

ONAJE

A Play in Two Acts

by

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November 4, 2019

Cast of Characters in Order of Appearance:

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR: Richard's father. A white man in his mid 50s. An alcoholic Chesapeake Bay waterman dressed in working clothes and work boots.

DAN CLAGGETT: A black man in his mid 50s. A solid Chesapeake Bay waterman and factory worker dressed in work clothes and work boots. He is the patriarch of his family.

BELLE: A white woman in her late 20s who is sassy, street-savvy, and attractive. She is dressed as a Reno truck stop waitress.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, JR. (RICHARD): A white man in his early 30s who is overdressed in completely new cowboy clothes.

ONAJE (WILLIAM)CLAGGETT: A black man in his mid-30s, who is lonely from his long exile on the road. He is dressed in an old bomber jacket, work pants and work boots, all extremely dusty and worn. He carries a duffle bag and sextant for navigation.

HENDERSON: A white ex-policeman in his early 50s, who is dressed in a work shirt and work pants but wears a policeman's hat.

SARAH CLAGGETT: Dan's wife. Black, in her early 50s, she is dressed in work clothes that are informal, but clean and neat.

ANDREW: A white boy in his late teens or early 20s, he is an affable, naïve, hitchhiker in a faded madras shirt, khaki pants and work boots. He is a civil rights worker of the 60s vintage.

The Set:

The single set is made up of three locations that merge in the last scenes. Downstage center is a picnic table. Stage right there is an old convertible with working headlights, horn and radio, front and back seats and a Maryland license tag. Stage left is the kitchen of a waterman's house on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. The kitchen has an inside door that leads to the bedroom and to the rest of the house and a screen door that leads outside to the rest of the stage. There is an old stove next to a sink and a very old icebox. There is, at the center of the kitchen, a small table and a few cheap metal chairs and a light bulb with a shade hanging

from the ceiling. The kitchen doubles as the battered kitchen of RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.'S home and the clean and tidy kitchen of DAN and SARAH'S home.

During the time that the space represents RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.'S kitchen, it is bathed in the flickering blue of the light from a small TV that is on the kitchen table. The removal of the T.V and a few loose beer cans on the floor, transforms it into DAN and SARAH'S kitchen. In front of the house, upstage left are two wooden removable folding chairs that act as the front seats of a pickup truck when needed.

Author's Notes, Time and Place:

The play takes place in July of 1980 on the Eastern Shore of Maryland and at several of the rest stops along Western Interstate Routes 80, 29 and Eastern Interstate 70.

All flashbacks take place in July of 1967 during the Rap Brown demonstrations and resulting burning of Cambridge, Maryland.

ACT I SCENE 1

SETTING: A spot light falls on RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR. as he unpacks his lunch at the picnic table. He sits for a moment looking out over the audience before he eats. DAN enters into the spot light.

DAN

Violently grabs RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR. from behind and turns him around to face him and then slugs him hard. RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR. falls and struggles to get up. DAN slugs him again.

Henderson stops me down at the dock. He says there was money stolen last Tuesday after they sold the catch of crabs. He wants to know where I was last Tuesday at lunch time...

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

I told him you were still out on your boat.

DAN

I know you did! But I wasn't. Why'd you tell him that?

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

You didn't steal it, did you?

DAN

No, I didn't steal nothing!

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

I told Henderson that you weren't around when it went missing.

DAN

Stay out of my life Middleman!

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

Where were you when they sold the catch.

DAN

I came in early.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

Anybody see you come in?

DAN

I don't know who saw me. I don't care.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

You better care. Henderson is looking for you all the time.

DAN

You didn't see me. Why'd you say you did?

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

He was looking to blame you. You know he's got people saying you were there. You need an alibi.

DAN

You weren't there when I came in. If they find out you are lying, you telling a lie to protect me, won't do me no good.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

We were friends once.

DAN

We were never friends.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

We both work the Bay, Dan.

DAN starts to throw another punch.
At the last second DAN pulls the
punch and exits.

BLACKOUT

END OF SCENE

ACT I SCENE 2

THE HEADLIGHTS OF THE CAR FLASH ON
AND BEAM OVER THE AUDIENCE.

RICHARD, behind the wheel, is
driving fast, with BELLE banging on
him from the backseat and screaming
at him at the top of her voice.
The car radio is very loud.

BELLE

(Reaching again and again
over the front seat as she
keeps trying to turn the
radio down.)

I am asking you ... I am asking you ...I am begging
you...turn the radio down! And slow down.

RICHARD bats her back into the back
seat.

RICHARD

And that's another thing I play my music as loud as I want
whenever I want!...

(he lowers volume)

...But because I love you, I'll turn the radio down.

BELLE

And-slow-down!

RICHARD

...Because I love you. I will slow down.

BELLE

(leans over front seat)

Thank God... And can I come back up to the front seat yet?
Pleeease?

RICHARD

No.

BELLE

You already told me you loved my cooking about a million
times and I told you I wouldn't work no more and I told you,
you would get laid regular and I don't want no other
conditions... and I wanna get back in the goddamn front seat!

RICHARD

No.

BELLE

No? No, what? No, there's gonna be more conditions? Or no, I
can't get back in the front seat? For Christ sake Jesus!

RICHARD

Just no! No, Belle. No!

BELLE

Well, ain't you the goddamn cat's ass! Well okay, ...I'll
just have to have some of my own fun back here.

She pouts for a moment, then lifts herself up to sit on top of the back seat and begins enjoying the rushing wind.

BELLE (CONT'D)

...I'm having fun now...Goddamn it! I'm having fun now!

BELLE lets her hands catch the wind.

BELLE (CONT'D)

AAAAAH - Weeeoo!

She spits in the wind to the left, dodges its return. Spits again to the right but fails to dodge it and disgusted she brushes spit off of her shoulder.

BELLE (CONT'D)

Alright, tell me about the goddamn state of Maryland. I don't want to hear about goddamn where you been. I don't want to hear about Nicaragua or wherever it was and I don't want to hear about the damn Wyoming ranch no more. I want to know where the hell I'm going.

RICHARD

(beat)

Maryland is great.

BELLE

That's not what I heard. I heard it was the pits... Can I get back in the front seat yet?

RICHARD

No! You are staying in the backseat until you...

BELLE

For the rest of my life? Hey, I can make the best of this.

Mock aristocracy waving from the top of the back seat

Drive on, Richard! Take me to a restaurant, Richard! Don't be late, you asshole! Everybody in Maryland is going to think you're my driver, not my husband. If we get married!

RICHARD

You are not never going to find a guy as good as me and you know it. Get down or I'll roll the car. You wanna see me?

He jerks the steering wheel left
then right. She weaves dangerously.

BELLE

I said I would marry you but I swear to God the way you were
back in Reno I was the first woman you'd ever been with,
shaking all over and all.

RICHARD

That's a goddamn lie. I had women in South America. I had
women all the time when I was working on that ranch and two
nights before I met you in Reno I had four girls in the back
seat of this car and I still got more money than God!

He waves a fist full of money in
her face.

BELLE

(laughs)

Hey, keep your eyes on the road or you'll be humping your
horn forever, honey. For Christ sake, Jesus!

RICHARD

(turns focus back to road)

I'm telling you that's the bullshit that got you into the
backseat to begin with! Keep it up!

BELLE

So why the hell did you want me so bad? ...just call it
women's intuition. The only thing that saved me was them old
mattress springs. You must be part kangaroo.

RICHARD

(explodes)

Goddamn it! You're in the backseat forever and ever. I
swear it!

BELLE suddenly points.

BELLE

Richard, look! Watch out! Watch out!

RICHARD quickly veers left. There
is a LOUD THUD. Belle looks back.

RICHARD

Christ, did I hit it? What was it?

BELLE

I don't know. I swear it brushed the car. Pull over.

RICHARD pulls over and stops.

RICHARD

What was it?

BELLE

Geez. He is weird looking! He was kneeling, like praying in the road. He did a swan dive into the ditch... Hey, he's getting up.

RICHARD

You think I hit him?

BELLE

He's starting to run toward us! Are you gonna pick him up?

RICHARD

Well if I do, he's gonna sit in the front seat. You gonna apologize? You better decide quick.

BELLE

No, I'm not gonna apologize. What have I got to apologize about, you prick.

RICHARD

Everything!

BELLE

No! Go ahead pick him up. You wanna pick up some hobo hitchhiker go ahead and do it.

RICHARD

Apologize or I pick him up.

BELLE

Maybe I won't.

RICHARD

Goddamned women!

BELLE

My goddamned women's intuition tells me that you don't know nothing about goddamned women and all that stuff you told me weren't exactly true, that's what I think.

ONAJE runs toward the car. He throws the duffle bag into the back next to BELLE, acknowledging neither of them.

He gets into the passenger seat.

BELLE (CONT'D)

Holy shit...

RICHARD does a double-take, looks at Belle, then turns to ONAJE.

RICHARD

You okay? Do you need...

ONAJE

Go. Go. Go!

ONAJE urgently motions to go forward. RICHARD pulls back onto the road. ONAJE stands up in the passenger seat, gripping the windshield for support. He inhales deeply, then pulls the sextant out of his bag.

RICHARD

What? Hey, what the...

ONAJE

(aims sextant)

Ninety degrees off the North Star. Let's go. Speed man! Speed! Let's go!

He sits on top of the passenger seat and sits there throughout the scene.

ONAJE (CONT'D)

Let's go! AAAAAAAAh..... I am Onaje!

(Lowers the sextant.)

Faster! Faster! Faster!

RICHARD

Hey check this out! But no you won't apologize.

ONAJE

Faster! Speed! Speed man! Faster!

RICHARD

(looks back at BELLE)

You hear that? Faster?

(to ONAJE)

Wanna hear some loud radio?...

ONAJE

Yeah!

RICHARD

What the hell ya doin'?

ONAJE

Recharging... I stayed in that place for too long!
(Lets the air flow over him.)

Aaaah...

RICHARD

Hey, don't get weird buddy. You better behave or I'll put you
in the backseat.

BELLE

(Reaches over the seat and
hits the back of RICHARD's
head.)

The hell you will!

ONAJE

Speed man! Speed!

RICHARD

(turns radio way up)

Alright! This is the way the damn front seat ought to be.

BELLE

Turn that goddamned thing down! And slow down!

RICHARD

Hey man, what the hell are you doing?

ONAJE

(Still from the top of the
front seat of the car.)

Observing the change of this earth at a high rate of speed.

BELLE

Yeah. Okay? Just remember this. He killed people for the CIA.
In Nicaragua!

RICHARD

Yeah!

ONAJE

(studies RICHARD)

Bullshit!...

BELLE

He don't buy it Richard. Look at him!

RICHARD

Hey. I got everything under control, Belle.

BELLE

Sure you do! You think you're some cowboy on steroids and now you got an astrologer hobo riding shotgun! This is great! Both of you turn the radio down and slow down!

RICHARD

Hey man, I been out west and I've been in jail! You ever been in jail?

ONAJE

Yes.

RICHARD

Well okay.

BELLE

You never damn told me that you'd been in jail!

RICHARD

You never asked. Sweet cakes!

BELLE sits on the back of her seat.

BELLE

(screams at ONAJE)

Will you tell him to turn the goddamn radio down!

RICHARD

You all like it up there?

RICHARD stands up on the seat, one hand on the wheel, then sits on top of his seat, steering with his feet, heroically lifts his hands in the air.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Top this! Look at me! Wanna see me make a left foot signal?

(over his shoulder)

Or are you gonna tell me to keep my feet on the wheel?

He stamps at the radio with his foot and it goes off.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Look! Rest stop!

He steers to the right, then
realizes he can't stop the car.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Jesus Christ! We got no brakes!

He laughs, slides back into the
driver's seat and pulls the car
over to the rest stop.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Everybody out for a piss.

RICHARD gets out unzipping. ONAJE
gets out and goes over to the
picnic table. BELLE watches him
from the backseat.

The LIGHTS DIM on them and RISE on
the kitchen in the house, where
RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR. sits
drinking a beer and WATCHING TV.
There is a hand gun on the table
which is present in all future
scenes.

DAN

(Enters and knocks on the
door.)

Middleman, you in there?

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

(RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.
stands up and answers the
door.)

DAN

Sarah said I shouldn't have hit you after what you did. She
told me I was too hard on you when I talked to you. I don't
think so but Henderson was down on the docks again. He was
talking about you this time.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

Come in if you want.

(DAN enters.)

You want a beer?

DAN

No. You drinking this early?

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

Looks like I am.

DAN

You haven't been down at the docks for a couple of days. He's saying now that you or your boy took that money.

(Beat)

Why you got a gun on the table?

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

I don't care what he says.

DAN

Why haven't you been working the last couple of days. Where is your boy? Why you drinking like this?

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

I'm taking a vacation.

DAN

It's July, Middleman. The crabs are running. This is when we pay our debts.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

How is Sarah?

DAN

She's good. She was asking about you. Why aren't you working?

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

I don't know. All the rich people in Talbot County take vacations in July so now I do.

DAN

Go somewhere. Get out of here. Go down to Chrisfield.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

I don't like those people and they don't like me.

DAN

You hear about Chrisfield? You lose any of your soft shells at Chrisfield?

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

The holding tanks?

DAN

When the water broke on the tanks the whole system went down.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

Yeah, I have a couple dozen bushels up there.

DAN

Well they are all gone now.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

I don't care.

DAN

That is serious money lost. They were paying a dollar a soft crab and shipping them off to Japan on ice or something and Handy & Company was getting something like twenty three dollars a crab for Sushi bars I heard.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

I don't care.

DAN

(beat)

You knew you weren't going to get caught in that lie for me?

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

Don't ask and I won't tell.

DAN

You bought that car for your boy?

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

Yes.

DAN

In cash?

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

Yes.

DAN

Your boy's been gone almost a week.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

Yup. That's right.

DAN

He called you yet?

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

I told him to call when he gets work. Must not have work in Wyoming yet.

DAN

You been on vacation waiting for him to call?

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

That's right.

DAN

You been eating?

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

I've been taking a vacation from eating too. I've got beer.

DAN

You're not eating? What are you doing with the gun out?

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

When I get that call. When he's working out in Wyoming it will be done. I don't have a family like you.

HENDERSON enters and BANGS on the kitchen door several times.

HENDERSON

(bangs on door)

Hey, let me in. I want to talk to you. Come on let me in.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

What do you want?

HENDERSON

I want to come in. Why do you think I'm banging on the door?

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

Why do you want to come in?

HENDERSON

Maybe I want to take a leak.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

Pick a tree.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR. looks at DAN and then directs him to hide. DAN quickly goes through the other door, to the rest of the house and shuts it behind him.

HENDERSON

Why do you talk to me that way?

(gets no response)

It's about your son. The boys down at the Sunoco station on St. Michael's Road says your boy gassed up that car real good and it was packed like he was gone? You know anything about that? They said he had new tags on the car. You know about that?

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

No.

HENDERSON

I was down at the Court Street Pub yesterday and the prosecutor's office is talking. They don't know whether you got the money or your son. If it ain't you just tell me. You're running out of time! Running out of time!

HENDERSON bangs the door again.

(beat)

If you don't let me in, the cops will come when I go back, come on! I don't think your boy took that money. Come on let me in.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR. opens the door. HENDERSON enters, takes a beer from the ice box.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

Why are you in such a hurry to get everybody blaming my boy and me?

HENDERSON

I'm in a hurry because I want my money for getting to save your sorry ass before it is too late for you and your boy.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

Too late?

HENDERSON

Yeah, you know that black man, Dan took that money. Now you got to help me catch him before it is too late for you and your boy!

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

No. I won't do that.

HENDERSON

We lock up old Dan and his Sarah she will find two thousand dollars to get him out. They ain't like you Middleman. I think they got money saved up.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

No.

HENDERSON

Come on! You are messing up my investigation. You are his only alibi. Nobody else will say nothing. Come on! I'm getting my money one way or the other, Middleman.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

No.

HENDERSON

What is this about? Way back long ago? I still don't know why you wanted to be friends with some black man and his son back then.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

That black man loved his son. That boy was smart in school down here. He got a job in Baltimore. He got outta here.

HENDERSON

The "black science kid" is what we called him. Looking at the stars and all the boys at the Sunoco Station drinking coffee was watching him.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

He came down to march that's all...

HENDERSON

No. That's not all. We heard all about that boy and him studying the stars and universe and stuff like that... He thought he was black and "was somebody" on the Eastern Shore.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

Henderson you and the Klan set out to get him from the start, didn't you? You just were waiting on it.

HENDERSON

Yeah...

(laughs)

We fixed him real good. He be gone for like more than ten years now...

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

His daddy's still an oysterman out on the Bay like me, except he don't have a son no more. I knew the boy.

HENDERSON

Well he's a black one.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

So now what? They talking about my son?

HENDERSON

Well, like I said, the marina down in Easton has been missing two thousand dollars and it's common knowledge you been late on some payments...

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

So what's that got to do with my son?

HENDERSON

I don't know, but your boy just came back and nobody seen him around here the last week or so.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

So?

HENDERSON

So people in Easton been saying you bought him a used convertible about a week ago as soon as he got back to town... And nobody's seen him since...

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

What do you like to say: "He's free, white and twenty-one."

HENDERSON

Yeah, he's "free" now and people are wondering...That's all. You know anything about any of that?

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

No.

HENDERSON

They say you was around that money after you brought in your catch of crabs. And the same day, your boy was down there working on your boat...

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

I didn't offer you that beer, Henderson.

HENDERSON

(takes a swig)

You're not going to deny me a phlegm cutter, are you?

HENDERSON kicks a beer can.

HENDERSON (CONT'D)

Looks like you been doing more drinking than working. They think it's either you or your boy... People noticed you've been missing for talk over these last few weeks. You've been back here alone, they say... And nobody seen you out on the boat either. We were worried about you.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

So what's in it for you?

HENDERSON

(crushes can with bare hand)

I told you I want my money one way or the other. Where do you want it? In the trash or on the floor? Why don't you do a little thinking about my investigation.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

Get out of here!

HENDERSON

When did you get like this?

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

Get out of here Henderson.

HENDERSON

Was it years ago? The marina will give me half of what I get back...People pay top dollars for ex-cops.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

You never should have been a cop!

HENDERSON

The Klan was like the cops back then. That black guy you gave the alibi left early today.

He stands and starts for the door
to the rest of the house.

You mind if I look around?

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

Stops HENDERSON as he starts to open the door and pushes him out the screen door.

I knew they would send you first. If you got anything, tell the cops. They know where I live... But you come back here and I'll kill you! I will!

Directly after HENDERSON is out the door DAN comes out of the bedroom.

DAN

He was looking for me in here and he almost found me. If he had found me Middleman he'd have brought both of us in. Your alibi would have turned into a conspiracy as soon as he opened that door and found me here. Why you got that gun on the table if when Henderson comes in here you know you'll never use it? Why? Because you both are white!

DAN exits slamming the screen door behind him. The LIGHTS go out and BACK UP on ONAJE who has taken the red bandanna of food and sits at the picnic table. He puts his hands together, silently prays. BELLE remains on top of the back seat.

BELLE

If you're praying to save us from sudden death I'll be right over.

ONAJE

I'm grateful. Now that I'm moving again I'm praying William will disappear again. I've got to keep focused.

BELLE

William? Who is William?

ONAJE

In July every year William gets into my head.

BELLE

Is William dead?

ONAJE

Worse than dead.

BELLE

Worse than dead? What's worse than dead?

ONAJE

He became part of the "man machine".

BELLE

He is an accountant?

ONAJE

I should be dead for what he did.

BELLE

Okay, he is not dead and he is not an accountant. How many guesses do I get?

ONAJE

He put me out on this highway.

BELLE

(yells)

Richard, come here. Listen to this!

ONAJE

No more William. Nothing can save you William. I am Onaje!

BELLE

Are you William?

ONAJE

I am "the traveler alone." I am "the witness of truth." I am "the seeker of salvation itself." I am Onaje.

ONAJE brings his sextant to his eye, finds his mark.

RICHARD

(zips up his fly)

Aah. Hey, I feel better.

BELLE

What the hell are you doing?

ONAJE

Charting the stars; making sure of my course.

BELLE

Christ, all you have to do is follow the highway, don't you?

ONAJE

I don't acknowledge the highway.

BELLE

What do you mean you don't acknowledge it, you were just on it.

ONAJE

No, I don't recognize its importance.

BELLE

You just were on it. What do ya mean? It's there.

ONAJE

It's just evidence of formless logic. It's just the way people get places.

BELLE

What do you mean exactly?

ONAJE

I go due east for ninety days in the summer, due south for ninety days in the fall and in the winter due west and in the spring north. Little boxes, within or without themselves and I keep notes of the changes. Nobody cares about this planet and its people like I do.

RICHARD

You people better piss cause I'm not stopping for another three hundred miles. I got self-discipline. I practice bladder control! I got peaches under the seat. If anybody wants peaches, I got peaches in cans under the seat.

BELLE

(Ignores RICHARD)

Changes? What are you talking about?

ONAJE

I see things. I'm recording the final moments as the living generation becomes Mother Nature. One way or the other we're making the earth into our own consciousness.

BELLE

What?

ONAJE

And you don't even know that the Amazon is the lungs of the planet or that the zoos are the sanctuaries for the soon to be extinct... do you?

BELLE

(to Richard)

Lungs of the planet? This is wild shit.

RICHARD

Forget him, you better think about your bladder. It's gonna be painful about an hour from now. You know how your hair blows forward in the convertible. Well I ain't got no windshield wipers for the inside of this car.

He rummages under the front seat,
pulls out a can opener and a can of
peaches, which he opens.

BELLE

(indicates to RICHARD)

Well, what do you know about him?

ONAJE

I know more than you do. That's my business. How long you known him?

BELLE

About forty-eight hours.

ONAJE

Why are you traveling with him now?

BELLE

Because we're getting married. Look at my ring!

BELLE shows ONAJE the gaudy costume
jewelry wedding ring on her finger.

ONAJE

You didn't get that new.

BELLE

You are good! How did you know that?

ONAJE

I recognize the ring.

BELLE

(very pleased)

You do? Richard bought it at a pawnshop. The guy who sold it said Elvis wore it.

ONAJE

I recognize it. New it comes in plastic wrap in a box with a crown and a cape.

BELLE

Yeah. Elvis must have kept the other stuff.

ONAJE

What happens if it don't work out?

BELLE

No problem. I got bus money in my boot.

ONAJE

You've been married before?

BELLE

Sure. I may still be. I don't know. Don't matter, I'm a resident of Nevada.

ONAJE

You was a stripper once, weren't you?

BELLE

How did you know that?

ONAJE

You look at him that way.

BELLE

What do you mean?... What way?

ONAJE

You don't trust the man.

BELLE

It's my fault. I hope for too much and then I get disappointed.

ONAJE

You wanted a husband and some kids and a backyard?

BELLE

How did you know that?

ONAJE

I wanted a family once. You running from people back home?

BELLE

Richard thinks I'm running from a couple of bad husbands and some bad boyfriends and a repo man, but I'm not. Or at least not all of them.

(beat)

I can't believe a word he says... But he says he wants a family... I always thought I'd be at my best as a partner but I never found somebody to be my partner. Maybe I'm hoping for too much again... Tell me about William.

ONAJE

No angels for William. I got to transcend the loneliness...

(beat)

Where did he tell you he'd been?

BELLE

Been foreman at a ranch and before that South America.

ONAJE

He never worked on no western ranch.

BELLE

How do you know that?

ONAJE

You were a waitress you should have picked it up.

BELLE

(surprised)

How'd you know I was a waitress?

ONAJE

You got mustard on your waitress uniform.

BELLE

Oh.

(a little embarrassed)

But how about the western ranch?

ONAJE

Look at his hands and look at his boots. The boots are new, the hands are soft and he ain't got no western weather on his face.

BELLE

Well, where has he been?

ONAJE

He ain't been a soldier either.

BELLE

How do you know that?

ONAJE

Cause he's got a different kind of cold about him.

BELLE

(to RICHARD)

You better come over here.

This man don't know you, but he says you ain't been to the west and you don't know shit about the CIA.

RICHARD

(eats from can of peaches)

Forget him. What does he know?

ONAJE

He's been in jail.

BELLE

How do you know that?

ONAJE

He told you that in the car.

BELLE

Oh, that's right! The one thing he tells me about that's the truth is he has been in jail.

ONAJE

What do you know about his family?

BELLE

I don't know. Something about him being scared that some Maryland ex-cop will be banging on his daddy's door. He says he's got money for his daddy he won in the slots and that his daddy's got all of these books, picture books about Wyoming. I think he's going back to see his daddy 'n I'm kinda here cause he's gonna show me off. I think it's a little weird!

RICHARD

Hey, I got peaches here - you don't want no peaches?

ONAJE

I got chicken here. Day old fast food chicken and orange juice if you want it... And breath mints.

BELLE

Ask him about his daddy.

RICHARD

(explodes with anger)

He don't know nothing about my daddy. That's my business!

BELLE

Ask him about why he talks about those picture books of Wyoming his daddy has...

ONAJE

No.

BELLE

He told me all about himself being a war hero in Nicaragua in this truck stop in Reno and then he said after work I'll show you this town "like you never seen it before." You know what else...he says his daddy stole some money. And he used to hang out with people in the Klan!

ONAJE

(totally retreats)

The Klan? Oh, that's real nice!!! Woman you're on your own. You figure it out.

He points at the license plate of the car.

ONAJE (CONT'D)

They come flying down the highway like letters through the post office... addressed, stamped and return addressed. Every letter's got a message. You don't want to read it that's okay but I ain't reading it for you.

BELLE

(to RICHARD)

He don't think you were in Nicaragua and he don't think you were in... in Wyoming.

RICHARD

(to ONAJE)

What's that thing you were saying that you got to transcend the loneliness?

ONAJE

I got to keep moving or I'll get sucked into the man machine.

RICHARD

Like standing in cement that's drying?

ONAJE

Yeah. It's like that.

RICHARD

...And then you start thinking "formless logic?"

ONAJE

Yeah. But it's okay if I just keep moving...

RICHARD

If you're lonely, why don't you just go home?

ONAJE

I can't do that.

RICHARD

Why can't you do that?

ONAJE

That's where William lives.

RICHARD

(to BELLE)

I don't care what he thinks. He don't know nothing. Eat these peaches if you want 'em, but we gotta get back on the road.

He hands the can and fork to BELLE.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

The juice is good. Don't cut your lips.

(to BELLE)

This is just some hobo who looks at the stars, Belle!

BELLE

I was just asking?

RICHARD

Well, after you eat the peaches and the chicken, get back into the car because we're going, we're going home. I'm going to let him off at the interstate.

BELLE and ONAJE eat. RICHARD struts nervously back to the car and sits.

BELLE

Hey, you ain't getting out are you? He takes me out all night and then he takes me to work and then next night he comes with flowers and takes me out again. He had money. Lots of money that he won in the slots...He wasn't like most men. He would ask about me. And he wanted me to talk. We drove into the desert and watched the stars...He was nice to me. Maybe he is telling it all true. And the peaches for both of us. He don't know us really. What do you mean the car tells it all?

(Beat)

Hey, I don't wanna get back in that car if you're not...

RICHARD HONKS the horn impatiently.

BELLE (CONT'D)

Hey, take a nap! You been driving since Reno.

(to ONAJE)

I don't want him to be like those other men. You know?

ONAJE

Don't worry about it. I'm just along for the ride. You believe what you want.

RICHARD gets in the backseat and sticks his feet out.

RICHARD

Alright I don't care. I could use a nap. Wake me after you all have peed.

The LIGHTS RISE on RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR. who is standing next to the kitchen table. SARAH knocks on the door. RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR. opens the door but does not let SARAH in.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

You can't come in here. Didn't Dan tell you?

SARAH

Dan doesn't know I'm here. Dan says you let your boy go. Told him not to come back.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

Yeah, I did that.

SARAH

That's why I'm here. Dan is falling apart everyday about losing William the way we did... And your boy's coming back.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

(Puts his head in his hands)

I'm so sorry about my part in that.

SARAH

I know you are. I knew that when you gave Dan an alibi. I knew that when your alibi for Dan had to place you near the money. I knew that when you told Dan don't ask. I need your help.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

My help?

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR. lets SARAH
enter the house.

SARAH

William comes back to Maryland and Henderson and his people
and the prosecutor's office... I don't know what they'd do.
There would be no mercy for our William. No mercy for
William.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

Dan told me to stay away unless I brought his boy back to
him. That is a fair demand for what I did but it will never
happen. I can't help you. You've got to go and don't come
back.

SARAH

Dan said you've got no food.

(SARAH opens the door to an
empty ice box.)

I can bring you food.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

I've got what I need. I'm waiting for a phone call and then
it will be over. You've got to go. I don't want you all
tied into this. Get out of here. Get out of here now while
you can.

LIGHTS GO OUT ON STAGE.

LIGHTS RISE on RICHARD in the
backseat. ONAJE and BELLE are still
at the picnic table. RICHARD HONKS
the horn.

RICHARD

Come on, pee will ya? You got fifteen minutes.

BELLE

Hey, dig a grave and take a dirt nap, honey! Christ, the guy
won't give me any peace. He's Don Juan in Reno and a scuzz
ball by Cheyenne. Men are like that.

ONAJE

You're gonna marry him? Good luck.

BELLE

You notice things about him. What am I suppose to notice
about you?

ONAJE

What's that about some "Maryland ex-cop banging on his daddy's door?"

BELLE

He's going back to his daddy's place in Maryland...

ONAJE

Make sure he lets me off when he turns up to his place in Maryland. I don't want to go back to Maryland. I don't want to see the end of this.

BELLE

Just talk to me, will you. You could drive while he sleeps, maybe.

ONAJE

I can't drive. I don't know how to anymore. I forgot.

BELLE

Christ Jesus, no, that's like forgetting how to cook eggs!

ONAJE

No, all that's done. William did that. I don't do that.

BELLE

And what do you mean about not wanting to go back to Maryland?

ONAJE

What part of Maryland's he going to?

BELLE

The Eastern Shore. Is there such a place?

ONAJE

What part of the Eastern Shore?

BELLE

St. Michael's or Royal Oak or some place.

ONAJE

Jesus Christ!

BELLE

You know them places.

ONAJE

Yes.

BELLE

Come on. I don't want to go back to the car right now. Just talk to me, will you?

ONAJE

I grew up there. My Daddy always picked up hitchhikers...

DUSK-COLORED LIGHTS RISE on the cab of an old pickup truck. There is the SOUND of TRUCK BRAKES and ANDREW jumps in next to DAN. ANDREW arranges his duffle bag on his lap. In the darkened kitchen behind them, the TV is now gone and Dan's wife, SARAH moves around the stove, BARELY VISIBLE.

ANDREW

Oh, thank you very much. For a while there I didn't think I was going to get a ride before dark. Never been to the Eastern Shore of Maryland before...

DAN

Yeah, I just got off work from the canning factory up near Federalsburg. Getting pretty dark... Afraid nobody was going to see you out there.

ANDREW

I was afraid of that myself.

DAN

What part of the North you from?

ANDREW

How did you know I lived in the North?

DAN

Just standing on the road I knew you was from the North. You got that look about you.

(laughs)

People from the South like you don't live too long...And I used to work up North. What part of the North you from?

ANDREW

Just outside of Boston. A place called Watertown.

DAN

Oh yeah, Watertown? About a year I lived up in Central Square.

ANDREW

Sure! Lived right near there. Porter Square for a while.

DAN

North is alright. I had my fun. Ya do a lotta hitchhiking?

ANDREW

Sure. If I can get my hands on fifty bucks. I hit the road.

DAN

I know what you mean, man.

ANDREW

Got all the way to California and back last summer on fifty-four bucks.

DAN

Yeah, that's a good life. You smoke reefer?

ANDREW

Beg your pardon?

DAN

Grass, man?

ANDREW

(Cautiously)

Grass? Oh sure, on occasion.

DAN

Yeah. I used to smoke reefer. Smoke a little reefer, drink a little. Used to do that up in Central Square. Yeah, I've done my rambling.

ANDREW

What made you stop?

DAN

Oh man. I met my little woman outside Baltimore. Got a fine kid too. My boy is about your age. He turned out to be real bright. William. Yeah, I'm a happy man. I'm going to my little woman and be happy all night long. Man, that's the life. The rambling's only good for a while.

ANDREW

(laughs)

I believe you.

DAN

You be careful man. They're marching south of here, down in Cambridge. The people talking about it on the radio. My boy's down there. It worries me some.

ANDREW

Oh, I'm sure he'll be alright.

DAN

William came down from Baltimore last night... You know the south ain't like no other part of the country. It ain't like going to California. How far south you going?

ANDREW

Atlanta. I haven't been in the south much before, but I plan to be careful, real careful.

DAN

You do that man. The Klan is down here. Hate to see someone like you get hurt. Why you going to Atlanta?

ANDREW

About a week ago, my friend sent me a letter. He told me about what he was doing, Civil Rights work and voter registration. I thought maybe I could help somebody because I've had it pretty easy and all and I know that. So here I am.

DAN

You doing civil rights work? William told us last night he got a friend up at the University where he works who is from Africa. William says his friend likes to say he didn't know he was black until he came to America.

(DAN laughs)

William came down from Baltimore last night 'cause he wants to be part of the march today in Cambridge

ANDREW

My brother! Good for him. We will turn this world around.

DAN

You shouldn't go further down tonight on account of the march in Cambridge.

ANDREW

It's alright, I got a sleeping bag and I normally find a bridge for cover and curl up by the side of the road.

DAN

Well listen man. We ain't got much. We ain't got much at all, but if you'd like a roof over ya head, you're welcome at my place, if you want.

ANDREW

Yeah. Yeah, that would be very nice. Thank you very much.

DAN

We ain't got much but if that don't bother you, you're welcome. Besides that man I got a bottle on the kitchen shelf and it is Saturday so we can have ourselves a good time. All right? You can meet my William when he gets home tonight.

DAN offers his outstretched hand.

DAN (CONT'D)

I'm Dan.

ANDREW

(he shakes Dan's hand)

I'm Andrew.

Both laugh. RICHARD'S voice interrupts. DAN and ANDREW exit.

RICHARD

Come on damn it! Come on get into the car. I can't wait no more. We gotta go.

ONAJE and BELLE get into the car.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. I've been thinking about my daddy. You all sleep. Sleep now. Sleep. We got to get back on the highway again.

LIGHTS RISE on HENDERSON; he holds a folding chair as he bangs again on the door. RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR. is still at the kitchen table drinking.

HENDERSON

You running out of time Middleman. We all figured it out. You stole the two thousand dollars and you gave it to your boy. He was gone for eight years and you steal for him? He'll just come home when the money runs out. Sign the papers on him. What is he to you? The marina needs the crabs. Come on! I brought a chair - I'll wait.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

I'm not signing no papers on the boy.

HENDERSON

Come on. He don't love you. He was just one of them kids that went bad back then. Sign the papers. The marina said they'd forget it all. They make that much on you in two months. They want the crabs and oysters, Middleman.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

He's out in Wyoming by now. Pumping gas or fixing semis... He's free by now. I know it. What are you protecting man? The rich people own the land now and the Bay is dead... Get away from me Henderson!

HENDERSON sets up his chair and
takes a seat.

HENDERSON

Alright. I'll wait.

BLACK OUT

END OF SCENE

ACT I SCENE 3

SETTING: LIGHTS UP on the car. It is mid-afternoon. RICHARD drives in silence. ONAJE is in the passenger's seat, BELLE in the back, both asleep.

RICHARD

(nudges ONAJE)

I can't stand it, you been asleep for six hours. I've done my three hundred miles and more. Now wake up and talk to me. I want to know something from you.

ONAJE

(wakes with a start)

Where are we? What time is it?

RICHARD

We're heading in the goddamn right direction. I'm making better time than you normally make in a month. We're going east. I'm pulling over. Don't you ever have to piss?

ONAJE

Don't you ever sleep man?

RICHARD

(pulls car over)

No. I'm going home. Go ahead and take your leak, but don't wake up my bride. I pulled over and got sandwiches. Real quick though.

They get out. ONAJE goes to a trash can and unzips. RICHARD heads to the picnic table.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Piss in the can. Take some risks. Piss through all the bumble bees. I've been thinking. I wanna know why you interfere. It don't mean a damn to you what I've told her in Reno. It don't mean a damn what my intentions are. You listening? I lived it man.

(ascends picnic table)

It's in my brain. Crouched in the belly of the bird. Flying low at a couple of thousand feet with that chute on my back and lined up like a caterpillar before the open door with Nicaragua below me. And then shuffling forward. Bunny hopping forward. Up toward the door. With the clouds and earth in a picture frame in front and the man you're holding onto falling out into the picture. I hold onto the edges of the door. My voice has no sound in the turbulence. I look down...and then falling forward...Spread eagled in open space. The helicopter's thump, thump, thump, disappears into the clouds and I'm falling in open air with the horizon on all four sides. Falling forward into a distant map. Flocks of circling birds below me throw shadows across a little village of red metal roof tops. And then I am floating. Floating. It's peaceful and I am not part of anything. I remember that and POP the chute opens and, in that instant, I cross that line in mid-air and the trees become real and the gun fire becomes real and I can see the shimmer of the light off the waterways and the little paths and truck lanes with puddles in 'um and I see the earth coming up at me and the shock on my feet brings me to it and the canopy collapsing above my head. I almost forget that moment in mid-air. I almost forget. I don't know why you wanna fuck with me?

ONAJE

(urinates in can)

Cause it ain't as real as these bees.

RICHARD

(mounts table like a horse)

Real? You don't know nothing about bees until you've seen them around horses. A hot day around the cattle and a bee sting will send a horse off careening over the desert.

(stands on table)

I stood on them bareback with reins in my hands, barefoot on the sweaty backs. I mended the fences, rail after rail, and rode the cattle in, and built little campfires out on the plains and made sure my men were rested and were full of coffee. I take care of people. That's what I do. It's in my brain man. I had to live it there. So where do you come off telling me? Look at me. Where you come off telling her that that ain't so?

ONAJE

(approaches RICHARD)

How long were you in jail man?

RICHARD

I...I was there a while. Long enough to read all the magazines again and again.

ONAJE

I read too. I know every public library from San Francisco to New York. Maybe we ain't that different man. You read the magazines like I read encyclopedias just to touch the worlds. The worlds within the words; like dreaming in another man's mind? You dream the life of your soldier and your cowboy.

RICHARD

Yeah, well... I wanna take that woman back to Maryland and get married... And have a couple of kids. I wanna leave everything behind.

ONAJE

...And I understand your moment in mid-air. The idea when you ain't part of nothing. Watch the interstate come to us, close and go away from us...far away. We could be sitting anywhere up or down this highway and have the same view. Don't matter where we are. That is my exile. Prison was yours? Wasn't it?

RICHARD

(sits next to ONAJE)

Yeah, I got so lonely in that prison cell.

ONAJE

...But you lived it in your brain... It's like you said. It's like being part of nothing...

High above it, the stars in their constellations overhead and along this highway the breezes and the truck traffic changing the thoughts of the universe. It's beautiful. It's peaceful. It's the brain of Mother Nature. We'll be preaching "love and justice" here. You are not a convict anymore...and there won't be no more whippings in the world... We have transcended who we were.

RICHARD

You've been out here for years and years out here all alone?

ONAJE

What part of the Eastern Shore are you from?

RICHARD

How'd you know about the Eastern Shore?

ONAJE

The girl told me.

RICHARD

What really made you think I ain't been on a western ranch these last five years?

ONAJE

(points at car)

The tags are this year's and they're State of Maryland.

RICHARD

Jesus. You must have had your face right up to 'em. No wonder I hit you.

ONAJE

And you ain't never been to Nicaragua, right?

RICHARD

You threatening me, man? 'Cause nothing is getting in my way. I got to get her to Maryland. My daddy ain't nothing but a drunk, but he raised me. I got some debts to pay for my past. If I can get him to see her. This is important to me. Don't mess it up for me.

ONAJE

You're a lucky man, you are... I ain't going to hurt you.

RICHARD

Why? Why am I so lucky?

ONAJE

...You got someone to travel with...

RICHARD looks at ONAJE but says nothing.

BLACK OUT

The lights comes up on DAN'S house. SARAH enters from the screen door holding some carefully wrapped food in one hand. DAN meets her at the door.

DAN

Where you been?

SARAH

Don't matter now. Henderson's set up a chair outside the door. He's just waiting for him to give up.

DAN

Not our concern.

SARAH

Of course it is. Dan, he's never coming out of there again.

DAN

Nothing we can do for him now.

SARAH

What's become of you? You were once a kind and generous man. Now you can't even see the hand in front of your face.

DAN

Sarah don't be like that.

SARAH

You can't put anything behind you. You stack up your anger for years and now live from behind it. If this can't open your heart nothing will. That man stole money for his son to give him a life better than what he's got and he knows if he comes out of that house Henderson will take him in and he will be going to jail. He's not eating. He has a gun on the table in front of him. He's never coming out of that house again. His boy's gone. He's going to jail. He's got no reason to come out.

DAN

You taking food over to him?

SARAH

I had to come back. I can't do that now Henderson is outside.

DAN

Don't cross that line Sarah!

SARAH

You get sicker everyday Dan. You are going to lose yourself in your grief and then no one will be able to find you. Where will you be Dan? Where will I find you?

DAN

(explodes)

His boy came back to him. He sends him away. How can he do that? You leave them alone Sarah! They want forgiveness they can bring back my boy to me! You hear me! You leave them be!

BLACKOUT.

END OF SCENE

ACT I SCENE 4

SETTING: It is now NIGHTTIME and COMPLETELY DARK except for the SPARKS OF A CIGARETTE LIGHTER being lit. DIM LIGHTS RISE on the picnic table. BELLE, RICHARD and ONAJE sit side-by-side. RICHARD has a FLASHLIGHT. One of BELLE's boots is off.

BELLE

Everything important is kept in my boot.

BELLE lights a joint, takes a big hit then passes it to RICHARD. She puts her boot back on.

RICHARD

I shouldn't do this. The last time I did I got into a world of trouble...

He takes a hit, passes it to ONAJE.

ONAJE

I don't mind if I do...

He takes a big hit and all three hold their breath together. They look at each other and begin to snicker, finally exhaling together laughing.

BELLE

Nevada truck stop weed is always the best.

ONAJE

With rare exceptions basically all truck stop weed is the best.

RICHARD

(beat)

I'm getting horny...

BELLE flees to the top of the picnic table and RICHARD starts circling it, pointing his FLASHLIGHT at her inappropriately.

BELLE

(to RICHARD.)

Absolutely not! Not again until we're married! That was the deal in Reno.

RICHARD

I can't wait no longer.

RICHARD lunges at her and she kicks him away.

ONAJE

Hey, send her a candy gram... blow kisses at her.

RICHARD

I'm warning you! I'll take care of you!

He now chases ONAJE around the picnic table.

ONAJE

(laughs, taunts him)

Hey - you're going to have to wait! "Not again until we're married."

RICHARD

(to BELLE)

Why you doing this to me?

BELLE

And I got a right to know about the other stuff. Don't I?
Don't I? Don't I? Don't I?

RICHARD

Sure you do, honey. Just come on down, I'll marry you.

ONAJE

She's got a point...

BELLE

He's got a point and I'll bet when we been sleeping he grinds
it.

(bursts out laughing)

RICHARD

Come on down. He can marry us now.

BELLE

I thought it was only priests, judges and sea captains in
late movies...?

RICHARD

Belle...? Pleeeeease?

He gets down on one knee.

BELLE

Now - I like that.

ONAJE

Come on, I'll do it. Put your hands together..

(to RICHARD)

Just cause I'm a nice guy.

RICHARD

(holds his hand out to BELLE)

Say "I do."

BELLE

So what if I say "I do"? Are there any more conditions?

RICHARD

Come on!

BELLE

No radio. And no backseat stuff. I don't want no intimidation and do something about this bathroom problem you got, will you?

RICHARD

Belle, I'm talking married. Come on down.

BELLE

But by my terms.

RICHARD

Yeah, married.

(to ONAJE)

Do it.

RICHARD and BELLE hold hands.

ONAJE

Hey, let's make it cosmic. Come on.

(to RICHARD)

What's your name?

BELLE

Wait a minute. I don't know.

RICHARD

What do you mean, you don't know?

BELLE

I'm saying I don't know.

(Beat)

I mean I imagined something different for Christ sake, Jesus. I'm not talking big wedding in a church here. But what do you call this place? "Our Lady of the Picnic Table by the Highway?" Say we have kids what do I tell them: "It was real romantic but I don't know what state I was in?" "It was the most meaningful moment in my life, but he kept the car running." A girl can have dreams you know!

RICHARD

Come on do it, goddamn it. I'm telling you that I love you. No further questions. Any man ever told you that before?

BELLE

Well... Maybe...

RICHARD

Belle...?

BELLE

...Alright let's get on with it.

ONAJE

What's your name?

BELLE

I'm not sure this is legal.

RICHARD

Oh Jesus!

BELLE

Can't I ask?

RICHARD

(grabs and kisses her)

I love you.

ONAJE

You're both crazy!

BELLE

Oh-ho-ho... Look at mister perfect over here. You who thinks you're Christopher Columbus in a convertible. You who looks like you got dressed in a hurricane at K-Mart. Being legal married ain't important? You're the crazy one!

ONAJE

If you want me to do it you both got to tell me your names.

BELLE

I just got one question... How does anybody else know I'm married. I got no papers. I'm from Nevada, this shit's important!

ONAJE

She's right you know. You both need married people faces!

RICHARD

What?

BELLE

Does that make it legal?

ONAJE

Of course! Go over there. Hold hands.

He pretends to take their picture
with the FLASHLIGHT.

ONAJE (CONT'D)

Say "Cheese."

They both smile as if for a picture
but at different times.

ONAJE (CONT'D)

No, no you don't understand. You better have your face ready.
It's the same smile for fifty years. You better practice to
each other.

They practice smiling at each
other, each correcting the other's
face with small talk until they
start to laugh.

ONAJE (CONT'D)

"Okay. Ready?" "Cheese."

ONAJE flicks the flashlight on and
off, mimicking a flash like a
camera, illuminating their faces.

RICHARD AND BELLE

Cheese.

They both laugh and relax.

ONAJE

Now you're ready to be married. What are your names?

BELLE

Belle O'Brien. Or at least that was my last married name. I
may not never had a maiden name. For Christ sake.

ONAJE

Alright, I pronounce you Belle O'Brien married to...

RICHARD

Richard Middleman, Jr.

ONAJE

(recoils)

Oh God. From Royal Oak? Junior is it?

RICHARD

Mr. & Mrs. Richard Middleman! Man and wife!

BELLE

Is it official?

RICHARD

Not yet! What did you think this was all about sweet cakes!

He laughs, picks her up and carries her to the backseat.

BELLE

Oh, Gawd!

ONAJE

(ONAJE'S in shock)

Richard Middleman, Jr.?

BLACKOUT

DAN sits at his kitchen table going through a box of photographs which the family keeps on the table. Dusk is coming and the light is bleeding out of the kitchen. SARAH stands next to the door to the rest of the house and is waiting for DAN.

DAN

...Of all of the pictures we've got there is only one left. Only one left.

SARAH

The sun is going down dan. Let's get ready for bed.

DAN

The sun's not down out west yet. It is still light out west.

SARAH

Dan put the pictures back in the box. The sun is almost down...

DAN

Well turn on the light... Wonder what Middleman's doing as the sun goes down. Waiting for a phone call. Going to get a beer and waiting for a phone call. At least he knows... At least he knows his boy is alive Sarah. We don't even know that. William, he'd be scared to come home for what they would do to him. Scared to make a phone call 'cause they might find him... or maybe he is gone Sarah. Gone?

(Beat)

He ain't gone... He's too smart to be gone. Do you think he's gone?

SARAH

I don't know Dan. What difference does it make what I think?
I try to stay thinking on the living.

DAN stays at the table. SARAH
waits for him and then slowly turns
her back and leaves the room.

BLACKOUT.

END OF SCENE

ACT I SCENE 5

SETTING: Very LATE that same
night. DIM LIGHTS COME UP. Legs
protrude from the backseat as
RICHARD and BELLE sleep.

ONAJE suddenly jumps up,
frightened, then sits down again.

BELLE sits up in the backseat, then
slowly and painfully gets out.

BELLE

That is probably the worst wedding night that any woman has
ever had in recorded history.

(beat)

His idea of foreplay is a stuck zipper...You okay?

ONAJE

...I heard it from him every time he had a little liquor in
his belly and my mother was around. You people bringing
William back into me. I don't even know if my people are
still alive. "William, there ain't no use in rambling.
William, you find yourself a good woman." "William", Christ,
I haven't been that name in so long... You people put the
loneliness in me...

BELLE

You okay? You want me to tell you a story? I can't sleep.

She puts her arms around him.

BELLE (CONT'D)

Don't worry, honey, at least you ain't just married a pogo stick.

She rocks him back and forth as she starts her story.

BELLE (CONT'D)

I don't know nothing about Maryland, never been that far east. I'm north Texas, born and bred, just south of where old Route 66 crosses the top of the state...

ONAJE

You people bringing William back into me. We all laughing and then you people leave me out here all alone with William? You people aren't angels, are you? No, you're not. I can see the fires. I can smell the smoke. I don't want to go back to those riots down in Cambridge. No, I am Onaje. I'm right there at the edge of hell with Cambridge burning in front of me. And I'm running and one of the protestors is saying to me: "Take this gun out of here and run! Run away from here and throw this gun into the Choptank River when you cross the bridge!" And then I see Henderson...

ONAJE screams, jumps up and runs behind the car. He stands in the darkness for a moment, then a LIGHT FALLS ON HIM. He is hiding a gun behind his back. Across the stage HENDERSON is coming to him. We hear NOISE from the riots several blocks away.

ONAJE (CONT'D)

Why is it you?

HENDERSON

(points his gun at ONAJE)

Hey, is that you? Freeze Mother Fucker!

ONAJE

(conceals the gun)

I'm going. I'm gone man...

HENDERSON

You one of them from downtown? At the riots?

ONAJE

I am going home, Officer...

HENDERSON

Four fucking blocks away. I've been watching it on TV, national TV and I can see the fires from the window. You one of them?

ONAJE

(backs away, hiding the gun)

No sir I'm gone.

HENDERSON

No, you're here boy. You must have done something wrong. Put your hands on your head. Do it right now! Don't think about running cause I'll take you down!

ONAJE

What have I done wrong?

HENDERSON

You smell like Baltimore...

ONAJE

I haven't done anything wrong.

HENDERSON

Hands on your head!

ONAJE turns to run and HENDERSON fires a shot in the air. ONAJE thinking that HENDERSON has shot at him, pulls out the gun.

HENDERSON (CONT'D)

Get down on your knees! You're dead!

ONAJE

No more! No. No. No more!

ONAJE points his gun and FIRES.

HENDERSON grabs his shoulder, grazed by ONAJE'S shot. The LIGHTS GO OUT.

BELLE goes over to ONAJE, leads him back to the picnic table. LIGHTS RISE on the house – minus the TV now, clean and neat but impoverished. In front of the house, DAN and ANDREW sit in the pickup truck, frozen in DARKNESS.

A HANGING LIGHT, previously unused, goes on in the kitchen. SARAH saves an uneaten dinner and clears the table.

BELLE

Tell me. Finish the story for me. He's still sleeping.

As SARAH turns back to the stove, we hear the PICKUP TRUCK ENGINE. LIGHTS RISE on DAN and ANDREW exiting the truck. DAN walks through the screen door, kisses SARAH. He is followed by ANDREW who enters carefully.

DAN

Life is good woman! It's Saturday night and your Dan's celebrating overtime at the canning factory.

(Kisses SARAH)

How's my beautiful wife?

DAN pulls a bottle from a high shelf. DAN gets glasses.

Andrew, like you to meet Sarah, my misses. Where is William?

ANDREW goes to shake hands, but SARAH turns away.

ANDREW

Nice to meet you. Nice meeting you.

DAN

Andrew was hitching down the Federalsburg Road so I told him that in my house company's always welcome as long as they ain't afraid of sleeping on the floor. Now Sarah, you got some food ready? Where is William?

SARAH

It has gotten bad in Cambridge the radio says.

DAN

So William is still in Cambridge?

SARAH

He has been there since morning.

SARAH turns away and looks at Dan. She is displeased with him.

DAN

Got some bread, Sarah?

(SARAH gets some bread.)

DAN (CONT'D)

Andrew here lives up in Boston, right near where I used to stay.

SARAH

What you doing coming down here now?

ANDREW

I'm going down to Atlanta to meet a friend of mine.

SARAH

You hitching the whole way?

DAN

Yeah, he is.

ANDREW

My friend is helping with voter registration. I am going down to help him.

SARAH

What makes you do that?

DAN

Now you hush, Sarah. This boy's our guest.

ANDREW

Well if you want to hate me for being white, there is nothing I can do about it.

DAN

Sarah don't hate you because your white - she's just testing you. She don't mean no harm.

SARAH

You just don't find too many whites down here who are willing to treat a black man decent. That's all.

A ROAR of an OLD CAR outside stops
the conversation.

ANDREW

There must be some good whites in the towns around here.

(SARAH looks at DAN and
laughs.)

SARAH

Yeah, but there ain't many.

(to ANDREW)

You got a long way to go tomorrow. I guess I can pack you some food for tomorrow.

ANDREW

Thank you very much. Can I help you do the dishes?

SARAH

No, but thank you.

CAR DOOR SLAMS outside.

BELLE watches as ONAJE leaves the picnic table and slowly approaches the house. He is now a participant in his past. He SHEDS his outer jacket and now moves in a tee shirt, younger, muscular. He surveys the scene in silence.

SARAH (CON'T)

Andrew, you got a place to stay down in Georgia?

ANDREW

Yeah, I guess. Probably stay with my friend till I can get a room.

ONAJE enters the house. He is younger, edgy, frightened. The dialogue follows in overlapping, rapid succession.

DAN

Well come on in, William.

ONAJE

I've got to go!

DAN

We was worried for you.

ONAJE

I can't stay!

DAN

We got a glass for you.

ONAJE

I'm gonna leave now.

SARAH

No William. Dan wants us to...

ONAJE

I'm leaving now. I just got to pick up my things from last night...

SARAH

You can leave in the morning.

ONAJE

Goddamn I gotta leave now.

SARAH

Don't go William. Just stay with us a little while.

ONAJE

No. The white people set the black neighborhoods on fire!

DAN

William, what has happened with you?

ONAJE

The fire trucks are letting them burn. The cops are just watching. They blocked the Choptank Bridge. They are sniping across Route 50. There are people trapped in there...

DAN

That's 20 miles south of here, William. You are safe here.

ONAJE

They've got a car for me outside that will drive me up to Baltimore.

DAN

It's a different county down there. Come on you can spend the night.

ONAJE

Henderson, that cop from Easton is down there. They are all down there.

DAN

Henderson was down there?

ONAJE

The white people are killing us.

SARAH

No, William! You can stay tonight. Your father wants you to stay. You can go to church with us in the morning.

ONAJE

Damn it!... If I wait till morning...

DAN

You heard your mother... We can go to church...

ONAJE

Alright. Alright then. I'll go tell them to come back in the morning.

ONAJE signals out the door. We HEAR
a CAR LEAVING.

ANDREW

I think I'd better be on my way. I think you've got enough trouble without me here.

DAN

Don't let it bother you. Even if Cambridge is burning we will be safe here.

ANDREW

It still would be a better idea if I go. Thank you for the meal. It's been nice meeting you.

SARAH

What you running away from? This is the black man's world. You scared? You sure you're cut out for this?

ANDREW

I don't know. I just hope...
(ONAJE sees ANDREW.)

ONAJE

What are you doing here?

SARAH

William, don't bother him. He wants to go, let him go. He ain't done nothing.

ONAJE

He may know too much. What do you know boy? What do you know about Cambridge, tonight?

DAN

We ain't got nothing to be afraid of.

ONAJE

Maybe, maybe not. How did you get here, boy?

ANDREW

I was hitching. Your father picked me up.

ONAJE

You been to Cambridge?

ANDREW

No.

SARAH

Leave him alone. He hasn't done nothing.

DAN

He's hitching down to Georgia. Down to Atlanta to help a friend of his who's working with blacks down there.

ONAJE

Sure, I know. You going to save the blacks, white boy?

DAN

William, what are you talking about?

ONAJE

You had the radio on? You been listening to the radio?

SARAH

Yes.

ONAJE

But you don't know, do you? Everybody knows but you don't. Alright then, I'll tell you. They are looking for a "black man" on the Eastern Shore tonight because down in Cambridge a white cop was shot.

SARAH

Oh no!

ONAJE

That's right. I shot a cop.

DAN and SARAH react in horror.

SARAH

William?

DAN

What are you saying William?

ONAJE

I shot Henderson. That black man they are looking for is your son.

(pulls out gun)

So white boy, you're staying right here.

DAN

(furious)

You put that gun on that table!

ONAJE complies. DAN grabs him violently.

DAN (CONT'D)

You fool! William, you ain't never going be free now. You damn fool. You ain't never going be free.

ONAJE

I went down to march! The white people start burning down the houses and I'm trying to get home across the Choptank Bridge and Henderson stops me. He was going to kill me. I've got to get back to Baltimore.

SARAH

You ain't free, William.

ONAJE

I don't think Henderson recognized me... If nobody saw me, I'll be safe here till morning. But white boy, you're coming up to Baltimore tomorrow. You ain't leaving tonight.

DAN

I thought you were something more than a child but you're not. When you get to Baltimore, you take a bus north. You can't take care of yourself...

SARAH

(SARAH comes over to DAN.

She is distraught.)

If nobody saw him, like he says, maybe William will be free. Oh Lord, I hope so.

ANDREW

Did he shoot at you first?

ONAJE

That don't make no difference down here.

ANDREW

If it's in self-defense, you ought to get yourself free. Otherwise, you'll be running for the rest of your life.

DAN

William's right. It don't make no difference down here. William's right.

SARAH packs up food and exits.

DAN (CONT.)

Now, William, get yourself some clean clothes in that old suitcase - just you take what you need. But hurry now. You gotta get yourself some sleep.

ONAJE exits into the bedroom.

ANDREW

Can I help?

DAN

No.

ANDREW picks up the gun and holds it as a person would who had never held a gun before.

An ENGINE ROARS outside.

HENDERSON

Alright Nigger! Come out of there, before we blow you out.

ONAJE

(Runs back in terrified.)

There are police all around the back of the house!

DAN

(goes to door, looks out)

It ain't just cops out there. They Klan people. They ain't just cops. They're coming in.

(to SARAH)

Get back into the bedroom now!

ONAJE

(screams at ANDREW)

Give me the gun. Give me the gun.

ANDREW

No. Turn yourself in. You can get off.

ONAJE

They're Klan people. Give me the gun.

The screen door bursts open and RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR., Dressed in a KKK white hood and holding a baseball bat, and HENDERSON, holding a shot gun force themselves in. ANDREW wrestles with WILLIAM for the gun and it falls to the floor.

HENDERSON

Don't pick up that gun! I'll blow your fucking head off!

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

Dan, is that you? Dan?

DAN tries to intercede, but HENDERSON drives the butt of his shotgun into DAN'S head. DAN falls to the floor, bleeding. The GUN GOES OFF, but HENDERSON recovers, aims it at ONAJE.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR. (CONT'D)

(To DAN as he pulls off the KKK hood.)

Is it your boy William?

DAN

(To HENDERSON)

Get outta here - leave my boy alone!

HENDERSON

(to ONAJE as ONAJE reaches for the gun)

Don't you pick it up!

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

(to DAN)

I thought William was in Baltimore!

ONAJE

(reaches for the gun)

Damn you!

HENDERSON

(points gun calmly at ONAJE)

I'll wipe out your fucking family.

ANDREW

No! No! You can't do that! Don't do this!

HENDERSON now notices ANDREW.

HENDERSON

Well look what we have here... Well look what we got here. Just you look and see what we got here. You "white"? You ain't black and you sure ain't white. There ain't nothin' worse than a "white nigger"!

(to the others outside)

Hey, look who we got here! Hey, white nigger, you going to save us?

He starts to chant: "Hey, white nigger, you going to save us?"

HENDERSON points his gun at DAN'S Family and forces them to join the CHANT as it gets louder.

HENDERSON (CONT'D)

Hey, you gonna save us?

It gets LOUDER. HENDERSON holds up his hand and points at ANDREW.

HENDERSON (CONT'D)

No wait. I got an idea. Boy, you—

(to ONAJE)

Get that "white nigger" and you take him outside...

DAN looks over at RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR. and calls out MIDDLEMAN, SR.'s name begging for help as the chant raises again.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

No, Henderson, no, don't do this.

HENDERSON with his gun prods ONAJE to grab and drag ANDREW toward the screen door.

ANDREW

Oh God no - What are you doing?

As ANDREW struggles, the house is trashed.

HENDERSON

Come on boy.

(to RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.
and the others outside)

Get the whip!

(to ONAJE)

Whip him boy. Like your people got it. Whip him boy!

The stage goes BLACK. The encouragement of the CROWD outside GROWS LOUDER. Then a DIM SPOTLIGHT falls on ANDREW. He is hanging by his hands facing the audience. His shirt gets torn off his back and his knees almost touch the ground. ONAJE rocks and pivots to deliver the first blow and there is a loud SNAP and ANDREW'S body jolts from the shock of it.

ANDREW

(screams)

No. No. No more, please. No more.

ONAJE looks over at HENDERSON and tries to return the whip but HENDERSON demands more. Another SNAP of the whip and corresponding lurch from ANDREW.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

(in tears)

God help me! No more! No more! No more! No more!

HENDERSON signals to ONAJE to whip the boy again and ONAJE does. The cheering gets louder and ONAJE starts to increase the intensity and speed of the delivery, again and again. The LIGHTS GO OUT on the entire stage, then UP ON RICHARD, standing in the front seat of the car, pointing past the picnic table.

RICHARD

Belle, Jesus Christ! Grab him, he's running toward the highway! Belle. Grab him. Run after him. Don't let him go! I know him!

BLACKOUT

END OF ACT

ACT II SCENE 6

SETTING: The LIGHTS come up.
ONAJE sits at the picnic table
bundled in a blanket. BELLE stands
further off and RICHARD roams
nervously.

BELLE

(explodes at RICHARD)

A bull whip? Are you kidding me? For Christ sake Jesus!
Compared to Maryland, Reno's looking civilized!

RICHARD

(to ONAJE)

My daddy... He wasn't a part of it...

BELLE

Richard? What's it got to do with you?

(to BELLE)

My daddy's a decent working man. He's worked every day of his
life out on that Bay. He gave me money when I needed it and
the car! He ain't like that!

ONAJE

He was there...

RICHARD

But he... stood far off.

BELLE

Christ, Richard, give it a rest!

ONAJE

...The hell he did!

RICHARD

I can prove it to you! I was in the truck. I swear.

ONAJE

Your daddy's truck?

RICHARD

Yeah, in the back; my Daddy was standing far off from the others ...He didn't approve of what was going on!

ONAJE

Man he didn't drive no truck... Tell the truth from your heart!

(explodes)

In that one moment we were all the same... The slow moving mob, humankind, the brush fire that consumes everything, and leaves its garbage and plastic bags behind. We were earth's violent creature, mankind... We were cruel and laughing in the moonlight. We were the machine at work.

BELLE

You're afraid you're just like your daddy, aren't you? Violent and mean... Why'd I think you was different?

RICHARD

I am different.

BELLE

Hey, the first I hear about your old man he stole some money and some ex-cop is waiting on him. The next I hear is he's at a whipping. The man ain't no eagle scout!

RICHARD

I never lied to you!

BELLE

The hell you didn't. Tell me one thing you said that was the truth! You ain't been a soldier. You ain't been a cowboy. Oh. I'm sorry. You did. You told me you been in jail for Christ sake Jesus!

RICHARD

I said I loved you and I want our family! I didn't tell you no lie from my heart, Belle.

BELLE

(to ONAJE)

You tell me! You think he's okay? He's been kind to us... I don't know. The peaches and all...?

ONAJE

No. He's okay. He didn't lie to you from his heart.

BELLE

(to Richard)

What you've been telling me. Is it the truth?

RICHARD

Yes!

ONAJE

Not the cowboy and the soldier.

RICHARD

I said it. I ought to know.

ONAJE

No. Tell her man. Tell her the truth from your heart.

RICHARD

It's what I wanted to be, Belle. I don't know...

ONAJE

But you never were a cowboy or a soldier. In your exile you was just dreaming in another man's mind and understood the suffering. You became different from your past. You can love her now. You can care for her. Tell her the truth from your heart!

RICHARD

Don't mess this up for me!

ONAJE

(pleading)

What? ...We've been there man. ...We shared our exile together looking up and down the highway, didn't we? And high above us all the stars of Mother Nature in her perfect order? We have transcended who we were. We have found the kindness in ourselves. There won't be no more whippings in the world!... You understand? All the rest just gets mopped up in paper towels... and thrown away. Tell it to her from your heart?

ONAJE looks deep into RICHARD'S eyes, painfully realizing he does not understand.

ONAJE

No...? No...? ...Or were you, all along, just another one of them that just wander the roads, boy?...

The slow moving mob trapped in the circular logic till you die? You don't remember? No?... No? Fuck your flags! Go salute the paper towels!

RICHARD

Belle? Belle, I don't know what he's saying. Honest.

BELLE

(confronts ONAJE to defend
RICHARD)

Hey leave him alone! Get off of him with this cosmic bullshit. You want to know the truth? I'll tell you.

RICHARD

Belle...

BELLE

Shut up, I'm not through with him yet! What is this stuff about paper towels? Forget it, I say. I don't give a good goddamn!

RICHARD

Belle?

BELLE

(to RICHARD)

And you can shut up too!

RICHARD

People can be different, Belle...

BELLE

If your Daddy did it just say it. That's all I'm asking. I'll tell you the truth. My mother had two other kids, with a different daddy. When I was ten she gave me a picture. I use to dream about him. I dreamed I'd ride in the semis with him. Later I dreamed he'd stopped at my truck stop. But he is years and years long gone. I lost the picture in a motel room in Waco six years ago... Now I don't like talking about that but it's the goddamn truth...

BELLE, RICHARD and ONAJE freezing in place and the light falls on the action, already in motion, happening in DAN'S house. DAN pushes open the screen door and stands on the steps looking up at the stars.

SARAH is in the kitchen standing on a chair fixing the light hanging above the kitchen table.

DAN

No. No. Sarah... That's what I told him. He'd remember that: "Find a star above your house and go way from it, if you want, but you always know where it is so you can come back. You just follow that star." I'm sure I told him that. Maybe I didn't say it exactly... but he knows that. He knows that already. He picked a star, I'm sure.

SARAH

I'm giving you jobs that need to be done around the house but you're not doing them.

DAN

(Comes back inside and goes over the table and begins to go through the wooden box of pictures on the table.)

The white man gets his son back. We don't get our boy back? You know Sarah, there is no person who deserves it less. He's nothing but a drunk. Even the white people laugh at him behind his back. He can't catch enough to get himself out of debt. He even drove his wife away and then he never took care of his boy. He'll admit it to you.

SARAH

The man is just a follower, Dan. He took to you Dan. You had what he wanted. You two got along. He looked up to you, Dan. You can't be hitting him down at the docks. They all had to be watching. They all had to see that!

DAN

...But "You are what you do, Sarah." He cost us our boy. That is what he did.

SARAH

You never brought him up here. I never seen him up here before that night, Dan.

DAN

So you say it is okay what he did?

SARAH

You never invited him up here. He never even knew where you lived. You looked down on him Dan. You made fun of him.

DAN

I never looked down on any man. How can I look down on him when his boy goes to prison because he's white and my boy gets exiled forever from his home and family because he's black? Tell me that Sarah? He may be white trash but he is white.

SARAH

You went on like this all last night. I've been telling you something but you won't listen. What am I trying to tell you Dan?

DAN

That all this is fair? That it is okay that he gets his boy back and then he is so stupid he sends him away? That he is so stupid he steals money to send him away? I'm not listening to that.

SARAH

That is not what I am telling you.

DAN

You taking sides against me Sarah? William was your son, Sarah!

SARAH

"Was?"

DAN

I didn't say "was".

SARAH

He has been gone for almost thirteen years and Middleman is just a follower Dan. He was just a follower until it was too late.

DAN

I care about justice and William is coming back to us. It is just a matter of when!

SARAH

This ain't a "just" world.

DAN

You telling me I've got to let my boy go after the man that put him out on the road gets his boy back? Is that what you are telling me to do?

SARAH

I'm giving you things to do at home for two days. I'm trying to keep you off the docks so you won't be hitting people while the people will be watching. You heard him Dan! Henderson is trying to blame you for that stolen money after you have been hitting people on the docks. That light bulb has been burned out all day and it was your job all day to fix it. I'm trying to help you but you won't even help yourself!

DAN

Don't be managing me Sarah!

SARAH

I'm doing better than that! It is time you manage yourself! I'm leaving this house. I called that white boy in Boston. I tried to help that man who tried to help you. I tried to bring him food. That's what good people do. That man who was once your friend and tried to help you, you hit him. I'm trying to help you but you won't even help yourself. I love you too much to be trying when you don't want to help yourself. You got to figure it out for yourself and come home to your senses.

DAN

Lifting the picture of WILLIAM out
of the box on the table and holds
it up for both of them to see.
You are not leaving. There is my boy! There is your son.
Look! But all it is, is a picture in my hand.

The lights go out on them and DAN'S
house and return to BELLE, RICHARD
and ONAJE and back to BELLE who is
in mid-speech.

BELLE

...I can take all the backseat bullshit and bad sex but I can't take nothing less than the truth and be married to you. I'm just telling you we ain't married if we're living in difference stories. I can take it, whatever it is and forgive you. Forgive you everything. Sloppy drunks and you chasing flat ass women when you get old. But I don't want to love some picture of a man a million miles away living in the same house with me.

(beat)

You don't need to be like this. You don't Richard.

RICHARD

What do you mean? Belle?

BELLE

I mean don't lie to me no more. Don't box me out. Don't talk to him about your father... Talk to me!

RICHARD

He ain't got nobody. It scares me what he says.

ONAJE

(dejected. To RICHARD)

I thought you understood... I thought we were kinfolk sorta...

RICHARD

Belle, I'll take care of you.

BELLE

I don't want promises. I've heard them all my life.

RICHARD

I want to take care...

BELLE

I don't want no promises. I just want the truth.

RICHARD

Listen to me Belle. ...Some years back I got in trouble. My daddy said "He ain't my son..." He said that to the judge. The judge just didn't understand what he meant. He saw him saying "no." He saw him pointing at a criminal and saying: "No, he ain't my son". And the judge didn't understand. The judge looked at the newspaper people in the courtroom and saw my old man as a decent man with a bad seed that broke his heart and he said "Let this be an example to all you young people in Talbot County who take drugs. Eight years, hard time." Daddy thinks it was his fault. It wasn't daddy's fault! He thought he was saying both of us is decent... He's tried to make it up to me... The money, the car. He is gentle, Belle, gentle. That's the truth Belle. From my heart.

(to ONAJE)

I've been with my daddy when he told me he was scared of what he saw. My daddy is just like you... ...Because you're afraid of who you are!

ONAJE

(explodes)

Boy, I'm just afraid of mankind!

RICHARD

No. You're just like my daddy. You gave up. You're always running away.

ONAJE

Just like your daddy?

RICHARD

I'm not letting my daddy give up. I'm not!

ONAJE

I'm sorry for you. You had it man. It was beautiful and you lost it. I ain't crazy, man! All you people are crazy to live in the man machine: It is single-minded, violent and does not know what it destroys each day. Laugh at it. It laughs back 'cause you are the hero in your mirror. The master of more and more and less and less and...

RICHARD leaves BELLE and goes over to comfort ONAJE.

ONAJE CON'T

(to RICHARD)

For a moment I thought we were friends ...on a path to love and justice. The three of us. No?

(beat)

There ain't no point in being with you all no more. I'll get out here.

(ONAJE takes his bag out of the car but RICHARD stops him.)

RICHARD

No wait. You are real tired. Where you going to sleep out here? Under some bridge?

BELLE

Hey why you leaving us? You don't have to go.

ONAJE

I got to go. I've been here too long.

BELLE

(To RICHARD)

Don't let him go Richard. Don't let him go.

ONAJE

No. No. It was my mistake. It was my mistake.

BELLE

(To RICHARD)

Don't let him go Richard!

(To ONAJE)

Are you going to remember us?

RICHARD

You can sleep in the car a little bit. Get in. I'll let you off a little into Pennsylvania.

ONAJE

For a little while I was thinking you two were angels? No? No? No?

(beat)

But okay... The both of you. Thank you for the ride. I never get long rides like this. Yeah, I'll remember both of you... I'll remember you Belle. Just remember me. We laughed together. I married you two. I thank you. The both of you. Thank you.

ONAJE gets into the passenger seat
and prepares to sleep.

I'm just real tired... I'll sleep a little now. Just let me off in Pennsylvania... You hear?

ONAJE tucks his coat under his head
and goes to sleep.

RICHARD

RICHARD directs BELLE to go away
from the car so ONAJE can't hear
him.

We ain't far from being there Belle. We'll be there by morning. I don't care what he says Belle. He's got to get to Unionville. He'll be alright. He's just got to go home...

BELLE

Richard, he don't want to go home.

RICHARD

...Because he's just real lonely, Belle, he don't have nobody. He is the same as us.

RICHARD and BELLE go back to the
car and get in.

The LIGHTS goes out and the HEADLIGHTS BEAM out over the audience as the car's ENGINE picks up and they run down the highway.

BLACKOUT

END OF SCENE

ACT II SCENE 7

SETTING: HEADLIGHTS continue to beam out from the darkness of the stage. It is about an hour before DAWN. RICHARD turns off the LIGHTS as he parks in front of his father's house. ONAJE and BELLE are asleep as he gets out of the car quietly.

The LIGHTS RISE to reveal the trashed kitchen where RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR. sits drinking a beer. The TV LIGHT FLICKERS on his face as he stares into space, drunk and desperate. RICHARD watches his father drink then turns away and puts his head in his hands as he watches HENDERSON and listens.

HENDERSON bangs on the door.

HENDERSON

Goddamn it, you're gonna let me in sooner or later. It came across the radio. They spotted the car. He's coming home old man. It won't do no good no more to hold out in here.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

You're stupid Henderson. He ain't coming home.

HENDERSON

I just got it over the radio. They saw him driving in north of town.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

You lie, Henderson. He's out west. He's in Wyoming by now workin' in the open air.

(Throws the crushed beer can
against the wall.)

This fuckin' place ain't his home no more. He's got a good job out there.

HENDERSON

You steal for him and he comes back. You're the stupid one.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

Fifteen years ago you ran out the blacks and now you run out the poor. What are you protecting? Years ago you dumped a black man's son out on the highway and told him never to come home again cause you was "the law" and then eight years ago your people sent my son to prison for smoking dope and he never hurt nobody at all. Who are you people? This ain't my America no more.

HENDERSON

You still like that black man? The man whose boy we put out on Route 50?

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

Yes. He's a crabber just like me. You lose the hate when you work side by side and you share the suffering of another. He had a nice family 'til we busted it apart.

HENDERSON

His boy shot at me with a gun!

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

Everybody's got a gun down here and everybody smokes dope. But only the poor people get punished!

HENDERSON

Talk nice to me. I could have come in earlier but I knew it'd be easy when you saw he'd come back... I'm going to arrest him in town. I'll be back with the papers for you after I get some breakfast. It's over Middleman. ...It's over.

HENDERSON picks up his chair and exits. RICHARD lifts his head out of his hands and gently wakes up BELLE.

RICHARD

Belle... Belle... wake up... wake up.

BELLE

Where are we?

RICHARD

We're home.

BELLE

(half asleep)

Yeah, well that's all well and good, but where the hell am I?

RICHARD

Royal Oak. Eastern Shore of Maryland.

BELLE

Hey, the honeymoon capital of the world, right?

RICHARD

It's an hour before dawn or so. My father probably ain't up yet. The place'll be pretty messy. Come on get outta the car.

BELLE

I can get out of the backseat? Hey, you're a real peach.

(RICHARD helps her out and
she stares at the house.)

Pretty messy? That dump don't even look like its got toilet paper.

RICHARD

Be quiet, I don't want to wake him up.

BELLE

(looks at ONAJE)

Why didn't you let him out?

RICHARD

...It's his home, too.

BELLE

Hey, he don't want to be here.

RICHARD

He's got to see my Daddy...

BELLE

Richard! He sure don't want to see your Daddy!

RICHARD

It'll be okay. ...And for sure my Daddy needs to see him.

BELLE

This is the end of the road he was talk'n about.

(looks at the house)

Christ, I went three thousand miles for this?

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR. staggers to
the ice box for another beer,
screams out of frustration.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.
You better fuckin' not come home! I waited. I locked the door
and waited till you were clear. Goddamn Henderson's been
outside all week and you come back. My life is worthless now.
I was waiting to hear you was free. Go. Go. Go. I said.

(swings around, drinks again)
I'll beat the shit out of you if you did!

He exits to the bedroom and slams
the door.

ONAJE
(wakes with a start)
Why are we stopped?

RICHARD
My home man. Come on in if you want.

ONAJE
I don't want to be stopped! I told you to let me out at the
interstate! Hey, you listening to me?

ONAJE gropes around and finds his
sextant, gets out of the car and
goes to the picnic table and starts
measuring and charting the stars in
the EARLY MORNING SKY.

ONAJE (CONT'D)
I'm way off course. Didn't you listen to me!
(looks around)
Jesus Christ this is the Eastern Shore.

RICHARD
Quiet man. My father's asleep in there. If you don't like it
drive around!

RICHARD throws ONAJE the keys and
ONAJE catches the keys.

BELLE
Hey, just maybe, just maybe I'll want to get out of here.

RICHARD

You think I gave him the car?

(leads her toward house)

You're safe. He can't move.

ONAJE

(holds keys)

What do you want me to use these things for? I'm trapped!
Is that what you're telling me?

RICHARD

No man... It's up to you.

(laughs)

We see eye to eye this time man!

(to BELLE)

Come on in.

(they enter home)

Sorry about this. My old man was never much of a housekeeper.

ONAJE returns to the car and puts
the sextant down on the dashboard
of the car where it is out of the
way but visible to the audience.

BELLE

You're kidding. If you can find a mop in this dump in the
next two minutes, I'll cancel my bus tickets. You pigs had to
go three thousand miles to find a domestic? Hey, fuck this,
I'm out of here.

RICHARD restrains her.

BELLE (CONT'D)

Hey, I'm not cleaning this place. Light a fire and get some
marshmallows!

ONAJE

(gets into the car)

I'm staying in the car.

(gets out of car)

I can't stand being in the car if it's not moving.

He does a few orbits around the car
and toys with the idea of driving
it. He tests the HORN.

ONAJE (CONT'D)

The horn works.

He sits on the top of the driver's
seat, fiddles with the RADIO
unsuccessfully, starts kicking it.

BELLE

Why you leaving him out there...?

RICHARD

Just let him be.

ONAJE

Move - move! Damn this!

(kicks car)

Damn this!

(screams at the house)

You fuckin' with me, man? Stopping don't mean a thing? Hey,
you two listening?

RICHARD

(holds her hand)

Belle?

BELLE

What?

RICHARD

I wanna talk to you...

BELLE

Yeah, you sure as hell look like you wanna talk to me... 'N
we got some stuff to talk about.

RICHARD

Belle, I'll tell you the truth now. I was in prison... I just
dreamed about the Western Ranch... I read about it in the
magazines...

BELLE

...Yeah, I know and that James Bond stuff must have been a wet
dream.

RICHARD

Belle, listen... I was afraid you wouldn't like me...

BELLE

Men are born liars. What do you think I was born yesterday?

(hugs him gently)

Shh. Now don't worry about it no more.

RICHARD

Belle, I lived eight years cold in that prison cell. I read the magazines and dreamed of what I could have been 'n what I wanted to be. It put a fear in my heart of bein' lonely for always...

BELLE

Yeah, well you lying to me won't do nothing to change that.

RICHARD

It was what I wanted to be.

BELLE

But it's what you ain't. Besides I don't want some stinky cowboy, that don't matter.

RICHARD

Belle, then I got scared of wanting you too much...

BELLE

Shh, don't worry. I won't leave. With all the other men I never did the leavin'.

(kisses him)

I've been looking for you for a long time. I'll take care of you.

(comforts him)

The truth is all I want. There ain't no love that comes from lies. Are you goin' to leave me?

RICHARD

No... Never Belle ...Never! Not even for a minute!

BELLE

(nods, kisses him)

Richard, that's all I need..

ONAJE is still pacing by the car.

ONAJE

Christ, it is dark when you stop.

(screams at the house)

It's hard enough as it is. I don't need this!

He violently attacks the car, kicks it wildly, then throws everything but his bag out of the car.

ONAJE (CONT'D)

Let's go! Let's go!

He jumps onto the car and spreads his arms, but there is no speed, no wind.

BELLE
(watches ONAJE)

Richard?

RICHARD
He can come in here if he wants...

ONAJE
I need to go! Let's go! Damn you people!

DAN enters his imagination. ONAJE sees him and freaks out. SARAH follows DAN into ONAJE'S imagination.

ONAJE (CONT'D)
What is this? Get away from me. You were just my father once. Listen it's like this. Listen to me! You listened to me and then go away...

DAN
Welcome home. Give me the keys, William.

ONAJE
Give you the keys?

DAN
You can't drive...?

ONAJE
No, I can't drive no more.

DAN
Then give me the keys, William.

ONAJE
Leave me alone.

SARAH enters his imagination.

ONAJE (CONT'D)
I didn't want to come back here!

DAN

(to SARAH)

Yeah, I've been waiting but he never came back. Don't ask me about it no more.

SARAH

(to ONAJE)

We thought you'd be back someday.

ONAJE

(To SARAH Pointing at DAN.)

Leave me alone! Tell him to go away! Tell him. Get away from me! I'll be back on the road soon... Moving! Moving!...

DAN

...Boy, you still rambling...?

ONAJE

...I can shut my eyes and concentrate and get it back. I get back into the highway lights. The slip, slip, slip of highway lights on white lines.

He kicks the car then HONKS THE HORN and shouts at the house.

ONAJE (CONT'D)

Come on, let's go! Come on!

BELLE

Look at him out by the car. The poor man is shaking. He's terrified. Why didn't you let him out like... I'm going out to...

RICHARD

No stay here. Wait! He'll be alright.

ONAJE

(to DAN)

I don't need you all. I can get out of here.

ONAJE gets in the car.

DAN

Turn on the engine.

(ONAJE laughs)

What are you laughing for?

ONAJE turns on the engine.

DAN (CONT'D)

Come on... Come on. Let's see you drive!

ONAJE

Leave me alone!

DAN

What you got now is nothing. You know that William, don't you? You never going to be free!

ONAJE

Leave me alone! I'm sick of your speeches, speeches, speeches...

(screams, jumps out of car)

DAN

I can still hear the white boy screaming. You was cruel...

SARAH

You even scared the white cops the way you did it. I saw them pull you away and cut him down... Dan is right.

DAN and SARAH encircle ONAJE.

ONAJE

Deep in his own imagination.

...Halfway through it I saw the ropes pull on his wrists as his knees gave when they said "Again... Again like your people got it... again." I felt each one coming. His face pushed against the tree as he was hanging there. I laid it back on the ground behind me and rolled back my shoulder and the elbow and my wrists jerked like a speed ball pitcher rocks and pivots all his weight behind the pitch and SNAP against his back, and SNAP, I saw it cut lines like power lines across the sky, SNAP like the strings in the meat at the butcher shop... and it bled. I swear I was cutting into his lungs and SNAP, it splattered on the tree and the white faces laughing 'n cheering me on and it cut through white flesh like water. Splash. Splash red in the blue faces in the moonlight. It was past midnight when they cut him down. I can't reconcile it in my mind... I was just doing a white man's bidding...

SARAH

William!

ONAJE

Look at me Momma! Look at me!

SARAH

What do you mean look at you?

(looks at him very closely)

You're right... Willian, you look terrible.
(beat)

SARAH (CONT'D)

...You look terrible. Look at you... somebody dumped a trash bag all over your body. Do you know anything about that? Turn around. You are dirty William. William, what has become of you?

ONAJE

Momma I am so sorry!

SARAH

It's like Dan says. You never gonna be free...

DAN

I wanted to see you with a family, with children in the yard. Looking at yourself from the outside, growing up again 'n a wife to grow with, who loves you. It was just a father's dream I had for you. You never could listen, could you?... But we loved you... We loved you so...

One by one, SARAH and DAN turn
their backs on ONAJE as he speaks
to them...

ONAJE

Deep in his imagination.

...The first few mornings with the sun behind me and the crows rising in front of me out of the dark fields, I was running west as fast as I could go, fearing cops and down on one knee before the semi's as they'd pass. I moved only to move. I felt no future. My past fell off of me like the abandoned clothes you see on the roads. My heart stopped and then started with a different rhythm. The rhythm of the passing lines and trip, trip, trip of neon highway lights at fifty-five or, ...windshield wipers clearing away the rain. My eyes opened and I was so lonely... I kept you all in my thoughts those Christmas days when the highways are strangely empty and newspapers would blow, flip-flopping slowly, under the bridge before me and out of the other side... I thought I'd stop some day. Come home and all but after all this time you don't want me. This is all I am. I have nothing. I have nothing to give in return. I got nothing. I just want to go! Go!

(to SARAH and DAN)

A long time ago I was a child of yours.

I had everything back then, but I ain't like you all no more...

ONAJE reaches out to SARAH and DAN but they only glance back at him and exit as RICHARD, in the house bangs on the inside door of his father's house.

RICHARD

Come on out. I'm back home.

ONAJE

Deep in his imagination to himself.

...No. No. I am not William anymore... I am different now. After all this time I am changed. All these miles. All these boxes within boxes, every three months, every year, in the heart of this country, on the back of this planet, under these stars. I am Onaje now... Onaje with the truckers who share their cigarettes. Onaje with the woman in the boxcar who shares her food as we pass through orange groves in the spring time. Onaje, with the Bible bus singing Christmas songs when they never once stopped singing when they stopped and picked me up. No. I am Onaje free riding on the back of a farm boy's motorcycle all the way across Nebraska. I know these people. They are kind. They are good. They have fed me. I have slept beneath their bridges. I am their witness to the suffering and to the kindness. I am Onaje the traveler. The observer of the changing planet. The witness to love and justice and deep forgiveness... But you don't want me anymore... I am not William anymore... There is no need for me to be afraid. I just need to go. Go! Go!

The LIGHTS GO DOWN on ONAJE standing alone on stage, and RISE again slightly on RICHARD and BELLE in the house.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR. opens the door violently. He is drunk.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

Two weeks out and you come back. I give you freedom and you don't want it. That's all I ever wanted.

RICHARD

(tries to hug him)

I came back. I got married. We are going to survive. I couldn't leave you like this. I was only back from prison for a week and you sent me off. We don't have to be afraid of nobody. Look.

(reaches in his pocket)

I got money! You can go. Like in the picture books...

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

How we gonna survive? I gave you money and a car, and what did I tell you?

He throws RICHARD to the ground.

RICHARD

You told me to go.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

I told you to "disappear."

RICHARD

I went. But I came back. I got lots of money.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

You came back. The dirt ball, Henderson, has been banging at the door ever since I got you that money. Saying you'd come back. And I lived here and didn't answer the door and prayed that you would not come back. There's nothing for you here. You could have been free!

RICHARD

(hugs his father)

Daddy, there's no reason to get excited. You helped me. I got money. Look here at me! We are going to clean the house now. Look I got more than we need!

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

You could have been in Wyoming! Prison life is what you wanted. You could've been free by now! Where'd you think I got the money?

RICHARD

I got all the money we need!

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

Where'd you think I got the money?

(looks around)

...From returning Pepsi bottles or something? You know where I got it!

RICHARD

I'll pay the two thousand dollars. Look at all the money I got. You can go...

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

You got money and you came back to me?

RICHARD

I couldn't leave you like that. I just got outta prison. I knew what they'd do to you...

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

Do you really have money? Let me see it.

RICHARD gives him the money and he spreads it out in front of him.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR. (CONT'D)

Oh my God, it's real too...

RICHARD

Take some.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

Take some?

RICHARD

Go on.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

(scoops up some money)

And I can go?

RICHARD

...And come back when you're ready...

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

'N there's enough left over?... Hallelujah! I'm gone! All right!

He starts for the door, but RICHARD stops him and gestures to BELLE.

RICHARD

Daddy, that is my bride... This is Belle.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

Not bad... and she's in white too!

BELLE
(fiercely)

Can I smack 'um?

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

May I kiss the bride?

RICHARD

I guess so, but only on the...

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR. kisses BELLE
sloppily.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

..Daddy. That's enough!

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

I'm sorry, I'm so drunk.

BELLE
(wipes her mouth)

Ick. Like father, like son. Where'd you guys learn to kiss
like that... From a basset hound?

RICHARD

See the car outside? I met a guy out on the road, outside of
Cheyenne. Just take him to Unionville and then out to the
highway for me... You know who he is...

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

Who is he?

RICHARD

You'll recognize him.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

I can just go? I can take the car?

HENDERSON

HENDERSON enters and begins banging
on the door. ONAJE sees HENDERSON
but HENDERSON does not see ONAJE.
ONAJE hides behind the car.

Hey! What's going on?

(HENDERSON draws gun and
bangs on the door.)

Open up in there!

Jesus! Who is that?
 BELLE

It's Henderson!
 RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

The cops?
 BELLE

Yeah... Jesus!
 RICHARD

Richard don't let him hurt...
 BELLE

Middleman open up in there!
 HENDERSON
 (More aggressively banging on the door.)

Then lets fuck with the damn bastard.
 RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.
 You got the money for Henderson too? For sure?
 (RICHARD nods yes and RICHARD MIDDLEMAN SR. Aggressively starts toward the door.)

Open up in there, it's over!
 RICHARD aggressively blocks his father's efforts to get at the door.

Open up in there, it's over!
 HENDERSON
 (More aggressively banging on the door.)

No! No! Dad you don't want to...
 RICHARD

Not by the hair on my chinney chin chin, you pig!
 RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.
 (Yells at HENDERSON over RICHARD and through the door.)

Richard aggressively blocks his father's efforts to get at the door.

RICHARD
 Jesus Christ daddy! Stop this!

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.
 ...I'm here, you bill collecting limp dicked son of a bitch!
 (To RICHARD)
 We got the money right, don't we? I'm loving this.

RICHARD
 (Continues to aggressively
 try to stop his father and
 block the door.)
 Daddy! Daddy! This is not good!

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.
 (Yells at HENDERSON over
 RICHARD as he tries to get
 to the door.)
 Hey, did you see the book out about you, your wife and you're
 kid? It's called the three little pigs!

RICHARD
 (forcefully blocking the
 door)
 Hey, shut up, Daddy!

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.
 ...And one more thing Henderson... your family tree is a
 bush...
 (as an aside to RICHARD)
 I don't know what that means, but its a good one!

HENDERSON
 Okay, I'm coming in.

HENDERSON barges in with his gun
 drawn.

RICHARD
 Put the gun away. I got the money!

HENDERSON
 The hell you do!

He hits RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR. who
 falls. RICHARD pushes HENDERSON
 away and keeps HENDERSON and his
 father separated.

RICHARD

Wait a minute! I've got the money!

BELLE

(to HENDERSON)

What the hell are you doing?

HENDERSON

(pointing at RICHARD
MIDDLEMAN, SR.)

I'm taking this man in.

BELLE

(BELLE jumps in front of
HENDERSON.)

Richard, I can't stand pricks like this!

(to HENDERSON)

You behave! You're a cop or something, right? He's got the money! You hear me? He's got the money! Look here! I'm showing you my this here little finger.

She aggressively shoves her little finger and fingernail up into HENDERSON'S face. It is a weapon arising from her fist.

...You act right or I reorganize your mind with this here fingernail up your nose!... You small town cops never messed with a waitress from Reno!

RICHARD

Look, I've got the money. Look.

(holds up the money)

Look two thousand dollars.

BELLE

(still threatening HENDERSON
with her little finger)

...And if we need loose change, I'll take it out of your brain!.. And from the looks of you it I'd probably come up short!

HENDERSON

You got the money?

HENDERSON takes the money and begins to count it. In the car, ONAJE starts moving his arms in the same way he moved them in the first scene.

ONAJE

Oh please! I got to go. Go. Go... I feel the air of the earth,
hot and cold in turbulence falling off of me. Faster! Faster!
Faster! Am I moving?

BELLE

(To RICHARD)

Don't let no one hurt him!

ONAJE pulls in his arms, giving up
his spirit momentarily.

HENDERSON

What's going on out there?

HENDERSON raises to look, but
RICHARD restrains him. HENDERSON
draws his gun.

I'm going out there...

RICHARD

(points at the money)

Okay time's up. I'm taking the money back.

HENDERSON

I'm not done counting it yet.

HENDERSON sits down again and keeps
counting the money.

ONAJE

...No, no, I'm not... How many years has it been...?

ONAJE drops his arms and sits
dejectedly.

RICHARD

(Pulls RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.
to one side)

Get him out of here! He's got the keys. It's William..

HENDERSON

What's going on out there?

Stands up again with his gun.

RICHARD

(to HENDERSON)

You finished counting the money?

(HENDERSON indicates no and sits down again to count the money.)

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR. grabs the remnants of a six pack off the table with one hand and his gun off the table with the other, puts the gun in his pocket and stumbles out the kitchen door and approaches ONAJE. RICHARD, BELLE and HENDERSON freeze in place and the lights go down on them and raise dimly on RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR. and ONAJE.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

William is that you? William? Are you William? You are, ain't you? Let me take a look!

(He points at the house.)

Hey! You know who is in there? You gotta get out of here!

ONAJE

(beat)

Yeah. I saw him. You remember me?

ONAJE defensively climbs on top of the picnic table and looks down on RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

Get away from me Middleman...

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

Yeah, I remember you! You was smart! We laughed together. You was "the science kid"...

(beat)

William I'm so goddamn glad to see you I may kiss you. So give me the keys!

ONAJE

Where you going?

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

Wyoming.

ONAJE realizes that RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR. is too drunk to drive.

ONAJE

(beat)

Wyoming? You can't drive. That's in your picture books. You don't need a car for that.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

It's a dream I've had...

ONAJE

You know the roads all circle back on themselves... What you got planned for the loneliness that comes down on you? How come you want to do what I have done?

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

Looks up at ONAJE as ONAJE stands
above him on the picnic table.

I'm sick of this shit! The Bay is polluted. The eels are steep. A bushel of crabs is hard 'n I got old. I don't understand. I want to go to Wyoming.

ONAJE

You're crazy. Where you come off wanting to be in my exile?

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

Why am I old and I got nothing? Why is the oyster beds and the bay birds gone? Why am I out in a boat at dawn and it breaks haze and everything is still gray? I don't understand what happened.

ONAJE

You been locked in the man machine! At home you just got your TV on tapping into the engine's brain?

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

What the hell does that mean?

ONAJE

It means there ain't no Wyoming no more... It is changed from the picture books.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

It is you? I remember...

ONAJE

What happened to the boy?

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

I took him up to the hospital when they dumped you on Route 50.

ONAJE

I didn't kill him?

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

They put about two hundred stitches in his back. They shipped him back to Boston. You thought you killed him?

ONAJE

(Descends from the picnic table.)

Henderson's in there with you?

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

Look at me William. What have I got to protect?

ONAJE

You got an acre of ground.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

A home? It don't mean shit, believe me.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR. moves over to the car, and gestures to the road.

What's it like?

ONAJE

It's beautiful.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

It'll be beautiful?

ONAJE

Yeah. The country is beautiful. The people are great.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

After what you said?

ONAJE

I wanted a home...

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

...And a boat that leaks and you don't know why you do it every day?

ONAJE

My daddy told me some day I'd settle down. I'd understand.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

Well my daddy said the same damn thing and I did it and I still don't understand.

ONAJE

You know the people on the road who'll pick you up. They feed you. They give you everything, like they been long'n to their whole lives 'n they tell you beautiful long and lonely stories on the ride about themselves. Things they wouldn't even tell their loved ones...

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

I never been off the Eastern Shore... 'n I've been drinking for two weeks. Come on, William. Henderson will be coming out. They told you never come back!

ONAJE pins RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.
against the car. He does not
resist.

ONAJE

Why did you do that to me?

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

...I don't know... It's different now. It was a long time ago. It should never have happened like that...

He pushes ONAJE away and pins him
against the picnic table. ONAJE
does not resist.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR. (CONT'D)

You want to fight? I got nothing... nothin'... nothin'. William look at me...

(beat)

They broke me too... It was different... But it was the same.

ONAJE

It's not the same. ...You got that car?

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

You want a car? I got it for my boy so he could get out of here. And he came back!

ONAJE

Is it your car?

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

This Goddamn car is like a boomerang. You throw it away and it Goddamn comes back.

ONAJE

I want your car.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

I sure enough don't want this car!... I drive it to Wyoming and it would probably drive me back and I'd be married... Jesus Christ I couldn't take that again!

ONAJE

Give me the car.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

(searches glove compartment)

I'm sure the paperwork is in here somewhere. I'm never coming back to this place!

ONAJE

Then give me the car!

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

Hold on. I'm try'n to find the papers.

ONAJE

No conditions!

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

I bought the Goddamn thing with stolen money and its been punishing me ever since. I can't even get rid of it! It hates me! Here they are...

Hands ONAJE paperwork and ONAJE gets in the driver's seat.

Wait! There's one condition.

ONAJE

There are no conditions!

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

Now hold on. Hold on. My boy says I must get you to Unionville. The only condition is you drive it first to Unionville.

ONAJE

Unionville?

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

Your daddy's back to crabbing. The canning factory closed last year.

ONAJE

And my momma?

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

They got the same house in Unionville. Your daddy won't mind see'n me a little drunk. I'm gonna tell him "Look who I brought home to his daddy!" Look at this! He's gonna kiss me on the lips!

ONAJE

I don't think so...

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

(explodes in joyous laughter)

I'm gonna knock on his door and I'm gonna say "Look who I brought home to you! Look! Look! Look!

(gets into passenger seat)

Get in the driver's seat... We're going to Unionville.

ONAJE

You going to Unionville?

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

Yeah, you remember the way, don't ya? I'll show you the way. Come on!

ONAJE

Well damn, I'll be driving a car... We're gonna pick up hitchhikers ya know.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

Yeah, and we be tell'n them cosmic shit like you like!

ONAJE

And we'll give to them until the gas money runs out. Okay?

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

Hey, I got money. My boy brought back money.

ONAJE

I ain't done this in like, thirteen years. You ready to go?

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

(grabs ONAJE by his shirt.)

Tomorrow morning when I've slept it off you goin' to dump me out on that highway?

ONAJE

You don't think you'd get lost try'n to get home?

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

Yeah! I never been off the Eastern Shore.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR. sees the sextant which has been left on the dash board of the car.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR. (CONT'D)

Hey, wait a minute... Is this yours?

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR. picks up the sextant, looks at it carefully and slides up to sit on the top of the seat.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR. (CONT'D)

A sextant? They have these things at the Maritime Museum in St. Michaels?

ONAJE slides up to the top of his own seat to sit next to RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR. as he focuses the sextant on the sky.

ONAJE

You got to find your "true Zenith" from ninety degrees...

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR. adjusts the sextant and searches the sky.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

I know...

ONAJE

(ONAJE does a double take.)

You know how to use one of these things?

(beat)

You know the sun and stars from being on the Bay?

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

(Holding the sextant. He looks away from ONAJE. Tears come to his eyes.)

This is how you been traveling?... All these years alone?

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR. still holding the sextant. Tears gather in his eyes.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR. (CONT'D)

I'm so sorry. Maybe I could have stopped it.

(beat)

I'm so sorry William. I was so scared I didn't even try.

(beat)

ONAJE

(ONAJE puts his arm around him to comfort him.)

It's going to be alright Old Man.

(ONAJE hugs RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR. and then pulls his head into his shoulder and comforts him.)

We are going to be alright Old Man.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

I am going to Wyoming?

(beat)

You know what?

ONAJE

What?

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

If you're lucky... If you're real lucky...

ONAJE

If I'm lucky?

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

Yeah. If you're real lucky this Goddamn car will bring you back here.

ONAJE

Let me look at you, old man. You think you are Wyoming? Look at you. You don't look like Wyoming to me.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

Yeah, I want to go to Wyoming!

ONAJE

Old man, your people came back to you. Your boy, he came all the way back here for you.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

I want to go to Wyoming. I dreamed about it my whole life.

ONAJE

Why you thinking about Wyoming?

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

Come on you got to take me to Wyoming. First we are going to Unionville. I'm too drunk to drive and I'd never get back home then anyway!

ONAJE

Yeah... You think that's where you want to go? ...Well, suit yourself Old Man.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

We are going to Wyoming? I'll have someone to travel with?

ONAJE

Yeah... On the way we'll be preaching a little "love and justice."

(beat)

You just lived it man! It just happened to you. You're different now.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

Wait a minute! ...Nobody is going to get in this car with us! We're too Goddamn crazy!

ONAJE

...We got a big problem... No, you got a big problem...

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

What?

ONAJE

I don't acknowledge the highway!

(beat)

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

That's okay. I don't acknowledge the cops!

(Both burst out laughing and slide down into their seats and ONAJE turns on the lights and starts the engine.)

Come on we're going to Unionville!

BLACKOUT.

END OF SCENE

ACT II, SCENE 11

As the lights go out on the car the headlights stay on. It is still before dawn. The stage lights raise over the kitchen table at DAN'S house. His breakfast is ready but DAN is going through the little wooden box on the kitchen table. He stands and goes over to pour a cup of coffee from the coffee pot on the stove but before he drinks from it he puts it in front of him on the table and folds his hands to say grace.

DAN

Lord Bless this food...

(He puts his head in his hands. He can't finish saying grace.)

...And our lives to your service?

(He stands up from the table and points at the coffee)

Take it! Take what's left in the name of "my service" to you. You are a "just" God? So "just" take what's left. You take my son? I wait thirteen years and that ain't "just" enough? You take my Sarah. Why did you need to take her? Why? She walks out on me because she is tired of hearing me beg for justice? But that ain't "just" enough?

(Beat)

Now you take my sleep? All night the windows open in the heat and the Bay out there. That coffee it won't keep me awake all day while the crabs are running and Henderson watching me as I go out in my motor boat to empty my crab traps and motor back to have him staring at me as I walk the dock. ...Or maybe I don't even get there.

He goes to the door and opens it, goes down the steps, looks around and addresses the world outside.

My door is open! You don't have to be bust'n in this time. I got no locks keeping you out. Sarah took our money. You can't find her? She said she don't know where she is going. We never stole nothing. There is no money now even if we did.

(laughs)

I don't even have "just" enough.

(He goes back into his house.)

Take the coffee off the stove or out of my cup.

It's cold by now. I can't say it... "Grace?" Maybe you can "give me grace." That's what Sarah says I need. I've learned your justice. No white man will ever come in my house again. I give you that. I will promise you that! Is that the cause of all of this? Is this my punishment? I pray to you let me sleep? I'll put away the box.

(He goes and sits at the table and sweeps the table clean with his hand and folds his hands on the table and tries to sleep.)

Lights dim on the house but stay on DAN as he sleeps.

On the other side of the stage, after a long pause, the car lights which have been on get turned off and ONAJE slowly gets out of the car as does RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR. They stand with their backs to the car and look at the house.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

(Now remarkably sober from the ride to Unionville and the story he has heard from Onaje.)

Just tell your father what you told me.

ONAJE

They ain't gonna take me back. I don't look like William anymore.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

They have been waiting for you William.

ONAJE

If Henderson finds out I'm back...? Why am I stopping here?

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

Tell them about "living in another man's mind. How people can be different." Tell them what you told me coming up here.

ONAJE

(Looking around at the land and grounds.)

Look at this place. It is so quiet here in the mornings.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.
 (Looking around at the land
 and grounds.)

...Like returning to a cemetery.

ONAJE

Yeah, it's quiet here. On the highway I see a cemetery I would sleep there. The living always leave the cemeteries alone...

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

So much happened here. So fast. And so long ago. But it's over now William. You came back.

ONAJE

It is still the same. Maybe a different picnic table but the table is in the same place. The house is the same. You recognize the smell of the Bay...? I can't be here.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

I'm not going in.

ONAJE

I thought you wanted to see Dan.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

No, I'm staying in the car.

ONAJE

It's not the place. It's the people I'm scared of.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

They've been waiting for you William.

ONAJE

I'm different than I was.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

We all are William.

ONAJE

William is gone. He can't come home.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

You go knock on your door. Once you walk in there you all will change together. That is what your family always did.

ONAJE

(ONAJE starts toward the
 house and stops.)

My mother will be saying: "How can you be looking like that now?" And Dan's "Speeches, speeches, speeches...?" ...He will be looking at me and saying "William you never going to be free." Why am I stopping here?

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

It is different now. You are Onaje.

ONAJE

We still going to Wyoming?

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

You've got the keys.

ONAJE

(To RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.)

Get back in the car. I go in and then we leave.

ONAJE slowly travels to the screen door. RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR. Gets back in the passenger seat. DAN is still sleeping at the kitchen table in silence. ONAJE knocks on the door.

DAN

(Looks up)

Who's that?

(Standing)

Whose there? Open it. It's not locked.

From the darkness of upstage center come BELLE and RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, JR. BELLE carries a flashlight. RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR. Crouches down in the passenger seat until he recognizes them. ONAJE opens the door and sees DAN and DAN sees ONAJE and gasps, wraps his arms around him and brings him into the house and shuts the door.

(The lights go out on them.)

BELLE

The car is here. Why did you park your daddy's truck down the road?

RICHARD

The lights are on in the house.

BELLE

He must be in there. Where is your father?

(She is looking around.)

This is where it happened for Christ sake Jesus? Where were you?

RICHARD

They dragged him down the steps. The lights of the trucks lit up the yard. They whipped the boy over there.

BELLE

Richard, I'm not liking this. Is everywhere down here like this?

RICHARD

It's where I was raised Belle.

BELLE

I can't wait to raise our kids inside of a horror movie.

(Pointing at the house.)

You think your father is in there too?

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

(From the passenger seat of the car.)

No, I'm here.

BELLE

(Jumps out of her skin.)

For christ sake Jesus. ...A never ending horror movie.

RICHARD

(To his father.)

Is he in there all alone?

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

I couldn't go in there. I'm waiting 'till he comes out and then we are go'n to Wyoming.

RICHARD

How long has he been in there?

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

Not long. Just a little time. They are happy in there.

BELLE

How you know that?

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

They took him in.

BELLE

You know that?

RICHARD

So what are they doig in there?

BELLE

I made Richard come up here. We don't want nothing to hurt him. Isn't that right, Richard?

RICHARD

Yeah.

BELLE

...Ever again. I mean nobody is ever allowed to hurt him ever again!

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

He was driving up here telling me about your trip. He is Onaje now. He is amazing, isn't he?

RICHARD

I knew that from when I picked him up.

BELLE

No, you didn't! I swear Richard you lie. You just lie.

RICHARD

I just didn't jump all over him like you did self-doubting me all over the place.

BELLE

Yeah, I did a little of that. I know you mean well but you are go'n straight to hell if you don't start telling the truth. But I love you anyway.

RICHARD

(Continuing to kid her as an
act of love.)

I knew he was going to marry us too.

BELLE

Oh, so now you are trying to be funny?

RICHARD

Belle, I've always been funny, but it's just for special people.

BELLE

Yeah, well make me laugh when you think I'm ready.

RICHARD

Quiet! You hear talking coming up the road?

From upstage enters SARAH and
ANDREW.)

ANDREW

Why did you park down on the road? It's too early for your
people to be up?

RICHARD and BELLE recess into the
shadows around the car and watch.

SARAH

I just wanted you to walk up here to know what its like when
it is peaceful.

ANDREW

Eight hours to get down here. I got to turn right around to
get back for work on Monday. Jesus I recognize the house.

SARAH

The lights are on. You can do this.

ANDREW

...I mean thirteen years almost to the day.

SARAH

Just think about what we talked about driving down here.

ANDREW

(Stops and is reliving it.)

...But it is scary with the morning heat and all. The trucks
with their headlights all on surrounding us all around over
there. The tree. The place is the same... Give me my keys.

SARAH

Come on. I can smell Dan cooking breakfast in there. Come
on in.

ANDREW

(ANDREW continues his
remembering.)

I don't think I can do this. ...I go to confession every
morning before dawn and I wait. The neighborhood is dark and
quiet. The lights start to go on in the houses. The priest
meets me in the morning at my church. I wait for the sound
of his keys on the other side of the door and the sound of
the lock being turned... Your husband, he goes right by here
every morning? Everyday?

SARAH

Yes.

ANDREW

I've got to drive back home. It is a long drive.

SARAH

You said you wanted to do this, Andrew.

(Beat)

We've been driving all night. You must be hungry.

ANDREW

Your son. He isn't in there?

SARAH

He never came home again.

ANDREW

Your husband was kind to me back then. Picking me up and all. You all were kind to me. Feeding me.

SARAH

No. I was hard on you.

ANDREW

For years after I got out of the hospital I'd go to confession and tell about this place. I'm still confused by it. What I did.

SARAH

It wasn't your fault.

ANDREW

I had no right being here. I got punished for it. I can't bring your boy back.

SARAH

He's not coming back Andrew.

ANDREW

(Reflective and remembering.)

...I just don't know how there can be such violence. It's all on T.V. and the movies but it's not real unless you're in it.

SARAH

We were in it too.

ANDREW

No. In it all alone. The headlights all blinding me. The screaming voices. In it all alone.

The priest says I must forgive but I keep going back. I can't get it out of my head that God should hate what they did to me... What happened here?

SARAH

We will make you welcome here.

ANDREW

But your husband wants to have his son back? You told me that! I can't do that.

SARAH

I know. I know...

ANDREW

I don't think I can do this.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

(Coming from the car to meet SARAH and ANDREW.)

Sarah? Sarah is that you?

(Then to Andrew)

I'm here to do this too. Yes, you can...

ANDREW

(To RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.)

Who are you?

RICHARD

(Interrupting)

He didn't mean no harm from his heart. He was standing far off...

ANDREW

...Far off? With the truck lights on? And you?

RICHARD

I'm his son. Yeah, I was in the truck but he didn't approve of... but I want to say I'm sorry for what happened.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

Richard, I can do this for myself.

(to ANDREW)

I'm saying I'm sorry for...

ANDREW

Is William in there? Is the boy that whipped me in there?

The lights raise again on DAN and ONAJE.

ONAJE

And ...The man in the car outside. It is Middleman. He won't come in.

Pushing open the screen door and looking out at the car and RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

DAN

You brought that man here?

ONAJE

No daddy. Other way around.

DAN

(Opens the screen door and slowly walks toward the car. RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR. cautiously meets him.)

You brought William here?

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

To be truthful, I didn't have a whole lot to do with it.

DAN

William says you did.

ONAJE

(From the top of the steps of the kitchen.)

Daddy, invite him in. His boy picked me up.

(SARAH and ANDREW see ONAJE in the door way.)

ANDREW

(Looking at ONAJE)

Is that him?

SARAH

William?

ANDREW

(To SARAH)

You said he would not be here? Give me the keys!

SARAH

(Rushes up to ONAJE and they are reunited.)

William, welcome home! Welcome home!

DAN
Sarah, are you home now? Why are these people here?

SARAH
I went to Boston and brought Andrew back.
(Trying to introduce ANDREW.)
Andrew came back here...

DAN
No. Sarah? He can't be coming on our land again!

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.
Dan, these people came back...
(Offers to shake DAN'S hand
but DAN refuses.)

DAN
(DAN puts his hands in his
pockets and they stay
there.)
No. Things have changed.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.
We are the same... like before...

DAN
No. We were never the same.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.
Did William tell you? About what happened...? Dan, we are
the same.

DAN
No Middleman, we are different. ...You don't remember? Your
people burned our houses in Cambridge.

SARAH
(To Dan as she hugs and
kisses him.)
Come on Dan! Let's get some breakfast into these people!
Look who we have!

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.
William coming up here told me the story of who brought him
here.

(Introducing the people to
DAN.)
Sarah, she has brought Andrew all the way from Boston. My
boy Richard brought his new wife, Belle...

(RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR tries
to introduce BELLE to DAN)

DAN

(DAN focuses on SARAH'S
return and then rejects the
offer of harmony.)

Sarah? You going to let them on our land? Let them in this
house?

(Beat)

No!

DAN (CON'T)

(To RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.)

No! You don't remember? Their people lynched a relative of
mine back when I was a boy. Now they are trying to get me for
stealing money down on the docks!

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

William told me how my boy brought him here. They traveled
together to come home. William was afraid to come home but
my boy...

SARAH

Dan, I want us to feed these people breakfast.

DAN

No! I want us safe as a family now! Sarah, I want these
people off of our land.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

My boy married Belle out on the road. She was a waitress in
a truck stop in Reno who never been to the Eastern Shore...
She don't know nothing about the place at all!

DAN

No! No!

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

...And Dan! William, he married my boy and that waitress
while they were coming home to me.

DAN

Married them? How can he do that?

SARAH

For Jesus sake Dan! What? You are worried if its legal? Are
we going to get them breakfast?

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

They did it from their heart Dan.

DAN

No! Middleman, I thank you for my son... but...

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

I didn't do it. My boy brought him home to you.

DAN

No. Middleman, get in your car and go back to Royal Oak.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

I can't...

SARAH

Dan, invite them in.

DAN

Sarah, that boy and that man... They are never coming into our house again!

SARAH

Dan, invite them in. They must be hungry. Maybe that's all that matters.

DAN

Middleman, I'm telling you get in your car and drive out of here. All of you get out of here! Leave me to be with my boy and my Sarah!

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

I can't. I gave the car to William.

ONAJE

(To DAN)

Daddy! Invite them in.

SARAH

Invite them in! Be the black man you say you are!

DAN

No!

SARAH

Come on, Andrew, we'll bring the breakfast out there.

(To DAN)

I am not putting up with your stubbornness any more! Come on Andrew.

DAN blocks the steps to the house.

DAN

No! Why do you want to come into my house again? What caused you to forget? Some ride cross this country with my boy? He lived in terror for thirteen years? What has caused you all to want to be bringing all this back?

ONAJE

(He realizes how damaged his father is.)

It's going to be alright Old Man. It's going to be alright.

(ONAJE goes to his father.)

SARAH

Alright Dan, then I'm bringing the food to the picnic table! And you are going to say grace to bless this food and these people.

BELLE

I'll help you set the picnic table.

(To RICHARD)

Come on Richard, come help us here. Look what's going on here Richard. You said you wanted a family. This is how a family works.

RICHARD

(Kidding BELLE back and feeling the raising joy.)

So, Belle, when did I lose my God given natural male authority? Was it when I gave up on "the loud radio?"

BELLE

(Starts Laughing)

Yeah! You bet Cowboy. For Christ sake Jesus.

DAN

Violently blocking the steps to the kitchen.

I'm not saying grace here over my table! You hear!

(To RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.)

I hit you before! I'll hit you again!

ONAJE

Comforts his father and puts his arms around him.

It is going to alright Old Man. It is going to be alright.

RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR.

...After William went into your door, I thought about... my boy is married now. He came home. I'm like you Dan... I got a family now. Maybe I don't want to go to Wyoming no more. Now Dan you listen to this: Tell the story that you told me William... about "living in another man's mind."

ONAJE

ONAJE stands behind his father. He lays his hands on DAN'S shoulders as he begins to speak.

...I had been gone a long time and a boy in a cowboy hat and a woman in a waitress uniform picked me up outside of Cheyenne...

The front lights of the car go on and from the darkness around the car comes HENDERSON.

HENDERSON

Well. Well. Well. Looky what we got here.

Up stage, a set of truck lights go on and then another and then quickly another until the truck lights flood the stage and picnic table. RICHARD MIDDLEMAN, SR. separates himself from the people around the picnic table, turns his back to the truck lights, faces the audience, awkwardly pulls the gun out of his pocket and then cocks the gun, turns and levels it at the approaching shadows that are holding weapons and coming from the trucks.

BLACKOUT

END OF PLAY