The Sins of Kalamazoo, a Full-Length Play Based on the Works of Carl Sandburg

Christine Iaderosa

Western Michigan University

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THE SINS OF KALAMAZOO, A FULL-LENGTH PLAY
BASED ON THE WORKS OF CARL SANDBURG

by

Christine Iaderosa

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Dr. Steve Feffer, Advisor

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Christine Iaderosa
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CRITICAL ESSAY

“I hear America singing, the varied carols I hear,”
Walt Whitman, *I Hear America Singing*, 1900

“I hear America, I hear, what do I hear?”
Carl Sandburg, *The Sins of Kalamazoo*, 1922

Locating Cultural Identity through Theatrical Representations of History and Memory in the National Narrative in *Stuff Happens, The America Play* and *The Sins of Kalamazoo*

In 1900 Walt Whitman wrote the celebratory poem “I Hear America Singing”. Twenty-two years later Carl Sandburg replied to Whitman’s celebration of the shining promise of America with his poem “The Sins of Kalamazoo”, posing the question: “I hear America, I hear, what do I hear? Sandburg’s poetry notes the tarnish of Whitman’s America, but still seeks the promise, although with acknowledgement of the darker side. What glows in Whitman’s poem, shivers in Sandburg’s, and is haunted by the “creeping mystic what-is-it” of the unknown. America’s national narrative is made up of both the shining promise of the future and of the recognition of the decay as its cultural identity becomes fragmented through time. The differences between Whitman’s and Sandburg’s America continue and are paralleled in the national collective memory.

The theatre provides an exceptional cultural space for re-examining America’s perceived identity through interpretation of its past which may help to answer the question “what do I hear?” David Hare’s *Stuff Happens*, and Suzan-Lori Parks’ *The America Play* combine the unique shared temporal space of theatre to examine important moments in American history. These two playwrights are also uniquely qualified to
present stories of national narrative as they are both, in a sense, outside of the narrative itself, Hare, as a British citizen, and Parks, as an African-American woman. They each have a distance from the cultural identity derived from the history. Both of these scripts use this distance to examine the space in narrative memory where cultural identity is formed and bring it into question. *Stuff Happens*, examines the events within the Bush Administration that led up to the invasion of Iraq; and *The America Play*, focuses on Lincoln’s assassination through re-enactment by an African-American look-alike. Both of these plays deal with subject matter and imagery that is present in the current collective memory of the American audience. The known narratives are well established and the characters are recognizable. I intend to illustrate how the re-presentation on the stage of these events and images from America’s past, firmly embedded in the national narrative, can aid in informing and reforming the cultural identity forged through the collective memory of the audience. I will then show how this analysis informs my own play, *The Sins of Kalamazoo*.

Each of these three plays present theatrical images of history and memory that are part of the cultural identity in three important ways. First, each play is grounded in a very specific location that is re-created on stage. *Stuff Happens* is located in the offices of the Bush Administration, *The America Play*, is located in the “Exact Replica of the Great Hole of History”, and *The Sins of Kalamazoo* is located in both the poetical and actual town of Kalamazoo. For my purposes, location can be defined as both the physical space in which the historical moment is located initially, and its relocation within the
space of the theater. Secondly, all three plays use a single character’s experience and memory of an event that is part of the national narrative and therefore recognizable in the collective memory of the audience. *Stuff Happens*’ storyline is largely presented through the experiences of Colin Powell. In *The America Play*, the action follows the main character, The Lesser Known, and his attempt to locate himself in the Lincoln assassination narrative. *The Sins of Kalamazoo* uses intertwining personal storylines that relate to larger social movements in American history. Finally, each of the three plays includes desire to belong to the inside combined with the sense of being left out. I term this the “insider-outsider viewpoint”. That is, the point of view of a character who sees himself as outside the dominant culture and therefore does not identify with the cultural identity formed by the collective memory. Once again, Powell’s ethical character seems out of place in the wheeling’s and dealings of the Bush Administration. The Lesser Known, as an African-American, does not see himself in the Lincoln narrative, and the characters in *Sins* at first seem like stock characters of Americana but never complete the American Dream narrative. In this way, these characters provide a new viewpoint for examination of national narrative identity and, hopefully, provide the audience a space for reflection.

Performance of the past offers a chance at mourning, melancholia and memory for the audience. Attaching memory to a physical site provides a space and place for visitation and rumination that is fixed in space and time. Such physical sites of memory or reflection include memorials, monuments and gravestones. However, the time since
the occurrence of the event of memory, the erection of its concrete marker and our present moment is also filled with memories of interim events and information. The intervening experience grows like mold on the initial events and their tombstones. The past need not be passive or set in stone only to be looked at from a distance and forgotten. Rather, this distance is filled with active memory, space for reflection and commentary. Therefore, we can see again how the theater becomes a specifically actional space to examine the historical event and the memory filled space of the interval between then and now.

The primary term for this memory filled space between the past and the present is nostalgia. In her book The Future of Nostalgia, Svetlana Boym states that the art of memory is rhetorical, “connecting physical places with stories and discourse...Places are contexts for remembrances and debates about the future, not symbols of memory or nostalgia” (77). What is often dismissed as nostalgic can, in fact, be filled with meaning. Boym describes early notions of nostalgia as symptomatic of the feeling of dislocation suffered by soldiers far from home during a time when new definitions of time and space were being developed at the turn of the nineteenth century. She breaks nostalgia into two parts: restorative and reflective. The restorative is a yearning for the “actual” a desire to return to or reconstruct a utopian past that never existed. Reflective nostalgia is linked with the process of remembrance; it “lingers on ruins, the patina of time and history, in the dreams of another place and another time” (41). In other words, reflective nostalgia delves into that interim temporal space of individual and collective memory and explores
their relationship to one another. A monument erected to mark an historic event is usually meant to mark the event in a restorative way. It is meant to ensure against forgetting and erasure. However, nothing can retain its pure form, or remain in a static position. The passage of time is seen as the monument becomes worn and weathered and evolves its meaning from a marker commemorating an event to a marker commemorating a memory. The past is not fixed in space and time, like a stone. Rather, it is an active presence that can be engaged in dialogue. The performance of history in *Stuff Happens, The America Play,* and *The Sins of Kalamazoo* provides an audience with the opportunity for re-creating cultural memory as well as in-depth analysis of the distance between the restorative truth and the reflective longing for what could have been and what can change.

Theatre space is temporal space: Performers and the depicted events exist in the same space and time as the audience, becoming a place for reflection. Because memory is also temporal, this juxtaposition between theatre and memory provides resistance to restorative nostalgia. In her book *Memory-Theatre and Post-Modern Drama,* Jeanette Malkin states “Theatre is “a temporal art, an art-through-time, theater also depends on the memoried attentiveness of its audience with whose memory (and memories) it is always in dialogue” (3). The dialogue between the theater and its audience in the shared temporal and liminal space of the theater creates an unreplicable experience. Each audience member’s individual cognitive process is affected by slightly different environmental factors such as seat placement, physicality, personal experience, etc. and
that affects the memory of the experience as a whole. Even a media record of a theatrical event cannot exactly replicate a memory in the same way as when the moment is shared in space by both the audience and the performers. Thus, this is how a new individual and collective memory of a national event is formed in the space of the theater.

Other examples of how physical places of memory actually highlight the pluralistic and ever-changing meanings that time adds to communal memory can be seen in Malkin’s discussion of the work of Pierre Nora. Nora, in his comprehensive documentation of physical sites of memory, discovers that the passage of time confers distance on these markers which then

“elude[s] the narrative demands of historical progression, emphasizing instead an ever-changing, often conflicted collective identity that emerges in the synchronic concrete remains of the present…” (Malkin 24)

Nicks and scars occurring to the physical site through the passage of time measures the temporal distance and marks the shift in meaning. As with live performance, reflective nostalgia is caught in a spatial and temporal liminality from which vestiges of the past can be retrieved and re-assigned meaning. Reflective nostalgia does not view the missing elements in the gap of time between a historical moment, or creation of a historical marker or monument as an absence. Rather, reflective nostalgia sees that gap filled with meaning, marked with all of the happenings that have occurred since the moment of the marker’s inception. Restorative nostalgia shapes the nationalistic myth-making of heritage and patriotic cultural memory; of “reconstructions of the monuments of the past” (Boym 41) while attempting to ignore the gap of time. It is in the location of these
physical "monuments", however, that the reflective connections between the individual and the collective can be made. Memorials, whether intentionally built by the State or unintentionally formed by time, seemingly fixed in national identity and memory as they are fixed in space, are rich sources of reflective nostalgia. Seeing those memorials or monuments represented onstage along with the theatrical "suspension of disbelief" convention of the theater, provides the audience with further permission to reflect on their meaning and the interim events.

Location

Hare and Parks both provide uniquely effective opportunity to reflect and measure the past through the performance of mourning. Location in the theatre is considered in the distance of that measure, the physical site of the theatre, and the location of the play itself. The pieces of history, recognizable within the audience’s memory, help them to locate themselves in the time and space of the world of the play. The importance of these physical markers in Stuff Happens and The America Play helps spur the memory-making and recognition that allow the opportunity to mourn the absence and presence of effects and inevitabilities. Cues for the audience of temporal and physical location in Stuff Happens, takes two forms. First, the action largely takes place around a huge blond wood boardroom table symbolizing executive control and corporate power. Secondly, the location of the known faces of the president and executives involved in the Iraq War decision are located on the bodies of the actors playing them. The space between the
actor's body and the character's reality provide a Brechtian sense of alienation and identification for the audience. Again, the audience must suspend their disbelief and accept that they are not watching the actual event but a theatrical representation. But in accepting this, they allow room for reflection on who, and what, is being represented. By locating the character on the actor, room develops for the questioning of motives and memories in the text. The audience recognizes the physical characteristics of the public figures in the story – Rice’s tailored attire, Powell’s uniform, Bush’s accent – but is appropriately distanced by the parts that are unlike the originals. The distance between the actual public figures and the actors’ bodies reflects the distance between the moment of the original events and the time of their re-enactment. As the audience watches the play, a new memory of events is created and the national narrative shifts. Moments that were originally presented as heroic, single-minded and necessary are revealed, in the light of current events, as unmotivated, suspect and misdirected. Once again, within the new memory being created in the moment of the performance, the past, present and interim intermingle to form a new collective memory and reshape the cultural identification with the event.

In *The America Play*, the physical site is itself a theatrical representation of the original: it is both a grave and a monument to another(‘s) life. This location is “An Exact Replica of the Great Hole of History” that is being created by the character known as The Lesser Known. Like the African-American national narrative, this hole is a replica of the original. This site of replication is where The Lesser Known (aka the Foundling Father)
re-enacts the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. The Lesser Known also locates a well-known, recognizable political figure, Lincoln, on the unknown space of his African-American body. Once again, the audience is forced to recognize the space between the collective memory of the event and the disconnect in seeing it re-enacted with anomalies of black skin. While Hare is presenting a re-enactment of historical events, Parks has added a layer of representation in that her main character is re-enacting the event. Therefore, the audience is, in essence, watching a re-enactment of a re-enactment.

In the second act, the Lesser Known's Exact Replica of the Great Hole of History becomes an archeological dig, where the Lesser Known's family is attempting to discover his fate. The Exact Replica of the Great Hole of History becomes an unmarked grave, an absent memorial, an inverted monument to the undocumented lives of African-Americans after the Civil War. The audience recognizes the artifacts uncovered by Lucy and Brazil and understands their meanings since they saw them used in Act I. They can collectively recognize the individual acts of mourning for the loss of a figure as distanced by time and space as Lincoln is in the nineteenth century. As Hare reconstitutes a recent event in the national narrative, Parks' play presents not only the event, but the century of time filled with memorialization and dislocation of those who recognize the importance of Lincoln's life and death in the national narrative and also the difficulty of locating the self within that narrative today.

Parks' world is a shadow of the national narrative because there is not room for the African-American experience in the current telling. The physical space of the theatre
is doubled and trebled in the theatrical locations of the amusement part of the original Great Hole, duplicated by The Lesser Known’s Exact Replica. This shadowing is further emphasized in The Lesser Known’s re-enactment of the original death of Lincoln, which happened in a theatre, now replicated in his replicated amusement park. These locations created by Parks emphasize the lack of actual location in the African-American narrative. In the world of the theatre, however, the lack becomes a strong, tangible place of memory.

*The Sins of Kalamazoo* is a play not focused on an individual or actual event, but rather focused on a symbolic place that is used to encapsulate meanings within the national narrative and signifiers of the cultural identity. The play is an adaptation of the poem, which is a mythical representation of Kalamazoo as an “everytown” location. It is meant to represent the essence of small town America. Therefore, in many ways Kalamazoo provides a lens for examination of nostalgia and the arts of mythologizing, memory and identity creation. The name “Kalamazoo” evokes images of mythology and nostalgia, depending on one’s association with various referents. The lyrical and rhythmic nature of the word, not necessarily ethnically identifiable as a remnant of the Potawatomi language, conjures images of nonsensical, mystical or fantastical places. It rhymes easily, in a singsong fashion providing prime fodder for nursery rhymes, children’s stories and comparisons to the equally fictive but equally culturally loaded “Xanadu”.
There is, however, an actual Kalamazoo. The city’s tourist bureau produces souvenir T-shirts proclaiming, “Yes, there really IS a Kalamazoo” to facilitate spreading the word for visiting emissaries of the less colorfully named cities of America. Further proof is supplied by marketing slogans that provide location by name recognition if not geographical identity. Glen Miller’s “I’ve Got a Girl in Kalamazoo” or the popular “A Kalamazoo Straight to You” promise of the Kalamazoo Stove Company epitomizes the place of Kalamazoo in the American memory. The latter slogan utilized stoves by mail order, further blurring location by accessibility. America in the early part of the twentieth century became a railroad map of crisscrossed locations to order from, to identify with, to symbolize, to imagine but not necessarily to be.

Quebec scholar Pierre Nepveu’s 2002 book, *Interieurs du Nouveau-Monde*, includes a chapter that mentions the poem from which he derives the term, “The Kalamazoo Complex”. Nepveu’s article uses the poem as a commentary on the transitory nature of space in twentieth century continental North America. It is significant to the poem’s meaning that Kalamazoo, as a mappable location, is precisely half way between Detroit and Chicago. In the rapid expansion days of train travel it would have been a place only seen in passing through dirty train windows. The poem mentions the stores on Main Street, the five and dime, the billiard hall, the Standard Oil Company and International Harvester. Sandburg’s images are a combination of all of the Americana in every small town that one passes through on their way to get to somewhere else.
Sandburg’s poem uses the physical location of Kalamazoo to express a longing for America’s childhood that is lost in time and space. Sandburg’s repeated question “I hear America, what do I hear?” is listening through time to Walt Whitman’s earlier “I Hear America Singing”. Much of the text of Sins echoes Whitman’s America. However, where Whitman seems to see the bright promise of the future, Sandburg is more concerned with the tarnish and patina of time. The reflective nostalgia is enhanced, as the distance from the poem’s point of conception and the present day grows longer.

Combining elements of the actual Kalamazoo and the poetic Kalamazoo in a theatrical space, gives us the opportunity to once again examine images from the collective memory in cultural identity. Historical anecdotes vie with fiction as the play follows the outline loosely provided by the poem. Actual Kalamazoo historical characters such as the city’s founder, Titus Bronson, and civic leader Caroline Bartlett Crane are plucked out of the past and placed in the script. Some scenes are based on fact, others are created wholesale. Actual physical locations are used, such as Crane’s “Everyman’s House”, an existent monument to her civic-mindedness and an artifact of Kalamazoo history. The audience, in Kalamazoo at least, can leave the theater and drive by this historic site. Other site-specifics are fictive. Sandburg’s poem refers to the bronze hound dogs guarding the public square. These statues do not exist, except in the world of the play where they take on their own history.

Placing the text of the poem The Sins of Kalamazoo in a theatre space along with referents and representations of the images in the text, as well as physical site-specific
referents to the actual Kalamazoo that have a historic familiarity re-evaluates the historicity of the cultural identity created by the poem when read in its original context. Whether or not the play is seen only by audiences familiar with the actual or the mythical Kalamazoo, the hope is the other characters will be familiar from America’s cultural narrative. Kalamazoo thus becomes “Anyplace USA”. Specific moments become universally recognized for their probability and familiarity.

**Personal versus Collective Memory**

Storytelling relates the teller’s personal viewpoint of a story to the audience which, in turn, filters the experience into the collective memory. Theater is storytelling, and theatrical storytelling has a long tradition of aiding in cultural self-recognition through development of collective memory. Boym recounts the ancient story of the poet Simonedes of Ceos who, entertaining at a banquet, was fortuitously called outside for a moment, just as the ceiling of the banquet hall gave in and everyone there was crushed beyond recognition. As the only survivor, it fell to him to identify the dead for their relatives by remembering the seating location of the guests. “Simonides discovered the techniques of memory used by ancient orators, connecting places in the familiar environment (physical *topoi*) to stories and parts of discourse (rhetorical *topoi*); only the connections between them are often arbitrary, semiotic rather than symbolic” (Boym 77). But if memory created in the theater is made up of everyone’s individual experience, how then can it become collective? In pondering the definition of collective memory,
Malkin’s discussion refers to 1920’s French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs’s belief that “individual memory is only possible, and is itself formed, within the concrete spaces of a public social world.” [emphasis added] (Malkin 23). The theatre can be that public social world in which private memory and collective memory are irrevocably intertwined with traditions, shared experiences and verbal conventions. The reiteration of shared memory through theater and storytelling, therefore, is not intended to revisit an unchanging past but rather to reexamine the “shifting social frames” and reconfigure the past to emerge into the present.¹

 stuff happens, and the america play excel at re-examining these shifting social frames, allowing the audience to emerge into the present with a new understanding of the national narrative. in the introduction to his book, acting on the past: historical performance across the disciplines, editor mark franko states “the temporal presence of performance masks intrinsic absence” of the past since “performance is ‘restored behavior’” (2). the restored behavior then becomes restored memory, replacing or filling in the gaps in individual knowledge and solidifying the collective memory. in this way memory can be re-visited through the theatrical experience of the communal audience rather than through the lived experience of individual pasts. boym points out the difference in collective and national memory. the latter “tends to make a single teleological plot out of shared everyday recollections. the gaps and discontinuities are mended through a coherent and inspiring tale of recovered identity” (53). this “recovered identity”, when seen through the lens of theatre, becomes a collective identity
as it is re-experienced in the shared temporal space of the theatre audience and the
performers. This new experience in collective re-memorying offers

“instead shared everyday frameworks of collective or cultural
memory... mere signposts for individual reminiscences that could suggest
multiple narratives. These narrative share a certain syntax... but no single
plot... The collective frameworks of memory appear as safeguards in the
stream of modernity and mediate between the present and the past,
between self and other” (53).

The dialogue with the past and the individual memory, as shared by the collective
audience experiencing the performance at that moment, reforms into a new and nuanced
memory and moment of cultural identity self-recognition. The audience member who
felt lost in the deluge of information that was everywhere during the early years of the
decade can pause and relocate himself while watching these events in the space of the
theater during Stuff Happens.

Franko’s “re-stored behavior”, the re-storing of memory through performance, is
particularly relevant when presenting forms of history onstage. Malkin states “In many
of these [postmodern] plays... we find a no longer grounded past; a past that floats within
the collective consciousness—as a place of (fragmented) collective identity” (4). The
theatrical event reforms memory in three parts: 1) the personal memories of the event of
the writer and theatrical artists involved; 2) the memories the individual audience
members bring to the event and their own connotations and personal experiences; and
3) the collective re-memory of the event that is combined when the event is re-shared in
the theatre space by that particular audience and compounded by the moments of the
production. These three elements combine in a performative reckoning of the craving for a cultural re-identification with the past; a desire for unity in the fragmented memory of the American identity, and a realization of the absences in the restorative nostalgia of the national narrative. As Boym notes “nostalgia remains an intermediary between collective and individual memory. Collective memory can be seen as a playground, not a graveyard of multiple individual recollections” (54). For playwrights such as Parks and Hare, the stage is the playground of memory and they invite the audience to dance with their characters around the plastic gravestones.

In *Stuff Happens* and *The America Play* it is clear that when the distance between intimate personal memories of national identities within the larger context of the national narrative is sifted, it reveals subversive memory, divergent from the larger hegemonic one. *Stuff Happens* personalizes Colin Powell’s struggle to do the right thing amidst the overwhelming decisions of the administration. Hare’s reconstruction of events emphasizes the personal moments of defeat for Powell. The story becomes recognized as “ours” in terms of the audience who has suffered the consequences of the actions, and the regret for what Powell tried and couldn’t accomplish. We can see the possibilities for alternate outcomes too late. By sharing Powell’s (and thereby Hare’s) viewpoint, we become more aware of our own absence in this narrative. In the end, Powell must retain his identification as part of the Bush Administration. Individual readers and audience members will identify with the moments in the text when he stood apart. It is clear in the
final Powell scene that he has become a puppet, a sentiment Hare emphasizes in his stage directions:

AN ACTOR: The previous September, [2003], Colin Powell attends a lunch of New York Times editors.

*Powell is at a lunch with Editors.*

He is asked:

EDITOR: Do you think Americans would have supported this war if weapons of mass destruction had not been the issue?

POWELL: Your question is too hypothetical to answer.

AN ACTOR: An editor then asks:

EDITOR: Would you personally have supported it?

AN ACTOR: Powell smiles and reaches out his hand.

*POWELL smiles and reaches out his hand.*

POWELL: It was good to meet you.

*All the ACTORs stand like a line of inspection on either side. In silence, POWELL turns and, without turning back, leaves the play* (119).

Powell’s character provides the personal within the collective memory. Hare further emphasizes Powell’s personal voice by continuing his narrative out of the recorded events and fictionalizing some scenes based on hearsay accounts. He uses knowledge that has been gained since the events of the play that Powell, as a Bush puppet, was not free to divulge at the time. Hare’s emphasis on the physical place also grounds the moment for Powell. Hare specifically writes that Powell exits through a “line of inspection”, a physicalized site made of actors’ bodies onstage. He also does not exit the stage, as a more common stage direction might state, he “leaves the play”. His exit signifies, through physical action, his leaving the game of lies and deceit. In reality,
Powell retires, and fades from public memory and media. Hare gives his audience a dignified direct visual image of this retirement for their contemplation.

In *The America Play*, Parks dances around the familiar restorative monuments of the national narrative of Lincoln's assassination and the sense of loss of potential that informs our present cultural identity. In the guise of mourning Lincoln, the play actually reflects on the distance between the black and white national narratives. The Foundling Father's personal reverence for Abraham Lincoln and his regret over the fact that he could not provide him gravedigging service due to the passage of time, results in his mission of re-enactment. The recognizable facts of the President's last moments are recited by The Foundling Father as he goes through the motions of his newfound occupation. But it is the changeable, theme-park version of events which the Foundling Father portrays. Personal choices are made throughout: the color of Lincoln's beard—sometimes black, sometimes blond—the assassination epitaphs shouted by his clients. The Lesser Known's clients' motives range from the desire for historical authenticity (restorative) to dilettantism, perhaps an echo of that attempt of self-location in the past.

THE FOUNDLING FATHER (Rest): I think I'll wear the yellow beard. Variety. Works like a tonic.

(Rest)

Some inaccuracies are good for business. Take the stovepipe hat! Never really worn indoors but people don't like their Lincoln hatless (168).

And as the next customer, B Man, exits:

(Booth shoots. Lincoln "slumps in his chair." Booth jumps)

B MAN: "Now he belongs to the ages."
(Rest)
Blonde?

THE FOUNDLING FATHER: (I only talk with the regulars.)

B MAN: He wasn’t blonde. (Exits.) (169)

The next couple to come through the door are newlyweds.

C MAN: You allow 2 at once?

THE FOUNDLING FATHER

(Rest)

C WOMAN: We’re just married. You know: newlyweds. We hope you don’t mind. Us both at once.

THE FOUNDLING FATHER

(Rest)

C MAN: We’re just married.

C WOMAN: Newlyweds (170).

The regular scene ends with the husband encouraging the wife to shout her epitaph “They’ve killed the president!” The memory of Lincoln’s assassination and its place in the national narrative belongs to everyone and everyone is free to form their own relationship with that narrative. The theme park atmosphere of active participation in the event mirrors the distance of history. The story is, however, Lesser Known’s. He is the black man in the role of the white Lincoln. His clients are white in the role of Booth, although they do cross gender. The personal view The Lesser Known brings to the national narrative, illustrated by his personal choices, creates the space for the audience to question their own association with the narrative and see the things that are missing.
This space emphasizes the absence of the African-American narrative within the cultural memory. The Lesser Known is attempting to fill this absence with his own presence.

In the second act, personal memory is extended to The Foundling Father’s wife, Lucy, who keeps secrets for the dead, and their son, Brazil, a Weeper, both of whom are searching the Great Hole, now an archeological dig, for his remains. Parks parallels the known and unknown of history by conflating the past of Lincoln with the past of The Foundling Father’s. The wordplay of replacing “Founding” with “Foundling” emphasizes the displacement of the Lesser Known’s place in Lincoln’s re-enactment. Their actions of re-enactment and archeological digging follow the forms of restorative nostalgia as they collect artifacts as markers of The Lesser Known’s past. But, their blurring of memory and inclusion disrupts the restorative and tips the balance to reflective.

Boym notes that other cultures, especially Eastern European nations, attempt erasure of their past, tearing down statues of former dictators and renaming cities in order to restore them to their pre-communist identities. In America, however, “the past cohabits with the present...the souvenirization of the past and obsession with roots and identity...are ubiquitous” (38). This obsession with the collection of objects of memory (literally souvenirs), reflects a fetishization of the past, symptomatic of a cultural struggle to establish identity. Many post-colonized cultures attempt to re-assert their presence by bringing forward their past pre-colonization. They are attempting to heal the interruption in their history and fuse their past with their present. Thus we can see that the theater, as
a place of re-examination of the past, helps the audience locate their present selves in combination with the past of their cultural identity.

The amusement park atmosphere of the Exact Replica is full of restorative and reflective nostalgia souvenirs in the form of relics. In the end, the Foundling Father dies an unknown death and only relics of his fakery survive him. His identity, in unison with the black identity, must be decoded from souvenirs of his life, remnants of his history and fragments of his costumes. Like so much of African-American history, the narrative must be pieced together from isolated bits of echoes and shadows. Each restorative relic, however, is tinged with the reflective knowledge of the items use in the first act and its distant echo in the white world.

In the theater, The Sins of Kalamazoo combines personal narratives and stories within the history of Kalamazoo and, in turn, America, which measure the distance between the personal inside the collective. An early discovery revealed that Kalamazoo was the birthplace of Edna Ferber, author of the novel Showboat. The musical version of Showboat is often considered to be the first complete American musical and the beginning of a uniquely American art form. The musical, at face value, (and certainly in its 1951 MGM incarnation) appears to present a mindless Americana that seems to present a singing and dancing utopia of restorative nostalgia. In fact, the novel and original script of Showboat deals with racial issues and inequalities of class in post-Civil War America in a much more reflective way. "Edna" became a character in Sins and one storyline echoes the miscegenation scene in which Julie is "outed" for having a drop of
black blood. In Ferber’s *Showboat*, the character Julie Dozier (a name appropriated for *Sins*), has a husband who stands by her. In the *Sins* version a pregnant Julie is abandoned by her lover Cal. The reminiscence of a scene, perhaps familiar to audiences who have seen *Showboat*, is informed with a different outcome that leads to a different narrative. The hope is that an awareness of possible narrative outcomes will awaken varying recognitions of the pluralistic narratives in America.

A “telescript” written by Caroline Bartlett Crane, in an attempt to garner publicity for her book about Everyman’s house becomes a site of restorative nostalgic for a utopian family life in 1924. In *Sins*, a storyline develops off of this script in which the young couple, rather than finding the peace of mind promised by her Everyman solution, and its accompanying credit program, ends the play in crushing debt, thus presenting a more reflective backward glance at the eventual outcome of long past good intentions. The original telescript, and the accompanying book, describe the progressive Crane’s solution in the 1920’s America to helping the working class. Her community activism was full of hope for the future. As *Sins* progresses, however, the audience must reconcile that hopeful promise of growth and inspiration from new social innovations of the past with the present economic disaster we find ourselves living in today. Once again the space of the theater provides a conflation with the known past and the present where identity is formed.
Insider-Outsider Cultural Identity

An individual may often identify with and against a national narrative and simultaneously feel included on one level but excluded on another. Perhaps because, on an individual level, the American identity is so diverse, Americans seem to feel the need for constant self-redefinition. As an African-American, Parks’ historical narrative does not match the national narrative. As a British citizen, Hare writes about the Iraq war from a geographical as well as an ideological distance. However, it is exactly this distance from the outside looking in to the national narrative that provides the richness of their material.

Along with the designations of identifying with and against to locate self inside the national narrative is the desire to be accepted as an insider, part of the club. Restorative nostalgia takes these designations to a conspiratorial level by identifying outsiders as “if you’re not with us, you’re against us”. As Boym states,

“Restorative nostalgia knows two main narrative plots – the restoration of origins and the conspiracy theory, characteristic of the most extreme cases of contemporary nationalism fed on right-wing popular culture. The conspiratorial worldview reflects a nostalgia for a transcendental cosmology and a simple pre-modern conception of good and evil (43).”

Parks and Hare both recognize this restorative worldview of the insider-outsider mentality. Each sets up a theatrical world in which lines are clearly drawn to signify teams, and the audience is giving a choice of which side with which to identify. Hare plays with the images of patriotism and the rhetoric of good and evil used by the Bush Administration, juxtaposing it with the common political sense of Blair and Powell, each
of whom are attempting to behave in a diplomatic fashion. They see themselves as patriotic, and supportive, but not in the same terms, or with the same terminology as neo-conservatives.

At one point in *Stuff Happens*, Hare includes a scene so replete with restorative nostalgia that, in the context, he seriously questions the definition of family values. The fireside scene ending the first section of the play, comes complete with jigsaw puzzle, and hearkens back to the times of Jimmy Carter’s cardigan, Roosevelt and the trusting misleading image of family value restorative nostalgia. Hare is clearly referencing the unreachable utopian security that the “family values” cry seems to offer. The scene is an emergency meeting held at Camp David the weekend immediately following 9/11. It is at this meeting that the decision to bomb Afghanistan is taken but the topic of a war on terror and possible repercussions for Iraq is also subtly tossed into the ring. The scene ends with a relaxed family scenario in which Condi Rice sings “Amazing Grace” and the others join in. It is a faux moment of Americana and false unity that simultaneously provides a level of humane-ness to these familiar characters, a look behind the scenes in their lives, and is sharply contrasted with the deceitful backstabbing and diplomatic jockeying that makes up the rest of the play.

By heightening the sense of restorative nostalgia in the old-time fireside imagery, Hare gives the audience a clear choice in cultural identification. Do they identify with the warm family imagery of board games by the fireplace and songs around the piano performed in conjunction with the decision that has led to the deaths of so many
Americans? Are they jolted out of the warmth of the familiar scene by the realization of the results and therefore forced to identify against the American values of family when they are directly manipulated and tied to the same values that lead to war? Can you have one image of family values without the other?

In Parks' play, The Lesser Known and his family are so outside of the national narrative that they must build a replica in which to fit. Their restorative and reflective cultural referents revolve around death. The family business of The Lesser Known is grave digging. The audience can identify with the familiar and theatricalized images of mourning: Lucy listens for the truth in the whispers of the dead. "I need tuh know thuh real thing from thuh echo. Thuh truth from thuh hearsay" (175). Brazil performs the mourning and chooses forms that are appropriate with great seriousness. Much like actual history, nothing is tangible, nothing can be grasped and held but only copied, imitated and reported through hearsay. But Lucy and Brazil are cultural outsiders as their mourning parallels and contrasts Mary Todd Lincoln's place in the national narrative as she states "His lonely death and lack of proper burial is our embarrassment" (175). The Lesser Known's lonely death is the inverse of the very public but lonely death of Lincoln. There is no grand funeral, no parade, no monument for The Lesser Known. Proper burial, secret guarding and performed respect is the job of the outsider for those on the inside of the recognizable national culture. The outsiders provide service to the insiders. They do not receive service in return. Mourning, for Mary Todd Lincoln is a
deep felt emotion and performance of her grief. For the outsider family of The Lesser Known, it is a job to be performed:

BRAZIL: Couldn’t choose between wailin or gnashin. Weepin sobbin or moanin. Went for gnashing. More to it. Gnashed for her and hers like I have never gnashed. I woulda tore at my coat but that’s extra. Chipped uh tooth. One in thuh front.
LUCY: You did your job son.
BRAZIL: I did my job. (176)

Parks is commenting on how we preserve the past and memorialize memory and the performance of mourning. Reflective nostalgia is filled with mourning. This loyalty to job and family is also part of the national narrative, but from a different angle. The distance in meaning an object has from one person to another, depending on their place in the dominant culture, is highlighted by what is done with that object. For some, objects are used and discarded. In Parks’ America the past is a theme park; memory a ride to be taken, enjoyed, and exited. Artifacts are placed on a pedestal and assigned a designated place in the “Hall of Wonders.”

LUCY: Dig on, son. – Cant stop diggin til you dig up somethin. You dig that something up you brush that something off you give that something uh designated place. Its own place. Along with thuh other discoveries. In thuh Hall of Wonders. (176)

A Hall of Wonders is an echo of the distancing effect of a museum whose dominant culture curators designate the importance and remoteness of objects based on their historical place in the restorative memory. The outsiders are the ones who come and wonder at the effects. As an African-American, Parks’ view of the past is one of revision and erasure. Her focus is on finding a place, locating a past and marking with proper
burial those who have been forgotten. The archeological dig for African-American history and cultural identity must be done in context with the existing dominant (white) American history. It does not exist alone, but only in context of the more identifiable Lincoln mythology. Parks' is the history of the outsider black replica of Lincoln and his effort to be recognized as “known” in the shadow of the original, and thereby achieve insider status.

The audience watching The America Play may identify with or against their own place in the Hall of Wonders. Are they the conquerors who built the place and plundered other cultures for artifacts to display? Are they the gawkers who buy the tickets and take everything at face value? Or, are they the objects themselves; captured and displayed for others' to define? As these questions seep into the audience’s psyche, the realization must be made that wherever they may locate themselves in the narrative, the cultural identity is a pluralistic one.

The play, The Sins of Kalamazoo, is measuring the distance between Sandburg’s Kalamazoo, and America, and their current locations in terms of reflective space. The poem, “The Sins of Kalamazoo” is often dismissed by citizens of Kalamazoo because Sandburg apparently never actually visited the town. Those who view Sandburg's poem as restorative within the insider space of Kalamazoo, enjoy ironically noting that Sandburg never actually visited the town, marking Sandburg as an outsider. This restorative interpretation takes two tracts: either they are annoyed with the inaccuracies of Sandburg's description, or they take an odd pride in boasting about actual sins
committed in Kalamazoo. A lecture on June 10th, 2008, at the Public Library presented by the local historical society entitled “The Sins of Kalamazoo” presented stories of colorful crimes, from murder to bootlegging, culled from old newspapers. Those who insist that Sandburg never visited and therefore has no validity in writing a poem about Kalamazoo are arguing for an absolute truth in the poem’s representation rather than seeing the poem as an adaptation of what is a “spot on the map”. The keepers of history: the archivists, the librarians, and the historical society, upon hearing the poem mentioned, place it within its historical context as a product of Sandburg and the 1920s. They see the poem as in the past, as written without a contemporary context. On the contrary, the poem’s distance from its original time is rich in present day context especially when compared to Walt Whitman’s work and to the present day. Sandburg’s poem longs for the clear voices of America and echoes the instability, the waning clarity, of who is on the inside and who on the outside of cultural identity. In Sins, characters that were clearly meant to depict insider status in the past find themselves on the outside, questioning their shifting status.

Each of the individual stories, whether fictive or factive, while coded in what appears to be restorative nostalgia, are actually attempts at reflective nostalgia in the face of America. Each character struggles to “hear” America and find his or her place within that song. Eventually, each character fails or succeeds to some extent to meet the demands placed upon them. There is a dialogue in this adaptation between the poem, the history, and the fiction. There is also a dialogue between the past and the present as well
as the restorative past and the reflective present. Each character's first appearance is meant to be reminiscent of their symbolic identity. The railroad bum, the chorus girl, the small-town waitress, each is a stock character of the past two centuries and recognizable in the rags to riches national narrative. As the play progresses, however, each character becomes more than initially promised. The individual narratives shift and the characters are uncomfortable in their versions of the American Dream. The miscegenation scene touches on the missing narrative at first, but soon morphs into the single mother as outsider. The railroad bum who marries the waitress and works hard for his living, buys Everyman's House on credit and ends the play consumed by debt. Again and again the scenes of solution become America's present. None of the solutions are tidy and the desire for the familiar happy ending is thwarted. Audiences should recognize that small town companies are bought and sold by large disinterested corporations that leave ghost towns in their wake. Narratives of race, class and gender are interwoven with the identifiable symbols of Americana. The play presents images of the past, within the context of the audiences' present, searching for new interpretations of cultural identity.

The Sins of Kalamazoo, does not focus on one singular historic narrative event, rather its focus is the passage of time between the shining promise of the late nineteenth century and the end of the twentieth. Collected writings of Sandburg have been intertwined to help the audience recognize shifts and movements in the nation's past. These include a selection from Rootabaga Stories, a collection of children's stories as well as several folk songs Sandburg collected and published in The American Songbag.
The result is a play meant to mirror the placeless uniformity of Midwest America that Sandburg seems to be longing for in the original poem with a strong Sandburg voice. As a progressive, Sandburg himself was critical of the national narrative and seemed to be searching for the America promised by Whitman, then contrasting it with the America he found. The compilation of his poetry evokes a transient figure, listening for an American voice and discovering a different world from the one Whitman wrote about. In some ways, Sandburg’s writing seems to be an outsider’s attempt to write his own national narrative.

The Whitman images exist in his poem, but the voices are not so clear. *What do I hear?* The mysterious in the poem is present in the juxtaposition of the “shivering silver angel and the creeping mystic what-is-it”. The value of either is suspect, but the what-is-it—reminiscent of PT Barnum’s popular freak show exhibit of Henry Johnson, aka Zip the “What is it?”—seems potentially sinister in its mysticism. What-is-it is the unknown, the fear of the death toll of the recent World War I, the loss of the promise of America and the fear of what will replace that loss. It is the realization of a darker side to America’s hegemonic narrative. The realization that we are all outsiders to our own cultural narrative.

The only character in the play that intertwines with every other character is dubbed “The Drummer”. In early incarnations he was first presented as “The Showman”. He arrived on a Medicine Show Wagon and prepared to sell a cure-all elixir. As the play developed he became the traveling salesman, and thus the capitalistic spirit and the cause
of massive debt. He is meant to embody part of the mystic what-is-it from the days of PT Barnum. He is a combination of the false hope found in advertising and the cure-all of consumerism. He appears to have the secret password for everyone to achieve their insider dreams, but his promises always lead to more isolation.

*Stuff Happens, The America Play* and *The Sins of Kalamazoo* present the audience with strong and recognizable images of America's identity and past. Each play provides its characters with a personal story that conflicts with the national narrative and is meant to give insight to the audience into their own cultural identity. By locating these memories in specific places and on recognizable faces, room is created for the audience to reflect on its own past and relationship with the stories being told, and thereby progress from a restorative past to a reflective one. Using the familiar images from the past delivered through poetry, film, songs and theatre, but coloring them with a sensibility of the present, casts a clearer light on the current song of America. We still hear America singing, but the song is no longer sung by a hegemonic choir. Rather, it is a rich mix of solos, with many rhythms, languages and voices that form a discordant cacophony of a multitude of American Dreams.

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<http://theater2.nytimes.com/2006/04/14/theater/reviews/14stuf.html>


Bibliography


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CHARACTER LIST AND SCENE

Characters

Actor 1  Drummer/Showman/Titus/Man #2
Actor 2  Conductor/Man #1/Judge/Sherrif/Foreman
Actor 3  Joe/Man #3/Pete/
Actor 4  Cal/Jacob/Man #4/Ice Man/Sammy/Danny
Actor 5  Carol/Sally/Eve/
Actor 6  Kim/Woman #1/Ginny/
Actor 7  Julie/Woman #2/Annie/Daisy

Scene

All scenes take place around the town of Kalamazoo at various times throughout its history.
THE SINS OF KALAMAZOO, ACT I

[The set should look like a vaudeville stage of a city park. There is a park bench USL, a large painted drop with bushes and park setting on it in cheery, not-that-realistic colors. A gazebo should come out of the drop – i.e., functional steps, ½ the platform, etc. There are two large bronze dogs, one DR and one DL. They gaze out at the audience like sentinels. USR is a drop of a train station with a built up platform. USL is a drop of a street scene with a diner.

A train whistle blows. CONDUCTOR comes out to the platform and checks his pocket watch. As each member of the cast enters and says their line they take their place in a semicircle.

CAROL
THE SINS of Kalamazoo are neither scarlet nor crimson.

JOE
The sins of Kalamazoo are a convict gray, a dishwater drab.

KIM
And the people who sin the sins of Kalamazoo are neither scarlet nor crimson.

JULIE
They run to drabs and grays—and some of them sing they shall be washed whiter than snow—and some:

DRUMMER
We should worry.

(Slight pause.)

Saturday night is the big night.

CAL
Listen with your ears on a Saturday night in Kalamazoo
And say to yourself: I hear America, I hear, what do I hear?

[Train whistle blows.]

CONDUCTOR

Yes, Kalamazoo is a spot on the map
And the passenger trains stop there
The trains come in from the east and hoot for the crossings,
And buzz away to the peach country and Chicago to the west
Or they come from the west and shoot on to the Battle Creek breakfast bazaars
And the speedbug heavens of Detroit.
And everyone is on their way to find something, to their dreams, their futures, their failures,

All Aboard! All Aboard, all those on their way to--?

[Characters begin walking in a rush across the stage like Grand Central Station. Each with their own attitude.]

I'm on my way to Chicago.

JULIE

I'm on my way to Detroit.

CAROL

I'm on my way to New York City.

JOE

To Miami.

KIM

To Los Angeles.

DRUMMER

To you.

[As each character finds their assigned place on the stage, spread out, they plant the chair and sit and take attitude of a train ride.]
The trains run at a speed of delivery. The movement holds a promise of inevitable achievement. Each and every one of us knows we’ll find what we’re looking for, as long as we keep on moving. Surviving. Living.

I’ll find a job there.

I have an audition!

I want to spread the word.

I’m going to escape this life.

I want to start a new one.

To make money.

It seems nobody stays. Everybody is passing through. On their way to something, somewhere else. Passing through on their way to finding that special person, place. They can’t stop until they find it. And until then....

[Each character, except DRUMMER picks up chair and exits on line.]

Just passing through.

Just passing by.

Just passing.
JOE

Just passing on my way.

CAL

Don’t mean to stay none.

CONDUCTOR

Like tumbleweeds blowing across the desert the Railroad scatters seeds that sometimes take root, sometimes not. We seize things and label them “ours” and sit back and wait to see what they grow into. The movement is transferred from us to it. We plant a seed called potential, and see what grows from it.

[Train Whistle Blows.]

All Aboard!

TITUS

For me that potential was land. A place to call my own. A place to own, to be special. I wanted a place that was all mine. I got myself a wagon and some provisions and I set out to stake a claim on the West. To get me some of my own. After a while I found just the spot.

CONDUCTOR

Next Stop! The Birth of a Town. Bronson, Michigan. All Aboard!

[Train Whistle Blows.]

TITUS

I sold potatoes, seed potatoes, and they called me “Potato Bronson”. After a bit I had enough to buy me a plot of land. I was the first one here. First one to see the potential of this place. I built a hut and worked it until it was respectable enough to bring a wife into the picture. I went back home to Connecticut, married Sally, and pretty soon we were out here together making our mark.

[SALLY enters in pioneer dress and begins “hoeing” in the background.]

We bought more land. I was going to trade my potatoes for $100 and a shotgun but Sally, here, stopped me from that. Good thing, too, ’cause the land we bought soon became the county seat. Boy howdy, it really took off then. Started growing into a right smart little village. But you know what the problem with a village is? There’s people in it.
[TITUS sits in a rocking chair watching the people go by sourly. The rest of cast walks by doing business. Waving to Sally who waves back cheerfully.]

I love your garden Sally.

SALLY

Thanks, Mary. I’ll bring you some peas, soon as they’re ready.

WOMAN #1

Won’t that be nice.

[Exits.]

MAN #1

Morning, Titus, see you at the Temperance Meeting tonight?

TITUS

[Not looking at him.]

Yes, Stephen, I’ll be there.

MAN #1 Exits. JACOB and WOMAN #2 enter.

JACOB

Morning, Titus. Morning, Sally.

SALLY

Good morning, Jacob.

Huh.

TITUS

WOMAN #2

Oh, Sally, you should see the cherry tree Jacob just got for me. It is the most beautiful thing.

SALLY

Oh, my.
WOMAN #2
When it reaches its growth and starts blossoming it will look like cherry snow in my yard. Just like when I was a girl.

SALLY
That sounds wonderful, Emma, I can’t wait to see it. Where’d you plant it?

WOMAN #2
Right outside our window. It’s the first thing I see when I wake up in the morning.

JACOB
I know a place, Titus, if you’d like to get one for the missus.

TITUS
I don’t need no help from you, sir.

SALLY
Titus.

TITUS
If’n I need a tree I can go get one without no help from the likes of him.

WOMAN #2
Well, I never. Goodbye, Sally.

SALLY
I’m sorry, Emma. You know how he gets.

WOMAN #2
I know, Sal, I’m sorry, too.

[They exit.]

SALLY
You know it’s polite to answer a salutation.

TITUS
I know.

SALLY
And Jacob was just making a friendly offer.
I know.

SALLY
Well, do you know that you were rude?

TITUS
Meant to be.

SALLY
Titus, what on earth for? Jacob’s been our neighbor for going on three years now.

TITUS
Was him that got me throw’d out of the courthouse.

SALLY
Titus, you were whittling on the windowsill.

TITUS
I donated the darn thing. Should be able to make my mark on it when and where I like.

SALLY
You donated the land. That means you gave it to the people for their courthouse. It’s not yours anymore.

TITUS
Well, it’s got my name on it.

SALLY
That’s right. It’s the Bronson Courthouse. Right next to Bronson Park, in the town of Bronson.

TITUS
Think that’d be like owning it. Seems like no one cares whose name is on it no how.

SALLY
It’s yours the way a child is yours. It’s got your name on it, but you don’t own it. You can’t cut it, or steal it, or kill it. You just got to let it grow into what it’s gonna be.

TITUS
Hmph.
You understand that?

SALLY

Suppose so.

TITUS

[Pause]

You want a cherry tree like Emma’s?

SALLY

Maybe. Someday. Right now I got enough to tend too. With my garden and all.

TITUS

I can get you a cherry tree. Any fool could do that.

SALLY

Titus, you’ve gotten me everything I could ever want. Don’t you worry about that. I just wish....

TITUS

What?

SALLY

I just wish you could be a little bit nicer to people, that’s all.

TITUS

If I had my druthers, I’d rather live in a town with no people in it a’ tall.

SALLY

Well, what kind of town would that be? No people. My lands, you want to live in a ghost town?

TITUS

Ghosts would keep quiet, anyways. Wouldn’t be telling me what to do, what to say.

SALLY

Wouldn’t have me.

TITUS

Hmmph. Guess then I’ll stay here. In Bronson.
In Bronson.

SALLY

[Train whistle blows]

CONDUCTOR

All Aboard!

[SALLY and TITUS exit the stage with rocking chair.]

Railroad's a wonderful thing. You can follow the tracks or make your own way as you go. You can get off and meander or jump back on and let your wanderlust lead you. There's always someplace else to be. Sometimes people get off, and sit a spell when the train stops. Sometimes they find what it is they're looking for, don't got no need to get back on and keep going. Point is, it's out there if you're willing to find it. We don't know where we're going but we're on our way. Like Joe here. He's been looking for a while, now, not quite ready to stop, but getting there.

[JOE enters. He is a tramp, or has been for the past six months. He's wearing overalls and a flannel shirt and work boots. He's been riding the rails, living as a hobo for a while. It's the 1930's.]

JOE

I been riding the rails for six months now. The first time I jumped a freight I was seventeen and didn't know nothing except I needed to be somewhere else real bad. The only thing moving in my town were the trains so one night I climbed up the water tower, waited for the two o'clock to Milwaukee to come along and jumped right on top of the roof, feeling the wind comb my hair, and I rode her til I found a way into the car. I'm looking for that place that feels right. Don't know where it is. But I'll know it when I see it. Until then, it's watch out for the bulls, and try not to be caught being stupid.

[Train whistle blows. Joe picks up his bag and crawls under the platform just as the CONDUCTOR walks over the top and looks around. CONDUCTOR looks at his watch.]

CONDUCTOR

Next Stop! Hard Knocks, Michigan
[CONDUCTOR walks away and Joe comes out furtively. He starts to walk across the stage and as he reaches the dog statue DSL MAN #1 steps in and stops him.]

Hey kid, you got a light.

MAN #1

Sure bud, somewhere here.

JOE

[trying to act older and wiser than he is.]

Sure bud, somewhere here.

MAN #2 enters from other side of stage and comes up behind JOE.

MAN #2

That’s mighty fine of you kid. Can you light me up, too. Care for a smoke?

JOE

Don’t mind if I do.

[MAN #2 sticks a cigarette in Joe’s mouth and Joe starts to light it with same match – or lighter – used on other two.]

MAN #1

Hold on there, sonny, that’s three on a match.

JOE

So?

MAN #2

What’re you, green? You can’t do three on a match.

Everyone knows it’s bad luck.

MAN #1

JOE

[Chuckling, going ahead with lighting cigarette.]

Oh, I don’t believe in that stuff.

MAN #2

Oh yeah, you don’t, huh? You a tough guy?
MAN #1

Yeah, you been around?

JOE

I been around some, sure. I ain’t superstitious like my grandma.

MAN #1

Well, maybe you should be.

[MAN #2 has moved behind JOE and while MAN #1 holds his attention, #2 slips a garrote around his neck and begins to choke JOE while MAN #1 pats him down and steals his bag. They give a kick or two to Joe’s body as he falls gasping for air to the ground. Then leave, with a few parting shots.]

MAN #2

Thanks kid, next time, maybe you should listen to your grandma.

[JOE slowly stands and brushes himself off. He shakes his head.]

JOE

Got caught being stupid.

[Looks up in the moonlight, suddenly.]

Look at that moon. It has a ring around it. Never saw anything like that. I’m going to follow that moon. I hear her calling me, like a….like a….beckoning silver angel.

[JOE limps off stage in direction of the train station. Train whistle blows.]

CONDUCTOR

It’s experiences that make us. Good ones and bad ones. Sometimes we let them shape us, sometimes we have to let go of who we wanted to be and discover who we are in spite of ourselves. You can hold on to a pain until it defines you. Or you can kiss it, let it go and go on becoming your best self. Either way, it changes who you’da been without it.

[Train whistle blows.]

All Aboard. Next Stop, Public Square. Private Memory.
[ACTOR #5 enters DSR. She is a no-nonsense woman of the mid-1900s. She wears a close fitting hat, tailored clothes. Addresses the audience.]

ACTOR #5/EDNA

I just had to get off here to see how it’s changed.

[She walks around stage looking at things as she talks.]

I was born in this town. I can remember coming to this gazebo with my mother. I’d play run-sheep-run with my friends and we’d watch my brother play ball, right over there. And look.

[Examines bottom of gazebo.]

M-S-F. Here’s where my brother carved his initials. You can still see them, underneath the grime. Ha! There’s the post office, and the undertakers, the Five and Ten and the Shooting Gallery. All the shops say “Satisfaction Guaranteed!” Ha, under a layer of dust an inch thick. Now there’s a contradiction. Everything’s the same as I remember, except dirtier. Grayer. Dreary drab, convict gray. Wait, are they still there?

[Looks and finds bronze dogs.]

Those damn dogs. Satisfaction Guaranteed. My ass!

[ACTOR #5/EDNA heightens her bravado for a moment and leans over to look into the eyes of one of the dogs, challenging. A low growling is heard and she backs away to SC. ]

Damn. I thought they’d be gone by now. It’s been more’n twenty years. I know it’s silly to be afraid of something for so long. But, some things have more weight than others, you know? In the effect they have on our lives, I mean. I was about four or five. It was a clear sunny day. Back when things had color. The grass was so green, the sky so blue.

[Lights brighten, intensifying color on stage, music starts, a combination of calliope and kids laughing, summer sounds.]

There was color everywhere and everything seemed to be painted new. My mother had brought me to the Gazebo to play and we were waiting for more friends to show up so we could start a game. I especially remember the Gazebo had just been whitewashed, it was sparkling in the sun. I looked at it in wonder because only the week before it had been dirty and dingy and now it glowed, it glistened, like early morning frost. I was amazed that dirt and time could be covered up like that. One stroke and a thing could be made new again. My mother had gone off to talk to a friend and I was skipping around the steps.

[She skips.]

And my friend Gracie came up to join me. Hi Gracie!
Waves and smiles at invisible Gracie.

We started this game on the steps, one up, two down, back and forth. Then we heard this growl

Growl is heard again and music stops – lights dim.

I froze and turned around so slowly. Gracie turned quicker. There was this wild dog right there in the park. I don’t know where it came from. It was big, as big as me, and brindled with long teeth and it was staring at us, just a few feet away. Gracie started screaming, that high-pitched scream of a little girl. And the dog lunged. Its teeth caught Gracie around her neck and began to shake her like a rag doll and the blood sprayed out. It sprayed crimson across my white pinafore, it sprayed scarlet across the new white of the gazebo. I felt one drop land on my mouth. I licked it – tasted salt, and….copper, and then I was screaming and there was this bang

[Gunshot sound effect.]

The dog stopped, dropped. There was this pile of dead flesh, the dog and Gracie lying there. Their blood together wasn’t crimson or scarlet, somewhere in between. A man from the shooting gallery down the street had run outside and killed the dog. My mother grabbed me, feeling me for hurt but the blood was all Gracie’s.

[She gathers herself into her adult mode again.]

Next time I saw that Gazebo was a year later as we were boarding the train out of town. It was all white again. The blood of Gracie had been covered up, washed away. Washed whiter than snow. Like sin washed clean in a baptism. I’d never been able to go back to that park. The dog statues scared me too much. My mother asked the Mayor to take them down but they wouldn’t. Said they’d been a donation from a big important family and it would be an offense to take them down for the fears of a little girl. After all, the statues hadn’t done anything. Like I said, Satisfaction Guaranteed, my ass. Always depends on who’s doing the satisfying and who’s looking to get satisfied.

[ACTOR #5/EDNA stalks off.]

CONDUCTOR

Next Stop, A Musical Interlude with that songbird of the circus, Miss Julie Dozier

SHOWMAN

[JULIE joins SHOWMAN in the song. Townspeople gather around. SHOWMAN steps away as people stay and watch her sing.]
**Railroad Bill**

Railroad Bill, Railroad Bill  
He never work, and he never will;  
Well it's bad Railroad Bill.

Railroad Bill, Railroad Bill,  
Took everything that farmer had;  
Bad Railroad Bill.

Railroad Bill had no wife,  
Always looking for somebody's wife;  
Then it's ride, ride, ride.

Kill me a chicken,  
Send me the wing,  
They think I'm working,  
But I ain't done a thing;  
Ride, ride, ride

Railroad Bill,  
Mighty Bad Man,  
Shoot the lantern  
Out of the brakeman's hand  
Bad Railroad Bill.

Railroad Bill,  
Desperate and Bad  
Took everything  
That poor woman had;  
Then it's ride, ride, ride.

[As clapping and bowing are mimed.]

**CONDUCTOR**

That's right. The train is all about deliverance. It can deliver you to where you want to go, it can help deliver you from where you been. Sometimes it can bring you a delivery of just what you need. All Aboard! Ladies and Gentlemen, the Circus Comes To Town!
SHOWMAN
[Enters by climbing atop wagon. JULIE is standing on wagon to his side in circus regalia.]

Step Right Up! Adam Forepaugh's Amazing circus. We got elephants, camels, tigers, acrobats, trapeze artists and some of the prettiest songbirds this side of the Ohio River, so step right up ladies and gentlemen, just two bits buys a seat. Three shows only, then we'll be gone until next year. This'll be your last chance to see the show that people have been talking about from Poughkeepsie to Peoria.

[Cast as townfolks circa 1880 gathers around and buy tickets from SHOWMAN. As they clear, CAL is standing at foot of wagon looking up at JULIE. He is infatuated with her and she is watching him.]

Do you have your ticket, young man?

CAL
Yes. I bought one for every show.

SHOWMAN
Every--? You must see something you like.

CAL
[Still looking at Julie.]
I sure do.

SHOWMAN
Well, if you like it that much, why don't you talk to it?

JULIE
[whispering:]
Gentleman's gotta be introduced to talk to a lady, boss.

Is that right?

SHOWMAN

Yes.

JULIE

Do you want to be introduced?
JULIE
[Gives a hard look to SHOWMAN. Through her teeth:] Please.

SHOWMAN
Well sir, uh, Mr. – what’d’ya say your name was sir?

CAL
Cal, I’m Cal. Um, Calvin T. Hodges. The Third. Yeah, the third. I’m a songwriter.

SHOWMAN
You are? I never heard of you and I hear lots of songs.

CAL
[somewhat chagrined.]
Well, I haven’t sold anything yet. I’m a writer though. I need to get out more, see the world more.

SHOWMAN
Izzat so?

JULIE
[Extending hand for kissing.]
It’s a pleasure to meet you.

SHOWNMAN
Ow. Oh. Right. Mr. Calvin T. Hodges....the Third, may I present to you Miss Julie Dozier.

JULIE
[Extending hand for kissing.]
The pleasure is all mine ma’am.

CAL
[There’s an awkward pause as he attempts to kiss her hand from her perch up on the wagon and she tries to bend over elegantly to let him.]
JULIE
Just one moment, why don’t I come down and meet you proper-like.

CAL
Oh, thank you.

[JULIE comes down the back of the wagon while SHOWMAN remains up top and watches amused.]

JULIE
There now.

[Extending hand again.]

CAL
A pleasure ma’am.

[He kisses her hand.]

Um. Miss Dozier, would you care to let me buy you some lemonade? Show you the town, some?

JULIE
It does look very nice. I believe this is my first time here.

CAL
Oh no Ma’am, I saw you last year when you came.

JULIE
You did?

CAL
I’ve been waiting ever since that moment for you to come back.

JULIE
My. Well, when you travel like I do all the towns begin to look the same. They all sorta blur together.

CAL
I think I’d like that. I’ve never been gone from this one. I’d like to see so many things that the details run together like wet paint.
JULIE
Well. It can get old, after a while. Nothing to hold on to. Sometimes being able to watch paint dry seems like a fine ambition.

CAL
Until you've actually spent time doing it.

JULIE
What's this town called? It seems real nice.

CAL
Kalamazoo's all right. But I want to see the world.

JULIE
It looks like a nice place to settle down. Have a family.

CAL
Oh it's a nice place. President Lincoln even came here and gave a speech once, right over there in Bronson Park. That was before he became President, of course, but still.

JULIE
Still.

[She eyes SHOWMAN watching them.]

I'll be back for the next show.

SHOWMAN
Are you going to be all right with him?

JULIE
Of course.

[Looking at CAL.]
I think I can trust him. His eyes look kind. I don't see no meanness in them. Can I trust you?

CAL
Well, shoot. I guess so. I mean, I'm just a normal guy. Like anybody else.

JULIE
[To SHOWMAN.]
It's alright. I'm a big girl, you know.
SHOWMAN

I know, darlin’. Have fun. Don’t do anything I wouldn’t do.

[SHOWMAN climbs down and exits.]

JULIE

There now.

[Pause.]

So, you seen the show before?

CAL

I watch every year. I couldn’t wait for you to come back. I’ve been saving and saving for tickets. And I swore to myself that this time I was gonna get up my courage to talk to you.

JULIE

To me?

CAL

Yes. I saw you last year on your tightrope in your silver dress...outfit...whatever you call it. Singing your song. And, I was too scared to say boo. When I finally had the mettle the circus was all packed up and gone. I’ve been waiting a whole year and I swore I’d talk to you the minute I saw you and I wouldn’t stop til you were gone again.

JULIE

Oh my,...I....

CAL

I don’t mean I’m going to talk all day and night. But I have a whole year of things pent up to say to you. And, I was hoping you wouldn’t mind me talking to you. Course, if you don’t want to you can just tell me to shush and I will. I can be as quiet as a fox in a henhouse when I want to be. Do you want me to be quiet?

JULIE

No. Well, not yet, anyway. You just got started.

CAL

That’s right, and I have a whole world of things to say.

JULIE

Like what?
CAL
Like how beautiful you are. How beautiful you sing. Ever since you left last year I can’t hear any of my songs in any voice but yours. I’ve written all my songs for you.

JULIE
My goodness.

CAL
And how much I missed you. You’ve been my silver angel out there on the horizon that I’ve been watching for every night.

JULIE
Silver angel. I like that.

CAL
I wrote a song about it, “My Shimmering Silver Angel in the Orange and Purple Sky.”

JULIE
Sounds...colorful.

CAL
Well, you should see the nights here, sometimes the smoke makes the sunsets a red gold color, and in the winter the frost turns everything silver. The moon gets a ring around it and sometimes you can hear....

JULIE
What? What do you hear?

CAL
America.

JULIE
America?

CAL
[Getting lost in his thoughts.]

What do I hear? It’s calling me.

JULIE
[Calling him back.]

You’re a funny man Cal. I like you.
I like you, too Miss Dozier.

[They lean in for a kiss as the CONDUCTOR enters lights fade on the couple.]

CONDUCTOR

More people follow their dreams, the more they need help from the bumps and scrapes along the way. Lucky for us, some people dreams consist of helping others. Dr. Caroline Bartlett Crane did a lot for this community. Created kindergartens, homemaker classes, municipal housekeeping, traveled the world looking studying progressive reform.

[CAROL enters, dressed in silver/grey, she is a minister addressing a congregation.]

CAROL

I would like to thank the community for welcoming me as your first female minister. I believe that a church cannot be a place where we come together once a week and enjoy our doctrine and congratulate each other on having a faith free from superstition. We will find that the more we do for others, the more in the end, we have done for ourselves. Education, childcare, these are the services that can raise people to their heights. Remember:

The sins of Kalamazoo are neither scarlet nor crimson.
And the people who sin the sins of Kalamazoo are neither scarlet nor crimson.
They run to drabs and grays—and some of them sing they shall be washed whiter than snow—and some: We should worry.

Ladies and Gentlemen, it is our mission to provide the bread, and the room, for the poor and forgotten. Let us pray.

[She bows her head and the lights fade out on her. CONDUCTOR enters.]

CONDUCTOR

On the train, even when you’re riding on flat lands it can be like a roller coaster, it’s got its ups and downs. It can be wild or peaceful. It stops and starts. It’s never just doing one thing, it’s always changing and you’re always on your way to somewhere.

[Train whistle blows.]
Next Stop! The Town with the Wishing Heart.

[JOE enters from platform. He’s not hiding from the CONDUCTOR this time. He’s older and much wiser than last time we saw him.]

JOE
[Jumping down off platform and walking DCS.]

This is my eighteenth town, sixth state and third year on the rails. I’ve pretty much been finding what I can as I go along. But today’s different. Today I feel like the sun’s telling me to stay for a while. This town is calling me. I’m going to get me a real job, I said. So I jumped the train. Cleaned myself up and went to this International Harvester I’d seen from the boxcar that had a help wanted sign in the window. They got me hauling boxes of parts from one end of the place to the other. First week my back ached so bad I liked to die. But now, I got a jingle when I walk. I decided to spend some on a real meal at the Whistle Stop Café, I sat at the counter and there she was. The prettiest darn thing I’d seen from Maine to California.

[Lights up USL on Whistle Stop Café. He crosses to the short order counter.]

KIM
Welcome to the Whistle Stop. Coffee?

JOE
Sure thing, good lookin’.

Be right back.

KIM

I knew she wasn’t talking to me. I knew she wasn’t really aware of who I was. But I knew I was the man she’d been waiting for her whole life, just come in to sweep her off her feet. I knew ‘cause that’s what she was to me. I just needed to get her to open her eyes some and recognize me.

KIM
[with coffee.]

Here you go. There’s cream and sugar on the table. Ready to order?
JOE
I’ll have a stack of wheats and—no, scratch that—Y’know what? I’m going all out, get me the corned beef hash, the green beans, a cup of chicken noodle soup and well, I guess the coffee for now.

KIM
Hash, beans, soup – got it – be right back with that, you want dessert?

JOE
What’s good?

KIM
Well, the apple pie’s pretty okay, but I think the lemon meringue is the best, as long as you like your lemon tart, not too sweet. The pumpkin’s got a bit of a kick to it.

Do you like it?

KIM
Sure.

JOE
[Meaningfully.]
What else do you like?

KIM
[With a significant look.]
My job. My privacy.
And my German Shepherd.

[Exits.]

JOE
[to audience.]
Then it came to me. I watched her sashay off with that little smile -- that was practiced with putting off the customers, just enough to keep the tip -- and I knew what it was that she needed to hear me., To see me.

[JOE straightens up at the counter and pulls out bright crimson handkerchief. He does a bit of magic as he sees KIM coming back. Holds up something under handkerchief and blows a kiss to something in the distance.]
KIM
[With plate of hash and coffee pot.]
If that don’t beat all. Who you blowing kisses to?

JOE

Shh. Listen, can you hear it?

KIM

Hear what?

JOE

Listen. It’s music, a little brassy, it’s people talking, laughing. It’s the sound of excitement and life.

KIM
[Suspiciously:]

I don’t hear nothing.

JOE

It’s America.

[Out.]

I hear America, I hear, what do I hear?

KIM

Your brains rattling in your skull, you ask me.

[_puts the plate and coffee down.]

JOE
[TURNS TO HER WITH HANKIE, LIFTS THE CRIMSON RED EMBROIDERED HANKIE OFF HIS HAND TO REVEAL A WHITE ROSE, HE PRESENTS IT TO KIM.]

For you.

KIM

It’s beautiful. So clean and pure.

JOE

No sins on that flower. It’s as pure as snow.
KIM

Thank you.

JOE

Do you want to hear America with me? There’s a dance this Saturday night at the Community Hall.

KIM

I guess I might just be persuaded.

JOE

[Kisses his hand to something far off.]

Thank you.

KIM

Now who you blowin’ kisses to?

JOE

My silver angel. She grants me my wishes.

KIM

Ha! I wish I had an angel like that. Don’t think you’re getting everything you want from me.

JOE

No. She only grants my desires of the purest intentions. The what’s-its that are meant to be.

KIM

You’re a funny kind of guy. What are you doing here?

JOE

I’m here because I’m here. It’s meant to be. I don’t know where I’m going, but I know I’m on my way to great things. Now that I’ve met you.

[Lights out on scene. Train whistle blows.]

CONDUCTOR

All Aboard. Railroad Crossing. Where the Trains Hesitate.
[CAL enters and begins song as entire cast enters from SR and SL each with chair, joining him in the song. They set them facing front, two by two, as if looking down a railroad car. Each time the song starts the cast performs a dancing “musical chairs” with the next speaker landing in the center seat. Throughout scene lights flicker from sides as if through train windows. CONDUCTOR punches tickets.]

**The Railroad Cars are Coming**

The great Pacific railway,  
For California hail!  
Bring on the locomotive,  
Lay down the iron rail;  
Across the rolling prairies  
By steam we’re bound to go,  
The railroad cars are coming, humming  
Through New Mexico,

**ACTOR 3**

The railroad is like a digestive system. Riding in a giant hungry animal that tracks its way around the country, devouring everything in its path. Leaving little towns in its droppings.

**ACTOR 5**

There are so many churches. The steeples are like hatpins. The more I ride the trains, the more the towns stay the same. I watch the landscape fly by and it seems that churches are the only thing that grow natural in this country.

And inside the churches grow the same little old ladies. Like seedpods, waiting to burst and ride the winds to other towns, holding their aprons over their heads in tiny parachutes. Serving pot roast and mashed potatoes to the men’s clubs. All with the same smiling wrinkled old faces.

I ride the train through time and the faces all stay the same. I look out the window and I see another one of those old church lady faces, more familiar than the rest. It winks at me and I realize it’s my own. My reflection in a train window. And I look down, and I’ve got a pot roast in my hands. Time. Time and trains. For sinners. And for the lovers of humanity.
SONG CONTINUES
The railroad cars are coming, humming
Through New Mexico
The little dogs in dog-town
Will wag each little tail;
They'll think that something's coming
A-riding on a rail.

ACTOR 4
The railroad is like a nervous system and the track is the spine. Lives and messages, feelings, warnings, pain, all racing at top speeds throughout the corporeal land, each place sizzling with synapses, flashes, neurons, reactions and then actions transversing the tracks and sending messages pulsing through the nation, keeping each place alive. Alive and waiting for the next message, connecting everyone and everything.

ACTOR 7
The railroad is like your circulatory system. Each train is a blood cell, delivering food, life, sustenance to towns along the track. It's what keeps everything going

SONG CONTINUES
The rattle-snake will show its fangs
The owl tu-whit, tu-who,
The railroad cars are coming, humming
Through New Mexico

ACTOR 1
I ride the train like a dinosaur through the desert. Through the prairies over the mountains. Impenetrable, iron, metal, smoke, steel, cutting metal paths through new territories. The fossils of the trains can be found in abandoned track, lost towns, uprooted civilizations. There is no place untouched. At first the tracks were laid shiny and new. The ground was green with promise and the sky blue with the future.

Now there's rust and dust on everything, the seats are worn and the newness of America has grayed and the promise threatens to be forgotten. What's at the end of the track? I see a long horizon with a shivering silver angel. Track not laid. An engine not yet built. We should worry.

ACTOR 6
Life is a train ride through time. As a child I'd run to the roundhouse to see the train turn around and sometimes they'd let the old steam engine out for Lincoln's birthday and the Fourth of July. We'd lay pennies on the track to get them smashed flat.
When I was young I liked the caboose best. I’d ride at the end and feel the whole train to my back cutting through my future, watching the track unfold behind me like my past, growing in the distance.

Then I loved the engine best. I’d sit up as close as I could and race, hurtling through space to get where I was going as fast as I could with all that power and weight pushing me forward.

Now, I sit in the middle and watch it flicker by from the windows of the cars, sometimes it goes slow and sometimes it goes fast, but I just wait for when it stops. I think...I think...I think I’m ready to get off.

**SONG CONTINUES**

The railroad cars are coming, humming
Through New Mexico

[Train whistle blows. Train scene ends. Actors exit with chairs.]

**CONDUCTOR**

Trains run through time and space. You start on one end of the country in the morning and you arrive on the other a day before you started. Sometimes time works in your favor. Other times it don’t.

[Train whistle blows.]

Next stop. Kalamazoo.

[TITUS enters. Rest of cast makes up courtroom spectators. SALLY sits watching. During this scene TITUS’s behavior becomes increasingly erratic. He has little tics, both verbal and physical that increase with his agitation.]

**JACOB**

I woke up your Honor and it was gone. Emma noticed first. She likes to look out the window to see if it’s blossomed every morning. It’s her habit. But she looked out that morning and there was this big ugly hole.

**JUDGE**

How do you know that Mr. Bronson was the culprit.
JACOB
Your Honor. There was a trail of dirt going in the direction of his house.

TITUS
Huh.

JACOB
I went to his house and there was dirt in the back of his buckboard.

TITUS
Course there was you idjit. Buckboards have dirt.

JACOB
Your honor, it was the same dirt as from the tree. He had a shovel and a burlap right there.

TITUS
Don’t prove nothing.

JUDGE
The defendant will be quiet until called upon for his testimony.

TITUS
Just saying don’t prove nothing. It’s mine.

JUDGE
Is there anything else incriminating?

JACOB
Yes, your Honor, I went around back of his house and he had a newly-planted cherry tree looked an awful lot like mine.

[Spectators titter. Judge glares.]

JUDGE
Order in the court.

[Courtroom settles.]

Mr. Bronson, what do you have to say for yourself?

TITUS
I can speak now your Honor, is that it?
JUDGE
Yes, Mr. Bronson, now is your chance to defend yourself.

TITUS
I say it’s MY tree, on MY land, behind MY house, and MY buckboard and MY shovel in MY town and that sorry jackass can just go to hell with his stories.

Courthouse rumbles. Judge bangs gavel.

JUDGE
Order. Order. Mr. Bronson. Is that your entire defense?

TITUS
It’s what I got to say.

JUDGE
In that case I have no choice but to find for the plaintiff. Court Adjourned.

Courthouse breaks up. Townsfolk congregate in one corner while SALLY and TITUS meet together.

SALLY
Oh, Titus, how could you?

TITUS

SALLY
Titus, let’s go home. I’ll make you some tea. We’ll just let this all pass over.

TITUS
Not right. Not right at all. Man comes to a place, settles it, invites his friends and family to make a town, pretty soon nothing belongs to him anymore.

SALLY
Come, Titus.

They begin to exit. Judge/Mayor steps forward with the rest of the ensemble behind him.

JUDGE
Hold on there, Titus. We have something we want to say to you.
[TITUS and SALLY turn.]

TITUS

Ayuh.

JUDGE

Look, Titus, we appreciate all you’ve done for this town. We truly do. But, we feel like the town has grown on past you, and we met over this at the Town Meeting last night and, well, I don’t like to be the one to have to say this, there’s been a provision passed to rename the town Kalamazoo. I’m sorry, Titus. Sally.

SALLY

Henry. How could you?

TITUS

[Broken. All the wind has been knocked out of him.]

Kal-a-ma-zoo?

JUDGE

That’s right. It’s a Potawatomi word. That’s what they call the river. We thought it’d be nice for the town.

[SJUDGE and townspeople exit the stage.]

SALLY

C’mon, Titus.

TITUS

Kalamazoo. Sally. Did you hear that? Someone took my child, Sal. You said I couldn’t own it, said I couldn’t steal it, but it can be stolen. From me.

SALLY

Oh, Titus.

[They exit the stage. Lights brighten. Train whistle blows.]
CONDUCTOR
Experience makes the man. New faces come and replace the old. Our children grow and have experiences of their own. Life goes on, repeating itself over and over, as if each repetition will find a bit more truth to it. Riding the rails in pursuit of...what was it?

[Train whistle blows.]

All Aboard! The Circus Returns to Town!

[Circus music starts with CAL as announcer this time. JULIE mounts the end of the wagon/platform. She is wearing a tight rope walkers outfit with fishnet stockings and a parasol. Other cast members pass by and pay attention to form “crowd”. SHOWMAN watches a part from the crowd.]

CAL
Step right up ladies and gentlemen to see the most amazing, the most fantastic high flying songbird you’d ever hope to lay eyes or ear on. She can balance and sing at the same time just like a bird on a wire. Ladies and Gentlemen come one, come all, don’t miss the most amazing performance of Julie Dozier!

JULIE
[Sings a song while doing a simple tightrope act.]

Waillie, Waillie
When cockle shells turn silver bells,
Then will my love return to me.
When roses blow in wintry snow,
Then will my love return to me.

Oh, Waillie! Waillie!
But love is bonnie
A little while when it is new!

But it grows old and waxeth cold,
And fades away like evening dew.
CAL

That’s all for now folks, but there’s plenty more to see tonight under the big top at Adam Forepaugh’s Amazing Circus. The show’s just two bits and let me tell you it’s worth twice that much. We’ve got lions, tigers, camels, you name it, things you ain’t seen here nor nowhere else ever before. There’s only one place, ladies and gentlemen, to see these wonders. You’ll get your money’s worth. Come back tonight and see the whole thing. Miss Julie Dozier under the big top! I promise you you’ll be glad you did and sad if you don’t.

[Crowd leaves. CAL takes some beer to clear his throat.]

JULIE

[With robe wrapped around her.]

How was I, Cal?

CAL

Fine, honey, just fine.

JULIE

Where are we now?

CAL

I don’t know, all the town’s look the same to me.

JULIE

Oh. Looks just like that place we were in last week in Ohio.

CAL

Yep.

JULIE

Look—a Whistle Stop. Wasn’t that in Illinois?

CAL

Nope, that was the Whistle Blower. Waitaminute. I recognize this place. It’s Kalamazoo. Haven’t hit this berg in a couple of years.

JULIE

Isn’t this where we met?
When I joined up with this fleabag circus.

You were going to sell your songs on the road with us. Wanted to travel and blur the world.

Yeah. Whatever.

Has it changed much? Since we were here? Is there anything you want to see?

I doubt it. Didn’t change while I was here, sure as hell ain’t going to change much without me.

Well, what do you want to do before the show?

I thought I might play a round of pool over there at that pool hall. Feeling lucky.

Oh, well, okay. I guess I can poke around the stores for a bit.

Wait, I changed my mind. Hold on a minute. There was one thing--

Hey, fella, do you still make guitars here?

What’s that, guitars?

You know, boxes the singing wood winds ask to sleep in? Do you rig up strings the singing wood winds sift over and sing low?
CONDUCTOR
Mister. We manufacture musical instruments here.
[CONDUCTOR exits.]

CAL
Not very poetical in this place.

JULIE
Let’s go look, Cal. You’ve been needing a new guitar.

CAL
Alright, baby. You get changed and we’ll go shopping.

[JULIE exits. CAL smokes a cigarette and wanders around for a moment, ansy. He stops, listening to something.]

CAL
Did you hear that?

America?

[Starts to hum a melody. Singing out parts of it. Keeps looking towards the pool hall.]

Hell, I’ll be right back.

[GOes to pool hall. After a moment JULIE comes back on in beautiful dress.]

JULIE
I was thinking after we get you a guitar we could get a lemonade and talk, I got something to tell y— Cal? Cal? Where’d you go?

[SHOWMAN has been standing to one side watching. He steps out now and confronts JULIE.]

SHOWMAN
Hi there, Angel.
JULIE
Oh, hi, boss. Long time no see, I guess.

SHOWMAN
How’s he been treating you?

JULIE
Oh, fine. He’s trying. It’s just so hard with all the disappointments and all.

SHOWMAN
We all have disappointments. We don’t take ‘em out on the ones we love. We let the ones we love take them out of us. Like pulling thorns out of your heart.

JULIE
I know, boss. He’s trying, he surely is.

SHOWMAN
Is he still writing those songs for you?

JULIE
No. He hasn’t written for a while now. Not since that time in Buffalo when he got accused of stealing that song.

SHOWMAN
He did steal that song. Everyone east of Buffalo’d been humming it for a month he comes along with it and tries to pass it off as new. Fool.

JULIE
He says he needs a new guitar. We were just going to—

SHOWMAN
Have you told him, Julie? About….who you are?

JULIE
I was--

[Pause.]
No. But he wouldn’t care about my blood. He’s not like other people.

SHOWMAN
Man like that, can’t take disappointment, can’t take surprises neither.
JULIE
He’ll stand by me. He loves me. I know he will.

SHOWMAN
You’re a stronger person than he’ll ever be.

There’s something else.

JULIE
Yes?

SHOWMAN
I’m going to have his baby.

JULIE
Julie. You know you got to tell him. Let the man show his colors now, stead of when it’s too late. It’d be for the best. Whatever happened.

SHOWMAN
I know. I will. I promise.

[CAROL enters as they’re talking. She’s wearing a silvery/gray dress.]

SHOWMAN
Take care, little girl. One of these days you’re going to need someone real bad. I hope that someone’s there for you when it happens.

[SHOWMAN exchanges significant looks with CAROL who nods, he exits. JULIE wanders off in search of CAL in the other direction. Train whistle blows.]

CONDUCTOR
All Aboard! A Fork in the Tracks.

[Lights up on JOE and KIM, one year after we’ve last seen them. They’re very in love. They are at the post office window which doubles as the marriage license window]
JOE
We’d like to get a license. What’s that? A marriage license of course.

[Makes face at KIM, who smiles.]

What’s that? Oh. Joseph Milton Hennessy.

KIM
Kimberly Anne Slejower.

JOE
[Keeps her hand.]

Soon to be Kimberly Hennessy.

KIM
Kimberly Hennessy. That has such a nice ring to it. Better than Slejower.

JOE
Ring? Ring! Oh, I gotta get you a ring, honey.

KIM
That’s okay Joe. I know we can’t afford it right now. Later, is fine.

JOE
Later nothing. We got time. Our whole lives together. I’m going to buy it on time at the installment shop.

KIM
I guess, we need to get everything else since we’re going to be married.

JOE
Why not.

KIM
Oh, Joe, I’m so excited.

JOE
Me, too, honey.

[Indistinct mumble from window and JOE has license. He waves it in the air and they’re off to the Judge.]
Train whistle blows.

Mournful circus music plays. CAL and JULIE enter and whisper at the window. The atmosphere is completely different. They are shamed, hiding. While they wait, they don’t look at each other. JULIE attempts to take CAL’S hand, but he finds something else to do with it. She bites her knuckles instead. When the paper comes they step away from the window and cross downstage where the sheriff stops them.

CONDUCTOR/SHERIFF

Just a minute there, you two.

CAL

Yes, officer?

SHERIFF

May I inquire as to your intentions with this woman?

CAL

Why? I’m going to marry her. That’s right. We’re getting married.

SHERIFF

I need to ask of what race you are, sir?

CAL

I’m white, mister, as any fool can see. Why do you ask?

SHERIFF

Ma’am, can you answer the question?

JULIE

Why, I’m white. Of course.

CAL

Hey. What is this?

SHERIFF

I’m sorry sir, but I been told that you two are representing a case of miscegenation. It’s illegal for the two of you to get married.
SHERIFF
This here woman’s been passing for white, but I got it on good authority that her grandmother was black. We don’t allow mixed marriages in this state. We follow the one drop rule.

CAL
Julie? Is this true?

JULIE
Oh, Cal. I’m sorry. I should have told you, but I didn’t think—I just couldn’t—I love you.

CAL
I don’t believe it. One drop. What’s our baby got, then?

SHERIFF
That would be a black baby, mister.

CAL
My son with no future before he’s even born. What kind of a woman are you? Trapping a man into building a life on lies.

JULIE
I love you. We’ve made it this far. It shouldn’t matter.

CAL
It doesn’t matter for you. Not even for me. But for my boy it matters a hell of a lot. A hell of a lot. Bye, baby.

[Stalks off ripping up license — turns to blow paper pieces in a farewell kiss to her.]

JULIE
[Shifts sobbing to the ground.]

Cal. Please. No.
[SHOWMAN Enters with a guitar and starts strumming a song. As he sings, JULIE gets up and staggers off stage. Rest of cast joins him for the “All Night Longs.”]

SHOWMAN

[sings song]

Paul and Silas, bound in jail,
All night long.
One for the sing and the other for to pray,
All night long
One for the sing and other for to pray,
All night long.
Do, Lord, deliver poor me!

Straight up to heaven,
And straight right back,
All night long.
‘Tain’ but one train
on this track
All night long.
‘Tain’ but one train
on this track
All night long.
Do, Lord, deliver poor me!
Never seen the like
Since I been born,
All night long
People keep coming and the train done gone,
All night long.
People keep coming
And the train done gone,
All night long.
Do, Lord deliver poor me!

[Train whistle blows. JULIE enters distraught. Full cast is in semicircle US. She stumbles DSC. She is exhausted, and heart-broken.]
JULIE
Cal! Cal! I know you loved me. It shouldn’t matter. The baby doesn’t matter. Blood doesn’t matter. Why do you let it scare you? Don’t leave me. How could you do this to us?

MAN #1
[Crosses stage in front of JULIE, touches her face, she starts to follow, man exits.]
Hey, baby, what you looking for?

JULIE
Cal?

MAN #3
[Crossing the stage the other way, brings her back to center but keeps going off. All cast speaks the boldface words emphasis or echo.]
Want to make a difference in my life, baby?

JULIE
Cal? Is that you? Please come back?

MAN #1
[Crossing.]
I’m coming baby, I’ll be there for you all night long, if you want me to be.

JULIE
Oh.

MAN #3
[Circling.]
I can be anybody you want me to be. Everybody is the same.

JULIE
No.

MAN #1
I can be nobody if that’s what you want. I’m nobody. You’re nobody? Who am I?

JULIE
I’m—
MAN#3
Shhh, baby, no names. No faces. Just whosits and whatsis that’s all that matters.

JULIE
No. I’m—

MAN #1
I have been to hell and back many times.

MAN #3
I know all about heaven, for I have talked with God.

MAN #1
I dabble in the blood and guts of the terrible.

MAN #3
I know the passionate seizure of beauty and the marvelous rebellion of man at all signs reading “Keep Off”.

MAN #1
[all freeze]
My name is Truth and I am the most elusive captive in the universe.

MAN #3
You’re my silver angel, baby.

MAN #1
You’re my America, baby

MAN #3
What do you hear, baby? What do you hear?

[Train whistle blows long and hard. JULIE collapses in the center of the men they step back to the semi-circle.]

[CAROL crosses down from semi-circle and stands over JULIE’S sobbing form. After a moment she reaches down and strokes her hair.]
CAROL
There, there. It’ll be all right. I have a place for you.

[JULIE looks up into CAROL’S face for a moment, then throws her arms around her legs.]

JULIE
That’s not who I am. That’s not who I want to be.

CAROL
I know. I know who you are. Come with me. You’re safe now. Come with me.

JULIE
I just want to go home. All I ever wanted was to be home.

CAROL
That’s all right. You can have a home with me. It’s time we all settled down.

[CAROL lifts her to her feet and together they walk off slowly. Cast exits stage except for CONDUCTOR.]

CONDUCTOR
Yes, Kalamazoo is a spot on the map
And the passenger trains stop there
And the factory smokestacks smoke
And the grocery stores are open Saturday nights
And the streets are free for citizens who vote
And inhabitants counted in the census.
Saturday night is the big night.
Listen with your ears on a Saturday night in Kalamazoo
And say to yourself: I hear America, I hear, what do I hear?
All Aboard. Next Stop Act II! We All Settle Down.

[Train whistle blows.]

END OF ACT I
THE SINS OF KALAMAZOO, ACT II

[The set has been modified. Where the train station scaffold was, now a house is under construction. Everything else is largely the same.

JULIE enters downstage center carrying a baby in her arms. She stands CS and croons.]

JULIE
[To the tune of “Go Tell Aunt Rhody”.

Bye-lo baby,
Bye-lo baby,
Bye-lo baby,
Bye-lo baby, bye.

Mamma will love you
Mamma will love you
Mamma will love you
All my life.

Daddy will love you

People will love you
People will love you
All their lives

Bye-lo baby,
Bye-lo baby,
Bye-lo baby,
Bye-lo baby, bye.

[She stumbles over the word “daddy” and substitutes in “people”. CAL enters in the dark US and watches her, unseen.]

[JULIE exits when the song ends. Work Whistle Blows. CAL crosses DSC starts to put on a hard hat and utility belt. But the Train Whistle blows in the distance. He takes off the hard hat.]
CAL

Did you hear that? I hear America, I hear, what do I hear?

[Work whistle blows again and the CONDUCTOR, now the FOREMAN enters. He and CAL seem surprised to see each other. CAL helplessly hands his hard hat and belt to the CONDUCTOR, who takes them and puts them on.]

I'm sorry. I can't.

[CAL picks up a guitar case and runs off in direction of the Train Whistle. Work Whistle Blows. FOREMAN begins song as cast gathers around, joins him in song.]

FOREMAN

Oh, the boll weevil is a little black bug,
Come from Mexico, they say,
Come all the way to Texas,
Jus' a-lookin' for a place to stay,
Jus' a-lookin' for a home,
Jus' a-lookin' for a home.

The first time I seen the boll weevil,
He was a-settin' on the square.
The next time I seen the boll weevil,
He had all of his family there.
Jus' a lookin' for a home,
Jus' a-lookia' for a home.

The farmer say to the weevil:
"What make yo' head so red?"
The weevil say to the farmer,
"It's a wondah I ain't dead,
A-lookin' for a home,
Jus' a-lookin' for a home."

The farmer take the boll weevil,
An' he put him in the hot san'.
The weevil say: "This is mighty hot,
But I'll stan' it like a man,
This'll be my home,
It'll be my home."

The farmer take the boll weevil,
An' he put him in a lump of ice;
The boll weevil say to The farmer:
"This is mighty cool and nice,
It'll be my home,
This'll be my home,"

The farmer take the boll weevil,
An' he put him in the fire.
The boll weevil say to the farmer:
"Here I are, here I are,
This'll be my home,
This'll be my home."

Why does one person stop at one place and another one keep on going? What makes a place feel right? Feel like home. Some people never leave where they're born. Some travel around searching endlessly, for the place that let's the roots grow. Feels right under their feet.

Welcome. Welcome back. Welcome home.

Take Kalamazoo, for instance. It's plain enough to see why you'd stop here. It's like other little towns. Along a river. Got roads, got transport, it's exactly half way between Detroit and Chicago. Halfway. The place where you get off and settle down when you've had enough. When you're half way between your growing and your dying. It's that time when you decide what it is you really want out of life.

I want a place that feels safe.

I want justice for the people.

I want a future for my family.

I want a baby.

JULIE

CAROL

JOE

KIM
Five babies!

I want recognition.

A house.

A home.

A home.

A star.

Money!

First Shift. Finding a Trade.

[FOREMAN turns back to his work on scaffolding. DRUMMER gets ready to pitch. His flashy clothes are toned down, but his manner is still brassy. He is wearing a suit and tie, derby hat, circa 1900. As he finishes with his setup, he shoots his cuffs, straightens his tie and begins his pitch.]

Step right up, step right up. See what I have in my bag of tricks today!

[Cast enters and gathers around, looking at his merchandise. JOE and KIM enter and look, she is now visibly pregnant.]
KIM
Come on, Joe. Maybe he has something we can use.

JOE
I doubt it, honey.

KIM
Well, looking doesn’t cost anything.

JOE
You’re right. Hey, mister, what do you got?

DRUMMER
For a bright young man like you? Let me see here. What’s your trade?

JOE
Aw, I was working over at the International Harvester, but I got laid off. Right now I’m sorta looking ....

DRUMMER
Say no more, say no more. What a man without a job needs is a trade. Be your own boss. Offer something everyone needs and you’ll always be in demand. Are you good with your hands, sir?

JOE
Yeah, I guess so, yeah, sure.

DRUMMER
Well, I have something here you might be able to make use of. Got it in trade a while back from a man who had no more use of it only because he’d grown too old for the work.

[He pulls out heavy, dusty carpet bag and sets it down at JOE’s feet.]

These are the tools for a stone mason. I’m told they are of excellent quality.

JOE
[Examining tools.]

Yeah, these are good. I used to do a little stone carving when I was younger. Worked with my grandfather for awhile. How much do you want for them?
DRUMMER
Well, sir, that is a mighty fine set, and I'm sure they'd be worth quite a lot.

JOE
[Shuffles, indicates KIM'S belly.]
Well, see, I don't—

DRUMMER
But I'll tell you what. The darn things weigh a ton. I can't be carrying them around with me forever. What say you take them off my hands for a nominal price and pay me the balance, plus interest of course, after you've got yourself set up in business?

JOE
[Brightens.]
Really? I think I could come up with about ten bucks. Would that swing it?

DRUMMER
That will do for starters, young man. And let me see what I have here for the missus. [He rummages in his bag for a moment and comes out with a beautiful rattle.]
For the baby.

KIM
How sweet,...but....I don't think we can pay for extras right now.

DRUMMER
On the house, ma'am, on the house. Anything for a happy customer.

KIM
Oh, thank you.

JOE
[Handing over money and picking up tools.]
Yes. Thank you very much.

DRUMMER
All in a day's work. Don't forget, I'll be back through here again and you let me know how you're getting on.
JOE
[Exiting.]

We will, mister.

KIM

Bye.

DRUMMER

And so the dance begins.

[Work Whistle Blows.]

FOREMAN

First Break. Checking in.

[CAL enters. He is performing in a radio program.]

CAL

Hi folks! Thanks for listening to me. I’d like to dedicate this song to Julie. Sweetest songbird I ever heard. I miss you, honey, I hope somewhere out there, you can hear me.

[Sings.]

The rich folks ‘cided to take a trip
On the finest ship that was ever built
The cap’n persuaded these people to think
This Titanic is too safe to sink.

Out on that ocean
The great wide ocean,
The Titanic, out on the ocean,
Sinkin’ down!

The ship left the harbor at a rapid speed,
Twuz carryin everythin’ that the people need
She sailed six-hundred miles away,
Met an iceberg in her way

Out on that ocean
The great wide ocean,
The Titanic, out on the ocean,
Sinkin’ down!
Up Come Bill from the bottom floor
Said the water was running in the boiler door
Go back, Bill, an shut your mouth
Got forty-eight pumps to keep the water out!

On the fifteenth of May nineteen-twelve
The ship wrecked by an iceberg out in the ocean dwell
The people was thinking of Jesus o Nazaree
While the band played “Nearer My God to Thee!”

[Work Whistle Blows.]

FOREMAN
Back to work. Setting Down Roots.

[Lights up on CAROL in front of building site watching FOREMAN work.]

CAROL
Be sure you hammer that nail in correctly, young man.

FOREMAN
Yes’m.

CAROL
Are you sure you’ll be able to make the deadline? We have planned our showing for May twelfth.

FOREMAN
I’ve got my crew working overtime, ma’am. We’ll make it.

CAROL
Very well. Good. Thank you.

[JULIE enters carrying a brightly colored potted plant.]

JULIE
I thought these would look nice at the doorstep. Oh my. Are you sure they’ll be finished by the deadline?
CAROL

That's what he assures me.

JULIE

I suppose we should trust him. Must trust him. Don't really have a choice.

CAROL

No. I'll trust him. His heart's in it, everyone's heart is in it. That'll make the difference.

JULIE

Guess so. It is quite amazing what they've managed to do in only seven weeks.

CAROL

That's because the whole community is behind it. That flower is lovely. What a nice idea, child. We'll find just the right place for it.

[She takes flower and places it in front of the house, arranging it decoratively.]

Do you know what the trolley man said to me as I was coming to visit the house today?

JULIE

What?

CAROL

I told him I wanted to get off at the model home, and he said to me - with relish, mind you - , "Model Home - you know I think that would make a fine model home, for a bachelor!"

JULIE

No.

CAROL

I turned on him like a mother might whose precious baby had been called a brat. "Why, the very idea!" I said, "I'll have you know, sir, that this is a home for a father and mother and six children!"

JULIE

Six?

CAROL

Well, if you added another bed here and there. I might have exaggerated, but who wouldn't?
Oh dear.

CAROL
I made him promise he’d come to the Demonstration Week. I let him know I was not amused. Told him he’d only be forgiven if he’d promise to come.

I’m sure you did.

CAROL
Won’t he be surprised by the room? The convenience of it. I hope I’m there to see his jaw drop when he takes it all in.

JULIE
I’ll tell the other ladies to keep their eyes open for him.

CAROL
I do feel like a mother, you know, to this house. I know it’s not mine and others have all contributed to its, well, birth. But I’m just as proud of it as if it were mine own.

JULIE
It certainly is something to be proud of. You have many great accomplishments.

CAROL
But few are so tangible. So concrete. I watch this house being built, growing, from my own bedroom window. I feel a part of me in it. Like I’ve passed something along.

JULIE
You have. You’ve left your mark on many things here.

CAROL
Yes. Well. Like Don Quixote I’m forever battling windmills that keep rising again. Or is it St. George fighting dragons? But this feels right.

JULIE
It is right.

[She arches her back and stretches with a soft groan.]
CAROL
And you, my dear, how are you? And Peter?

JULIE
Oh, I'm just a little tired, but I'm fine, really. Peter is doing well in school. Most of his friends are leaving town when they graduate but he has to stay here and help me. He smiles about it, but I know he'd rather get out and see the world.

CAROL
Everyone must leave to appreciate what they've left. He'll get his chance, just not right away.

JULIE
He's starting to take an interest in girls.

CAROL
Oh my, another headache for you, I'm sure.

JULIE
[Bitterly.]
I'm afraid he'll take after his father.

CAROL
Well, let's hope not.

JULIE
No. That's my fear, you know. That no matter how I live, no matter what I do, he'll grow up and be like Cal. A heartless man who'd leave a woman stranded.

CAROL
Every man makes his own choices. Every woman, too, of course. Don't you worry about Peter. He's got a good home and a good mamma. He's a good boy.

JULIE
Thank you, Dr. Crane. I know you're right. Well, I must get home. Are you coming?

CAROL
I think I'll stay and watch just a little bit. Watch it grow.

JULIE
All right then.
[She exits.]

CAROL
[To the house.]

Bye-lo baby,
Bye-lo baby,
Bye-lo baby,
Bye-lo baby, bye.

[She exits.]

[Work Whistle Blows.]

FOREMAN
Next shift. Enjoy what you got. While you can.

[Lights up on JOE and KIM in their small apartment. JOE is telling a children’s story over her pregnant belly. While she sits in rocking chair DSR.]

JOE
[Reading from book.]
“Next they came to the country of the balloon pickers. Hanging down from the sky strung on strings so fine the eye could not see them at first, was the balloon crop of that summer. The sky was thick with balloons. Red, blue, yellow balloons, white, purple and orange balloons -- peach, watermelon and potato balloons -- rye loaf and wheat loaf balloons -- link sausage and pork chop balloons -- they floated and filled the sky.”

KIM
Joe, you nut. He can’t hear you.

JOE
Yes, he can I tell you. “The balloon pickers were walking on high stilts picking balloons. Each picker had his own stilts, long or short. For picking balloons near the ground he had short stilts. If he wanted to pick far and high he walked on a far and high pair of stilts.”

KIM
Stilts?
JOE
Says so right here. Stilts. "Baby pickers on baby stilts were picking baby balloons. When they fell off the stilts the handful of balloons they were holding kept them in the air till they got their feet into the stilts again."

KIM
[Pointing at picture in book.]
Who's that supposed to be way up there?

JOE
[Reading.]
"He was singing too happy. The songs came out of his neck and made him so light the balloons pulled him off his stilts."

KIM
How sad. Will he come down again?

JOE
"Yes, his heart will get heavy when his songs are all gone. Then he will drop down to his stilts again."

KIM
Sounds dangerous. How can something as silly as balloon picking be dangerous?

JOE
Everything that's real's got a danger, hon. Even too much happiness.
[Continues reading.]
"The train was running on and on. The engineer hooted and tooted the whistle when he felt like it. The fireman rang the bell when he felt that way. And sometimes the open-and-shut of the steam hog had to go pfisty-pfoost, pfisty-pfoost."

KIM
[Stopping him.]
Read to me about the zig-zag railroad.

JOE
[Looking for page.]
That's up here after the country where clowns come from.

KIM
Oh right. Skip the clowns, that part's scary.
JOE
No scary parts for my love, huh? Don't like to think dark thoughts?

KIM
No, I don't. I'm superstitious. It could hurt the baby.

JOE
Okay, okay, little mother. Here we are. "The train ran on and on till it stopped running straight and began running in zigzags like one letter Z put next to another Z and the next and the next."

"The tracks and the rails and the ties and the spikes under the train all stopped being straight and changed to zigzags like one letter Z and another letter Z put next after the other."

KIM
Joe?

JOE
[Yawns.]
Yeah, hon?

KIM
Promise me you'll never get tired of reading to the baby?

JOE
I promise.

[fade out on scene. FORMAN enters.]

FORMAN
See, once you've stopped with the running and start with the settling, you find you're in another sort of race. You might not be covering the distance land-wise, but you still got long ways to go. To keep up. To reach something. Something makes your change of pace worthwhile. It helps if you know what that is. But nearly no one does.  

[Work Whistle Blows.]
Take a Break. Work on Life.
CAL enters as if on a vaudeville stage.

CAL
(sings with a flashy style)

My daddy is an engineer,
my brother drives a hack,
my sister takes in washing and the baby balls a jack
and it looks like I'm never going to cease my wandering.

I been wandering early and late
New York City to the Golden Gate
And it looks like I'm never going to cease my wandering.

Been working in the army
been working on a farm
All I got to show is the muscle in my arm
And it looks like I'm never going to cease my wandering

Well there's snakes on the mountain
and eels in the sea
And a red-headed woman
Made a wreck out of me.
And it looks like I'm never going to cease
My wandering.

Ashes to ashes
And dust to dust
If the whisky don't get you than the woman must
And it looks like I'm
Never going to cease
My wandering.

Oh, it looks like I'm never going to cease my wandering.

[When song ends he bows and starts to leave
stage, he is stopped by SHOWMAN.]

SHOWMAN
Hey, son. You got some nerve bringing your sorry self back here.
CAL
I didn’t mean to come here. I signed up for the circuit, this just happened to be a stop on the line.

SHOWMAN
Just a stop on the line, huh? No interest in anything here? Or anyone?

CAL
She’s still here? Both of them?

SHOWMAN
Maybe. But they’re doing fine without you. Seeing as how they had to. Why don’t you just skedaddle back to where you came from.

CAL
No, wait. I want to see them. I do. I just can’t…stop.

SHOWMAN
Sure you can. All it takes is setting for a spell, taking a load off your feet. Trusting people. Relaxing.

CAL
You don’t understand. I’ve come close. I was in New York, I was singing on the radio. I cut a record. I’ve been following the sound of America from California to Florida and I can’t stop. I saw men killing each other over gold and jumping from skyscrapers over paper. I can’t settle down.

SHOWMAN
You listen to me, boy. You had the love of a good woman. You had one of the best voices this side of Lake Michigan to sing your songs. And you got, somewhere, a beautiful little boy who’s going to grow up not knowing his father and probably be better off for it, you ask me. You can’t stop, you say. That’s fine, boy, just keep on walking.

CAL
A boy? A black boy?

SHOWMAN
Doesn’t really matter. His blood’s red, same as mine or yours. He’s as beautiful and sweet as his mother. I’m predicting that by the time he’s ready to go out in the world those are the only things that are going to matter. Not any nonsense about a drop of blood. Not to anyone with sense at least.
CAL
Do you know where I can find her?

SHOWMAN
Can’t say as I do, no.

CAL
Oh. I thought...

SHOWMAN
I can’t say. If you want to find her bad enough you will. But first you got to earn that right.

[SHOWMAN exits, leaving CAL alone on stage.]

CAL
(sings in a sincere, subdued style)
Ashes to ashes
And dust to dust
If the whisky don’t get you than the woman must
And it looks like I’m
Never going to cease
My wandering

Oh, it looks like I’m never going to cease my wandering.

[When song finishes CAL stands helplessly on stage staring out at the audience. Then he seems to come to some decision and runs offstage.]

FOREMAN
Once you start a family, everything you thought you needed seems to grow out of your control. Pretty soon, it’s like those things begin needing you, owning you. Then you need more to get that sense of control back. And so it goes.

[Work Whistle Blows.]

Second Shift. Increased workload.
Hi, honey, how was work today?

[KIM enters and is making dinner for JOE. There is a cradle in the background and frequently we hear a crying baby. KIM is pregnant again. JOE enters and sits, very tired and dusty from working. As they move around the space it should be clear that they are very cramped, and KIM has to run a lot to get everything. All action is mimed, baby could be a large doll.]

KIM

Hi, honey, how was work today?

[She hurriedly kisses him while squeezing past him to get to the baby, who she picks up, coos too, then puts down quickly to return to cooking.]

JOE

Like always.

[He just misses connecting with the kiss.]

I’m tired, dusty. Had a lot of work today.

KIM

[Running back to stove. Then for slippers.]

Well, have a seat and I’ll have dinner ready for you in an instant. I’ll get your slippers.

JOE

[Sits.]

Thanks, hon.

[There is a knock on the door.]

JOE

[Not moving.]

Do you want me to get that?

KIM

[Rushing back in with slippers in her hand. She crosses to “door”.

No, no. I’m up.

[Answers door.]
ICE MAN

Hi there, ma’am, got your ice for you today.

KIM

My, you’re late. Well, if you could put it in the ice box.

ICE MAN

Sorry about that, had a flat tire.

[Baby cries again. KIM runs that direction.]

KIM

That’s okay. I understand. I just cooked everything that wouldn’t keep.

JOE

[Opening book, with sarcasm.]

Sounds delicious.

KIM

[To baby.]

There, there, sweetie, it’s okay. Mamma has to finish dinner, and then it’ll be your turn.

ICE MAN

[Coming out of kitchen area and exiting.]

I think you might have something burning in there, ma’am. Good day sir.

JOE

Good day.

KIM

[Rushing back.]

Oh, dear.

JOE

I have some bad news, dear.

[Pots slam off.]

KIM

[Offstage.]

What’s that?
I said I have some bad news.

Oh?

[As she tries to set the table.]

They raised the rent on my shop. I can't afford it.

Oh, dear. Just when you were starting to really pick up business.

Well, I had a thought.

[As she tries to set the table.]

Yes?

Well, I—have you seen my sweater?

Yes dear, I sewed the button back on.

Thanks, sweetie. Kiss?

[Stops from running back into the kitchen to bestow a kiss.]

You're welcome dear.
JOE
[As he begins to sit at table and eat.]

Well, I was thinking there's room in the garage to make into a shop. It wouldn't take
much money, what, with what I have extra out there anyway. I could move my things
over and in the long run save money.

KIM
[Bringing in dish, picking up baby and putting her
in the high chair and beginning to sit at table to
feed him and herself.]

That would be nice.

JOE
I could come home for dinner and supper.

Wonderful.

What?

JOE
What? What.

KIM

I don't know, it sort of sounded like you might have meant something when you said that.
"Wonderful."

KIM
No, I didn’t.

JOE
Yes, you did. Like you meant it different.

KIM
No, I really don’t think so.

JOE
Okay, but you sounded funny. Hey, is there any more of these peas?
Yes, they’re on the stove.

Can I have some?

Yes. Just a second. When I’m done feeding the baby, I’ll—

No. That’s okay. I’ll get them myself.

[He gets up to serve himself like he is doing her the biggest favor in the world. He returns to his seat.]

After dinner I’m going to start drawing up the plans. I’m kind of excited about it, if you want to know the truth.

That’s nice.

There it is again.

I don’t know what you’re talking about.

“That’s nice.” You didn’t say it like you meant it, more like you didn’t.

It’s just that, well, I’m tired, and running, and I try to make a nice home for you and it’s hard and you don’t help and I know you try to but I need more than for you to get up and get your own damn peas!

I work, I bring in the money.

I know. I’m sorry. I’m just tired, that’s all. All day, everything. Oh! I hate this house.
JOE
You know what, honey? You’re right. I just don’t know what to do about that.
[Knock on door.]

I’ll get that. Why, hello, there.
[It is the DRUMMER.]

Hiya, Joe. How’s it going?

JOE
Well, I’ve set up my own business with those tools you sold me, carving headstones. I’m doing pretty good. I can pay you what I owe you.

DRUMMER
Lovely, lovely. How’s the little Missus?

KIM
Hi. I’m fine.

DRUMMER
The baby, and another on the way. Marvelous.

JOE
Yes. Well, about what I owe.

DRUMMER
You look like you could use more space here, Joe.

JOE
Well, actually, we were just talking about that, funny you should mention it.

DRUMMER
I picked up this flyer on my way to see you. Might be of interest to you.

JOE
[Reads.]
“Demonstration Week of Everyman’s House. Fits a family of five, affordable housing for America’s Everyman.” Wow.
DRUMMER
Quite the buzz about it. Apparently it's won some national competition in house design.

JOE
Well, we couldn't afford...

DRUMMER
Not to worry, not to worry. I've gotten into a new line of work myself. Sort of a Savings and Loan concern now. Go look at the house and if you're interested we can see what we can do.

JOE
Gee, that's mighty fine of you.

DRUMMER
My pleasure, always my pleasure.

[All exit.]
[Work Whistle Blows.]

FOREMAN
First Break! Work brings life's rewards.

We held Demonstration Week and had over 20,000 visitors walk through that house. Won the Better Homes in American 1924 Model Home contest. Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover sent a telegram to congratulate us. President Coolidge said the house had "outstanding merit". Dr. Crane had ladies showing--

[CAROL grows impatient with FOREMAN talking about her baby and joins in the narration. Cast comes on and assembles as visitors and docents.]

CAROL
Allow me, young man. Yes, I had ladies showing off the house. Making sure that everyone saw exactly how it worked to the finest detail.

[Cast mimes going through the house with JULIE acting as guide. JOE and KIM come through to take the tour. Slides of the house are shown on top scrim corresponding with rooms covered.]

Like the Mother's room.
JULIE
Here Ladies and Gentlemen, is the Mother's room. As you can see it is right off of the kitchen. Mother can take care of baby, cook, clean and do all her duties without all those unnecessary steps and climbing stairs. It has a fold-out crib and with a small gate at the doorway baby is safe and under mother's watchful eye while she works.

CAROL
Tell them about the living room.

JULIE
Here is the comfortable Living Room. The fireplace is warm and welcoming. It's right off of the front door so the rest of the house remains hidden from visitors.

MAN #5
You're missing a room here. What about the dining room?

JULIE
I'm so glad you asked that. Here at the window seat we take out this folding table, just steps away from the pass-through of the kitchen and the family may dine. When dinner is over, it simply folds away and the space is saved. Why have a whole room to use a few hours a day? And here's a lovely screen to pull across in front of the table should dinner be interrupted.

CAROL
Show them the father's room.

JULIE
Say that the Mrs. has visitors she's entertaining in the living room. Father comes home from work, sweaty, dirty, he doesn't wish to walk past his guests in this condition. On opening the front door he notices them, and he merely slips down the stairs to the basement shower, cleans up and from there he can continue upstairs or join his guests clean and refreshed.

JOE
I'd like that.

KIM
The mother's room is such a wonderful idea. It would save me climbing all those stairs every day.
JULIE
What you’re really going to appreciate is the kitchen. The heart of the home. Here we have a pass-through. You cook dinner, prepare it here, at the counter, and as your dishes are prepared, you don’t need to run back and forth between rooms, simply lay what you need here on the counter and then easily retrieve them to the table on the other side.

KIM
That’s amazing.

JULIE
And here, just under the sink, we have a warming cabinet to keep everything warm as it’s prepared. As soon as your whole dinner is ready no steps are needed, just move from one place to another. Everything in the kitchen is within easy reach.

KIM
Joe, think about the running I do in a day. Why this house would be so perfect for us.

JOE
Honey, you’re right. I’m going to sit down tonight and talk to the man about how to swing it.

KIM
I love you.

[JOE and KIM turn and greet SHOWMAN who shows them where to sign the papers for their loan. Action is mimed while CAROL talks.]

CAROL
Affordable housing. Simple living, happiness in the home. These are the things that are necessary to keep American safe, stop war, bring peace. It starts in everyone’s own heart and family.

[Work Whistle Blows.]

FOREMAN
A dance of life and debt.

[Cast enters and begins to sing ARE YOU ON during following.]
CAST

In the days of old Rameses, are you on, are you on?
They told the same thing, the very same thing.
In the days of old Rameses, that story had paresis,
Are you on, are you on, are you on?

[DRUMMER enters with a big handful of colorful helium balloons on one side of the stage. KIM and JOE enter, she’s very pregnant again. It is their third child. She has two small children with her. They approach the DRUMMER.]

DRUMMER
Hello there, little family. How is the new house treating you?

JOE
It’s just great. And we’re glad we bought it as you can see, our family is growing again.

DRUMMER
My goodness, how many do you have now?

KIM
This will be our third. If it’s a boy I’m going to call him Joe, Jr. If it’s a girl she’ll be Gloria. Danny and Daisy are our other two.

DRUMMER
[Untangling two balloons for the children.]
Well, these are for the tykes.

KIM
Thank you, you’re always so generous to us.

JOE
Yes. Thanks.

DRUMMER
How are you holding up? Business still going well?

JOE
Yes. I actually had to sell the business. I’m not my own boss anymore. This big corporation moved in, better for the town. Lots more jobs. We’re providing funeral
accommodations complete with the real estate of the plots, the stone carving, the arrangements, coffins, everything on a wide basis.

DRUMMER
No more business for the little guys, right?

JOE
Well, this is easier, more convenient and it pays more. Sure, the people out in the big cities get a chunk, but we all benefit.

Sure, sure.

DRUMMER
There is one thing, though.

JOE
Yes, sir. Anything I can help you with?

DRUMMER
Well, the medical bills are kind of high, right now. And I was hoping you could help me with our loan to swing a new car. Now that I don’t work out of my garage anymore, I kind of need it.

JOE
Not to worry. No problem. I’ve always got what you need. That’s what I’m here for, after all.

CAST
Adam told it to the beast before the fall, are you on? He told the same thing, the very same thing. When he told it to the creatures, it possessed redeeming features, But to tell it now requires a lot of gall.

[Music plays. Family exits. JOE comes back and takes a balloon with a dollar sign on it. Other cast members enter and take balloons from the DRUMMER. JOE comes back several times. Each time collecting more balloons. We can see he’s deeply in debt.]
JOE
Hey, the baby was born. Her name is Gloria. She’s beautiful. She had some problems being born, but it looks okay now.

DRUMMER
[Handing him a dollar balloon.]

Glad to hear it. Glad to hear it.

[JOE exits. More people rotate through the balloons.]

CAST
Joshua told it to the boys before the wall, are you on?
He told the same thing, the very same thing
At the wall of Jericho before the wall began to fall,
Are you on, are you on, are you on?

JOE
Hi. I’m afraid I’m a little late on my payments. I need to work some extra hours, but they cut me back at the shop. They hired a bunch of young people, want to give them more time. Plus they’re cheaper.

DRUMMER
We’ll work it out. Have a balloon.

[Cast rotates through balloons again.]

CAST
In the days of Sodom and Gomorrah, are you on?
They told the same thing, the very same thing;
In Sodom and Gomorrah, people told it to their sorrow,
Are you on, are you on, are you one?

JOE
Gloria died last night. She made it until she was five years old. I don’t have any money for the funeral. If I could just—

DRUMMER
I’ll take care of it, son. Here you go.

[JOE exits with balloon.]
CAST

In the days of ancient Florence, are you on?
They told the same thing, the very same thing;
In the days of ancient Florence, it was held in great abhorrence,
Are you on, are you on, are you on?

[CAROL enters last. She is older and tired, limping. She is handed a black balloon. She smiles when she receives it.]

[Work Whistle Blows.]

FOREMAN

End of Second Shift. Next Shift, Graveyard.

[Somber music as cast gathers for a funeral. SHOWMAN plays minister.]

MINISTER

Ladies and gentlemen. I don’t know if there’s life after death. No way to tell. People tell us we just got to believe but that seems to me like a mighty long bet. Odds are pretty steep. I do believe in ripples, though. I believe that each life touches a place and leaves a ripple in its time for others to see, to be affected by. How deep those ripples go, how many rings get formed, well, that all depends on what was done and with what spirit.

Dr. Caroline Bartlett Crane’s life left many ripples. Her influence is resonating throughout this town, through the buildings she formed, the laws she helped pass, the jobs she created and the lives she saved with her charity, planning, and help. She was a tireless instigator and supporter of municipal housekeeping, clean water, safe food, childcare, job training, the list goes on.

I don’t know if Dr. Caroline Bartlett Crane is in Heaven. I do know that down here, the ripples of her life will go on touching people for years to come. She was a watchdog for this community, righting wrongs wherever she saw fit. Fighting for the rights of others. To commemorate her life the mayor has commissioned these two bronze dog statues to guard our community at the entrance of Bronson Park. Watching over our community, as she did, for years to come. These hound dogs of bronze on our public square look to a long horizon with a shivering silver angel, a creeping mystic, what-is-it? An angel watching over our past, our present and our future. Washing away our sins, in Kalamazoo.
[Work Whistle Blows.]

FOREMAN

Graveyard Shift. For Those Who Work the Night.

[CAL remains as rest of cast exits. He is alone and disheveled. A lot has happened to him since we last saw him.]

CAL

I kept trying to work, to follow my dream but I kept seeing her face, hearing her voice. Pretty soon the only America I could hear anymore was her. I kept listening, I didn’t talk for a whole year. Didn’t open my mouth, didn’t smile. Only things went in, whiskey, rye, beer, wine, as long as it had alcohol and dulled the pain that’s all I wanted. I rode the cars and never made any decision. When I got caught and kicked off a train I just took the next one came along. Didn’t matter if it was going back to where I’d just been.

Then, one day, it just stopped. I woke up and the train was stopped. I rolled over and tied my kit to my wrist, figuring the bulls would be coming to kick me off, but I lay on my back waiting until the last possible moment to move. I could see the sky through the top hatch. There was the sun and it was beautiful. It was hot and fresh and new somehow. I hopped off and walked back along the tracks to this town. And here I am. It’s gray here. There’s nothing shiny like Julie – but it’s a kind of gray that’s easy on the eyes, as long as you don’t ‘spect too much from it. Long as you don’t get disappointed wanting more – more color, more life. Only problem is, I can’t stop gabbing. Anytime I open my mouth I can’t stop the words coming out. Lord help me, I’m gabby.

[PETE walks across the stage. He’s young high school student. Eager, happy and sweet. CAL stops him.]

CAL

Hey, kid, you got a light?

PETE

Sorry, sir, I don’t smoke.

CAL

Hey, where you going so fast? You can stop and talk for a moment, can’t you.
PETE
Yes, sir. Can I help you with something?

CAL
I was lagging along, reading the signs here, I see you got signs everywhere satisfaction is guaranteed, they say. You got shooting galleries where men kill imitation pigeons, and doctors for the sick, and lawyers for people waiting in jail, and a dog catcher and a superintendent of streets, and telephones, water-works, trolley cars,

PETE
Yes sir, we got all those things. Kalamazoo is a growing town.

CAL
Kalamazoo, did you say?

PETE
Yessir.

CAL
Do you still make guitars here?
Do you make boxes the singing wood winds ask to sleep in?
Do you rig up strings the singing wood winds sift over and sing low?”

PETE
Yes, sir, We manufacture musical instruments here. And Checker Cabs, and pharmaceuticals, and stoves. “Get it New from Kalamazoo”, you heard of that?

CAL
I hear, America, I hear, what do I hear?

PETE
What’s that sir?

CAL
Hey, kid, looking for a quiet game?

PETE
No, sir, I don’t play pool. My mother’d kill me if I did.

CAL
C’mon, won’t your father let you play a game or two?
Pete

I don’t have a father. My mother says if I play pool I’ll more than likely turn out like him, and she doesn’t want that.

Cal

What’s your name, son?

Pete

Peter Dozier. Mister, now if you’ll excuse me I really have to be going.

[Peté exits. Cal watches after him for a moment, realizing who he is. A smile breaks out on his face and he puts guitar strap over his shoulder.]

Cal

[Sings.]

I was born almost ten thousand years ago,
And there’s nothing in the world that I don’t know;
I saw Peter, Paul and Moses,
Playing ring-around-the-roses
And I’m here to lick the guy what says ‘taint so.

I saw Satan when he looked the garden o’er,
Saw Adam and Eve driven from the door,
And behind the bushes peeping,
Saw the apple they were eating,
And I’ll swear that I’m the guy what ate the core.

I saw Jonah when he embarked within the whale,
And thought he’d never live to tell the tale.
But old Jonah had eaten garlic
And he gave the whale a colic,
So he coughed up and let him out o’ jail.

I saw Samson when he laid the village cold,
Saw Daniel tame the lions in the hold,
And helped build the Tower of Babel,
Up as high as they were able,
And there’s a lot of other things I haven’t told.
I taught Solomon his little A-B-C’s,
I helped Brigham Young to make Limburger cheese,
And while sailing down the bay
With Methuselah one day,
I saved his flowing whiskers from the breeze.

Queen Elizabeth she fell in love with me
We were married in Milwaukee secretly,
But I schemed around and shook her,
And I went with General Hooker
To shoot mosquitoes down in Tennessee.

I remember when the country had a king,
I saw Cleopatra pawn her wedding ring,
And I saw the flags a-flying
When George Washington stopped lying,
On the night when Patti first began to sing.

[Song turns into dance music in background.
PETE, SAMMY, GINNY and ANNIE enter. The Whistlestop is now a soda shop. They’re dancing.]

PETE
Whoa, I’m going to sit this one out.

GINNY
[to ANNIE.]
Can I join you two?

SAMMY
What’s up with Pete?

GINNY
I don’t know. He seems almost glum because he’s graduating this weekend.

ANNIE
Wow, I can’t wait to graduate. I’m off to school in Pennsylvania.
GINNY

Why are you going so far?

ANNIE

As far away as I can get. This town is one-horse and I’m ready for a full stable.

SAMMY

I hear that. My dad got me a job out in Alaska. I get to travel, and when I’m done training I’ll be a big hot shot salesman.

GINNY

Gee. I’m going to State. I wish I could go further. Still, at least it’s three hours away on train. It’ll be a change.

Right.

PETE

[Joining them.]

What’s all the jawing?

ANNIE

Are you upset about graduation?

PETE

Me? No. I just don’t know what I’m doing after Saturday. I mean, I’d like to go somewhere, but I need to stay at home and help my mom. All you guys are taking off.

SAMMY

We’ll come visit.

GINNY

I promised Mom I’d be home at least every other weekend.

ANNIE

I won’t be back much, but I’ll write, I promise.

PETE

Will you, Annie? Promise?
ANNIE
Of course. If you promise to write back.

PETE
Oh, I will. Gee, I feel better already. Let's dance, Annie.

[Jukebox starts again and ANNIE and PETE dance. Music takes on a slow motion distorted quality as time passes and PETE is left alone on stage. EVE, the owner of the shop comes up to clear away glasses. PETE moves over to post office window.]

PETE
Are you sure there's nothing for me? I wish you'd look again — there must be a letter for me.

[An envelope is handed through. PETE takes it excitedly.]

Gee thanks. Oh.

[Dejected he goes back to stool in soda shop with letter in his hand.]

EVE
Hey Petey, haven't seen you in here for a dog's age.

PETE
I was just checking the post office. No letters today. Not from my girl, anyway.

EVE
Been a while since you got one, huh?

Yeah.

PETE
She's out in Pittsburgh?

Yeah.
Long distance relationships are hard.

Yeah. I guess so. Maybe tomorrow.

I bet you wish you’d left town, too.

Oh, it’s alright here, but I want to see the world.

Yeah, they all do. But you know what?

What?

They all pretty much come back here in the end and say

Everything looks the same.

I’ve been everywhere and no where’s any different.

It’s all like here. Everywhere.

Really? But where’d you go?

I’ve been to France, sweetheart.
Alaska, Texas, Mexico.

Florida, Oklahoma.

Paris, Lyon, Venice, Nice.

Oregon, Washington, Nevada and Utah.

Orlando, Atlanta, Charleston.

Why are you here?

We're here because we're here.

Is that all?

Why else?

Meant to be I guess

No place better.

Where we belong. Except now it's my turn, after all, I guess. I'm going to war.

[Hooking arm thru PETE's.]

[He shows others the draft letter. They all gasp. Fadeout on scene.]

[Work Whistle Blows.]
FOREMAN
Changes are what life is made of. Nothing can stay the same, change is growth, movement. Even if you try to things get thrust upon you. You’re forced to move. By time, if nothing else.

Graveyard Shift. First break. The wind shifts.

[KIM and her teenage daughter and son DAISY and DANNY enter the Bronson park area. The place has changed, there is grafitti, it is kind of noisy, overgrown, the gazebo is dingy and dilapidated. There is a municipal garbage can on one side of the stage. There’s marching band music playing offstage.]

DAISY
When’s Daddy coming?

KIM
I told him to meet us at one pm. He’s only ten minutes late.

DANNY
On Dad time he’s still got ten minutes before he’s early.

KIM
Danny, I want you to be nice to your father. No fights today.

DANNY
I know, Mom, but it’s not me. He always starts it.

KIM
I don’t think that’s exactly true either. Just try to show respect.

DANNY
Yeah, yeah.

KIM
To both of us. Now, help me lay out this picnic.
DANNY
But it’s so dirty downtown. Couldn’t we have gone to the county park? Or the Club?
Why do they call it Bronson Park, anyway?

KIM
I don’t know. Today’s the anniversary of when I met your dad, and it was right over there, where the Whistlestop used to be. I guess I didn’t realize how much it’d changed. I have a surprise for him.

DAISY
The Lincoln Bar used to be the Whistlestop that you worked at?

KIM
Yes.

DAISY
Wow. I can’t imagine what it was like then.

KIM
And before you ask, I think it’s called the Lincoln Bar because President Lincoln spoke once right over there, at the gazebo. It was different then.

DAISY
What’s the surprise?

KIM
I’ll tell all of you together.

DANNY
Fine. But as soon as we’re done I want to go play ball with my friends.

KIM
Okay.

DAISY
And I need to get home to pack for school.

KIM
I know, dear. Help me set up.
DANNY
Do we have to sit so near to these dogs? They kind of give me the creeps.

DAISY
Don’t tell me you’re scared of a couple of statues?

DANNY
Look how vicious they look. Who’d put these things here anyway, a place for families?

KIM
There’s a plaque. What’s it say, Daisy?

DAISY
“In memory of Dr. Caroline Crane, watchdog of our society.” Who was Dr. Caroline Crane?

KIM
I don’t know.

DANNY
I never heard of her. Too bad we can’t sit over there under that tree.

DAISY
It’s too close to the druggies.

DANNY
Well, it’d be cooler. Kind of hot here in the sun.

KIM
We’ll be fine. There’s a nice breeze to cool things off. I brought your father’s favorite fried chicken.

[She pulls out a KFC bucket.]
Here, I bought these nifty Styrofoam plates so clean up will be easier.

DAISY
Wish we could eat off of Styrofoam all the time. Never have to do dishes again.

KIM
Too expensive.
Hi. Honey, how’s work today?

JOE

Fine.

DAISY

Hi, Daddy.

JOE

Hi.

KIM

Thanks for coming down here to meet us.

JOE

I guess lunch is just as good at one place as another.

DAISY

Mom has a surprise for you, Daddy.

KIM

Daisy, I was going to wait a bit.

DAISY

I want to know, too.

KIM

Well, okay, here goes. I know we talked about this—and I know what you said—but I ran into Laura last week and she just mentioned it, and I asked, and they hired me and I got it!

DAISY and DANNY

Mom! Wow.

JOE

What?
Mom got a job.

I told you how I felt about you working.

Well, Daisy is going off to secretarial school next week, and she’s all set. Danny is old enough to take care of himself, so I don’t have that much to do around the house anymore and we have so many bills.

I can take care of it.

Honey, we’re so far behind. We need this.

In my family the man had to work. Danny should quit school and get a job. He could come work with me.

No way. I hate gravestones. I don’t like to work with my hands. I want to go with my friends to college.

The boy’s got to finish school. It’s different now. Kids need to go on and go to college if they want to find a good job.

When I was his age I was riding the rails, I was working anywhere I wanted to.

Things are different.

You were a bum. We call people like you hobos, bums. Nowadays you need an education. You’re nothing if you don’t have a diploma.

Well I guess your father is a nothing, then.
DANNY
I didn’t mean you. I meant now.

JOE
I know what you meant. You think you’re so much better than your old man. I knew more back then without school than you’ll ever learn.

DANNY
We’ll see about that. Sorry, Mom.

[DANNY storms off.]

KIM
Joe. He’s trying. And I can work. He doesn’t need to quit school.

JOE
Yeah. Well. Maybe you should. I got another notice from the bank yesterday.

KIM
I didn’t see it.

JOE
I hid it from you. Didn’t want you to see it. Says we could lose the house. Talking about foreclosing.

KIM
Oh my god. Joe. I have to go to work.

JOE
I know. I know. I just don’t know if it will be enough.

DAISY
Mom, I could wait on school. Work around here for a while longer. Would that help?

KIM
I don’t know honey.

JOE
I’d hate to ask it of you. But the truth is, we need the money.
Oh, Joe. As bad as that?

I didn’t want to face it. But now I have to. I don’t know how this happened. I tried to talk to the bank about it, and they talked to me like I’d been drinking or gambling our money away. I’ve never done anything like that, Kim. I’ve always worked and tried, and somehow it just always gets to be too much for me. There’s always the bills. The credit, the things we bought that we thought we really needed but we couldn’t pay for. The house.

It made sense at the time. You were doing so well then, but then the business—

I wish I’d never sold the business. I was happier as the boss. Damn big corporation, what do they know about the people in this town. It’s just money to them.

Gloria got sick, the medical bills. The funeral.

The balloons.

What?

The balloons. Remember the balloon pickers? From that book you used to read to Gloria when she was sick?

I used to read it to you, too, when you were in your mother’s belly.

I was just remembering the balloons. And the stilts. Sometimes you have to let the air out so you can float back down to earth. That’s all this is.

What do you mean, honey?
DAISY
Well, for a long time we were too happy. We were floating too high. We sang our silly songs and didn’t care. But now our songs are all gone. We need to drop back down to the ground. Where it's safer.

JOE
You listen to me, young lady. Don’t ever be afraid of flying high. Of reaching for what you want. Just because we’re having a tough time now.

DAISY
I know, Daddy. I’ll stay here and help you get on your stilts again. But next year I’ll be able to sing my songs and reach for my balloons.

JOE
That’s my girl.

KIM
It’ll be okay.

JOE
Yes. It’ll be okay. It’s all just dust in the end, isn’t it? When it comes right down to it, everything just reverts back to dust.

[Lights fade out on scene.]

[Work Whistle Blows.]

FOREMAN
Third Shift break.

[JULIE and PETE enter. He’s in a uniform and carrying a duffle bag. They are in deep conversation then they hug and he leaves. She walks around the park. As she talks the rest of cast enters and acts out her story.]

JULIE
Here is where it happened.

I told Peter about his blood, before he left. He wanted to hide it, at first, then he wanted to explore it. He went South. Looking for his grandmother and that side of the family that I’d never wanted to identify with. He found them. For years he didn’t speak to me.
Said I was wrong to hide who I was from the world, to pass in a white world when there was so much wrong for the black man. I agreed with him. He was right, but I’d been doing it for so long I didn’t know another way. I was still afraid to tell my friends here. Afraid of losing my place. I knew Dr. Crane would understand. But I wasn’t sure about anybody else. I think mostly I was afraid of the change that would take place behind the faces. The shift in thinking, the qualification that would happen in even the most well-meaning person.

Peter made a big name for himself. In the army he joined a group of men who were proud of their race, proud of their heritage. His picture was in the papers and eventually I had to admit to my own past and I was right. The smiles stayed the same, the people were still friendly but behind their eyes was the slightest bit of a guarded death. A part that had trusted me at face value didn’t believe anymore. If I didn’t appear to be who they thought I was, what else in the world couldn’t they trust? I had brought misgiving, fear of the unknown to their safe little worlds. We should worry, they thought, if this is no longer true how far does it spread?

One day Peter made a speech in Washington DC on the steps of the capitol. Do you know what it is to be so incredibly proud of someone and at the same time more frightened than you’ve ever been in your whole life? I listened to him on the radio, watched him on the TV set at the store. He was eloquent. Proud, like his father, but beaming with integrity. With honesty, shine. He was wearing his war uniform. And he spoke about equality. He said the time had come and things had changed and the world had grown. And people applauded. People like him. With him.

Then he came home and the worry behind the people’s eyes came out in their throats. And they sang a different song.

[Peter enters in army uniform. He enters by Gazebo, which is dingy and worn, now. He lights a cigarette, then begins walking across stage towards the dog statue. As he approaches it there is a sound.]

**VOICE**

Woof!

What??

**PETER**
VOICE
[Very threatening.]

Grrrrrrrr!

PETER
[Backing away towards other statue.]

Who’s there?

VOICE #2

Woof!

[PETER checks his pace and stays center stage, sensing that he is surrounded.]

PETER
Come on out now. Who are you? What do you want?

MAN #1
[Enters from behind dog statue.]

Hey, boy.

What do you want?

MAN #2
[Enters from behind other dog statue.]

Hey there, boy.

PETER
Leave me alone. I’m just going home.

MAN #1
[Both men start growling and others join them. They surround PETER and start hitting him, barking and attacking like a pack of rabid dogs. Someone smears black on his face. Everyone is barking and tearing at him. They drag him off stage.]
JULIE
I lost my boy to this town. When they finally let him go he was tarred and feathered and hurt way down in his soul. He won't ever come back even though he grew up here. He has no home. Neither do I.

Now I'm leaving, too. I don't know where to go, all places are the same. They have the pretty shiny exterior with the grit and grime behind it. I don't know if people used to be different, or maybe it's just me that's changed. It's like there's two of everything: what things could have been, and what they really are. And the difference in the two, well, it's almost always a disappointment.

All I know is I can't stay here anymore. Everywhere I go I see him. I see them. And I see the dogs.

[She exits.]

CAL
I stood there. I watched what they did to my son. I was right there at the Lincoln Bar. I could have stepped in, stopped it. In my memory sometimes I did. Sometimes I step out with a rifle in my hand and I say "Let go of my son!" I own him, then. I claim him as mine. The crowd parts and he comes forward with a look of wonder on his face. He's confused. He just knows me as "pops" the town drunk. The guy who gets arrested for urinating in the park. But he embraces me and tears stream down our cheeks.

Other times I imagine I step in and say those words "Let go of my son!" and they laugh. They accuse me of being black, of being bad blood. They grab me and string me up, too. We're both tarred and feathered and taken out of town. Glad to be rid of us.

But the truth? The truth is I watched it. I was too scared to even step out of the door, I watched through the blinds. I heard my son scream and I saw him beaten, blackened. They knocked an eye out of his head. When they carried him off he didn't hardly look human anymore. And I found I had just enough in me to buy another drink. Shoot me some imitation pigeons. Wash the sins from my soul stained gray with cowardice and failure.

[Cast enters forms semi-circle in the USC. DRUMMER and FOREMAN stand on each end of semicircle.]
That’s about it, folks. Everything changes, everything stays the same. These people fade out and make room for others. They come here following hopes and dreams and it’s all different because time has made it different. Time changes things, if it don’t wash it clean, exactly, it at least gives things a new face to look at.

[DRUMMER enters wearing realtor jacket. A young couple enter. Listening to the spiel.

DRUMMER
Here we have a nice house with historic value in the community. This house was known as “Everyman’s House” and won a design contest way back when. It was said to have the mother in mind and improved efficiency for the little woman.

WOMAN
Well, I don’t plan on having children.

MAN
Honey, we’re still talking about it. Although, it does seem awfully small for a family with children.

WOMAN
It could work for us though. I like the historic value of it. And I’ve told you I don’t want children.

MAN
I wish the view was better. They must not have had that busy road going by when it was first built. I thought we said we’d talk about it. If you’re worried about what others would say....

DRUMMER
That’s right. It was just a quiet country road at the time. Everything around here was just empty land.

WOMAN
Pretty tight, now. It’s not others. I don’t care what other people think of me, and you. Couples of color aren’t even that unusual anymore. But, it’s still hard on the children. What do you think honey?

MAN
I think it was hard on you, but it will be easier and easier with each generation.
WOMAN
I meant about the house.

MAN
We'll sleep on it. It does have a lot to offer. It would need a lot of updates though. We'll call you tomorrow.

DRUMMER
Wouldn't expect anything less. Thanks for your time.

'Bye.

[Couple exits.]

DRUMMER
Kalamazoo, both of us will do a fadeaway. I will be carried out feet first

FOREMAN
And time and the rain will chew you to dust And the winds blow you away.

ACTOR #5
And an old, old mother will lay a green moss cover on my bones And a green moss cover on the stones of your post office and city hall.

ACTOR #3
Best of all I have loved your kiddies playing run-sheep-run

ACTOR #6
And cutting their initials on the ball ground fence. They knew every time I fooled them who was fooled and how.

ACTOR #3
Best of all I have loved the red gold smoke of your sunsets; I have loved a moon with a ring around it Floating over your public square;
ACTOR #6
I have loved the white dawn frost of early winter silver
And purple over your railroad tracks and lumber yards.

ACTOR #4
The wishing heart of you I loved, Kalamazoo.
I sang bye-lo, bye-lo to your dreams.
I sang bye-lo to your hopes and songs.
I wished to God there were hound dogs of bronze on your public square,
Hound dogs with bronze paws looking to a long horizon with a shivering silver angel, a
creeping mystic what-is-it.

END OF PLAY