



There Ain't No Wyoming

A Play In Two Acts

Robert R. Bowie, Jr.

There Ain't
No Wyoming

THE TIME AND PLACE

The play takes place in the early 1980s at several of the rest stops along Western Interstate Route 80 and Eastern Interstate Route 70 and at the Royal Oak house of Richard's father on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. All flash backs take place in the late 1960s on the Eastern Shore of Maryland during the Rap Brown demonstrations in, and the burning of, Cambridge, Maryland.

CAST OF CHARACTERS IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

- Onaje: A black man in his middle thirty's who is dressed as a highway bum in patches, feathers and rags.
- Belle: An attractive white woman in her early to mid-twenty's who is dressed as a Reno truck stop waitress.
- Richard: A white man in his early thirty's who is over dressed in completely new cowboy clothes.
- Henderson: A white ex-policeman in his early fifty's who is dressed in a work shirt and work pants but wears a policeman's hat.
- Richard's
Father: A white man in his middle fifty's. A Chesapeake Bay waterman who is dressed in working clothes and work boots.
- Dan: A black man in his middle fifty's who is dressed in old overalls and work boots.

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- Andrew: A white boy in his early twenty's who is dressed in faded madras shirt, khaki pants and work boots. He is a liberal civil rights worker of the sixties vintage.
- Sarah: Dan's wife. She is black and in her early fifty's and dressed in work clothes which are informal, but clean and neat.
- Faith: The daughter of Dan and Sarah. She is in her late teens. She is dressed in the simplest of the 1960's black styles which would be affordable for a black working class family of that time.

THE SET
(AS IS REVEALED TO AUDIENCE)

The stage is revealed to the audience; first by a spotlight on a picnic table, down stage center, on which Onaje sleeps, wakes and exits as is more particularly described in the text, and then the lights go dark; and second as the front two lights of an old convertible beam out over the audience from downstage right and the car radio blares distant static blocked country music. The car has battered Maryland license tags which are illuminated, softly and inconspicuously. The stage lights come on very slowly in order to represent the car being driven at a reasonably high rate of speed traveling east into the upcoming morning. There also is a slow strobe that rises in intensity and then drops instantly into darkness for a moment and repeats in rhythmic intervals to represent the light



from over hanging florescent lights as the car speeds along the interstate. The first few minutes of conversation between the characters comes from almost darkness revealing them only as shadowy silhouettes behind the headlights in their respective seats in the car. There is a scrim behind the car that reveals the first light of dawn on the western sky behind them.

Richard, who is driving, is perhaps 5 foot 9 or 10 inches tall. He is wearing a cowboy hat, which is too big for him, pressed down on his head so the wind from the car will not blow it off. He has a a four or five day growth of beard. He is dressed in a brand new cowboy shirt which is rococo in its embroidery and embellishments, and a pair of new blue jeans which conceal the top half of a set of new cowboy boots. As the play opens the only thing that can be seen by the audience through the windshield are his shoulders, his hands gripping the wheel, and his head and cowboy hat. Behind him, in the backseat, the passenger's side, is Belle. She is perhaps 5 foot, 5 inches tall; she has a good figure and is dressed, in a dirty white uniform, as a truck stop waitress. She has a red bandanna or scarf over her head to stop her hair from blowing in the wind. As the scene opens she is leaning over the front seat passenger side trying to turn down the blaring radio. Throughout the entire first scene the lights rise slowly on downstage right, as the dawn comes, illuminating the car and eventually the picnic table which is off to the side, at down stage center, and two wooden folding chairs set up, side by side, down stage left, which will act as the front two seats of an old pick up truck.

As the lights rise, in the shadowy distance of upstage left, slowly appears the inside of a very battered first floor kitchen. The kitchen has an inside door which leads to the rest of the house and an upstage screen door which leads to the outside. Above the sink, in the corner of the stage, there are a few shelves. An old stove is next to the sink and next to that is a very old icebox with the door open so that the icebox light casts a small sliver of light across the kitchen floor. There is, at the center of the kitchen, a small table and a few cheap metal chairs and a light bulb hanging from the ceiling. The

house, during the play, doubles as the battered kitchen of Richard's father's home and the clean and tidy kitchen of Dan, Faith and Sarah. Scene changes allow time for the change although the change need only be minimal. During the time that the space represents Richard's father's kitchen it is bathed in the flicking blue of the light from a T.V. which is on the kitchen table. The house, however, is not revealed by the light coming down on the car which is downstage right, until later in the first Act and as the audience observes the first action of the play it sees only Onaje with a spotlight falling down on him on the picnic table downstage center.

ACT I SCENE I

ONAJE:

(It is slightly before dawn. The highway runs up and back nearby. Onaje has just woken up on the picnic table under a rest stop light. He stretches and feels the moving air around him and then reaches into a duffle bag and gets an apple and begins to eat it as he stretches and wakes up.) AAAhhh - OOOh. *(As he eats the apple he rummages in the duffle bag again and gets out a red bandanna which contains some old fast food chicken and he takes a bite and puts the half eaten apple back into the bag.)* Yea - we're talkin breakfast chicken here! *(He bursts into a warm wonderful robust laugh and puts the chicken back into the bandanna and pulls out a sextant and finds his mark on the North Star and then holds his hand out ninety degrees indicating due East. He then packs up his bag and takes a deep breath before he steps off of the picnic table.)* East for ninety days...

(He disappears into the darkness. The headlights of the car flash on and beam over the audience and the strobing overhead street lights illuminate Richard behind the wheel, obviously driving fast into the dim morning light, with Belle banging on him from the backseat.)

BELLE:

(Reaching to turn the radio down from the—back passenger seat and screaming at the top of her lungs above the radio which is blaring.) I'm askin' ya I'm askin' ya I'm begging ya turn the radio down! And slow down.

RICHARD:

(Taking his right hand off the wheel and batting her back into the passenger seat, also screaming at the top of his lungs over the radio.) - And that's another thing - I play my music as loud as I want whenever I want!... *(He turns the radio down)* ... But because I love you I'll turn the radio down.

BELLE:

And-slow-down!

RICHARD:

... Because I love you I will slow down. *(As the car slows down the strobe of the street lights slows in pace.)*

BELLE:

(Leaning back over the front seat passenger side.) Thank God.. And can I come back up to the front seat yet? Pleeeseee?

RICHARD:

No.

BELLE:

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

RICHARD:

No.

BELLE:

(Leaning over the front seat passenger side again.) No? No, what? No, there's gonna be more conditions? Or no I can't get back in the front seat? For Christ sake, Jesus!

RICHARD:

Just no! No Belle - no!

BELLE:

Well, ain't you the God damn cat's ass! Well okay, ... I'll just have to have some of my own fun back here. *(She pouts for another moment and then she lifts herself gingerly up to the back of the car to sit on the trunk behind the back passenger seats and exposes herself to the rushing wind over the windshield.)* ... I'm having fun now! ... do you hear me? ... I'm having fun now! ... God damn

it I'm having fun now! *(She returns to amusing herself, since Richard does not answer, by flapping her arms and letting her hands catch the wind so they go up and down and bouncing up and down on the back of the car with her feet still on the seats of the backseat. She makes sounds like "AAAAAAh Weeeeo" very loudly as her mouth fills with the forced air rushing over the windshield. She is momentarily lost in the act of amusing herself. She starts to spit into the wind and dodge the return spit either left or right until -she brushes off some of the spit from her shoulder, says "OOOOOOh" in disgust and returns to her seat, bored again, and then leans over the front passenger seat to speak to Richard again.)* Alright, tell me about the God damn state of Maryland. I don't wanna hear about God damn where you been. I don't wanna hear about Nicaragua or where ever it was and I don't wanna hear about the damn Wyoming ranch no more. I wanna know where the hell I'm go'n.

RICHARD:

(After a brief pause.) Maryland is great.

BELLE:

(After a brief pause.) That's not what I heard. I heard it was the pits... Can I get back in the front seat yet?

RICHARD:

Not til you apologize ...

BELLE:

Will not apologize damn it! Now or ever!

RICHARD:

Well then stay in the back seat then.

BELLE:

For the rest of my life? - Hey, I can make the best of this - *(In a mocking aristocratic voice as she assumes a superior position back again on top of the backseat.)* Drive on, Richard! Take me to a restaurant Richard! Don't be late you asshole! Everybody in Maryland is going to think you're my driver not

my husband. ... if we get married! *(She leans over the seat and tweeks his cheek and gets back gingerly on top of the seat above the car.)*

RICHARD:

(Over his shoulder) You ain't never gonna find a guy as good as me and you know it - Get down or I'll roll the car - you wanna see me? *(He zig zags the car by twisting the wheel left and right and she weaves back and forth on the top of the seat dangerously and then plops back into the back seat.)*

BELLE:

I said I'd marry you - but I swear to God the way you was back in Reno that I was the first woman you'd ever been with - shakin' all over and all -

RICHARD:

(Trying to face her while he is still driving.) That's a God damn lie - I had Spick women dn South America; I had women all the time when I was working on that ranch and two nights before I met you in Reno I had four girls in the back seat of this car and I still got more money than God! *(He waves a fist full of money in her face.)*

BELLE:

(Pointing straight ahead.) Hey, keep your eyes on the road or you'll be humpin' your horn forever, honey... For Christsake, Jesus!

RICHARD:

(Turning back to look at the road.) I'm tellin' ya that's the bullshit that got you into the backseat to begin with! Keep it up!

BELLE:

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

RICHARD:

(Exploding and turning back again to look at her while he is still driving.)

Apologize for that, too, God damn it! Or you're in the backseat for ever and ever - I swear it!

BELLE:

(All of a sudden looking straight ahead and pointing with great fear in her voice.) Richard, watch out! Look at that thing - Watch out! Watch out!

RICHARD:

(Returning his eyes to the road and- then quickly veering to the left, there is a thud, and returning back with a correction to the right.) Christ, did I hit it? What was it?

BELLE:

(Turning around entirely in her seat to look.) I don't know. I swear it brushed the car - pull over.

RICHARD:

(Pulling over and stopping the car on the edge of the road.) Did I hit it? What was it? *(The lights are on them steady now for the first time.)*

BELLE:

(Still turned around in her seat but gazing periodically back at Richard.) ...Jeez - He's a weird lookin' nigger -the Motha did a swan dive into the ditch... - he was kneeling, like praying in the road with some bags next ta him... Hey, he's getting up.

RICHARD:

Well, should I back up - did I hit him?

BELLE:

He's standing up and he's starting to run toward us - Are you gonna pick him up?

RICHARD:

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

better decide quick.

BELLE:

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

RICHARD:

Everything!

BELLE:

Nol Go ahead pick him up. You wanna pick up some nigger hitchhiker go ahead and do it.

RICHARD:

Well maybe I'm just a good person. But you better make up your mind. Now!

BELLE:

(Crossing her arms and sitting on the back of the car looking behind her at the hitchhiker running toward them.) And maybe you're just a rat's asshole and you don't give a shit about anybody.

RICHARD:

Apologize or I pick him up.

BELLE:

Maybe I won't.

RICHARD:

God damned women!

BELLE:

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

RICHARD:

Get out of the car.

BELLE:

.... but I love ya anyway. *(Onaje, a black man dressed in a bizarre collection of feathers, african prints, ragged pants and motorcycle boots, runs limping from upstage right, from behind the scrim, to downstage right toward the passenger door of the car. He is carrying a duffle bag full of a thousand odds and ends over his shoulder as he hobbles speedily to the car and throws the duffle bag into the backseat next to Belle, acknowledging neither of them, and gets into the passenger seat and slams the door.)*

RICHARD:

(Richard pulls back on to the road and picks up speed after shifting gears several times during which Onaje stands up in the passenger seat, looks straight ahead and grips the windshield for support. Richard looks over and does a double take.) What? Is this the wrong direction or something? Hey, what the ... - *(Onaje inhales the wind with great gasps.)*

ONAJE:

(Onaje pulls the sextant out of his bag and puts it to his eye and continues to look up into the sky and continues to stand up in his seat. He begins pointing his left arm diagonally off toward the driver's left and staring for a moment into the sky and then stardng absolutely straight in front of him.) Ninety degrees off the North Star - don't worry about it babe, you're headed in the right direction. Let's go. Speed man, speed - let's go! *(He grips the top of the windshield and sits on the top of the seat of the passenger's seat and braces himself for the increase of wind and starts bouncing up and down with excitement.)* Let's go! *(Richard continues to pick up speed and the strobe lights increase but the stage is now filled with new morning light.)* AAAAAAAAAAAAh.... I am Onaje!

RICHARD:

Hey, Belle, check out this! ... but no you won't apologize.

ONAJE:

(Sitting on the top of the seat and holding on to the top of the windshield.)
Faster. Faster!

RICHARD:

You hear that? *(Looking back at Belle.)* Faster? *(He laughs and then turns to Onaje)* Wanna hear some loud radio?... What the hell you doin'?

ONAJE:

Rechargin... aaah. *(Onaje lifts his arms and follows the exact motions that Belle had followed when she was sitting on the trunk above the seats in the backseat earlier but he is dead serious. His arms are spread wide. He is drinking in the wind and speed hungrily.)* I was in that place too long! Aaaah.

RICHARD:

Hey, don't get too weird buddy --You better behave or I'll put you in the back seat.

BELLE:

(Hitting Richard on the back of his head from her place in the back seat.) The Hell you will I

ONAJE:

Music..? yea!

RICHARD:

(Turning up the radio full blast and turning back and laughing at Belle.)
Alright! This is the way the damn front seat ought'a be.

BELLE:

Turn that God damned thing down! And slow down!

RICHARD:

Hey man, what the hell are you do'n?

ONAJE:

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

BELLE:

Yea - okay? Just remember this - He killed people for the CIA. In Nicaragua!

RICHARD:

Yea!

ONAJE:

(Studying Richard for a moment before he speaks.) Bullshit!... *(spreading, his arms out again and drinking in the speed)*

BELLE:

He didn't buy it Richard - look at him!

RICHARD:

Hey - I got everything under control, Belle.

BELLE:

Sure you do - you're actin' like Clint Eastwood gone mad 'n now you got a gorilla ridin' shot gun! This is great! Both of you turn the radio down and slow down!

RICHARD:

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

ONAJE:

No.

RICHARD:

Well okay.

BELLE:

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

RICHARD:

You never asked... Bimbo! *(He laughs and looks up at Onaje who does not respond.)*

BELLE:

(Lifts herself up to the top of the backseat and sits again on the trunk and then screams at Onaje.) Will you tell him to turn the God damn radio down!

RICHARD:

You all like it up there? *(He stands up on the seat and with his hands still on the wheel he sits on the top of his seat and then momentarily uncertain, puts his feet on the wheel and then heroically lifts his hands in the air, driving with his feet, and imitates, sarcastically, the motions that Belle and Onaje had performed when they were confronted by the air blowing into their faces.)* Top this! Look at me! *(Looking back at Belle who is totally horrified.)* Wanna see me make a left foot signal - *(Looking over his shoulder at Belle)* or are you gonna tell me to keep my feet on the wheel? *(He stamps at the radio with his right foot and the radio goes off.)* Look! Rest stop! *(He points and steers the car with his feet to the right toward the rest stop and then realizes he can't stop the car because his feet are not on the brakes.)* Jesus Christ! We got no brakes! *(He bursts into laughter and then focuses immediately in front of him and then slides back into the driver's seat and puts on the brakes and pulls the car over to the rest stop.)* Everybody out for a piss.

(The lights that have slowly raised to illustrate the dawn have now revealed the battered house upstage left in a shadowy framework. Richard gets out of the car, pulls down his fly and exits downstage right. Onaje gets out of the car and goes over to the picnic table. Belle watches him from the back seat of the car. The lights dim on them and raise on the kitchen in the house, stage left. In the house Richard's Father drinks a beer and watches morning T.V. He is drunk at the kitchen table. On the other side of the stage, entirely separate from the action so far, Henderson comes from down stage left and heads for the front door of the shadowy

house. He bangs on the door several times and waits. Richard's Father looks up, does not respond and then returns to his drinking.)

HENDERSON:

Hey, let me in. I want to talk to you. *(He bangs on the door.)* Come on let me in.

RICHARD'S FATHER:

What do you want?

HENDERSON:

I want to come in - why do you think I'm bangin' on the door?

RICHARD'S FATHER:

Why do you want to come in?

HENDERSON:

Maybe I want to take a leak.

RICHARD'S FATHER:

Pick a tree.

HENDERSON:

Why do you talk to me that way? *(Richard's Father doesn't move and goes back to watching T.V.)* It's about your son. *(He bangs on the door again.)* People are talkin' in town -I'm here to help you - we were buddy's once. If you don't let me in the cops'll come when I go back - come on!

RICHARD'S FATHER:

(He gets up from the table, walks over to the screen door and lets Henderson in.) We've had our differences Henderson.

HENDERSON:

(He enters.) Sure, sure we have - but you ought to be over that now - The people in town been askin about you and your son. *(Henderson goes to the*

refrigerator and gets a beer.)

RICHARD'S FATHER:

What are they sayin' about my son?

HENDERSON:

(Pops the beer and drinks.) Well, the marina down in Easton has been missing two thousand dollars since last week - 'n it's common knowledge you been late on some payments...

RICHARD'S FATHER:

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

HENDERSON:

(He drinks a swig of the beer.) I don't know, but your boy just came back and nobody seen him around here the last week or so.

RICHARD'S FATHER:

(Returning to the kitchen table he drinks his beer.) So.

HENDERSON:

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

RICHARD'S FATHER:

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

HENDERSON:

Yea - he's free now - and people are wondering... That's all - you know anything about any of that?

RICHARD'S FATHER:

No.

HENDERSON:

They say you was around that money after you brought in your catch of crabs. 'N the same day your boy was down there workin' on your boat...

RICHARD'S FATHER:

I didn't offer you that beer, Henderson.

HENDERSON:

(He takes a drink.) You wouldn't deny me a beer this early in the morning, would you? *(He kicks a beer can.)* Looks like you been doing more drinkin' than workin'. ...They think its either you or your boy... People noticed you've been missing for talk over these last few weeks - you've been back here alone, they say... 'N nobody seen you out on the boat neither - They were worried about you.

RICHARD'S FATHER:

So what's in it for you?

HENDERSON:

(Takes a drink and crushes his can in his hand.) Where do you want it - in the trash or on the floor?

RICHARD'S FATHER:

Get out of here!

HENDERSON:

When did you get like this - was it years ago?... The marina'll give me half of what I get back - people pay top dollars for ex-cops.

RICHARD'S FATHER:

Get out of here Henderson. You never should have been a cop!

HENDERSON:

You know people live together. They think together. It's like a common

understanding - you been choosing to be outside - why is that?

RICHARD'S FATHER:

(Getting up from the table forcibly and threatening Henderson to get him to leave.) I can still beat you - now go!

HENDERSON:

Was it your boy or you? Just tell me who I'm lookin' for...

RICHARD'S FATHER:

(Throwing Henderson out the screen door.) I knew they'd send you first - If you got anything, tell the cops - they know where I live... *(He shoves him out the door and threatens him.)* But you come back here and I'll kill you! I will! *(The lights go out on them and back on Onaje who has taken the red bandanna containing some fried chicken out of his duffle bag. He opens it on the picnic table and begins to read the sky with a sextant down stage center, while Belle remains seated on the trunk of the car.)*

RICHARD:

(Reenters zipping up his fly.) Aaah. Hey, I feel better.

BELLE:

(As she gets out of the car.) What the hell are you doing?

ONAJE:

(Pausing for a moment and then looking at her and putting the sextant on the picnic table.) Charting the stars; making sure of my course.

BELLE:

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

ONAJE:

I don't acknowledge the highway.

BELLE:

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

ONAJE:

No, I don't recognize its existence.

BELLE:

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

ONAJE:

(Packing up the sextant.) It's just evidence of formless logic - it's just the way people get places.

BELLE:

What do you mean - Exactly?

ONAJE:

I go due east for ninety days in the summer - due south for ninety days in the fall 'n in the winter due west 'n in the spring north - little boxes, within or without themselves and I keep notes of the changes - It's my job work.

RICHARD:

(After zipping up his pants he goes to the car and speaks.) You people'd better piss cause I'm not stop'n for another three hundred miles - I got self discipline - I practice bladder control! I got peaches under the seat - if anybody wants peaches, I got peaches in cans under the seat.

BELLE:

(Addressing Onaje and not paying any attention to Richard.) Changes? - what are you talking about?

ONAJE:

I'm recording the final moments as the living generation becomes mother nature... We're makin' the earth into our own backyard.

BELLE:

What?

ONAJE:

'N you don't even know that the Amazon is the lungs of the planet... do you?

BELLE:

Lungs? This is wild shit, come here and listen to this guy.

RICHARD:

Forget him, you better think about your bladder -

BELLE:

(To Onaje) You mean like ... what?

ONAJE:

I mean that I am the only witness to the change. I'm an observer - it's my job.

BELLE:

Come over here and listen to this - really -

RICHARD:

It's gonna be painful 'bout an hour from now - you know how your hair blows forward in the convertible - well I ain't got no windshield wipers for the inside of this car - *(He rummages under the front seat of the car and pulls out a can opener and a can of peaches and begins opening the peaches.)*

BELLE:

Hey, Richard come here! *(She beckons to him but he pays no attention)* Richard? Well, what do you know about him? *(Pointing at Richard)*

ONAJE:

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

BELLE:

About forty-eight hours.

ONAJE:

Why are you travel with him now?

BELLE:

Because we're gettin' married.

ONAJE:

What happens if it don't work out?

BELLE:

No problem - I got bus money in my boot -

ONAJE:

You've been married before?

BELLE:

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

ONAJE:

Where'd he tell ya he'd been?

BELLE:

Been foreman at a ranch and before that South America.

ONAJE:

He never worked on a western ranch.

BELLE:

How do you know that?

ONAJE:

You were a waitress, you should have picked it up.

BELLE:

How'd you know I was a waitress.

ONAJE:

You got mustard on your waitress uniform.

BELLE:

Oh, *(She's a little embarrassed)* but how about the western ranch?

ONAJE:

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

BELLE:

Well, where's he been?

ONAJE:

He ain't been a soldier either.

BELLE:

How do you know that?

ONAJE:

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

BELLE:

(To Richard) You better come over here this man don't know you but he says you ain't been to the west and you don't know shit about the CIA.

RICHARD:

(With a can of peaches in one hand and a can opener in the other hand.)
Forget him, what does he know.

ONAJE:

I know what I see.

BELLE:

Well that's two out of three. What do you know about his father?

ONAJE:

Nothing. What has he told you?

BELLE:

I don't know - something about him bein' scared that some Maryland ex-cop will be bangin' on his daddy's door. And that his Daddy's got all of these books, picture books about Wyoming - He only told me this stuff after we get all the way outta Nevada - and he's going ninety miles an hour!

ONAJE:

I don't care. I'm hungry.

BELLE:

I think he's going back to see his daddy 'n I'm kinda here -cause he's gonna show me off - I think it's a little weird!

RICHARD:

Hey, I got peaches here and a can opener - you don't want no peaches?

ONAJE:

I got chicken here - day old fast food chicken if you want it... And breath mints.

BELLE:

If you're so God damn know everything why aren't you eatin' health food? Huh?

ONAJE:

You ever tasted that shit?

BELLE:

Ask him about his daddy.

RICHARD:

(Exploding with anger.) He don't know nothing about my daddy. That's my business -

BELLE:

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

ONAJE:

No.

BELLE:

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

ONAJE:

Oh, that's real nice... Woman you're on your own - You figure it out - they come fly'n down the highway like letters through the post office - address, stamped and return address - every letter's got a message - you don't want to read it - that's okay but I ain't read'n it for you.

BELLE:

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

RICHARD:

I don't care what he thinks. He don't know nothin'. Eat these peaches if you want 'um, but we gotta get back on the road. *(He stabs his fork into the can of peaches and eats one and hands the can and fork to Onaje.)* The juice is good. Don't cut your lips. This is some nigger who looks at the stars - Belle!

BELLE:

I was just asking?

RICHARD:

Well, after you eat the peaches and the chicken, get back into the car cause we're going, we're going home - What he says - the man gets out when I turn off the interstate. *(Belle and Onaje eat the peaches and chicken at the picnic table and Richard struts nervously around the picnic table and back to the car and sits in the driver's seat while they eat.)*

BELLE:

Hey, you ain't gettin out are you? - he takes me out all night 'n then he takes me to work 'n then next night he comes with flowers and takes me out again - he had money -lots of money that he won in the slots. ... He wasn't like most men - he'd ask about me - 'n he wanted me to talk. We drove into the desert and watched the stars... He was nice to me. Maybe he is tell'n it all true. 'N the peaches for both of us - he don't know us really - what do you mean the car tells it all? I don't wanna get back in that car. Hey, take a nap - you been driving since Reno. He scares me a little bit, you know?

ONAJE:

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

RICHARD:

Alright, I don't care. I could use a nap. Wake me after you all've peed. *(He gets in the back seat and sticks his feet out from the back seat. The lights go down on Richard, the car and the picnic table, and rise slowly on Henderson who has returned to the front of the house upstage left.)*

HENDERSON:

(As the lights raise on the house he starts banging on the door.) Come out here. Get your ass out here. *(Richard's Father is sitting in a chair drinking a beer. The T.V. light flickers on him as he waits.)* The Sunoco station on St. Michael's Road says your boy gassed up that car real good and it was packed like he was gone? You know anything about that? They said he had new tags on the car - you know about that.

RICHARD'S FATHER:

No.

HENDERSON:

I was down at the Court Street pub yesterday and the prosecutor's office is talkin' - they don't know whether you got the money or your son - If it-ain't you just tell me -

RICHARD'S FATHER:

Get lost Henderson.

HENDERSON:

That's what you want me to tell them?... Give me the money or I'm turnin' in your son - Let me in... Come on...

RICHARD'S FATHER:

No.

HENDERSON:

How you gonna pay for the motor on that boat if you ain't bringin' in

crabs? The boys at the Sunoco station drinking coffee want to know - What should I tell 'um, huh? Come on let me in. *(He bangs on the door again.)*

RICHARD'S FATHER:

Tell 'um I took all that I could from the oyster beds I seeded last year and tell 'um the crabs are small 'n they stink of oil in the baskets when I bring 'um in... 'N tell 'um they did that.

HENDERSON:

(Banging on the door.) What the hell does that mean? Come on let me in.

RICHARD'S FATHER:

Tell 'um the water's dirty and the sky is dirty and I don't want to go out on that boat no more.

HENDERSON:

How'd your boy get that money for-that car? Where he's been they don't pay too good. *(He laughs.)* You stole it for him, didn't you? I can get you off - just sign this paper that your son did it - come on - I won't get the full thing but they'll pay me then - come on!

(After banging once or twice more he exits and the lights dim on the house. The lights rise again on downstage right. Richard is nervously sitting in the back seat as the lights come down on him and on Onaje and Belle who are still at the picnic table. He leans over the front seat and honks his horn several times to encourage Belle and Onaje to come back to the car.)

RICHARD:

Come on, pee will ya - you got fifteen minutes.

BELLE:

Hey dig a grave and take a dirt nap, honey! Christ, the guy won't give me any peace. He's Don Juan in Reno and a scuz ball by Cheyenne. Men are like that. Jesus. I like him but I don't know who he is!

ONAJE:

You're gonna marry him? Good luck.

BELLE:

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

ONAJE:

Babe, I been watchin things happen so long I know how things happen. You look at me close you can tell. I know the pattern of things...

BELLE:

What do you mean?

ONAJE:

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

BELLE:

How come you could read him so fast? I think you're right. I think he knows you're right, but he don't care. Why do you think that is?

ONAJE:

I don't know - he wants us to go.

BELLE:

No don't go. Just talk to me will you. You could drive while he sleeps, maybe.

ONAJE:

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

BELLE:

Christ Jesus, No - that's like forgettin' how to cook eggs!

ONAJE:

No, all that's done with...

BELLE: T

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

ONAJE:

What part of Maryland's he going to?

BELLE:

The Eastern Shore - is there such a place?

ONAJE:

What part of the Eastern Shore?

BELLE:

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

ONAJE:

(Visibly frightened) Jesus Christ!

BELLE:

You know them places?

ONAJE:

Yes.

BELLE:

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

ONAJE:

I grew up there - my Daddy always picked up hitchhikers... *(The lights rise onto the other side of the stage, downstage left, on the two chairs. There is a brown*

paper bag under the left chair with a six pack of beer hidden in it. The two chairs represent the cab of an old pick-up truck, the front two seats, and some form of imagined gear shift. The lights go on slowly as the sound of a truck pulling over and stopping on the side of a highway, becomes louder. Lights go on as Andrew jumps into the cab next to Dan, who is driving. The action is parallel to Onaje's entrance earlier. Andrew is about twenty or so years old, and carrying a duffle bag. Dan is a solid man; strong, and still exhibits a great deal of youth in his mannerisms and movements. As Andrew has hauled himself up into the truck and pulled the duffle bag in behind him, the lights are all the way on and colored, creating just before sunset, at the point of dusk. In the area up stage left where Richard's father has been sitting, in the old house, now move in the shadows, Sarah and Faith. They sit at the table or move around the stove barely visible but clearly present.)

ANDREW:

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

DAN:

Ya, getting pretty dark... 'Fraid nobody was going to see ya out there.

ANDREW:

(He pulls out a cigarette.) I was afraid of that myself. Mind if I smoke?

DAN:

No, man, your privilege.

ANDREW:

You like a cigarette?

DAN:

No thanks, man. Don't smoke. *(Andrew lights his cigarette, settles back for the ride.)*

ANDREW:

How far south you going?

DAN:

Only down as far as Unionville. Just got off work from the canning factory up near Federalsburg. *(Signals behind with his thumb.)* Just going on home. How far south ya wanna go?

ANDREW:

Eventually, I want to get down as far as Atlanta, but the rides have been short so it might take me another day or two. I am going down to see a friend of mine who's there. I thought I'd go help him.

DAN:

What part of the North ya from?

ANDREW:

How'd ya know I lived in the North?

DAN:

Just standing on the road I know'd ya was from the North. Ya got that look 'bout ya. People from the South like ya don't live too long. Yea, I used to work up North. I used to drive big rigs outside Cleveland. Yea, I like the North. What part of the North ya from?

ANDREW:

Just outside of Boston. A place called Watertown, Massachusetts.

DAN:

Oh yea, Watertown? 'Bout a year I lived up in Central Square. Ya know where that is, huh?

ANDREW:

Oh sure. Lived right near there - Porter Square for a while. What part

of Central Square?

DAN:

Up the far end of Brookline Avenue.

ANDREW:

Yea, that can be a pretty tough place.

DAN:

Oh yea, I had my fun. Ya do a lotta hitchin'?

ANDREW:

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

DAN:

Yea, I know what you mean, man. I know what ya mean.

ANDREW:

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

DAN:

Ya jump freights?

ANDREW:

Coming back through the midwest, I jumped one that took me through Iowa almost all the way to Omaha. I stopped in this little place called Fort Dodge.

DAN:

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

ANDREW:

Beg your pardon?

DAN:

Grass, man?

ANDREW:

Grass. Oh sure, on occasion.

DAN:

Yea. I used to smoke reefer. I remember them good times. Smoke a little reefer, drink a little. Used to do that up in Central Square. Yea, I dun my rambling.

ANDREW:

What made you stop?

DAN:

Oh man. I met my little women outside Baltimore. I got two fine kids too. Boy of mine's about your age - William. Yea, I'se a happy man. I goin' to my little woman and be happy all night long. Man, that's the life. The rambling's good for a while but ya get yourself a woman and you'll be a happy man.

ANDREW:

Well, I'm looking.

DAN:

Well you just keep on looking.

ANDREW:

(Joking) I believe you... Listen I want to thank you for the ride...

DAN:

You be careful man. They're fightin' south of here, down in Cambridge. I heard it just now on the radio. My boy's down there. It worries me some.

ANDREW:

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

DAN:

There's been shootings down there... William-came down from Baltimore this morning... The radio says they're burning Cambridge, and a cop was shot. It worries me. (*He laughs, consciously changing the subject.*) Well, I'll tell ya. It's Saturday night and I don't work Sunday. So I generally get me some beer coming home. Ya like beer?

ANDREW:

Sure. I've got a little money. Want me to help get some?

DAN:

(*Starts rummaging under the front seat.*) I guess we've both been working hard today. No man, I don't want ya money. (*Pulls out the brown paper bag.*) Here I got some all ready. Ya like Millers? (*Passes beer to Andrew.*)

ANDREW:

Sure. That's great.

DAN:

Now ya got to keep it down now 'cause the cops don't like us drinking on the road (*opens his beer*), but I guess if we're careful, what they don't know won't hurt 'em none. (*Takes a drink. Signals to Andrew to do same.*) Come on man. Ya gotta get happy. (*Andrew laughs and takes a drink. Beat.*) What makes you want to go down to Atlanta? Ya know the south ain't like no other part of this country. It ain't like going to California, you know that man?

ANDREW:

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

DAN:

You do that man. (*drinks*) The Klan is down here. Hate to see someone like you get hurt - but you was telling me why you're going to Atlanta.

ANDREW:

About a week ago, my friend from Atlanta sent me a letter. He told me about what he was doing, Civil Rights work and voter registration. All summer I wanted to get out and ramble. So when I got this letter, I started thinking about how I could go down to Atlanta. I thought maybe I could help somebody 'cause I've had it pretty easy and all and I know that. So yesterday morning I called up the guy at the job real early and told him I'd quit - told him he could keep the rest of the pay check and I packed the duffle and by eight o'clock I was thumbing down the Mass Turnpike on my way to Atlanta. So here I am.

DAN:

You shouldn't go further down tonight on account of the fighting.

ANDREW:

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

DAN:

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

ANDREW:

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

DAN:

Well I tell ya man. We ain't got much but if that don't bother ya, you're welcome. 'Sides that man I got a bottle over the kitchen shelf and it is Saturday so we can have ourselves a good time. All right? Maybe you'll meet my boy if he gets home tonight...

ANDREW:

All right! Sounds good. *(With a grin. Both of them laugh happily.)*

RICHARD:

(Suddenly Richard's voice interrupts the story as he yells from the other side of the stage at Belle and Onaje. The lights black out on down stage left and Dan and Andrew exit in the dark of down stage left.) Come on damn it! Come on get into the car. I can't wait no more - we gotta go. *(Onaje and Belle get up from the picnic table and get into the car slowly.)* I'm sorry. I've been thinkin' about my daddy. You all sleep. Sleep now. Sleep. You two need the sleep worst than me. *(The lights go out on the car and the engine of the car roars and they hit the highway again as the lights rise on the other side of the stage on Henderson.)*

HENDERSON:

(The light falls on Henderson; he holds a fold up chair in one hand as he bangs again on the door several times and Richard's father holds the same position at the kitchen table drinking a beer.) The bank is lookin' for its money - we all figured it out. You stole the two thousand dollars and you gave it to your boy. Middleman, he was gone for eight years and you steal for him? He'll just come home when the money runs out - come on let me in - sign the papers on him. What is he to you? It's just money. 'Sides you got you're own debts to pay - the marina needs the crabs - come on in *(He bangs on the door.)* I brought a chair -I'll wait.

RICHARD'S FATHER:

I'm not signing no papers on the boy.

HENDERSON:

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

RICHARD'S FATHER:

No.

HENDERSON:

No? Christ you could be free.

RICHARD'S FATHER:

No. The rich people cut my crab lines with their powerboats nowadays and they don't care - they laugh at me. They dump last night's beer cans and head up the Tred Avon to Oxford for lunch - ask them, they'll tell you it ain't against the law.

HENDERSON:

I go back and tell them that 'n they'll tell me get the two thousand - they don't care - they want the money - one way or the other they want the money - what do you want me to say?

RICHARD'S FATHER:

What are you protecting man. The rich people own the land now and the Bay is dead... He's out in Wyoming by now - pumping gas or fixin semis - He's free by now - I know it. Get away from me Henderson! *(Henderson moves down in front of the house, down stage left, and sets up his chair and takes a seat.)*

HENDERSON:

Alright -I'll wait.

(The Lights Go Out.)

ACT I SCENE II

As the lights come up on the car downstage right, it is mid-afternoon of the same day. Richard is driving. Onaje, in the passenger's seat, is asleep and Belle, in the back seat, is also asleep. As the lights rise and illuminate the car, the headlights are off as is the radio.

RICHARD:

(After a long pause while he continues to drive he starts banging his open hand against Onaje's left shoulder in order to wake him up.) I can't stand it, you been asleep for six hours. I've done my three hundred miles and more. Now wake up and talk to me. I wanna know something from you.

ONAJE:

(Waking up and looking at Richard with a start.) Where are we - what time is it?

RICHARD:

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

ONAJE:

(Waking up and shaking himself) Don't you ever sleep man?

RICHARD:

(As he pulls the car over in a rest stop.) No. I'm going home. Go ahead and take your leak, but don't wake up my bride. I pulled over and got sandwiches - real quick though. *(They both get out of the car and Onaje goes to relieve himself in a rest stop trash can, on stage right, and Richard proceeds to the picnic table which is now lighted.)* Piss in the can. Take some risks. Piss through all the bumble bees, *(beat)* I've been thinkin'. *(Onaje uses his other hand to sweep away the bees.)* I wanna know why you interfere? It don't mean a damn to you what I've told her in Reno - it don't mean a damn what my intentions are. You listening? I lived it man *(he gets on top of the picnic table)* - it's in my brain

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

ONAJE:

(Urinating in the can.) Cause it ain't as real as these bees.

RICHARD:

(He steps onto the seat of the picnic table and then mounts the picnic table like a horse.) Real? You don't know nothing about bees until you've seen them around horses. A hot day around the cattle and a bee sting will send a horse off careening over the desert. *(He stands on top of the picnic table as he speaks.)* I stood on them bareback with the reins in my hands - barefoot on the sweaty backs. I mended the fences, rail after rail, and rode the cattle in, and built little campfires out on the plains and made sure my men were rested and were full of coffee - I take care of people. That's what I do. It's in my brain man - I had to live it here - So where do you come off tellin' me - look at me - where you come off tellin' her that that ain't so?

ONAJE:

(Onaje has been watching him, as he has zipped up his fly and now slowly approaches him. Onaje stands beneath him as Richard lords over him from the top of the picnic table.) How long were you in jail man?

RICHARD:

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

ONAJE:

(He steps up on the seat of the picnic table and sits downfacing the audience with Richard towering above him.) I read, too. I know every public library from San Francisco to New York. Maybe we ain't that different man - I read dictionaries just to touch the worlds. The worlds within the words. Like you. It's a kind of dreaming in another man's mind - you know. Are there any words that scare you man? Take two words and put them together - How about "whipping." How about "Endless"... "Endless-whipping" don't those two words sound frightening together - you ever thought about that? *(He thinks for a moment.)* "Niggerman"

RICHARD:

Yea well... What does that have to do with me? I wanna take that woman back to Maryland and get married... And have a couple of kids. I wanna leave the shit behind.

ONAJE:

(Gently gesturing to Richard to join him at the picnic table.) I understand the idea ...When you ain't part of nothing - I saw a city burning once. I saw the cops running before the gun... Listen to me now - Watch the interstate come to us, close and go away from us far away. We could be sittin' anywhere up or down this highway and have the same view - don't matter where we are: You dig? Come on sit down... *(He holds his hands out quietly, testing the air around him.)* ...The breezes are like the thoughts of the universe... In between, the highways come and go, there is this picnic table - and us sitting here...

RICHARD:

(Sits down next to Onaje.) So what the hell do I see? Different, I mean?

ONAJE:

Just once I wanted somebody to see it my way... Can you feel it? ...The truck traffic is changing the thoughts of the universe... This is the place for the moment.

RICHARD:

...I think maybe I understand - but I get scared thinking like this...

ONAJE:

No man - it's beautiful. It's the brain of Mother Nature.

RICHARD:

Yea - I know ...Christ every time you take a dump you must be wondering whether its killing some fish... You mean it though - huh? ...

ONAJE:

What part of the Eastern Shore are you from?

RICHARD:

What difference does that make - How'd you know about the Eastern Shore?

ONAJE:

The girl told me.

RICHARD:

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

ONAJE:

(Pointing over his shoulder at the front of the car.) The tags are this year's.

RICHARD:

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

ONAJE:

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

RICHARD:

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

ONAJE:

I'm getting off at the interstate - I'm not gonna see the end of this. I've seen it in my head already.

RICHARD:

You never see the end of any ride, do ya? You're always sleeping under a bridge. What's the reason for that man? What was that story?

ONAJE:

Yea - that's right. I was tellin' her a story - but I stopped.

RICHARD:

And you don't want to see the end of this one, do ya? (*Grabbing Onaje violently.*) Don't screw it up for me - you hear, or I bring you down with me - I can take you down.

ONAJE:

You're a lucky man you are... I ain't gonna hurt you.

RICHARD:

Why? Why am I so lucky?

ONAJE:

... You got some one to travel with... It don't matter, I'll be gone soon - you understand... (*Richard understands, looks at Onaje but says nothing.*)

BELLE:

(*Sits up in the backseat of the car during the last interchange between Richard and Onaje.*) Where the hell are we now? (*Rubbing her eyes.*) Where the fuck is this? (*While she was asleep she had her feet out, exposed to the audience on the driver's side of the car as she lay supine in the back seat. During the speech prior to her first dialogue the feet disappear and her head pops up and she sits on the back of the car with her feet placed on the backseats of the car.*) You know when I wake up too fast and look at you guys real close, I feel like Patty Hearst. (*She yawns and stretches*) ...But it goes away when I realize that I'm broke and I ain't stupid... (*She burst out laughing.*)

RICHARD:

(*Standing up from the picnic table and addressing her.*) Don't you want to go to the bathroom? Really, its been awhile?

BELLE:

(*Rubbing her eyes and looking at Richard.*) Christ, I've never seen anybody so hung up about body functions. I haven't eaten nothing, 'cept some peaches, and I ain't drunk nothing - so I don't have to pee. I'm not liking this much anymore. He don't think any of this shit you told me is true.

ONAJE:

What difference would it make?

BELLE:

Well who am I marrying - the Lone Ranger? On our wedding night he takes off the mask? (*Slowly she gets out of the car and starts to approach the picnic table, she is stiff from the ride.*) That is the weirdest sleep I've ever had. My body is sweating and my feet are freeze dried.

RICHARD:

Can I hug you?

BELLE:

(She is still groggy from sleep.) Yea, sure, but just tell me what state I'm in? ...I'm not like'n this no more.

RICHARD:

(Very gently, but very firmly he hugs her.) Tomorrow morning by dawn we will be there. I promise you.

BELLE:

(She breaks from the embrace.) Don't you ever sleep? I wake up, you're awake. I wake up, he's awake.

RICHARD:

You hungry or anything?

BELLE:

Don't he ever sleep?

ONAJE:

He's obsessed with it. He wants us to go.

RICHARD:

Come on, get in the car. We're gonna get there soon. You can eat the sandwiches in the car. We'll be there by dawn tomorrow. *(They all head for the car, get in, the engine revs and the lights go out.)*

ACT I SCENE III

(The lights rise slightly on the picnic table. It is the middle of the night later the same day after another ride. Belle stands on top of the picnic table, Onaje is sitting at the picnic table and Richard is roaming around the picnic table. They all carry flash lights and use them when necessary to see each other. By this point in the ride they now know what to expect from each other and there is an unspoken friendly humor between them.)

BELLE:

(To Richard from on top of the picnic table.) Absolutely not! Not until we're married! That was the deal in Reno -

RICHARD:

I can't wait any longer. *(Richard lunges at her and she kicks him away.)*

ONAJE:

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

RICHARD:

I'm warning you! I'll take care of you! *(He chases Onaje around the picnic table.)*

ONAJE:

(Laughing and taunting him.) Hey -you're going to have to wait! Look at her! Hold on to it while you drive.

RICHARD:

(Pointing to Onaje and chasing him the other way around the picnic table good naturedly.) Why you doin' this to me?

ONAJE:

Just drive with your knees - get a two fist ed grip on it and squeeze. *(He grabs his crotch to illustrate.)*

BELLE:

And I got a right to know about the other stuff. Don't I? Don't I? Don't I? Don't I? *(She stands above Richard.)*

RICHARD:

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

ONAJE:

She's got a point...

BELLE:

He's got a point and I'll bet when we're not looking he grinds it. *(She imitates the sharpening of a pencil moving her hand real fast - and then bursts out laughing.)*

RICHARD:

Come on down - he can marry us now.

BELLE:

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

RICHARD:

(Pleading from below) Belle.... ? Pleeese? *(He gets down on one knee beneath the picnic table.)*

BELLE:

Now - I like that.

ONAJE:

Come on, I'll do it. Put your hands together... *(Looks at Richard)* Just cause I'm a nice guy.

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RICHARD:

(Holding out his hand to Belle.) Say "I do."-

BELLE:

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

RICHARD:

Come on!

BELLE:

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

RICHARD:

Belle, I'm talking married. Come on down. *(Belle descends from the picnic table.)*

BELLE:

But by my terms.

RICHARD:

Yea, married. *(Looking over at Onaje. They hold hands)* Do it. *(They kneel.)*

ONAJE:

(Beat) Hey, let's make it cosmic. *(He bursts out laughing in self-mocking humor.)* Come on. *(To Richard)* What's your name?

BELLE:

Wait a minute. I don't know.

RICHARD:

What do you mean you don't know?

BELLE:

I'm saying I don't know. (*She stands up.*) I-mean I imagined something different for Christ sake, Jesus. I'm not talkin' big wedding in a church here - I mean Christ look at this! Say we have kids what do I tell them: "It was real romantic but I don't know what state I was in?" "It was the most meaningful moment in my life, but he kept the car running?" What is this place: "Our lady of the picnic table by the highway" or what? A girl can have dreams you know!

RICHARD:

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

BELLE:

Weellll... Maybe ...

RICHARD:

Belle...?

BELLE:

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

ONAJE:

What's your name?

BELLE:

I'm not sure this is legal.

RICHARD:

Oh Jesus!

BELLE:

Can't I ask?

RICHARD:

I love you. (*Grabbing her and kissing her.*)

ONAJE:

You're both crazy!

BELLE:

Oh-ho-ho- Look at mister perfect over here. What? This ain't important? Don't call me crazy. You - who think you're Christopher Columbus in a convertible - you who look like you got dressed in a hurricane at K-Mart. Bein' legal married ain't important? You're the crazy one!

ONAJE:

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

BELLE:

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

ONAJE:

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

RICHARD:

What?

BELLE:

Does that make it legal?

ONAJE:

Of course! Go over there. (*Pointing to the picnic table*) Hold hands - (*He pretends to prepare to take their picture with his flashlight*) - Say "cheese". (*They both smile as if for a picture but at different times.*) No, no - you don't understand - one at a time - say "cheese", "cheese" - you (*pointing at Richard*) you better have your face ready - its the same smile for fifty years. You better practice to each

other. *(They turn to each other, good naturedly and practice smiling at each other, each correcting the other's face with small talk or the pushin' of fingers at mouths or eyes until they start to bicker.)* "Okay - Ready?" "Cheese." *(Onaje flashes the light across their faces, left to right. At the same moment the stage lights flash like a camera which for an instant illuminates their faces in the surrounding darkness.)*

RICHARD AND BELLE:

(Together) There! *(They both relax.)*

ONAJE:

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

BELLE:

Belle O'Brien - or least that was my last married name - I may not never have had a maiden name - for Christ's sake.

ONAJE:

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

RICHARD:

Richard Middleman, Jr.

ONAJE:

(Recoils in horror.) Oh God from Royal Oak? Junior is it?

RICHARD:

Mr. & Mrs. Richard Middleman - man and wife!

BELLE:

Is it official?

RICHARD:

Not yet. What did you think this was all about - sweet cakes! *(He laughs, picks her up and carries her to the backseat of the car.)*

BELLE:

Oh, Gawd.

ONAJE:

(Still in shock.) Richard Middleman, Jr.?

(The Lights Go Out.)

ACT I SCENE IV

(It is very late that same night. The lights come up very little. Onaje is sitting at the picnic table crying softly to himself. The legs of Belle and Richard protrude from the back seat as they sleep. All of a sudden Onaje jumps up frightened as he looks behind him and then sits down again.)

BELLE:

(Belle's head appears as she sits up in the back of the car and slowly and painfully gets out of the car and joins Onaje.) That is probably the worst wedding night that any woman has every had in recorded history. The only thing that makes me feel better is the thought that you maybe can't marry us. Christ, you talk about incompatible. His idea of foreplay is a stuck zipper... Why're you crying?

ONAJE:

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

BELLE:

Ah, don't cry. *(She puts her arms around him)* You want me to tell you a story? I can't sleep. *(Hugging Onaje around the shoulders)* Don't cry honey - at least you ain't just married a pogo stick. *(She rocks him back and forth as she starts her story.)* I don't know nothing about Maryland, never been that far east. I'm north Texas, born 'n bred, just south of where old Route 66 crosses the top of the state... What are you cryin' for? What were you telling me that story for? Was it you down in Cambridge that night? Tell me. Can't you tell me?

ONAJE:

(Buries his head in his hands and screams and then jumps up from the picnic table and runs upstage right, behind the car. He stands in the darkness for a

moment and then a spotlight falls down on him. He is holding a gun which is leveled directly across the stage at Henderson who has been asleep in his chair.) Why is it you? *(There is the noise of the riots several blocks behind him.)*

HENDERSON:

(Facing Onaje and pointing his gun at him.) Who is that out there. ...Freeze mother fucker!

ONAJE:

(Turning to go and concealing the gun behind him so Henderson can't see it.) I'm going - I'm gone man...

HENDERSON:

You one of them niggers downtown? At the riots?

ONAJE:

I'se goin home Officer... *(backing away)*

HENDERSON:

Four fuckin' blocks away - I've been watchin' it on T.V. -national T.V. 'n I can see the fires from the window - you one of them niggers?

ONAJE:

(Backing off, but still holding the gun.) No, suh, I'm gone - see you in the morning.

HENDERSON:

Freeze, I said... They stationed the Talbot County cops outside - like they know better - you're from the fightin' downtown aren't you nigger? You been downtown - I've seen the fires risin'. 'N you running?

ONAJE:

(Turning his back on Henderson as if to leave.) I'm gone... just let me go... man. I didn't burn - I just came down for the march.

HENDERSON:

No - you're here baby - You must'a done something wrong -put your hands on your head. Do it right now!

ONAJE:

(Afraid and turning to Henderson.) What have I done wrong?

HENDERSON:

You smell like Baltimore... Hands on your head - now! *(He levels his gun at Onaje.)* You're a dead nigger now!

ONAJE:

(Points gun at Henderson and fires.) No more! No. No. No more! *(The lights go out. Belle goes over to Onaje. Belle holds Onaje for a moment and then leads him back to the picnic table.)* What is it? Tell me. Finish the story for me - he's still sleeping.

(The lights rise up stage left on the house. It is the exact same structure as before but now it is a small house in the black township of Unionville, on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. Kitchen table, ice box, various shelves - all clean and neat but fairly impoverished. The same chairs are around the kitchen table. All that is needed for the scene is the removal of the TV and beer cans and the placement of a table cloth over the kitchen table. Dan and Andrew are back in their folding chairs, representing the pick-up truck, down stage left frozen in darkness. The light which hangs down from the kitchen ceiling, which has been off before, goes on. Sarah and Faith are in the kitchen. Sarah is dressed in an old simple but colorful dress. She is shifting pots saving a dinner for her husband, Dan. Seated at the kitchen table is Faith. Sarah speaks from the stove as the lights go on to start the action.)

SARAH:

He ain't happy now. Look at the way he came in this morning. He's tired and worn out and he's scared, Faith. It was Baltimore that done that. It was

Baltimore that changed William. You go up there with him like he wants and you'll come back scared and running too. I tells ya Faith, don't go to Baltimore. It ain't what ya want. I'se begging ya.

FAITH:

(Standing and turning away from Sarah.) Damn Momma. If I stay down here I'll be a nigger till the day I die. I'll be cleaning houses and doing white man's laundry. You don't have to be a nigger nowadays. You can't understand that. Up in Baltimore you don't have to be a nigger no more. *(Turns to Sarah)* Yea, you're right. William is scared but William don't "yes suh" nobody. He ain't nobody's nigger cause William ain't afraid to fight for what is his. He's a leader. He's got respect and Baltimore gave it to him. Don't ya see...

SARAH:

Ya don't have to run away to Baltimore to get respect, child. I respect myself. Baltimore don't teach ya respect for yaself. Baltimore teach ya to hate. Did ya see my William come in? He says he came down here to fight. I never taught him that. It was Baltimore that taught him that.

FAITH:

Ya gotta fight sometimes. William is trying to be free. He's trying to be free as a Black man.

SARAH:

Ya don't have to come all the way down from Baltimore to fight down here. That's looking for trouble.

FAITH:

This is where William was born. This is where his home is. *(There is a roar of the engine of a pick-up truck outside. Sarah wipes the tears from her eyes with an apron. Turns back to the stove. Dan and Andrew rise from their chairs and exit the pick up truck. Dan walks in through the screen door, hugs his wife, kisses her on the forehead. He is followed by Andrew who enters carefully.)*

DAN:

Woman, its Saturday night and your Dan's getting drunk. *(Throws his head back and laughs. Proceeds over to Faith, kisses her on the forehead and pats her on the head.)* How's my beautiful daughter? *(He reaches up to get a bottle from the highest shelf at the far end of the kitchen.)* Thought ya was going out tonight, Faith? A beautiful girl like you ain't staying home on a Saturday night with her relations, is she? *(Goes on collecting two glasses, puts them both on the table, turns to Andrew.)* Andrew, like ya to meet my family, Sarah, my misses *(Points to his wife)* and my daughter, Faith. *(Andrew walks to shake hands with both of them.)*

ANDREW:

Nice to meet you. Nice to meet you. *(Faith-turns away.)*

DAN:

Andrew was hitching down the Federalsburg Road so I told him that in my house company's always welcome as long as they ain't 'fraid of sleeping on the floor. Now Sarah, ya got some food ready? *(Sarah turns to the stove and speaks.)*

SARAH:

Dan, William wants to take Faith up to Baltimore with him when he goes back. *(Dan slowly pours his drink after sliding a drink down to Andrew.)*

DAN:

Is William still in Cambridge?

FAITH:

Been there since morning.

DAN:

He gone to fight? Well Faith, you going with him?

FAITH:

I don't know yet Father. I think I will.

SARAH:

Ya can't let her go, Dan. Don't let her go. Look what Baltimore dun to our William...

DAN:

If she wants to go, there ain't much I can do 'bout it.

SARAH:

(To Faith) If your Father tells you, you can't go, ya wouldn't disobey him, would ya?

DAN:

It ain't a matter of disobeying anymore. Woman, our child's grown now. One day ya see the children that's been playing in ya yard and that you's been watching, spanking and taking care of, has just growed up. Ya can't stop it. If Faith wants to go to Baltimore, I ain't gonna be making her do no disobeying to do it. *(Sarah turns around and looks down at the stove.)* If you wants to go, ya go then. I dun my ramblin'. Ya got the right to do yours, but just ya remember one thing. *(Gets up, leaves glass on table and goes over to her, puts hands on the back of her chair.)* All that travelin', driftin' around, that's no good, 'cause ya always runnin' away from one place and running to the next - Pick a star out over your home... tonight - before you leave... So's you can spin on your heel and point it out in the middle of the night. Some people do something while they movin' so they can't ever live decent, so they can't ever stop, so they can't get that peace of mind of goin' home... Ramblin' only good if it teaches ya, Faith - ta live decent. Faith you decide. When William comes, you decide. *(pause)* *(He hugs her and she breaks the embrace.)*

FAITH:

I think I'm going.

DAN:

Well, that's all right then, Faith. When's William coming back?

FAITH:

I don't know, Father. He said he'd be by tomorrow morning. I guess I go then.

DAN:

We's gettin' up t' go to church. If William wants, he can eat breakfast with us. Then you all go, but I wants us all to be together before ya leaves. That ain't askin' much.

SARAH:

(Turns around almost in tears.) Dan, you can't...

DAN:

I ain't gonna talk 'bout it no more. Now we'se gonna all forget our troubles and I's gonna get drunk. Anybody want to join me, there's a lotta whiskey in this bottle, but I ain't gonna talk 'bout dis no more. *(Sarah turns around, serves the two of them dinner.)* Ain't you all gonna eat with us?

FAITH:

We've all ready eaten. We kept this warm for you. You're late tonight, Father.

DAN:

Yes, we got t' talking and I musta got out late. Got some bread for us, Sarah? *(Sarah goes and gets two slices of bread.)* Thank you. Andrew here lives up in Boston, right near where I used to stay.

FAITH:

What ya doin coming down here?

ANDREW:

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

FAITH:

You hitching the whole way?

DAN:

Yea, he is. *(laughs)* I told him it'd be mean, but I don't think he believes me.

ANDREW:

Oh, I believe ya. I just can't afford to go any other way. Besides, its interesting.

DAN:

Yea, man, but have you every been hurt bummin'? I mean really bad? I mean so bad that you just didn't know whether you'd just ever survive?

ANDREW:

(Joking) Had the daylight's beaten out of me in Omaha last summer.

DAN:

(Taking a mouthful) Oh yea, I been through Omaha. Where was you in Omaha?

ANDREW:

Up in the northern part.

DAN:

Oh yes, up in Omaha - they got things kinda mixed up. All the whites live in the south and all the black folk live in the north. Black folk got ya, huh?

FAITH:

Well you came to the right place for revenge...

ANDREW:

I don't understand. What do you mean?

FAITH:

I mean the South.

ANDREW:

I'm not going to Atlanta for revenge. My friend is helping with voter registration. I am going down to help him.

FAITH:

What makes you do that?

SARAH:

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

FAITH:

What you really mean is this boy is white.

ANDREW:

You've got no reason to be afraid of me. I couldn't harm you if I wanted to. Your Father-says that they don't like Northern boys here. I don't think they'd pay much attention to me.

FAITH:

Before you're Northern, you're white.

ANDREW:

(Andrew pushes his plate forward and stands up, picks up plate and starts to take it over to the sink.) Well if you want to hate me for being white, there is nothing I can do about it.

DAN:

(Still eating) Faith don't hate ya cause ya white - she's just testing ya. She

don't mean no harm.

FAITH:

You just don't find too many whites down here who are willing to treat a black man decent. That's all. *(A roar of an old car outside stops the conversation.)*

ANDREW:

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

FAITH:

Yea, but there ain't many.

SARAH:

(As Dan sits down with another half glass of whiskey) Ya been hittin' that stuff hard. Don't ya want to slow down?

DAN:

No, I can drink my whiskey. It's Saturday night woman. Why don't ya have a glass too? Come on, now. *(Pours some more into Andrew's glass and goes and gets a glass for Sarah.)*

SARAH:

(To Andrew) You sure ya got enough to eat, now? Ya got a long way to go tomorrow. Ya might as well eat good tonight.

ANDREW:

No. Thank you very much, but I couldn't be happier. Can I help you do the dishes?

SARAH:

No, I dun the dishes for Dan and me for next ta thirty years now. I thinks I can do it, but thank you though. *(Car door slams outside. Onaje stands up from the picnic table and slowly approaches the house.)*

FAITH:

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

ANDREW:

Yea, I guess. Probably stay with my friend till I can get a room. *(Onaje enters the house. While watching from the picnic table he has shed the outer coat, the feathers, the bits and pieces of his past and now moves in a tee shirt and long pants, muscular, and young in the heat. He is a participant in his past. He surveys the situation with silence.)*

DAN:

Well come on in, William. We're getting drunk, William. We got a glass here for ya. *(Starts to get up.)*

ONAJE:

(His voice is younger, edgy and bitter.) Saturday night. Just as sure as clockwork. Old Dan, my father, after finishing his white man's week, six days at the canning factory for a buck seventy five an hour, the week ends and all he wants to be is another drunk nigger. *(Turns to Faith.)* You comin'?

FAITH:

Yes, but let's leave in the morning. We can all have breakfast together before we...

ONAJE:

We're gonna leave NOW. Come on.

FAITH:

No William. Father wants us to eat breakfast together tomorrow. I want to do that William.

ONAJE:

We're leaving NOW.

FAITH:

If you want me to go, we're gonna have to leave in the morning.

ONAJE:

God damn you all. God damn ya. I gotta leave now. *(Onaje turns and starts to leave.)*

SARAH:

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

ONAJE:

(Onaje turns on his heels and speaks to Faith.) If I wait til morning, you'll go?

FAITH:

Yes, I said I would.

ONAJE:

Alright. Alright then. I'll go tell 'em to come back in the morning. *(Onaje exits and signals to the car to go.)*

ANDREW:

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

DAN:

Don't let it bother ya. This happens every time he comes down from Baltimore. *(Roar of engine of a car leaving.)*

ANDREW:

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

FAITH:

What you running away from? This is the black man's problems. You scared, white boy? You leave this in Maryland and it'll find you in Atlanta. You sure you're cut out for this, boy?

ANDREW:

I don't know. I just hope... *(In walks Onaje)*

ONAJE:

Where you going white boy?

SARAH:

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

ONAJE:

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

SARAH:

We ain't got nothing to be 'fraid of.

ONAJE:

Maybe - maybe not. How'd you get here, boy?-

ANDREW:

I was hitching. Your father picked me up.

ONAJE:

You been to Cambridge?

ANDREW:

No.

FAITH:

Leave him alone. He hasn't done nothing. He's hitching down to Georgia - down to Atlanta to help a friend of his who's working with blacks down there.

ONAJE:

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

DAN:

William, what ya talking about?

ONAJE:

You had the radio on? *(Dan begins to answer yes, but stops in fear.)*

SARAH:

No.

ONAJE:

Yea don't know do ya! Everybody knows but you don't. Alright then I'll tell you. They are looking for a "nigger man" on the eastern shore tonight 'cause down in Cambridge a white cop was shot about an hour ago.

SARAH:

Oh no, William.

ONAJE:

That's right. I took down a cop. That nigger man they looking for is your son. *(Pulls out the gun as he speaks.)* So white boy, you're staying right here. *(Sarah bursts into tears and goes into the bedroom. Dan stands.)*

DAN:

William, ya ain't neva gonna be free now. You can't ever stop ramblin' now. You ain't never gonna be free.

ONAJE:

I am going to be free. I am free!

DAN:

You ain't free, William. *(Dan shakes his head with deep disappointment as he exits into the bedroom.)*

ONAJE:

(As Dan exits into the bedroom Onaje calls after him.) Nobody saw me. If nobody saw me, I'll be safe here till morning. But white boy, you're coming up to Baltimore tomorrow. You ain't leaving tonight. I'll put you on a bus in Baltimore.

ANDREW:

He's right, you know. You're never going to be free.

DAN:

(Comes out of the bedroom.) William, ya know that I think ya dun wrong... Recently I thought you was something more than a child - but you're not. So we gotta help ya now. Now you gotta get away. Your Mother is gonna cook up some food for you to take with ya to Baltimore. I ain't got much money saved *(During this speech Dan puts cap back on whiskey bottle, returns it to the upper shelf)* but I'll give ya what I got. When ya get to Baltimore, ya take a bus north and try to get started up there. Faith ain't goin' with you no more. You can't take care of yourself, you sure can't take care of her. Come on Sarah *(calling into the bedroom)* - get out here and get that food to cooking. Now if we hurry, we can get all the work done tonight and then get some sleep -have breakfast together - then ya leave.

ANDREW:

How did you shoot the policeman? I mean did he shoot at you first?

ONAJE:

That don't make no difference down here.

ANDREW:

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

DAN:

William's right. It don't make no difference down here. I guess William's right. *(Sarah has started working on the food. Faith exits through the bedroom door.)* Now, William, ya lay that gun down and get yourself into some clean clothes. *(Onaje lays the gun down on the table.)* Ya go and take my two new shirts and that old pair of work pants that's clean in there. Pack yaself some of my socks in that old suitcase - just ya take what ya need. But hurry now. Ya gotta get yourself some sleep. *(Onaje exits into the bedroom.)*

ANDREW:

Can I help? *(He picks up the gun from the table and holds it as a person would who had never held a gun before.)*

DAN:

Not just yet. Ya get down in that chair. If we need ya, I'll call ya. Thank you man, I hopes you understand. He's my son, my son, man. *(Dan goes over to his wife)* Don't ya worry none now. If nobody saw him, like he says, maybe William will be free. Oh Lawd, I hope so.

HENDERSON FROM OFFSTAGE:

(Engine roars) Alright. Come out of there, before we blow you out. *(Dan runs to the screen door.)*

FAITH:

(Runs into the kitchen terrified.) There are police all around the back of the house!

DAN:

(Looking out the screen door.) It ain't just cops out there. They Klan people. They ain't just cops. They're coming in. *(To Sarah and Faith.)* Get back into

the bedroom now!

ONAJE:

(Enters and screams at Andrew.) Give me the gun. Give me the gun.

ANDREW:

No. Turn yourself in. You can get off. *(He holds the gun for an instant too long.)*

ONAJE:

They're Klan people. Give me the gun. *(Andrew pauses for an instant then as the screen door is shoved open and Richard's Father and Officer Henderson force themselves in he tosses William the gun.)*

RICHARD'S FATHER:

(Richard's Father and Henderson have entered the room with others behind them.) William - drop the gun! *(Dan tries to block the door to protect his family. Henderson instantly drives the butt of his shot gun into Dan's head and Dan flies back, bleeding on the floor. Onaje shoves his foot into Henderson's stomach and sends him against the edge of the door but Henderson recovers and aims his shot gun at Onaje.)*

DAN:

(To Richard's Father and Henderson.) Get outta here - get out!

RICHARD'S FATHER:

William - drop the gun before I blow your head off!

ONAJE:

(He aims the gun at Richard's Father.) Fuck you.

HENDERSON:

(Pointing the gun calmly at Onaje.) I'll wipe out your fuckin' family - drop it William. *(With gun still pointed at Richard's father.)*

RICHARD'S FATHER:

(Gun still leveled at Onaje and then sweeping the room with it.) So you want to see your people die - give it up!

ONAJE:

(Stands awestruck for a second then drops the gun - turns to Andrew.) You bastard. You white bastard. I told ya, ya weren't no good for us. I told ya, ya didn't know the ways of the south. Don't ya see. Ya can't help the black man. You white bastard. If you hadn't been here trying to help, I'd be free. Who'll ya help now? Oh Lord, you haven't helped the black man. He ain't gonna live no better after this. Ya didn't help the white man - he ain't never gonna change. So who did ya help, white boy? Who did ya help.

HENDERSON:

Well look what we got here. Just you look and see what we got here. A "white nigger." The man just told you. You ain't black and you sure ain't white. You just a white nigger. Gonna save us? *(To the others off stage.)* Hey, Middleman's got a white nigger. Hey, white nigger's gonna save us? *(Bursts into laughter.)* Hey white nigger, you gonna save us? *(Others offstage and on pick up the chant.)* Hey white nigger you gonna save us? *(As it gets louder. Faith and Onaje join in till it reaches its highest point and Henderson signals to stop.)* NO WAIT - I got "n idea -nigger boy *(he points to Onaje)* get that "white nigger" and you take him outside...

RICHARD'S FATHER:

No, Henderson, no, don't do this - We're here to bring in the boy!

ANDREW:

(Screaming as he is grabbed by Onaje and Henderson and dragged toward the door.) Oh God no - What are you doing? *(During the struggle the house is trashed.)*

DAN:

(Lying bleeding on the floor.) No William - Don't do this!

HENDERSON:

(To Onaje) Come on boy. (to the others outside) Get the whip! (The lights go out on the entire stage, the violence of the crowd outside fills the dark stage, the encouragement of the crowd grows louder, then a dim spot falls on Andrew. He is hanging by his hands from the wall down stage right close to the audience. His shirt has been torn off of his back and his knees almost touch the ground. There is a loud snap of a bull whip from behind the scrim up stage right behind the car. Onaje's shadow behind the scrim rocks and pivots to deliver another blow and Andrew's body jolts from the shock of it on his back.)

ANDREW:

(Screaming) No. No. No more, please. No more. (The whip is retrieved in the shadow behind the scrim and Onaje rocks and pivots and there is another snap of the whip and corresponding lurch of Andrew's body.) God help me - no more! (The lights go out on the entire stage.)

RICHARD:

(The lights are on Richard, softly as he is standing in the front seat of the car pointing over and beyond the picnic table.) Belle, Jesus Christ! Grab him he's running toward the highway! Belle - grab him - run after him - don't let him go! I know him!

(Lights Go Out on Entire Stage)

ACT II SCENE I

(It is perhaps fifteen or twenty minutes later. Onaje sits at the picnic table bundled in a blanket. Belle stands further off and Richard roams nervously behind Onaje.)

RICHARD:

(To Belle) He... He wasn't apart of it...

BELLE:

Why do you keep talkin' about it? What's it got to do with you?

RICHARD:

(To Onaje) Even when you told it you said "No Henderson" he said "No!" (To Belle) He's a decent working man - He's worked every day of his life out on that Bay - He gave me money when I needed it and the car! He ain't like that!

ONAJE:

He was there ...

RICHARD:

But he... He stood far off.

BELLE:

Christ, Richard, give it a rest!

RICHARD:

No!

ONAJE:

... The hell he did!

RICHARD:

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

ONAJE:

Your daddy's truck?

RICHARD:

Yea, In the back; he was standing far off from the others ... He didn't approve of what was going on!

ONAJE:

Man - he didn't drive no truck... (*Exploding and turning away.*) In one moment we was all the same... no race, creed or color... We were earth's violent creature, mankind... (*beat*) You understand... don't you!

BELLE:

You're 'fraid you're just like your daddy aren't you -violent and mean... I've known men like that all my life -why'd I think you was different?

RICHARD

I am different!

BELLE:

Hey, the first I hear about your old man he stole some money and some ex-cop is waitin' on him - the next I hear is he's been in a lynch mob - Hey - tell the truth - the man ain't no eagle scout!

RICHARD:

No! He's decent Belle!... and gentle.

BELLE:

He lies like you do - don't he - You ain't, no different -Maybe I don't care. Maybe you can go to hell! (*She turns her back on Richard.*)

RICHARD:

No Belle, I never lied to you...

BELLE:

The hell you didn't - tell me one thing you said that was the truth!

RICHARD:

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

BELLE:

It's all up in your head - maybe you don't have a heart!

RICHARD:

Maybe I was afraid you won't like who I really am...

BELLE:

(*To Onaje*) You tell me! You think he's okay - he's been kind to us... I don't know.

ONAJE:

He's okay - He didn't lie to you from his heart - He just dreamed himself a life - one for him and one for his daddy -And that's how come he's kind to us - Ask him. We understand each other now.

BELLE:

What's he mean Richard?

RICHARD:

I don't know.

BELLE:

What you've been tellin' me - is it the truth?

RICHARD:

Yes.

ONAJE:

No! The cowboy - the soldier ain't.

RICHARD:

I said it - I ought to know.

ONAJE:

That's right. Answer her - tell her man.

RICHARD:

It's what I wanted to be, Belle.

ONAJE:

Go on - You don't need no secrets. *(desperately)* Did you forget what you told me?... 'Bout the dream in the words of the magazines. It all came alive -for you. Man - we was there together.

RICHARD:

...What about the magazines?

ONAJE:

The words, in the books, in the magazines, the worlds within the words - you dreamed in another man's mind - the soldier, the cowboy... And deep in our loneliness we understood them in our minds.

RICHARD:

Don't mess this up for me!

ONAJE:

No - we have the same vision, Man - Tell her what you know in your soul! You imagined another man's life back there and you lived it! You can imagine her's - you can imagine mine - you can imagine us becoming Mother Nature with our understanding...

RICHARD:

I'm warning you...

ONAJE:

...I've been there too man - on this highway - when it looks the same either way, up and back. Did it happen? No - it ain't no yes or no - We understand - that's all that matters. Hey, and it's beautiful. Tell her man! Tell her!... We saw beyond ourselves... We shared it together at that bench lookin' up 'n down the highway, didn't we. You understand about the man machine becoming Mother Nature 'n us livin' in her dream... Tell her. That's what matters. All the rest eventually just gets mopped up in paper towels... and thrown away. We are three good thoughts in Mother Nature's dream. We'll be thinking thoughts in the larger mind together - and changing it together with our understanding - she'll wake up... and there won't be no more whipp'ns in the world!... You understand? *(During this speech a light falls on Dan, Sarah and Faith who are seated or moving around the dimly lit kitchen table. They have just had a family fight. Each is performing some small menial task and responds, as if listening, when some thought comes to mind. Onaje slowly is painfully realizing by looking deep into Richard's eyes that Richard does not understand.)* No...? No? ...Or was you, all along, just another one of them that just wander the roads, boy?... Trapped in the circular logic til you die. Don't you remember? No?

RICHARD:

Belle? Belle, I don't know what he's sayin' - honest.

BELLE:

(Sensing that Richard is in trouble and reacting to her own fear she crosses over to attack Onaje.) Hey leave him alone. Get offa him with this cosmic bullshit - you want to know the truth - I'll tell you - It's just man and woman and that's all!

RICHARD:

Belle...

BELLE:

Shut up, I'm not through with him yet! What's this stuff about everything eventually passing through a paper towel -forget it - I say, I don't give a good God damn! *(To Richard)* And you can shut up too! *(She heads back over to the car.)*

RICHARD:

Belle, before - when we were talking about my father...

BELLE:

Yea, but what were you talking about? 'It scares me to hear you two people talkin' crazy... None of that stuff matters... Just tell me the truth, that's all that matters.

RICHARD:

People can be different Belle...

BELLE:

If your daddy did it - just say it. - That's all I'm asking - I'll tell you the truth. My mother had two other kids, with a different daddy. When I was ten she gave me a picture. I used to dream about him. I dreamed I'd ride in the semi's with him. Later I dreamed he'd stop at that truck stop. But he was years and years long gone. I lost the picture in a motel room in Waco six years ago or so... *(She begins to cry.)* Now that makes me cry - but its the God damn truth. *(Richard goes over to her and comforts her.)* I can take all the backseat bullshit and bad sex but I can't take nothing less than the truth and be married to you - I'm just telling you - we ain't married if we're living in different stories. I can take it, whatever it is and forgive ya, forgive ya everything - sloppy drunk's and ya chasing flat assed women when you get old - but I don't want to love some picture of a man a million miles away - living in the same house with me. *(The dim stage light falls on Faith in the house as she rummages through a shoe box at the kitchen table as she looks for her old picture of Onaje. The light also falls on Dan and also on Sarah as they do chores around the kitchen.)*

ONAJE:

I thought you understood ... I thought we was kin folk, sorta...

RICHARD:

No we ain't. We're different than you... We don't want this life...

ONAJE:

I don't care - You people is different. *(Softly and defensively)* I am Onaje. *(His eye focuses, in his imagination on Dan, Sarah and Faith in the house.)*

DAN:

(Dan moves out of the house and stands at the steps looking at the sky.) That's what I'd tell him. He'd remember that: "Find a star above your house and go away from it, if you want, but you always know where it is - cause you can come back - you just follow that star." Maybe I didn't say it exactly. Maybe I didn't say it to him. He knows that already. He picked a star, I'm sure.

FAITH:

(From the kitchen table to no one in particular.) Momma, he's out there proud in the world - He's made something of himself - He will come back - Where is the picture... *(She rummages through some papers.)* It can't be gone...? Didn't daddy have it last? It's so dark in here.

SARAH:

(She stands on a chair in the kitchen and awkwardly reaches up to change a light bulb that has gone out above the sink.) Child, we know he will... Dan's just bein' crazy cause you went lookin' for that picture again - Dan, the light's out in the kitchen. *(To Dan, louder, since he is outside.)* Come on in Dan, we won't talk about it no more. *(Onaje stands listening to his imagination of Dan, Sarah and Faith.)*

RICHARD:

Belle, I'll take care of you -

BELLE:

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

RICHARD:

I want to take care...

BELLE:

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

RICHARD

I don't know what he meant...

BELLE:

Why do you care what he thinks? He ain't nobody...

RICHARD:

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

ONAJE:

(Referring to his imagined vision of his family) ... I left all that behind - it's just a place somewheres. Someplace back in time. (He sweeps them away with his hand.)

RICHARD:

(To Onaje) My daddy is different than the others... (To Belle) Belle, I swear it...

BELLE:

(To Richard) It's you, you're talkin' about - not your daddy - ain't it?

RICHARD:

Belle, you stay outta this. *(He returns to confront Onaje.)* This is between me and him.

ONAJE:

He was riding shot gun when they dumped me into the back of the pick up truck. He was there!

RICHARD:

It's you can't forgive him can you?

ONAJE:

He looked through the back glass at me as they dumped me out on Route 50...

RICHARD:

...Cause you're afraid of everything! Afraid of everything!

ONAJE:

Boy, I'm just afraid of my own kind - just a little bit maybe... Like you.

RICHARD:

He's afraid - he can't forgive!

BELLE:

(To Richard) You don't need to be like this Richard. (She heads for the car.) You don't Richard!

RICHARD:

(Follows Belle and grabs her) What do you mean? Belle?

BELLE:

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

RICHARD:

It scares me what he says.

BELLE:

(She gets back into the backseat of the car.) To quote a famous philosopher - "Don't listen to him Belle - he's just some nigger who looks at the stars."

ONAJE:

(Onaje to Richard as Richard gets into the driver's seat of the car.) I'm sorry for you - you had it man - It was beautiful and you lost it. I ain't crazy, man! All you people who want to be locked into the human engine is crazy - It is single minded, violent and does not know what it destroys each day - laugh at it - It laughs back - cause its the hero in the mirror - the master of more and more and less and less and *(Onaje is hurt and stopped in his tracks as his imagination focuses on Dan, Sarah and Faith as they begin to move again.)* I say forget about it forever! I say fuck your flags - go salute your paper towels! *(Richard and Belle stare at him. Onaje does not look at Dan, Sarah and Faith. Onaje holds his head in his hands.)* It ain't your fault - I never had much luck with that man-machine.

SARAH:

(Sarah screws a light bulb into 'the light socket that was previously dead and it goes on. Dan keeps looking at the sky and Faith continues to rummage through the boxes and papers.) Its on!

DAN:

(Dan is lost in his thoughts.) Sarah?

SARAH:

It's on! *(To Dan)* Come on back in - we won't be talking about that picture no more or why it's gone, Dan.

DAN:

(He comes out of his thoughts and enters through the screen door.) He's gone. I can feel it.

FAITH:

(Looking up from the box.) It's gone Momma... Why is it gone?

BELLE:

(To Richard from the backseat of the car.) Are you goin to leave him there?

RICHARD:

(To Belle from the driver's seat of the car.) I don't care what he says - Belle. He'll be alright - He's just got to go home...

BELLE:

Richard - he don't want to go home.

RICHARD:

...Cause he's just real lonely, Belle - he don't have nobody. *(Sarah steps down off "the kitchen chair and addresses Dan and Faith.)*

SARAH:

We ain't gonna talk about it no more - Faith, you hungry now child?

FAITH:

(Standing up) Yes.

DAN:

(To Sarah as he enters the kitchen.) Woman, I'm hungry, too... *(He feels excluded.)*

SARAH:

(Warmly) Dan, do you think I forgot you? . *(She holds her arms out to him.)* Oh, I do love you so.

FAITH:

(To Dan) I was afraid... for a moment I was afraid you'd given up on him comin' home...?

DAN:

Girl, now what was you afraid of?

FAITH:

Ah - you was afraid, too... Why don't you just say it to me once... Daddy?

DAN:

(Hugging Faith gently as they go to the table and sit down to eat.) Let's talk about something else now. Afraid?

FAITH:

... Daddy - why is that picture gone?

SARAH:

(Interrupting to save Dan from answering, she speaks to both.) Now stop your frettin' and eat - Dan...

DAN:

(Dan bows his head at the table as do the others.) Lord bless this food to our use and our lives to thy service. *(The light goes out on them.)*

ONAJE:

(Tears have filled Onaje's eyes. He is a broken man. He goes to the car.)
... You all is the crazy ones. *(To Richard)* For a moment I thought we was friends - there ain't no point in being with you all no more. If you'll be kind enough to drop me off up a little more into Pennsylvania. . .

RICHARD:

Get in man - get in *(Onaje gets in the car.)*

ONAJE:

I'm just tired now - real tired now...

RICHARD:

(Over his shoulder to Belle as he starts the car.) We ain't far from bein' there Belle - We'll be there by morning.

ONAJE:

... Let me off at midnight... You hear? The both of you, thank you. I'm just real tired... If you will - I'll sleep a little now. *(He tucks his coat under his head.)*

(The lights go out and the headlights beam out over the audience and the car's engine runs down the highway.)

ACT II SCENE II

(The headlights of the car continue to beam over the audience from the darkness of the stage. It is dawn. Richard sits quietly for a second in the driver's seat, and then turns off the lights. He has finally come home and is parked before his house. The stage lights rise slightly to reveal the trashed disarray of the kitchen in the Royal Oak, Maryland house of Richard's father. Onaje is asleep in the passenger's seat. Belle is asleep in the backseat, her feet exposed as before. Richard gets out of the car gently. Richard's father sits in the house in a chair drinking a beer. The T.V. light flickers blue and gray upon him as he stares into space. He is drunk and desperate. Richard watches his father take another drink and then he turns back toward the audience and puts his head in his hands and listens to the upcoming dialogue. Henderson, back in his chair, tilts back off the back legs of his chair and goes to the door and bangs on the door again.)

HENDERSON:

God damn it, you're gonna let me in sooner or later. It came across the radio - they spotted his car. He's coming home old man. It won't do no good no more to hold out in here. *(He bangs on the door again.)*

RICHARD'S FATHER:

You're stupid Henderson. He ain't comin' back.

HENDERSON:

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

RICHARD'S FATHER:

You lie, Henderson. He's out west - he's in Wyoming by now - workin' in the open air. *(He throws the crushed beer can against the wall, puts his head in his hands, and begins to cry.)* This fuckin' place ain't his home no more. He's got a good job out there. Pumpin' gas maybe, or fixin' semis.

HENDERSON:

You steal two thousand dollars for him and he comes back -you're the stupid one.

RICHARD'S FATHER:

Twenty years ago you ran out the niggers and now you run out the poor - what are you protecting?

HENDERSON:

Talk nice to me. I could have come in earlier but I know'd it be easy when you saw he'd come back... I'll wait. I'll wait. *(He goes back to his chair and sits down and goes back to sleep.)*

RICHARD:

(Richard lifts his head out of his hands and goes over to the car and slowly wakes up Belle very gently.) Belle... Belle...wake up... wake up baby.

BELLE:

(Rubbing her eyes.) Where are we?

RICHARD:

We're home.

BELLE:

(She wakes up gently, but maintains her sarcastic wit.) Yea, well that's all well and good, but where the hell am I?

RICHARD:

Royal Oak - Eastern Shore of Maryland.

BELLE:

(Sleepily she looks around disapprovingly.) Hey, the honeymoon capital of the world, right? *(She looks around and yawns.)*

RICHARD:

Come on in, its dawn. (*Richard's father begins to sob quietly with his head in his hands.*) My father probably ain't up yet. The place'll be pretty messy. Come on get outta the car.

BELLE:

(*Softly sarcastic now that she has slowly woken up.*) I can get out of the backseat? Hey, you're a real peach. (*Richard helps her out of the backseat.*) Pretty messy? That dump don't even look like its got toilet paper.

RICHARD:

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

BELLE:

Why didn't you let him out?

RICHARD:

... It's his home too.

BELLE:

Hey, he don't want to be here. This is the end of the road he was talkin' about. Christ I went three thousand miles for this?

RICHARD'S FATHER:

(*Stands up, gets a beer and takes a drink and wipes his mouth and screams out his words as he frets to himself.*) You better fuckin' not come home! I waited. I locked the door and waited till you were clear. God damn Henderson's been outside all week and you come back. My life is worthless now. I was waitin' to hear you was free. Go. Go. Go. I said. (*He swings around and takes another drink*) I'll beat the shit out of you if you did! (*He goes into the bedroom and slams the door.*)

ONAJE:

(*Waking up with a start and looking around.*) Why are we stopped?

RICHARD:

(*Over his shoulder.*) My home man. Come on in if you want.

ONAJE:

(*Spinning around in his seat and then standing on the seat.*) I don't want to be stopped! I told you to let me out at the interstate! Hey, you listening to me? (*He gropes around in the car and then finds his sextant and starts measuring and charting the stars in the morning sky.*) I'm way off course. Didn't you listen to me (*Looking around*) -Jesus Christ this is the Eastern Shore.

RICHARD:

Quiet man. My father's asleep in there. (*Over his shoulder to Onaje as he escorts Belle toward the house.*) If you don't like it drive around! (*He reaches into his pocket and throws Onaje the keys.*)

BELLE:

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

RICHARD:

You think I'd gave him the car? (*He continues to move toward the house.*) You're safe. He can't move.

ONAJE:

(*Holding up the keys*) What do you want me to use these things for? I'm trapped baby, is that what you're tellin' me?

RICHARD:

(*To Onaje over his shoulder.*) No man... It's up to you. (*He laughs*) We see eye to eye this time man! (*To Belle*) Come on in. (*They enter the house through the door and Richard goes into the refrigerator to get two beers.*) Sorry about this. The old man was never much of a housekeeper.

BELLE:

(*After a long look around she speaks with humorous sarcasm.*) You're kidding.

If you can find a mop in this dump in the next two minutes I'll cancel my bus tickets. You pigs had to go three thousand miles to find a domestic? Hey, fuck this, I'm out of here. *(She starts for the door to leave, but Richard restrains her.)* Hey, I'm not cleaning this place. Get some marshmallows and light a fire.

ONA JE:

(Throughout this and the following speeches he freaks out briefly.) I'm staying in the car. *(He gets out of the car.)* I can't stand bein' in the car if its not movin. *(He does a few orbits around the car and then toys with the idea of driving it. With the keys in his hand he tests the horn.)* The horn works. *(He gets back in and sits on the top of the driver's seat, tries to turn on the radio unsuccessfully and then begins kicking the radio.)*

BELLE:

Why you leaving him out there..?

RICHARD:

You want something to eat? *(He looks in a cupboard.)*

BELLE:

...Well what am I suppose to do - guess?

RICHARD:

Just let him "be" out there.

ONAJE:

(Still out by the car.) Radio's broken? *(He gets out of the car and kicks it.)* Move - move! *(Nervously he turns toward the house.)* Damn this! *(He kicks the car.)* Damn this! *(Screaming at the house.)* You fuckin' with me man? Stopping don't mean a damn. You listening? Hey, you two listening?

RICHARD:

(Sits down next to Belle and holds her hand at the table in the house.) Belle?

BELLE:

What?

RICHARD:

I wanna talk to you...

BELLE:

Yea, you sure as hell look like you wanna talk to me... *(Looking around the house.)* 'N we got some stuff to talk about.

RICHARD:

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

BELLE:

...Yea, I know - and that James Bond stuff musta been a wet dream.

RICHARD:

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

BELLE:

You're cry in', Richard?... What do you think I was born yesterday? Men are born liars. *(She hugs him gently.)* It's alright... Shh. Now don't worry about it no more.

RICHARD:

Belle, I lived eight years cold in that prison cell. I read the magazines and dreamed of what I could have been 'n what I wanted it to be. Three years in I saw a bird fly down into the courtyard and walk around and then fly out like it didn't know the place - free. It put a fear in my heart of bein' lonely like that for always...

BELLE:

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

RICHARD:

It was what I wanted to be.

BELLE:

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

RICHARD:

Belle, then I got scared of wantin' you too much...

BELLE:

Shhh - don't worry - I won't leave you. With all the other men I never did the leavin'. *(She kisses him.)* I've been looking for you for a long time - I'll take care of you. *(She comforts him.)* The truth is all I want - there ain't no love that comes from lies - Are you goin' to leave me?

RICHARD:

No. *(She nods and she kisses him.)*

ONAJE:

(From outside next to the car.) Christ it is dark when you stop. *(Screaming at the house.)* It's hard enough as it is - I don't need this! *(He violently attacks the car, kicking it wildly and then throws everything but his bag out of the car.)* Let's go! Let's go! *(He jumps on to the car and spreads his arms, but there is no speed or air.)*

BELLE:

(Looking at Onaje from inside the house.) Richard?

RICHARD:

He can come in here if he wants...

ONAJE:

I need to go! Let's go! *(Screaming at the house)* Damn you people! *(Faith*

enters his imagination slowly, from behind the scrim, and walks to the passenger's side of the car. Onaje sees her and freaks out.) What is this? Get away from me - you was just my sister once. Listen it's like this. Listen to me - you always listened to me and then go away...

FAITH:

Welcome home. Give me the keys, William.

ONAJE:

Give you the keys?

FAITH:

Well then drive!

ONAJE:

I can't drive no more.

FAITH:

Then give me the keys William.

ONAJE:

Leave me alone. *(Slowly Dan and Sarah enter his imagination and come to sit on the picnic table.)* I didn't want to come back here!

DAN:

(Sitting next to mother on the audience side of the picnic table.) Yea, I've been waitin' - but he never came back. Don't ask me about it no more.

SARAH:

(Sitting next to Dan on the picnic table.) He'll be back someday.

ONAJE:

(Violently to Dan.) Leave me alone! Faith tell them to go away! Tell them. *(Directing his comments to Dan and Sarah who are sitting at the picnic table.)* Get away from me! I'll be back on the road soon... Moving! Moving!...

DAN:

...Boy, you still ramblin...?

ONAJE:

(To himself) ...I can shut my eyes and concentrate and get it back. I get back into the highway lights - the slip, slip, slip of highway lights on white lines. *(He kicks the car and starts pacing around it, and then honks the horn and addresses the house.)* Come on let's go! Come on!

BELLE:

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

RICHARD:

(Restraining Belle who starts to go outside.) No stay here - wait. He'll be alright.

ONAJE:

(To Dan) I don't need you all. I can get out of here. *(He gets in the car.)*

FAITH:

Turn on the engine. Let's go up to Baltimore. *(Onaje laughs)* What are you laughin' for? *(Onaje starts the engine.)* Come on... *(She gets into the passenger side.)* Come on.

DAN:

(Standing up and addressing Onaje and walking around the picnic table.) What you got now is nothing. I know. I did my time on the road, William.

ONAJE:

(To Dan) Leave me alone! *(He covers his ears.)* I'm sick of your speeches, speeches, speeches...*(To Faith, screaming, as he jumps out of the car.)* Get outta the car, I can't drive! *(He kicks the car.)* Where the hell would I take you now?

FAITH:

(Jumping out of the car and sliding down the hood to full face Onaje as he stands at the front of the car.) I can still hear the white boy screamin' . You was cruel... You never took shit from no white man - you was free!

SARAH:

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

FAITH:

Don't listen to her - you got the keys - drive. Drive!

ONAJE:

I can't drive. *(Screaming at the house.)* Tell them I can't drive away from this!

FAITH:

Come on you can do it. Get in. Get back in. Come on.

DAN:

Don't steal that white man's car. He gave you the longest ride you had this summer.

FAITH:

(She tries to get Onaje back into the car.) Come on let's go! Drive man. He's just another white man. He's like that damn do-good boy that you about whipped to death - He'd come down south to fight a black man's war - drive the car - the hell with'em all. You never took shit from no white man.

ONAJE:

(To Faith, Dan and Sarah as they stand encircling him downstage center.) ...Half way through it I saw the ropes pull on his wrists as his knees gave when they said "Again"... "Again like your people got it - again." I felt each one coining - His face pushed against the tree as he was hanging there. I

laid it back on the ground behind me - and rolled back my shoulder and the elbow and my wrists jerked like a speed ball pitcher rocks and pivots all his weight behind the pitch and - snaps it against his back, and it cut lines like power lines across the sky, like the strings in the meat at the butcher shop... and it bled. I swear I was cutting into his lungs and - snap, it splattered on the tree and the white faces laughing - cheering me on - it cut through white flesh like water - splash, splash red in the blue faces in the moonlight - It was past midnight when they cut him down. I can't reconcile it in my mind... I was just a nigger doing a white man's bidding - so they'd leave me alone - so they'd let me out on the highway instead of taking me in for winging the cop in Cambridge. I was their slave. Hours before that I had a gun in my hands down in Cambridge 'n I used it and then consumed with hate I whipped one of my own - I hurt a little kid... Why would I do a thing like that?... I'm so sorry - sorry - sorry!

FAITH:

(Sitting up in the front seat on the top of the seat of the car and laughing.)
William - your crying...

ONAJE:

Look at me Faith - Look at me!

FAITH:

What do you mean look at you? *(Looking very closely at Onaje.)* You're right... Man, you look terrible. *(Although the following lines are humorous she delivers them in shock without any sense of humor.)* William you look like shit. Man, somebody dumped a hefty bag all over your body. Do you know anything about that? Turn around. I'm talking industrial strength here. OOOOOEEEEEEE, and I do believe I'm downwind of you too. Nigger, what has become of you?

SARAH:

How can you be looking like that now? What became of you? What put all this fightin' in ya?

DAN:

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

ONAJE:

(As Onaje addresses Faith, Sarah and Dan throughout this speech they, one by one, turn their backs on him.) ...The first few mornings with the sun behind me and the crows rising in front of me out of the dark fields, I was running west as fast as I could go, fearing cops and down on one knee before the semi's as they'd pass. I moved only to move - I felt no future - my past fell off of me like the abandoned clothes you see on the roads - my heart stopped and then started with a different rythum - the rythum of the passing lines and trip, trip, trip of neon highway lights at fifty-five or, ... windshield wipers clearing away the rain. My eyes opened and I was so lonely... I kept you all in my thoughts those Christmas days when the highways are strangely empty and newspapers would blow, flip-flopping slowly, under the bridge before me and out the other side... I thought I'd stop some day - come home and all - but after all this time you don't want me. This is all I am. I have nothing. I have nothing to give in return. *(There is a pause and then he screams at the house.)* I just want to go! Go! *(To Faith, Sarah and Dan.)* A long time ago I was a child of yours, I had everything back then but I ain't like you all no more - now... I got nothing - nothing - but a vision of a cold world changing ... into a human engin...

(Onaje reaches out to Faith, Sarah and Dan but they glance back at him and exit. The lights go down on Onaje standing alone on stage, and rise again slightly on Richard and Belle in the house.)

RICHARD:

(Banging on the bedroom door.) Come on out. I'm back home.

RICHARD'S FATHER:

(He opens the door violently and leans against the door frame. He is drunk.)

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

RICHARD:

(To his father as he hugs him and cries.) I came back. I got married. We are going to survive. I couldn't leave you like this. I was only back from prison for a week and you sent me off. We don't have to be afraid of nobody. Look, *(he reaches in his pocket)* I got money! You can go - like in the picture books...

RICHARD'S FATHER:

(He grabs Richard violently and cocks his hand ready to back hand him.) How we gonna survive? I gave you two thousand dollars and a car, and what did I tell you? *(He throws Richard to the ground.)*

RICHARD:

You told me to go.

RICHARD'S FATHER:

I told you to "disappear."

RICHARD:

(Looking up at his father.) I went. But I came back. I got lots of money!

RICHARD'S FATHER:

(Standing above him.) You came back. The dirt ball, Henderson, has been banging at the door ever since I got you that money. Saying you'd come back. And I lived here and didn't answer the door and prayed that you would not come back. We're slaves in this place! We're trapped - There's nothing for us here. You could have gone! You could have been free!

RICHARD:

(Looking up at his father and then standing and hugging him.) Daddy - there's no reason to get excited. You helped me. I got money - look here at me! We are going to clean up the house now. Look I got more than we need!

RICHARD'S FATHER:

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

RICHARD:

I got all the money we need!

RICHARD'S FATHER:

Where'd you think I got the money? *(Looking around at the beer bottles all over the house)* . . . From returning Pepsi bottles or something? You know where I got it!

RICHARD:

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

RICHARD'S FATHER:

You got money and you came back to me?

RICHARD:

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

RICHARD'S FATHER:

I gave you what I wanted most. Living out on that crabbing boat and God I've dreamed about Wyoming.

RICHARD:

I'll take care of the place. I'll give you what you need.

RICHARD'S FATHER:

Do you really have money? Let me see it. *(Richard gives him the money and Richard's father gets on his knees and spreads it out in front of him.)* Oh God it's real too...

RICHARD:

Take some.

RICHARD'S FATHER:

Take some?

RICHARD:

Go on. *(He offers his father a handful of money and his father takes it.)*

RICHARD'S FATHER:

... and I can go? - -

RICHARD:

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

RICHARD'S FATHER:

'N there's enough left over?... Halaluya! - I'm gone! *(He starts for the door.) All right!*

RICHARD:

(Restraining Richard's Father who has stopped short and stares at Belle.)
Daddy - that is my bride...

RICHARD'S FATHER:

Not bad - and she's in white too!

BELLE:

(She stands by the screen door.) Can I smack 'im?

RICHARD'S FATHER:

May I kiss the bride?

RICHARD:

Okay - but only on the lips. *(Richard's Father kisses Belle.)*

RICHARD:

Daddy - that's enough!

RICHARD'S FATHER:

I'm sorry I'm so drunk.

BELLE:

That's alright - I'm sure it's the first time for you too. *(Belle wipes her mouth.)* Ick - like father like son. Where'd you guys learn to kiss like that - from a basset hound?

RICHARD'S FATHER:

...What...?

RICHARD:

(Directing Richard's Father attention to the car outside.) I met a guy out on the road - outside of Cheyenne - just take him out to the highway for me... You know who he is...

RICHARD'S FATHER:

Who is he? He left here?

RICHARD:

You'll recognize him - just take him back to the highway -

RICHARD'S FATHER:

I can just go? I can take the car?

HENDERSON:

(Leaning off his chair and looking at the house.) Hey! *(He draws his gun.)*
What's goin' on? *(He bangs on the door)* Open up in there!

RICHARD'S FATHER:

You got the money for Henderson too? *(Richard nods yes.)* ...for

sure?... *(Richard indicates yes again.)* Then let's fuck with the old bastard. *(To Henderson through the screen door.)* ...Not by the hair on my chinny-chin chin, you pig!

RICHARD:

Jesus Christ Daddy - I don't believe you said that!

RICHARD'S FATHER:

(Yelling at Henderson again.) I'm here - you bill collectin' limp dicked son of a bitch. *(Addresses Richard)* We got the money right - don't we? I'm lovin' this *(He throws a crumpled beer can at the wall and starts again.)* Hey did you see the book out about you, your wife and you're kid?... It's called the three little pigs!

RICHARD:

Hey, shut up!

RICHARD'S FATHER:

...But don't worry about it. Henderson, cause your family tree is a bush... I don't know what that means - but that's a good one!

HENDERSON:

(Banging on the door.) Okay I'm coming in. *(He enters the house.)*

RICHARD:

Put the gun away - I got the money!

HENDERSON:

The Hell you do. *(He slaps Richard's Father who falls down.)*

RICHARD:

(Pushes Henderson away from Richard's Father.) Wait a minute! I've got money!

BELLE:

(Confronting Henderson aggressively.) What the hell are you doin'?

HENDERSON:

I'm takin' this man in.

RICHARD'S FATHER:

(From behind Richard.) You got no brains Henderson - you're dangerous 'n you're a pig!

RICHARD:

No wait - I'll handle this! Put away the gun!

BELLE:

Richard, I can't stand pricks like this! - *(To Henderson)* You behave. You're a cop or something, right? He's got the money! You hear me? He's got the money! Well, I'm showing you my little finger. *(She exposes the little finger on her right hand with her fist clenched in the face of Henderson.)* You act right or I reorganize your brain with this here fingernail up your nose. You small town cops never messed with a waitress from Reno!

RICHARD:

Look, I've got the money. Look. *(He holds the money in front of him.)* Here's two thousand dollars. *(He hands it to Henderson.)*

HENDERSON:

You got all the money?

RICHARD:

All and some!

HENDERSON:

All of it - two thousand?

BELLE:

If we need loose change, I'll take it outta your brain!... 'N from the looks of things I'll probably still come up short!

HENDERSON:

Let me count it.

ONAJE:

(From the car.) No. It ain't never gonna change - never. Ahhhh... *(He starts moving his arms in the exact same way he moved them in the first scene in the car.)* Oh please!... *(He closes his eyes.)* I got to go. Go. Go... I feel the smooth air of the earth, hot and cold in turbulence falling off of me - faster - faster - faster ... Oh God, please - Am I moving?

RICHARD'S FATHER:

Who is it out in the car?

BELLE:

Richard, don't let them hurt him!

HENDERSON:

(Pulling the gun as he sits at the kitchen table counting the money.) What's goin' on out there?

ONAJE:

(Pulls in his arms, surrendering to his constant position and giving up his spirit momentarily.) ... No, No, I'm not... How many years has it been...? *(He drops his arms, dejectedly and sits scattered with his head in his hands.)* All I am is gasoline in the belly of the machine.

RICHARD:

(Restraining Henderson) He ain't done nothing. *(He forces Henderson to look back at the money.)* Count it. *(To Richard's Father)* Go on out there - he's got the keys - Just get him back to the highway. It's William... *(All of a sudden*

Onaje turns and looks over his shoulder, defiantly at the house.)

HENDERSON:

Who is he?

RICHARD:

He used to live here - leave him alone. He's just crazy.

HENDERSON:

Where'd he live - Unionville? A black one?

RICHARD'S FATHER:

(Over his shoulder to Henderson as he exits the house through the screen door.) Yes. *(Richard's father approaches the car with the remnants of a six pack of beer in one hand. Onaje watches and Henderson, Belle and Richard continue to count the money.)* William? *(Coming over and looking at Onaje.)* You are, ain't you? Let me take a look at you! You been on the road for years and years? *(While Richard, Belle and Henderson count the money in the house the lights dim on them but the blue flicker of the T.V. continues and they eventually are captured by it as it plays upon their faces. In time they become stone figures before it with the blue light jumping on their faces, oblivious to the action between Richard's father and Onaje outside.)*

ONAJE:

You remember me? *(He is frightened.)* Get away from me Middleman...

RICHARD'S FATHER:

(Standing next to the car.) So give me the fuckin' keys!

ONAJE:

(He explores the possibility of an exit.) Where're you going?

RICHARD'S FATHER:

Wyoming.

ONAJE:

Wyoming? That's in your picture books. (*Getting out of the car.*) You don't need no car for that.

RICHARD'S FATHER:

I'm sick of picture books - give me the fuckin keys!

ONAJE:

You think a map is going to get you there?

RICHARD'S FATHER:

I've had this dream... to follow the roads to Wyoming.

ONAJE:

Go south for three months - then west for three months...

RICHARD'S FATHER:

Where the hell will that get me?

ONAJE:

... And do it for fifteen years! What the hell do you know about the roads? - why the hell Wyoming? There wasn't enough bullshit for you here? (*Onaje ascends to stand on the picnic table above Richard's Father.*)

RICHARD'S FATHER:

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

ONAJE:

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

RICHARD'S FATHER:

I'm sick of this shit! The Bay is polluted - the eels are steep - a bushel of

crabs is hard "n I get old. I don't understand - I want to go to Wyoming.

ONAJE:

Where you come off wanting to be in my exile?

RICHARD'S FATHER:

I don't understand what happened - why am I old and I got nothing? Why do the rich people own the land? Why is the oyster beds and the bay birds gone? Why is the shore grass gone and the God damn temperature of the seasons different? Why am I out in a boat at dawn and it brakes haze and everything is still gray? Now give me the keys nigger!

ONAJE:

(*Dominant above Richard's father and standing above him on the picnic table.*) Cause we are becoming Mother Nature! Genetic changes created by the human mind. The mind becoming ourselves. At home they just got their T.V.'s on -tapping into the engine's brain.

RICHARD'S FATHER:

What the fuck does that mean?

ONAJE:

It means there ain't no fucking Wyoming.

RICHARD'S FATHER:

(*Circling Onaje and looking him over.*) It is you? Ain't it? Always were a stubborn nigger. You whipped that white boy real good... I remember...

ONAJE:

(*Stepping down off of the picnic table and confronting Richard's Father.*) Maybe it's your turn now...

RICHARD'S FATHER:

What have I got to protect?

ONAJE:

You got an acre of ground.

RICHARD'S FATHER:

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

ONAJE:

Is that true? *(Sitting at the picnic table and facing the audience.)*

RICHARD'S FATHER:

(To Onaje referring to his travels.) What's it like? *(Joining Onaje on the other side of the picnic table.)*

ONAJE:

It's beautiful.

RICHARD'S FATHER:

Beautiful?

ONAJE:

Beautiful.

RICHARD'S FATHER:

It'll be beautiful?

ONAJE:

The country is beautiful - the people are great.

RICHARD'S FATHER:

After what you said?

ONAJE:

I wanted a home...

RICHARD'S FATHER:

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

ONAJE:

My Daddy told me some day I'd settle down - stop the ramblin - I'd understand.

RICHARD'S FATHER:

(Leaves the picnic table and leans against the car.) Well my Daddy said the same damn things and I did it and I still don't understand.

ONAJE:

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

RICHARD'S FATHER:

I never been off the Eastern Shore... 'n I've been drinking for two weeks.

ONAJE:

(Violently leaves his seat at the picnic table and launches himself violently at Richard's Father, pinning him against the car.) Why did you do that to me?

RICHARD'S FATHER:

(Does not resist.) ... I don't know... *(He stares back at Onaje who has his hand raised above his head.)* I don't know - it was a long time ago. *(He violently counter-attacks and shoves Onaje away across the stage and back against the picnic table.)* Nigger - you want a fight? I got nothing... nothin'... nothin'.

ONAJE:

(Onaje bursts out laughing.) ...You got a car.

RICHARD'S FATHER:

(Richard's Father circles the car and gets into the passenger seat.) Yea, but I'm too drunk to drive - you drive or you walk, nigger! Get in the driver's seat...

ONAJE:

Drive? *(He approaches the car.)* Drive? You know what? ... We got a big problem... No - You got a big problem...

RICHARD'S FATHER:

(Sitting in the passenger seat.) What?

ONAJE:

(Beat) I don't acknowledge the road.

RICHARD'S FATHER:

(Beat) No problem - I don't acknowledge the cops. *(He bursts out laughing.)* Come on - Get in! *(Onaje gets into the driver's seat.)*

ONAJE:

We got to be gentle man - 'n let it warm up. *(He starts the car.)* Well damn, I'll be driving a car... We're gonna pick up hitchhikers ya know. 'N talk to them.

RICHARD'S FATHER:

Yea, like I never talk to nobody on the Eastern Shore.

ONAJE:

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

RICHARD'S FATHER:

Yea -'n we'll tell 'urn all this sensitive bull shit.

ONAJE:

Jesus! Yea, you are drunk. I ain't done this in fifteen years - You ready to go?

RICHARD'S FATHER:

Yea - I'm ready... *(To Onaje offering him a beer.)* You want a beer?

ONAJE:

(Laughing) No - I don't drink and drive man.

RICHARD'S FATHER:

I already know you don't drive - Hey, honk the horn - I want my boy to see this... *(Onaje honks the horn. Richard leaves the others and goes to the screen door, pushes it open and watches his father and Onaje in the car. Richard's Father waves and calls to Richard.)* I'm goin' - we're goin'! *(Richard watches.)*

ONAJE:

(To Richard's Father) You want a breath mint?

RICHARD'S FATHER:

You makin fun of me, nigger?

ONAJE:

(Onaje grabs Richard's Father hard by the shirt at the throat.) By next morning when you'll have slept it off -you goin' to dump me out on that highway again?

RICHARD'S FATHER:

(Richard's Father forces the release of Onaje's hand.) Drive mother fucker - Drive! *(Onaje revs the engine and the lights of the stage dim over the car. The T.V. light flutters dimly on the stone figures of Henderson, Belle and Richard stage left. The front lights of the car turn on with great power and beam over the - audience. At first the passengers in the car remain in darkness and then dimly Onaje's figure can be seen sitting in the driver's seat driving ever so carefully)*

THERE AIN'T NO WYOMING: ACT II; SCENE II

and the lights change on the scrim to represent the change from day to night. Richard's Father, now sitting on the back of the front seat, can be seen holding, ever so awkwardly the sextant to his eye to scan the sky and looking, intermittently, at Onaje. They make eye contact, after a moment, and laugh, both consumed in the enjoyment of the ride but both break from the eye contact to stare straight ahead, separately and solemn, into the darkness. The strobe overhead lights slowly strobe, strobe, strobe - indicating increasing speed. The front lights of the car go off and the strobe increases rapidly so that the first image of the play is repeated.)

(End of Play)