS. By the end, Pandrion struts around the stage. Xylophlactis does a head stand.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

Everyone's on the Balm of Gilead now. Our bodies redesigned to transition through various genders at will.

PANDRION

I want to drug myself with the dreams of new ideas.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

Unless you... unless you let me bite you. There is no drug that will keep you alive like me. You too will age, and your new ideas, your house of revolutionary love will all fall.

PANDRION

But I feel immortal already.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

Your vibrance is a form of endangered life, my love.

*Xylophlactis attempts to bite Pandrion's neck.
Pandrion steps away just in time.*

PANDRION

I think that my sense of time might be radically different from yours. It's weird because I feel fabulous but also, I don't know who I am. Something's been on my mind, but I've been too shy to ask.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

Go ahead.

PANDRION

How old are you really?

XYLOPHYLACTIS

I was born in 1960, or maybe 1860, I mean. It was a long time ago so that makes me old enough to be your daddy. I was born out of kinship with members of all abilities and ages. I learned to love you, I learned how to care in the radical queer alterations of time. I learned how to love from her.

He points to the Narrator.

PANDRION

If I knew my original age... Actually, I don't think I want to know. it sounds heavy, too much to carry.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

The surface of the water appears undisturbed when you fly.

PANDRION

Can we go clubbing downtown tonight?

XYLOPHYLACTIS

Perhaps... But the time has come now for me to show you the cosmic future.

The narrator crosses CSR with two visors. She hands one to Xylophlactis and puts the other on Pandrion. Then sit cross legged and wrap the blanket around themselves. She stands behind them.

What do the stars look like to you?

PANDRION

They look like stars?

XYLOPHYLACTIS

Concentrate, look carefully.

PANDRION

Hmm.. I'm not sure. Well, that area over there (pointing), it looks like Detroit has taken the form of a beautiful woman.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

Yes, very good.

Narrator steps between them and begins to dance.

PANDRION

I feel like I can trust her. It's like the plants and blood of Detroit are nourishing the marrow of my bones.

Narrator continues to dance.

NARRATOR

And suddenly the city evaporated into fumes. Detroit was alive in the night sky like a girl blasting rap from her Cadillac. Detroit is still not perceptible. We don't know who she is. Remember. Remember. Detroit is a city that was never meant to survive.

NARRATOR, XYLOPHYLACTIS, PANDRION

And suddenly the city evaporated into fumes. Detroit was alive in the night sky like a girl blasting rap from her Cadillac. Detroit is still not perceptible. We don't know who she is. Remember. Remember. Detroit is a city that was never meant to survive.

Pandrion gets up and approaches the Narrator.

PANDRION

She is not afraid of memory like you are.

Xylophlactis cuts off their moment.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

I wanted to tell you. I want to, I wanted you to stay here with me a bit longer.

PANDRION

What time is it in Detroit now?

NARRATOR

It is October now. The Forgetting will begin again, soon. Sooner than you expect it to.

PANDRION

I don't want to forget you sweet creature.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

Please let me taste you. My body is so dry, so cold and humanless. I am just chemical dust at this point. Inorganic and thirsty. I crave your chlorophyll in ways you cannot imagine.

Pandrion takes off her visor. Music fades out.

PANDRION

Look, I really like you. I do. And it's strange to say, fucked up even, but I like the way you use me sometimes. It gives me a rush like an archivist never could. It's powerful our, I suppose we can call this love. But also, and this is the hard part. And I mean, I'm sorry but you make me want to wash my hands.

NARRATOR

Xylophylactis writes one hundred stories about the sharp pang of stigmactra he feels.

Xylophlactis takes off their visor and runs stage right and throws his body against the wall.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

I'm not a monster.

NARRATOR

Twenty vampires appear and perform a synchronized hip-hop dance. Xylophylactis, floats above them. At a climactic moment in the dance, gallons of blood gush on stage.

Hip Hop music and dance sequence.

PANDRION

I need to wash myself!

Pandrion runs to where the balm is down right.

All of this.. infection. I died, I fell, I dove, I ate, I got sick, I felt,

XYLOPHYLACTIS

I fought, I flew, I bore, I forgot.

NARRATOR

Xylophlactis swoops his cape over his body and with a single turn is headless. In a short puff of smoke, the Balm of Gilead is replaced by Xylophlactis' severed head.

Xylophylactis' voice is modified in the following section.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

Muahahaha!

PANDRION

Please, please, what have you done with the Balm of Gilead? I need it to wash myself; The neon of dust of the city has totally ruined my look.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

I am the vampire of Detroit, the scapegoat and savior of my generation. I drew red lines that separated neighborhoods and then folded red ribbons to signal hope. I fought for access to life saving drugs and then profited generously off them.

NARRATOR

Xylophlactis' head dislodges from the pedestal, becomes airborne, darts towards Pandrion and bites their neck.

PANDRION

AHHH!

The Crypt

NARRATOR

Xylophlactis' head hits the ground with a thud. Here the word AIDS should be spoken for the final time in the play. The ether of Detroit superclusters then dissipates.

Beat.

At rise, a fleeting moment when there is no suffering.

Xylophlactis embraces Pandrion as in the beginning of the play. Mirrored Moons music plays and disco balls spin.

Whole universes... exist... within your body. Your body... defended...

NARRATOR

The three mirrored moons are aligning!

XYLOPHYLACTIS

Detroit's cycle of rebirth will begin again!

NARRATOR

From dust to earth.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

From ashes to bodies.

NARRATOR

Spinning lights.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

Are spinning fast faster faster!!!

NARRATOR

You will arrive at the beginning of the end, again. Welcome Pandrion, to the end...

PANDRION

Wait, wait, wait a minute. Slow down. Are you not going to ask me if I have any last words, or something? Because I do. And one of them is fuck you.

Pandrion crosses to the Narrator, takes script from her and throws it on the floor. The narrator twitches and jerks, as if glitches are starting to disrupt her. Eventually she is convulsing and breaking down on the ground until she is still.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

What have you done to her!?

PANDRION

I've regained enough memory now to know that this is your writing. This is your script. Your so clever. It's almost as if you know how I speak. But your language is just a little too refractive and dry, the edges of your words chap my lips.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

I get it, you're upset. But please, we've already come so far. I know it feels strange that I'm the one who gets to tell the story of Detroit.

PANDRION

Strange? Oh, please, honey, will you just shut up. You feel guilty about what your ancestors did? Is that it? The privilege of your superpowers? Guilt about the epochs of violence and fanged extraction that led to this, your everlasting life. And so to make up for it you decided to write an AIDS play and make me the star. Well I have to say I'm flattered, I really am. You know there's nothing I love more than being the center of the universe.

Beat.

But this is just about you. It's always about you. And most of all I'm disgusted. I'm disgusted by what you have done to her. Look at her there, she was beautiful but now I see she was always just an abject and malleable lump of clay to you.

Narrator stands.

NARRATOR

Yea, this is whack. I guess we have made it finally out of time. Out of the play. But we're still somewhere, aren't we?

PANDRION

We're in total loss and quiet.

NARRATOR

At rise, a moment of...

Pandrion cuts her off.

PANDRION

You don't have to describe it for the audience anymore.

NARRATOR

Oh damn, that's original. So original. An AIDS play: that perfect form of victim art that can oversaturate every other horror. Why didn't I see this earlier?

PANDRION & NARRATOR

The pharmaceutical dust.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

The dust, yes. It's prophylactics that protect us. I've created this world where you can do whatever you want, and you don't have to worry about getting hurt. It's a space I've create where I can try to bring you both to life in a way that feels real and right.

NARRATOR

You want to know how I feel? You want to know how I *really* feel?

XYLOPHYLACTIS

Yes.

NARRATOR

Right now, I feel like....

She struggles and can't finish her sentence.

PANDRION

Your choreography has infected my body to the point that it's not fun to dance anymore.

NARRATOR

Like zombies.

*They walk around stage like zombies for a minute
then laugh together.*

XYLOPHYLACTIS

Please! You are real to me. This is all real to me. We crafted a story about how a Black trans cybernetic woman and a cis white vampire built a new kind of space-time in which to heal and...

PANDRION

I hate it. I hate that you call me that. Pandrion, the walking idea identity of the future! You know what I am? I'm an alien, I'm a fucking weird ass alien.

NARRATOR

I grow tired of watching as each recurrent holocaust passes, and we forget every time how to recreate the world. I am going now; Maybe to one of the three mirrored moons? I'm not sure. (Spoken to Pandrion) Coming with?

PANDRION

Thank you. But I need to stay and finish something. I'll see you again, I'm sure.

Narrator exits UR.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

You want to write it with me? We can write it how you want it.

PANDRION

Have you ever considered that maybe I want to forget all this? That I'm happier in ignorance than history? I just want the good drugs that wash all of filth and corroded trauma away. There is pleasure in not knowing, complete detachment from time and space, numb floating away.

XYLOPHYLACTIS

I am scared too. Scared of age and ruin.

PANDRION

It's been real. There is something beautiful about dancing through a pandemic with you. I did enjoy myself, I always do.

Beat

And now, Pandrion's final supernatural transformation. Let The Forgetting begin!

Dark acid house music plays. Pandrion dances. Xylophlactis watches. Lighting is specific here, with spots that transition with the music, and a few moments of intense flashing from the back wall lights which should blind the audience. Eventually lights and music fade out to black as Pandrion continues to dance.

End of Play