

FAMILY CLIMATE

A play by Charles Deemer

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FAMILY CLIMATE

TIME: The present and near future

PLACE: Portland, Oregon

CAST:

ANGELA HART, 40s, a widow, homemaker

JOEY HART, her son, a high school senior, bright, idealistic

BRIAN HART, 40s, her brother, a surgeon

HANK HART, 30s, her brother, an art teacher and painter

HOLLY HART, 30s, her sister, a struggling actress

HALLOWEEN CHIEF, an old man in Halloween costume of Indian Chief

AUDIO ELEMENTS: radio broadcasts; voices of historic Indians

SETTING: The entire action takes place in the living room of Angela's modest house.

FAMILY CLIMATE

The play is performed without intermission.

Scene 1

Darkness.

AUDIO

14 of the 15 hottest years on record have occurred since 2000, the UN says, as global warming continues unabated. This is The Guardian Radio Network.

Lights up. Living room. Angela leads Brian in.

BRIAN

When's Holly get in?

ANGELA

Her plane's delayed. She'll take a cab from the airport.

BRIAN

Hank?

ANGELA

He arrived this morning. He's looking for high school buddies.

BRIAN

Why am I not surprised?

ANGELA

You want a drink? Coffee?

BRIAN

I'm fine. I want more detail about Joey than I got on the phone.

ANGELA

I really don't know more.

BRIAN

He refuses to eat. That's it?

ANGELA

And talk.

BRIAN

Protesting the sale, I assume.

ANGELA

I don't know what else it would be.

BRIAN

You once told me he wasn't into family history.

ANGELA

He hasn't been. Getting him to the cabin was like pulling teeth. And now he doesn't want us to sell the land? It doesn't make sense.

BRIAN

I want to see him.

ANGELA

Good luck with that. Last I checked, his door was locked.

BRIAN

He has a lock on his bedroom?

ANGELA

Padlock.

BRIAN

You let him do that?

ANGELA

How could I stop him?

BRIAN

It's your house. He's still a minor.

ANGELA

Not for long.

BRIAN

For now. Angela, you've never been--

ANGELA

Strict enough. I know, I know.

BRIAN

Does he ever unlock the door?

ANGELA

Oh yes. He comes out. He uses the bathroom. He drinks water. He watched the news once.

Brian just looks at her.

ANGELA

Are you sure you don't want a drink? I'm having one.

BRIAN

What happened to sobriety?

ANGELA

Brian, I'm fine. I haven't had trouble in a long time.

BRIAN

Whatever.

A silence as Angela fixes a drink at a mini-bar.

BRIAN

I need to get a room.

ANGELA

I thought you'd be staying here.

BRIAN

(ignoring this)

How about I take everybody out to Jake's for dinner? Those of us who are eating.

ANGELA

I thought I'd order pizza and--

BRIAN

I don't eat pizza for dinner. Will everybody be here at six?

ANGELA

Hank should be. Holly didn't give a time.

BRIAN

I'll pick everybody up at six.

He leaves. Angela drinks.

Blackout.

Scene 2

Darkness.

VOICE IN DARKNESS: CHIEF SEATTLE

This is Chief Seattle. How can you buy or sell the sky, the warmth of the land? The idea is strange to us. If we do not own the freshness of the air and the sparkle of the water, how can you buy them?

Every part of this earth is sacred to my people. Every shining pine needle, every sandy shore, every mist in the dark woods, every clearing and humming insect is holy in the memory and experience of my people. The sap which courses through the trees carries the memories of the red man.

The rivers are our brothers, they quench our thirst. The rivers carry our canoes, and feed our children. If we sell you our land, you must remember, and teach your children, that the rivers are our brothers and yours, and you must henceforth give the rivers the kindness you would give any brother. This is Chief Seattle.

*Lights up. That evening. Angela and Brian.
Brian looks at his watch.*

BRIAN

Jesus Christ, Angela.

ANGELA

She said she wouldn't be long.

Hank enters from hallway to bedrooms. He carries a sheet of paper.

HANK

I know why. And it's not about the sale. It's about global warming. A manifesto.

He holds up the paper. Brian scoffs.

BRIAN

Terrific.

HANK

Look at this ...

Hank hands Brian the paper.

ANGELA

Then we have nothing to worry about, right? He got over the other times.

HANK

Did he ever go on a hunger strike before?

ANGELA

No. But he was in that tree almost three days before he came down.

HANK

How long has it been since he ate?

ANGELA

This is the fourth day.

HANK

How long before we have to worry?

BRIAN

(reading)

What garbage.

HANK

Doctor Hart?

ANGELA

(to Hank)

He is drinking water.

BRIAN

He'll quit soon enough. He's being theatrical without substance.

HANK

Hope you're right.

(about the manifesto)

So what do you think?

ANGELA

Let me see.

Brian gives Angela the paper. She starts reading.

BRIAN

It's textbook leftwing rhetoric. Same as before.

HANK

When I heard about the hunger strike -- which surprised the hell out of me -- I thought he was protesting the sale.

ANGELA

That's what Holly thought. We all did.

BRIAN

Speaking of which ... how long do we have to wait for her? I made reservations for seven. I'm not being late, with or without her.

ANGELA

You two go ahead. This is amazing, coming from him. The part about the Pope. I could never drag him to church.

BRIAN

You plan to drive?

ANGELA

I'm fine.

BRIAN

Whatever. I'm going to talk to him.

He exits via the hallway.

HANK

Hasn't changed.

ANGELA

None of us change, Hank. That's this family's cross to bear.

HANK

He does have a point. If you believe the scientists anyway.

ANGELA

You don't believe them?

HANK

I don't know who to believe any more.

ANGELA

It's so unlike him to admire a Pope. You don't think he'd become a Catholic, do you?

HANK

If he does, nobody tell mom. How's she doing?

ANGELA

Worse. She doesn't always know who I am.

HANK

That must be hard to take. I'll visit tomorrow after we sign the papers.

ANGELA

She actually acts more relaxed, more happy, than before. When she recognized me ...

HANK

Mom relaxed? I won't believe that till I see it. Does she know we're selling the property?

ANGELA

She did when Brian got power of attorney. Probably not now.

HANK

Just as well, don't you think?

ANGELA

Absolutely. Do you ever get second thoughts?

HANK

Of course.

ANGELA

How did Brian change your mind? The money?

Hank smiles.

HANK

If I said the money didn't matter, I'd be lying.

ANGELA

It would buy you lots of time to paint. No more teaching.

HANK

Parking cars.

ANGELA

You're not teaching?

HANK

Between gigs.

ANGELA

Oh Hank ...

HANK

Stop it. To get back to your question, I've always found the whole resort idea distasteful. Ski lodge, condos, golf course ... I don't know people who go to places like that.

ANGELA

You know Brian.

HANK

Exactly.

ANGELA

What changed your mind?

HANK

Holly.

ANGELA

Really?

HANK

You sound surprised.

ANGELA

I never thought of her as the argumentative type.

HANK

She didn't try and convince me. She told me why she changed her mind and would sign.

ANGELA

Why did she?

HANK

It's personal and private. I gave my word.

Angela thinks a moment.

ANGELA

She needs money for an abortion.

Hank shrugs.

ANGELA

I'm right, I can tell. But I don't see what that has to do with your feelings about it.

HANK

If she had a personal emergency--

ANGELA

An abortion.

HANK

Whatever it might be. I can see how a nest egg for emergencies could come in handy.

ANGELA

For the money then.

HANK

Okay, for the money. It makes me sound so unprincipled. But when you live paycheck to paycheck ...

ANGELA

You don't have to convince me. I definitely decided for the money.

Brian returns.

HANK

Any luck?

BRIAN

Doing what?

HANK

Talking to him? Whatever?

BRIAN

I told him the basic facts of Reality 101 through a closed door. I think he's smoking pot in there.

HANK

He wasn't when I saw him.

ANGELA

You actually saw him? He let you in?

HANK

I saw him briefly when he passed out the manifesto.

BRIAN

Look, I'm going to Jake's so I don't lose the reservation. Will you be right behind me or what?

ANGELA

I should wait for Holly.

BRIAN

She knows where Jake's is. Leave a note on the door.

The doorbell rings.

ANGELA

That must be her.

She exits to answer door.

BRIAN

I think you should drive.

HANK

Aye aye, captain.

BRIAN

Grow up, Hank.

Exits to leave.

Angela and Holly enter.

HOLLY

(To front door)

Nice seeing you, too, Brian!

(To others)

After two years. Whatever it's been. Since Joe's funeral.

HANK

Sis.

HOLLY

Bro.

They embrace.

ANGELA

Brian made reservations at Jake's. We'd better get going.

HOLLY

Is Joey coming?

ANGELA

Just us.

HANK

It's a long story.

ANGELA

You must be beat. If you'd rather stay and take a nap ...

HOLLY

And pass up a free dinner at Jake's? You know Brian will pick up the tab.

HANK

But not the bar bill.

HOLLY

Right. Well, better than nothing. I'm ready to go whenever.

HANK

Then let's do it.

ANGELA

(To Hank)

Would you drive?

She gives him the car keys.

Blackout.

Scene 3

Darkness.

AUDIO

The future will see a devastating worldwide food crisis, the

UN says. Global grain reserves are at critically low levels, and rising food prices threaten disaster and unrest. This is The Guardian Radio Network.

Lights up.

Later that night.

Joey is eating pizza, wearing earphones.

Angela and Hank enter.

ANGELA

You're eating! Thank God.

HANK

Good to see you back.

ANGELA

Joey, you look pale. I think tomorrow you should--

JOEY

I'm fine, mom. I'm fantastical. This is becoming so awesome ... the manifesto is just the tip of the iceberg.

HANK

You're losing me, Joey.

JOEY

I think I've started a revolution. My Twitter followers more than double every day. And on Facebook, GABI has almost ten thousand likes!

ANGELA

Who's Gabby?

JOEY

G - A - B - I. Give America Back to the Indians.

HANK

Oh boy ...

ANGELA

What on earth are you talking about?

HANK

Are you sure they even want it after the mess we made?

JOEY

That's the point. Obviously we can't fix the planet. Everything we try to do, which isn't much, ends up making global warming worse.

ANGELA

GABI is what? A club, a Facebook page?

JOEY

A movement.

HANK

What the hell, why not?

ANGELA

A movement to give the country back to the Indians. You can't be serious, and you have no way of doing it even if you were.

JOEY

It's an attention grabber. Like a metaphor. But we're already developing an awesome plan of action.

HANK

I'd like to hear it.

JOEY

We're still polishing it. Mr. Franks is helping us.

HANK

A teacher?

ANGELA

His controversial history teacher.

JOEY

You think he was controversial before!

HANK

Is GABI your idea or his?

JOEY

I can't remember whose but definitely not his. Ideas were being texted around like crazy. At first the goal was to get our parents' attention with a hunger strike and then present a manifesto and get them involved. Then it was no, we can't depend on adults, we have to do this ourselves. And then we realized only Indians have ever lived in harmony with the Earth. If anybody knew how to fix things, they would. Isn't this an awesome idea?

ANGELA

I'm not amused. You be careful. College entrance people don't like controversy.

JOEY

If we're all dead, what difference does it make?

ANGELA

Don't make this sound like a nuclear war.

JOEY
Hello? It's worse.

ANGELA
If that were true, then the government would--

JOE
The government is dysfunctional. A lot of them deny the problem.

ANGELA
Maybe they have access to secret information that--

JOEY
You have your head in the sand.

ANGELA
That's no way to talk to your mother.

HANK
Time out! Time out!

They calm down.

HANK
There's plenty of time to save the world in the morning. For the moment, I'm beat and I believe this is my bedroom.

ANGELA
I'll get sheets.

She exits.

JOEY

Actually there's not plenty of time. Glaciers have been melting much faster than predicted.

HANK

I get it, Joey. I just don't know what can be done about it.

JOEY

Because Americans can't do anything about it. We have the wrong philosophy. We're capitalists, which feeds on growth.

HANK

So you want the Indians to figure it out.

JOEY

The President declares a national state of emergency. He creates a governing board to create a new policy of redemption and environmental renewal. The board consists of American Indians, preferably descendants of elders. I mean, they lived in harmony with Nature for centuries. They know how to do it. So we put them in charge.

HANK

Asking them to help us may be asking a lot.

JOEY

We have to try. We have to do something.

HANK

You ever hear of Lew Welch?

JOEY

No.

HANK

He's a poet. One of the forgotten Beats. One of his poems ends this way ... I'm paraphrasing: You can't fix it. You can't make it go away. I don't know what you're going to do about it but I know what I'm going to do about it. I'm just going to walk away from it. Maybe a small part of it will die if I'm not around feeding it anymore.

JOEY

That really sucks.

HANK

Maybe it's too late to fix it. It's certainly not going away.

JOEY

You think we should watch our own extinction without trying to stop it? Why not just commit mass suicide?

HANK

I'd rather dance on the Titanic. That's what life amounts to now.

Angela enters with sheets.

ANGELA

Who's dancing on the Titanic?

JOEY

He thinks everybody should commit mass suicide. I can't believe you'd think that.

He heads for his room.

HANK

Actually we'll be colonizing Mars ...

(To Angela)
He's really been giving a lot of thought to this stuff.

ANGELA
I wish he wouldn't.

They start making a bed on the divan.

ANGELA
Obviously the weather's changing ... but how does it follow that the world is coming to an end?

HANK
Have to ask Joey on that. Not my pay grade.

ANGELA
Did he say anything about End Times and the Second Coming?

Hank is amused.

HANK
Relax. That's not where he's coming from.

ANGELA
Thank God for that.

They continue making the bed.

Blackout.

Scene 4

Darkness.

AUDIO

In addition to a food shortage, the UN warns that an even greater global crisis will be caused by a shortage of fresh water. As reservoirs dry up across the globe, a billion people will have no access to safe drinking water. Rationing and a battle to control supplies will follow, bringing disaster and unrest. This is The Guardian Radio Network.

VOICE IN DARKNESS: OHIYESA

This is Ohiyesa. It was our belief that the love of possessions is a weakness to be overcome. Its appeal is to the material part, and if allowed its way, it will in time disturb one's spiritual balance. Therefore, children must early on learn the beauty of generosity. They are taught to give what they prize most, that they may taste the happiness of giving. This is Ohiyesa.

Lights up.

The next day.

Holly storms in, followed by Angela. Holly is looking for something.

HOLLY

Where in hell do you keep the booze?

ANGELA

Whiskey and glasses over there. More variety in the kitchen cabinet. What do you want?

HOLLY

Anything.

ANGELA

Bourbon and water?

HOLLY

Great. A double.

ANGELA

I'll get ice.

Angela leaves. Brian and Hank have entered.

BRIAN

Now there's this family's universal cure all: let's have a drink!

HOLLY

Brian, I told you at the lawyer's, I have nothing more to say. I'm following my gut feeling. You can't change my mind.

BRIAN

I don't want to change your mind.

HOLLY

Of course you do. If I don't sign, then there's no deal.

BRIAN

Unless you're no longer in the family corporation.

HOLLY

What do you mean?

BRIAN

You sell your parcel to me and resign. Then what happens has nothing to do with you. You don't have to deal with your dirty developers. And you get money, which I know you can use.

HOLLY

But the land still goes to the developers.

BRIAN

So what? You have nothing to do with it one way or another. You're selling to your brother. Flesh and blood!

HOLLY

Who turns around and sells to those bastards!
Angela brings Holly her drink. She has one for herself.

Brian looks at his watch, making sure Angela notices.

HANK

Holly, you need to consider this. It does let us off the hook.

HOLLY

He's buying you out, too?

HANK

Look at it this way. You sell your car to someone. They go out and run over and kill a bicyclist. Should you be arrested for murder?

HOLLY

No way.

HANK

Exactly. This is no different. We're selling to Brian. What he does after that is his business. If bad karma results, it's his problem, not ours.

ANGELA

Hank, can I get you a drink?

BRIAN

Angela--

HANK

Nothing, thanks.

ANGELA

A glass of milk, Brian?

BRIAN

(Ignoring this)

I need an answer before four. I'm still flying home tonight.

HANK

It's the best deal we're going to get.

HOLLY

I'll think about it.

BRIAN

I'll call here at three to get your answer. Try not to get too polluted.

HANK

We were going to visit mom after signing. She'd like to see us all together.

ANGELA

I don't think she'll recognize us.

HOLLY

I can't handle that.

BRIAN

I'll visit her after lunch. Three, Holly.

He leaves.

HANK

I'll have that drink now.

Blackout.

Scene 5

Darkness.

VOICE IN DARKNESS: OHIYESA

This is Ohiyesa. The Wise Man believes profoundly in silence - the sign of a perfect equilibrium. Silence is the absolute poise or balance of body, mind and spirit. The man who preserves his selfhood ever calm and unshaken by the storms of existence - not a falling leaf, as it were, not a ripple upon the surface of a pool - this man has the ideal attitude and conduct of life. Silence is the cornerstone of character. This is Ohiyesa.

Lights up.

Living room. That afternoon.

Holly is on her cell phone.

HOLLY

I feel guilty because sis and Hank were probably counting on the money....

Hank enters.

HOLLY

Honey, I have to run. Love you.

She hangs up.

HANK

Everything copasetic?

HOLLY

Bob suggested we keep a few acres around the cabin for ourselves.

HANK

Didn't we decide against that a few years back?

HOLLY

I can't remember. I have no head for business.

HANK

So when Brian calls ...?

HOLLY

I won't be here. I chickened out and sent him an email. Same answer. Short and sweet.

HANK

I thought you needed the money.

HOLLY

My problem took care of itself. For once, the universe was listening to me.

HANK

Okay. We'll leave it at that.

HOLLY

I'm really sorry if I'm making life harder than you expected.

HANK

Don't worry about it. I've gotten very good at going with the flow. Have a safe trip.

They embrace.

HOLLY

I love you, mister painter man.

HANK

Love you back.

Holly waits for more.

HOLLY

Well? Love you back what?

HANK

I thought you quit.

HOLLY

Bob made me go back. I start rehearsals for "Same Time, Next Year" when I get home.

HANK

All right then ... that's a great role.

They embrace again.

HANK

Love you back, madam theater lady.

HOLLY

It's just the community theater.

HANK

Cut the "just" crap. A stage is a stage is a stage.

A long embrace.

Blackout.

Lights up.

A few hours later.

Hank stretched out on the divan, awake.

Joey enters with a back pack, coming from school.

HANK

Hey, Che ...

JOEY

Very funny. We're going to be bigger than Che. We'll be as big as Tom Paine. We're writing a new Common Sense.

HANK

More power to you.

JOEY

Where's mom?

ANGELA

(Entering)

She's right here. How long did I sleep?

HANK

Couple hours.

ANGELA

I must've been tired.

JOEY

Or feeling guilty about selling the family legacy.

HANK

We didn't sign. Holly backed out.

JOEY

I have the most awesome aunt in the world!

ANGELA

What should I make for dinner?

JOEY

I'm going to Bruce's for pizza.

ANGELA

On a school night?

JOEY

We have a lot of work to do. And Mr. Franks is giving us credit for it.

HANK

For how to give the country back to the Indians?

JOEY

For devising a strategy of transition.

ANGELA

Does the principal know what Mr. Franks is encouraging?

JOEY

Mom, this is really important. I can't believe how fast GABI is growing! There's already over a dozen chapters organized in

four states. This idea is so hot!

He exits to bedroom.

ANGELA

Were we like that?

HANK

Sure we were.

ANGELA

Youth has to rebel against something, I suppose.

HANK

Given the way the world is, the world his generation is inheriting, I can understand where their energy is coming from.

ANGELA

I think this whole weather deal is being blown out of proportion. If we can walk on the moon, we can fix the weather.

HANK

But will we?

ANGELA

If it gets bad enough, of course we will. This country isn't about ignoring problems. Sometimes we're slow, but we always get it done.

HANK

A lady of faith.

ANGELA

Of course I have faith.

Joey comes in, passing on his way out.

JOEY

You have faith in myths, mom.

ANGELA

Don't stay out late. It's a school night. That boy.

HANK

Actually I'm impressed with how serious he is - even about the dumbest idea I've ever heard.

ANGELA

I don't know about teachers today. They seem to encourage that sort of thing. Are you ready for a drink?

HANK

In a bit. I want to talk to you about something.

ANGELA

If it's about the land--

HANK

It isn't. I'm moving here. I got a job at the community college.

ANGELA

What? When?

HANK

A few weeks ago. I didn't want to bring it up while we were dealing with the sale.

ANGELA

I thought Jane loved it there.

HANK

We broke up. It's not something I want to get into. She found someone with more financial stability than an artist. An accountant.

ANGELA

Hank, I'm so sorry.

HANK

No sooner did that happen than I was denied tenure. So the last few months have been a mad, stressful scramble of sending out resumes. I got three interviews and two offers. I chose here.

ANGELA

That's wonderful. I mean--

HANK

I know what you mean.

ANGELA

Have you found a place to stay?

HANK

That's what I wanted to talk to you about. I want to rent your basement.

ANGEL

To live in?

HANK

Exactly.

ANGELA

Have you been down there lately?

HANK

Let's go right now. It can't be worse than some of the hovels I've lived in.

ANGELA

Don't decide until you see it.

HANK

And don't you under-estimate my decorative talent after spending a few hours at Goodwill. I can sleep there, work there ... bring my female students there ...

Angela playfully jabs him as they head out.

Blackout.

Scene 6

Darkness.

AUDIO

In the near future, victims of climate change will make the West pay for their losses and suffering. The scientific case is strengthening that developed countries are to blame for global warming and the disasters that result. There soon will be a legal reckoning, say lawyers representing the victims. This is The Guardian Radio Network.

Lights up.

A few days later.

Joey is showing Angela how to take a video on his iPhone.

JOEY

And press the button here. The main thing is make sure I'm in frame. Just don't freak out. It's really easy.

ANGELA

For your generation, I'm sure ...
Joey moves a few feet away and faces the camera. Angela makes an effort.

During this, Hank comes up from the basement.

ANGELA

I don't see you ...

JOEY

Mom!

HANK

Let me.

He takes the camera.

JOEY

It's a video.

HANK

Going first class.

JOEY

For recruitment on my Facebook page.

HANK

Let's do it.

(Playing the part)

Places! Quiet on the set! Action!

JOEY

This is Joey. I'm a senior at Roosevelt High and the founder, one of the founders, of GABI. I'm about to leave for school on the day of our first walkout protest. At exactly 10:15 this morning, west coast time, I'll be with at least 50 students from my school to leave classes in protest of the government's failure to address global warming in any serious way. We will march to City Hall for a political rally and won't return to classes until after lunch. We are not the only school doing this. So far, almost one hundred high schools in twenty three states will have students leaving classes at exactly 10:15 Pacific time. We chose this time because it's the approximate time of death of Sitting Bull after being murdered on the reservation in North Dakota. GABI, or Give America Back to the Indians, is growing faster than any of us thought possible in our wildest dreams. If you are a high school student and want to save the planet and save the extinction of the human race, please join us. Remember, don't trust anyone over twenty!

A silence.

JOEY

Cut!

HANK

What's this over twenty stuff? What about the teacher who's helping you?

JOEY

We don't work with him any more. He didn't want us to do this.

ANGELA

You never told me that.

JOEY

There's lots I don't tell you. I'm running late. Thanks, Uncle Hank.

HANK

Be safe.

Joey leaves.

ANGELA

Tell me I shouldn't be worried.

HANK

They have to feel like they're not powerless. I remember how I felt when we invaded Iraq. In my gut it felt like a great mistake, and I had to express myself. Marching in protest seemed the only way.

ANGELA

What if he gets arrested? It'll be on his record when he applies for college. At the very least, it would make him less likely for a scholarship.

HANK

I don't think anyone is getting arrested.

ANGELA

You're always so optimistic.

HANK

Not really. But I wish it were true.

Blackout.

Scene 7

Darkness.

VOICE IN DARKNESS: CROWFOOT

This is Crowfoot. What is life? It is the flash of a firefly in the night. It is the breath of a buffalo in the wintertime. It is the little shadow which runs across the grass and loses itself in the sunset.

Our land is more valuable than your money. It will last forever. It will not even perish by the flames of fire. This is Crowfoot.

Lights up.

A month later.

Hank is shooting video of Joey.

JOEY

This is Joey. Last night, when I checked Facebook a little after midnight, I learned that GABI registered its one hundred thousandth member. And last week we added our one hundredth high school. But I have even better news. Last week, on the Pine Ridge Reservation, students formed NAIM, the New American Indian Movement, and they will partner with GABI to bring our first Indians into the revolution for rebirth. This is an important and necessary step toward bringing the

descendants of native elders into decision-making positions in a new government. With this coalition, we can aim even higher. How does a two million student march on Washington sound? Stay tuned. And don't trust anyone over twenty.

*Hank stops filming.
Blackout.*

*Lights up.
A few days later.*

*Angela on the home phone, listening.
Joey starts through the room, on his way out*

ANGELA

Alice, I have to call you back.

She hangs up.

Just a minute, young man! Get back in here.

JOEY

Mom, I'm running late.

ANGELA

Get in here and sit!

Joey does. He's not used to seeing her this angry.

ANGELA

This has got to stop.

JOEY

I can't stop. I've got two hundred thousand kids counting on me.

ANGELA

I'm not talking about politics. I'm talking about how your grades are slipping. A "B" in computer science? You've always had A's.

JOEY

I'm getting punished for GABI. The teacher's a Republican.

ANGELA

That's no excuse.

JOEY

It's no big deal. I'll do an extra credit project.

ANGELA

I think it's a very big deal. And to show you how serious I am, you're grounded for the weekend.

JOEY

You can't ground me.

ANGELA

I'm your mother. I can do anything I want.

JOEY

What if I ignore you?

ANGELA

I'll call the police, they'll call Social Services, and eventually you'll be put in a foster home. Then see how much freedom you have.

JOEY

That's totally absurd.

ANGELA

Try me.

He's never seen her like this.

You'll thank me soon enough when you apply for college.

JOEY

You have your head in the sand! How can I apply for college if there isn't a planet left to live on?

He exits to his room.

Angela breathes deeply, trying to calm down.

Blackout

Lights up. That night.

Angela and Hank. Angela is agitated.

ANGELA

He's never done something like this before. I'm calling the police.

HANK

Sis, it's obvious where he went. There's a rally and powwow in the park.

ANGELA

A powwow?

HANK

Indians are getting more involved with what the kids started. A bunch of Chiefs will be leading the march in Washington.

ANGELA

He certainly won't be marching in that one.

HANK

You've got to let him go.

ANGELA

You're taking his side on this?

HANK

No. He needs to be punished but stopping him from participating in history is not the way to do it.

ANGELA

History, shmistory ...

HANK

It may prove to be important history, if they can actually get more than a million kids out there. And Joey's at the ground floor of all this. Your Joey. My nephew. I'm still pinching myself. If you take this away from him, he'll never forgive you for it.

She thinks about it.

HANK

Let me talk to him. He made an error in priorities. I'll tell him he can go on the march in Washington if he stays grounded until then and catches up on his schoolwork.

ANGELA

Improves his grades.

HANK

Improves his grades. What do you say?

ANGELA

I'll tell him tonight.

HANK

No. You go to bed. I'll wait up and talk to him.

ANGELA

You really like Joey.

HANK

Yes, I do.

ANGELA

You don't think he's ruining his life?

HANK

No, I don't.

ANGELA

Very well. Goodnight then.

HANK

Night, sis.

She exits.

Blackout.

Lights up half.

Later, almost midnight.

Hank dozes in a chair.

The front door opens. Joey enters, heading for his room.

HANK
We need to talk.

Joey jumps.

JOEY
You scared me.

HANK
You're scaring your mother. Sit down.

JOEY
She has--

HANK
--her head in the sand, I know. Sit.
(Joey will.)
I'm inclined to agree with you. But she's still your mother.
She worries like hell about you because she loves you so much.

JOEY
She's out of touch, Uncle Hank. She keeps bringing up my
college application.

HANK
She gets to make the rules in this house, Joey. You did a
really dumb thing tonight.

JOEY
GABI was invited to the powwow and--

HANK
--and you got to feel like a big shot. You got a lot of
recognition, am I right?

JOEY

They did a special drumming in our honor. It was so awesome.

HANK

Listen to yourself. What does being a big shot have to do with getting government action on climate change? I'll tell you what. Not a goddamn thing. It's frosting on the cake, and if it tastes too good, you're going to lose your focus. On the other hand, if you get a million high school kids marching on Washington--

JOEY

--much more than a million.

HANK

This has the potential to really change history. Why would you jeopardize this moment for a taste of frosting? Because your mother was going to forbid you going to Washington. And she has the power to do it.

JOEY

If she gives me to a foster family--

HANK

Dammit, Joey, don't make this so complicated. I talked to her on your behalf. If you stay grounded until the march, and get your grades back up where they belong, you can go to Washington.

JOEY

You did that for me? Why?

HANK

You remind me a little of myself at your age. Believe it or not, I've been in protest marches. I've been tear-gassed. I even spent a night in jail.

JOEY

What were you protesting?

HANK

The Iraq war. The second one. Regime change with shock and awe. We got gassed, some of us got arrested, and my parents decided to teach me a lesson by refusing to bail me out.

JOEY

So did it work?

HANK

Of course not. But I did get more careful. Which is exactly what you should do. Progressive struggles take a lot of time.

A silence.

HANK

I'm ready for bed.

JOEY

Thanks for dealing with mom.

HANK

No problem. You're blowing my mind actually. A million kids will be a sight to see.

JOEY

Two million.

HANK

There are what, twenty million high school students in the country? Ten percent is a big order.

JOEY

But we're all on the same planet. The next step is going international.

HANK

Get the hell to bed before I become an idealist again. And remember, you can't trust me. I'm over twenty.

Blackout.

Scene 8

Darkness.

AUDIO

On April 25, 2004, over one million marchers gathered on the National Mall in support of women's reproductive rights, making it "the largest protest in U.S. history," according to march organizers. News media estimated the crowd at under a million, closer to the Million Man March of 1995. Today those marches were made small by almost two million high school students who call themselves GABI, Give America Back to the Indians. And the New American Indian Movement, also led by high school students, seems to agree, taking their place at the front of the parade. How exactly the country could be given back to the Indians has never been made clear to this reporter. This is the Guardian Radio Network.

Lights up.

Late afternoon, after the march.

Angela on the home phone.

ANGELA

That's wonderful, Joey...

Hank has entered.

Your Uncle Hank wants to say hi.

She hands him the phone.

HANK

You must be walking on air...We're both proud of you.

ANGELA

Tell him to get to bed early so he doesn't miss his plane in the morning.

HANK

Your mother doesn't want you to stay out late. You have an early flight...Really? What's her name?...Have fun, Joey. You deserve it.

He hangs up.

ANGELA

What do you mean, have fun? Whose name?

HANK

There's a party. He met a girl named Amanda.

ANGELA

A party with drinking, I suppose. You know where that leads.

HANK

He had an incredible day.

The home phone rings.

Let him enjoy it.

He answers.

Hello....We were just talking to him....It went amazingly well.

ANGELA

Who is it?

HANK

Your sister wants to talk to you.

He hands Angela the phone.

HANK

Holly.

ANGELA

Hi....I'm a nervous wreck. Joey met a girl.

Blackout.

Lights up.

Hours later.

Angela and Hank look tired, tense.

ANGELA

It's only a three hour drive. Why does she stay with him?

HANK

I never understood what she saw in any of them. I can't believe I didn't pick up that something was wrong.

ANGELA

She's a good actress.

The home phone rings.

HANK

Finally.

He picks up.

Hello....It is. Who is this?...Go to hell yourself, you sonofabitch.

He hangs up.

So much for no backlash.

ANGELA

Who was it?

HANK

Some crank. He doesn't approve of your parenting skills.

Holly enters.

HOLLY

I let myself in.

ANGELA

(Going to her)

How are you?

HOLLY

A complete wreck, to be honest.

HANK

One of these days, you're going to have to--

HOLLY

I can't do this tonight. Right now I just want a drink and a hot bath.

ANGELA

In what order?

HOLLY

At the same time.

ANGELA

I'll fill the tub. Hank will make you a drink.

She exits.

HANK

Let me look at you....I was expecting worse.

HOLLY

I've gotten better at ducking.

HANK

I could say something.

HOLLY

You don't have to. This time I'm leaving.

HANK

I hope you mean that.

HOLLY

You know what's ironic? He used to hit me because he thought I was cheating on him. This time it was because I discovered he's been cheating on me. For almost a year.

HANK

Christ.

HOLLY

At least it's the kick in the ass I obviously needed. Now I won't even live in the same town with him.

HANK

You're moving?

HOLLY

I was thinking of coming here. I think it will be good for me to be close to Angela. I always feel better after talking to her. She's my rock.

ANGELA

(Off stage)

Water's ready!

HANK

I'll make that drink.

Blackout.

Lights up half.

After midnight. Holly is in bed on the divan.

The home phone starts ringing. Holly sleepily heads for it.

HOLLY

Hello ...

Angela enters in her robe.

ANGELA

What's wrong?

HOLLY

This is her sister. Just a minute.

She gives Angela the phone.

ANGELA

This is Angela ...

(She gasps.)

HOLLY

Sis? What is it?

Angela is losing it.

Blackout.

Lights up.

A short time later.

Hank, in a robe, is on the phone.

Holly comforts Angela.

HANK

All I know is they crashed the party and beat the shit out of everyone. Joey got it worse than most....Brian, does it really matter at this point? What's important is to get her on a plane as soon as possible. If I had the money--.....Perfect. You're a life saver.

HOLLY

I want to talk to him.

HANK

Holly wants to talk to you.

(To Angela, handing Holly the phone.)

Get packed.

Angela exits.

HOLLY

Brian, I'm ready to sign....I am serious....Because a situation like this brings home how useless it is to have wealth you can't even access. Our land feels more like a curse than a legacy....Works for me. Goodnight.

She hangs up.

HANK

Do you know what you're doing?

HOLLY

I haven't a clue. But I'm doing it.

Blackout.

Scene 9

Darkness.

VOICE IN DARKNESS: CRAZY HORSE

This is Crazy Horse. After suffering beyond suffering, the Red Nation shall rise again and it shall be a blessing for a sick world.

I see a time of Seven Generations when all the colors of mankind will gather under the Sacred Tree of Life and the whole Earth will become one circle again. In that day, there will be those among the Lakota who will carry knowledge and understanding of unity among all living things, and the young white ones will come to those of my people and ask for this

wisdom. This is Crazy Horse.

AUDIO

Backlash against the high school organization GABI, Give America Back to the Indians, continues to grow. According to a new CNN poll, seventy one percent of the parents of GABI members are putting new restrictions on their children's participation. And the last of the GABI teenagers hospitalized after a violent attack by the Sons of Satan motorcycle club has been released from the hospital and is on his way home. This is the Guardian News Network.

Lights up.

A few weeks later.

Hank and Holly.

HOLLY

We should have put the banner in here. Or made two banners.

HANK

Bedroom's much better. He won't expect it. In here, it's practically a cliché©. First, we give him a little disappointment. Where's the grand welcome with balloons, banners and the rest? Then he goes into his bedroom and we hit him with both barrels.

HOLLY

I think I heard a car door.

A quick exit and return to look

They're here! What did we decide? Song or no song?

HANK

No song. We need to play it by ear.

HOLLY

I'm really nervous.

HANK

I'm sure he is, too.

HOLLY

I'll just tell him I love him and he looks great.

HANK

And if he looks like shit, you'll insult him. By ear, Holly. When in doubt, say nothing.

HOLLY

I'll say nothing.

Angela, Brian and Joey enter. Joey is on crutches. It's hard for him to walk with them.

HOLLY

Joey!

She rushes to him.

I've been so worried about you. But you look wonderful! I love you so much.

HANK

Welcome home, Joey.

ANGELA

What can I get you?

JOEY

I'm really tired. I'd just like to take a nap. Would that be okay?

ANGELA

Of course you can take a nap.

Joey heads for the bedroom. He notices Angela and Holly are following him.

JOEY

I don't need any help.

ANGELA

I want to make sure your room's in order.

Threesome exit.

BRIAN

Christ, Hank. You could've put up some balloons.

HANK

We did the royal treatment in his bedroom. Listen.

A beat. Then squeals from Angela and Holly. No sound from Joey.

BRIAN

Very nice. I hope you don't have dinner plans because I managed to get everybody together to sign the papers this evening. We meet in the bar at The Hilton at seven.

HANK

We all have to be there?

BRIAN

You have a date? Break it.

HANK

Just curious.

BRIAN

Dad put it in the will, you know that.

HANK

Legalese goes in one ear and out the other.

BRIAN

Which may have something to do with your lack of wealth.

HANK

My lack of wealth follows directly from being an artist in this sex crazy, sports crazy, star worshipping culture I live in.

BRIAN

I seem to recall hearing about a few artists who have done quite well for themselves.

HANK

The stars. There's only room for a few.

BRIAN

If the public doesn't like what you're painting, paint something else.

HANK

Art has nothing to do with satisfying the public.

BRIAN

Not only are you a liberal, if not a radical, but an ivory tower elitist.

HANK

Whatever you say, Brian.

BRIAN

Condescension may work in the university, but it doesn't work with me.

HANK

My humble apologies. I'm going to see if everything is okay.

BRIAN

One more thing while we're alone. I've been wanting to tell you this for some time.

HANK

Shoot.

BRIAN

It's taken me a while but I think I figured out what makes you leftwing types tick. You're romantics. Some in the closet, some not, but you look at the world as if it's some kind of Eden. Forget all the snakes and deception and betrayal, it's your version of paradise. Whenever you talk about Nature, it's all snow-capped mountains and bubbling brooks. About Indians, it's peace on earth, no matter tribes were fighting each other then with all the ferocity of tribes in the Middle East today. You focus on a small corner of Nature and forget the rest. You leave out the lion stalking, killing, eating a deer. You leave out the buzzard ripping out the organs of only half-dead prey. In Nature, the real natural world, killing and violence are everywhere. You even find it at home. You ever watch a cat torture a mouse? Fun and games for the cat, but damn unpleasant for Mickey. You say it's a crime to torture terrorists but this behavior didn't come out of thin air. It's natural. It's in the DNA of animal life itself. And we're all animals, Hank, no

matter how often we deny it. Ever hear the expression "Nature red in tooth and claw"?

HANK

Tennyson.

BRIAN

So you know the reality. You just don't believe it. Is that it?

HANK

There's a lot more to it than that.

BRIAN

Just as there's more to all those kids on the street. GABI isn't a protest, it's a party. You ever look closely at their faces on television? They're having a ball! It's just like the sixties: here today, gone tomorrow. As the kids understand how dangerous it is out there, they'll go back to video games. GABI is history.

HANK

And I thought I was the cynic of the family.

BRIAN

Well, I got it said. Tell Angela I need to talk to her before I go.

HANK

I'll do that.

He exits.

Brian regards the room with its Goodwill decor. He obviously finds it distasteful.

Angela enters.

ANGELA

You wanted to see me?

BRIAN

I decided to stay over a day or two to make sure you get situated.

ANGELA

Situated how?

BRIAN

So you're safe, like we talked about. Getting a hand gun, taking a safety class.

ANGELA

But I didn't say yes.

BRIAN

Don't you watch the news? Vigilantes are targeting homes where GABI members live. You have to protect yourself.

ANGELA

We did get a few crank calls. And a sign was put on the lawn when I was at the hospital. Hank took care of it.

BRIAN

What did the sign say?

ANGELA

Bad parents raise bad kids.

BRIAN

I'd fault a certain uncle before I'd fault you. I know how

hard it's been since Joe died. So how about I pick you up in the morning. Say tennish?

ANGELA

I really should think about it more.

BRIAN

This is for Joey's protection as well as yours. Actually he's old enough to have his own hand gun.

ANGELA

My son does not need a gun.

BRIAN

He's in more danger than you are.

ANGELA

I'll get a gun myself. I'll protect him.

Holly and Hank have entered.

HOLLY

What's this about guns?

ANGELA

Excuse me. Nature calls.

She's quickly out of there, to avoid Holly.

HOLLY

Brian? Why are you talking to her about guns?

BRIAN

Because she needs one.

HOLLY

There will be no guns in this house.

BRIAN

Too late.

He reveals a side arm.

I've been packing for almost a year.

HANK

Legal, too, I bet.

BRIAN

Of course it's legal.

HOLLY

I need to sit down a minute. This is happening too fast for me.

She goes to a chair.

BRIAN

I'll come by in the morning to pick up Angela.

He heads out.

HANK

He's doing as well as can be expected.

BRIAN

Pardon me?

HANK

Joey. In case you give a shit about how your nephew is doing.

They stare at one another.

Blackout.

Scene 10

Darkness.

AUDIO

Twenty-nine percent of world fisheries are in collapse, according to a study by Canadian scientists. The majority could be gone by 2040, they warn. This loss, coupled with a projected doubling of food demand, means farm land animals will have to supply an additional 100 million tons of meat - and this at a time when world farmland also is in crisis. The challenge facing the coming generation of farmers is unprecedented. This is the Guardian Radio Network.

Lights up.

A few days later.

Hank is shooting video of Joey. Joey sits, his crutches nearby.

JOEY

Hi, this is Joey with my first video since coming home from the hospital. I want to thank everybody for the cards and letters and flowers and gifts, More than I can possibly answer. So consider this a big thank you to everybody.

One funny thing. I got a marriage proposal. I didn't know how to respond to that one.

Obviously I'm not going to be marching with you for a while. I don't think I could even if I could walk. My energy has tanked. Most days I just want to sleep or play video games or

gin rummy with my uncle. I know I probably should be giving you a pep talk here but sometimes it's hard to keep a lot of thoughts in my head.

Just know, when you're marching and protesting, I'm with you in spirit. That's all for now.

HANK

Cut...Game of gin?

JOEY

I'm going back to bed.

*Hank watches as he leaves, walking as best he can with the crutches.
Blackout.*

Lights up.

A few hours later. Hank and Joey play cards.

JOEY

When did you know you were an artist?

HANK

Actually I never use the word.

JOEY

How come?

HANK

Because the way it's used now has little to do with my understanding of art. An artist is someone who makes art. But art has become a commodity in the marketplace. I find that notion a little obscene.

JOEY

What do you think art is?

HANK

I think J.D. Salinger put it best.

JOEY

Who's he?

HANK

You never read *The Catcher in the Rye*?

JOEY

No, but I heard of it. It's an important novel, right?

HANK

Well, it once was. Salinger said an artist aims for perfection according to his own standards and no one else's. Art has nothing to do with the marketplace.

JOEY

But you've sold stuff, right?

HANK

I have. But not enough to live on. That's why I teach.

JOEY

But you all are going to be rich. You won't have to teach.

HANK

I'm well aware of this, believe me.

JOEY

How rich is mom going to be?

HANK
Considerably rich.

JOEY
How much is that?

HANK
High six digits.

JOEY
Mom's getting almost a million dollars?

HANK
Don't tell her I told you.

JOEY
Does that mean we have to move to some fancy condo?

HANK
I don't know what her plans are but that doesn't sound like your mother. I'm sure a good chunk of it is going to your college education.

JOEY
Why do people keep making plans when the planet is dying?

Angela and Holly enter.

HOLLY
Hank, you won't believe how high rents are out there. And try buying a house. Who can afford to live here?

JOEY
People who sell their family heritage.

ANGELA

Since when do you care about family roots?

JOEY

I'm just answering the question. Are we going to have to move now?

ANGELA

Of course not.

JOEY

Promise?

ANGELA

We certainly won't move until you graduate.

HANK

Gin. And game. Another?

Joey arranges his crutches and will leave.

JOEY

I need to update my Facebook page.

HANK

How are your members hanging in?

JOEY

Just terrific. Who doesn't like having the crap beat out of them? Who doesn't like their mother being called a whore? It's just awesome to live in the land of the free.

He exits.

ANGELA

That's a perfect example of what I was telling you. His whole attitude is different.

HOLLY

Look what he's been through. I think we're fortunate it's not worse.

ANGELA

Is he this cynical when you're alone with him?

HANK

No.

ANGELA

Does he resent me getting so much money?

HOLLY

How does that make sense?

HANK

I think it's a couple of things. He needs stability in his life now more than ever. That's what this house, his room, provide. Things he can count on. And he must be depressed by the backlash after the march. For the briefest moment at the party, after the march and before the attack, he must have felt like GABI was really going to make a difference. That must have been euphoric. And now ...

HOLLY

I think he made a difference. Congress is finally debating what to do. The kids put that in motion.

HANK

It's a far cry from what he expected.

ANGELA

Then it's time he learned how life can be.

HOLLY

Tell me about it.

HANK

Everybody's under so much pressure today. It's like there's this hunger hovering over the country, an insatiable hunger to have life matter, a hunger for opportunity and a level playing field, and when we don't find what we expect, hunger festers into frustration and lashes out, hunger strikes whatever is in front of it, and you end up with road rage and domestic abuse and random killing ... Under the circumstances, Joey's doing pretty well.

A silence.

HOLLY

Anybody want to go out?

ANGELA

I'm going to bed early.

HANK

I'm game.

HOLLY

How about some place we can dance?

HANK

Dancing on the Titanic ...

HOLLY

Don't get weird on me.

*They head out as Angela watches.
Blackout.*

Lights up half.

A few hours later.

Joey, a little drunk, is struggling to record a video selfie. He'll have a hard time keeping his balance, using one crutch.

JOEY

Hi, Amanda. This is Joey. I'm sorry I never sent you the video I promised. It took me longer to get home than I thought. I got the texts you sent way back when but I didn't know how to answer them. I can understand why you stopped sending any. Anyway, I've been thinking about you and thought maybe we could reconnect if you have time to reply to this. You're probably the smartest girl I ever met and I'd like to hear what you think about some of the crazy stuff happening now.

Hank and Holly enter. Joey hears them, turns, loses his balance and falls. They rush to him. They smell the booze.

HOLLY

Are you drunk?

Blackout.

Scene 11

Darkness.

VOICE IN DARKNESS: TECUMSEH

This is Tecumseh. When it comes your time to die, be not like those whose hearts are filled with fear of death, so that when their time comes they weep and pray for a little more time to live their lives over again in a different way. Sing your death song and die like a hero going home. This is Tecumseh.

Lights up.

The next day.

Angela, Hank, Holly. A sense of concern.

A half full bottle of whiskey on a table.

HANK

I don't think anyone should use the word intervention.

HOLLY

That's what it is.

HANK

Intervention Lite maybe. But to someone as bright and politically aware as Joey, intervention will bring up all the clichés of self-help books, TV shrinks and all the rest.

ANGELA

What's wrong with that?

HOLLY

Exactly.

HANK

He'll tell himself "consider the source" and blow us off. It'll be enough that he knows we love him and are concerned.

HOLLY

(To Angela)
What do you think?

ANGELA

We agreed to put Hank in charge.

HOLLY

Okay then

HANK

Trust me, I know how his brain will react to this.

The home phone rings. Angela answers.

ANGELA

Hello....Actually we're in the middle of something important....I don't have time to explain....Brian, that's great!....Can I get the information and call you back tonight?

Joey enters, a little hung over.

I have to hang up....I will. Talk to you tonight.

She hangs up. Instead of addressing the inquisitive looks from Hank and Holly, she fetches the whiskey bottle.

ANGELA

Look what I found in the kitchen cabinet. I remember it being almost full.

JOEY

I'm sorry.

ANGELA

That's not enough.

HANK

Sit down. We need to talk to you.

JOEY

I can't do this now. My morning already sucks.

HOLLY

Did something happen?

JOEY

Twice. So I've had enough hassle for one day, okay?

He starts away, back to his room.

HANK

Sit down, Joey.

ANGELA

You sit, young man!

JOEY

Mom ...

ANGELA

Sit down!

He does. A beat.

HANK

What two things happened?

JOEY

Amanda has a boyfriend.

HANK

Okay. And the other?

JOEY

The Indians don't want anything to do with GABI any more. With all the backlash, we've become a burden. The goals are the same but it's time for Indians to do it alone.

HANK

What do you think about that?

JOEY

Sorry to shock you, but I think they're right.

HANK

I'm not shocked at all.

HOLLY

I'm not shocked but I'm surprised.

ANGELA

Everybody's changing the subject.

JOEY

I said I was sorry. I did a really stupid thing. I wasn't thinking. If I'd been thinking, I would have replaced what I took with water.

ANGELA

How often has this happened?

JOEY

Just the one time.

She stares him down.

JOEY

One time with the bottle in the cupboard. I usually use the one out here. You use it yourself so often you never notice.

ANGELA

I am so disappointed in you.

JOEY

I'm disappointed in myself. I can't believe I came up with such a stupid idea.

HANK

Hold it right there. GABI got Congress off its ass and today it's facing issues and debating concrete proposals that it should have been dealing with years ago.

ANGELA

Don't flatter him. It was a stupid idea.

HANK

I will never believe that. Don't listen to her.

Joey will struggle to his feet to make a slow exit on his crutches.

JOEY

Since I don't have to listen to her ...

ANGELA

I'm making you an appointment with a professional.

JOEY

Don't be afraid of the word, mom. With a shrink.

ANGELA

Sit down.

JOEY

You think I'm going crazy.

ANGELA

We're not done here.

JOEY

My only problem is I live in a country that keeps lying to itself.

ANGELA

Joseph Stanley Hart!

JOEY

(Reciting)

"Give me your tired, your poor
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, their homeless, tempest-toss't to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

He starts singing.

"O say can you see, by the dawn's early light ..."

And he's gone.

HOLLY

Somebody tell me that never happened.

A silence.

HANK

What did Brian want?

ANGELA

Excuse me?

HANK

The phone call. You said you'd call him back tonight about something.

ANGELA

Right. The money's almost ready. He needs to know if you want a check or direct deposit.

HANK

Direct deposit.

ANGELA

He'll need the numbers.

HOLLY

Me, too. Straight into the bank.

ANGELA

Somehow a check feels more real than numbers on a computer screen.

A silence.

ANGELA

I thought money was supposed to make you feel better.

Blackout.

Scene 12

Darkness.

VOICE IN DARKNESS: BLACK ELK

This is Black Elk. I did not know then how much was ended. When I look back now from this high hill of my old age, I can still see the butchered women and children lying heaped and scattered all along the crooked gulch as plain as when I saw them with eyes still young. And I can see that something else died there in the bloody mud and was buried in the blizzard. A people's dream died there. It was a beautiful dream. Now the nation's hoop is broken and scattered. There is no center any longer, and the sacred tree is dead. This is Black Elk.

Lights up.

The next day.

Angela and Holly sit.

Hank enters with a grocery sack. He takes out a large bag of candy.

HANK

I got two to be safe.

ANGELA

Did you use the coupon?

HANK

Forget and get the wrath of my sister? No way. Where do you want them?

ANGELA

Just leave them on the kitchen counter.

Hank exits.

HOLLY

You're so prepared. I never remember to get it until the last minute.

ANGELA

That's why the coupons expire a week before Halloween. They want you to buy early.

Hank returns.

HANK

Obviously he hasn't come out yet.

ANGELA

I heard him in the bathroom.

HANK

And he gave no clue what this is about?

HOLLY

Maybe he wants to apologize. Hopefully.

ANGELA

Here he comes ...

Joey enters on his crutches. He sits down.

JOEY

Thanks for doing this.

ANGELA

What is it we're doing exactly?

JOEY

Helping me get my act together. Sorry about yesterday. I really wiggled out. But I have an idea how I can get my life together.

HOLLY

That's encouraging. Right?

HANK

What's the plan?

JOEY

I want to go to college in Sweden.

ANGELA

You can't be serious.

JOEY

Why not? You can afford it now. Can't some of the money be used for what I want?

ANGELA

Most of the money will be used to help you. Not only college but I'm having ramps built so you can get around easier. I'm adding a larger room for you in back and using your present room for guests. Don't you accuse me of being selfish with the money.

A silence.

HANK

What do you want to study in Sweden?

JOEY

I want to become a writer.

HANK

What brought this on?

JOEY

What you told me about art once. How an artist strives for perfection according to his own values. In other words, nobody's telling him how to do his art. Or how to live his life.

HANK

It's a little more complicated than that.

ANGELA

You don't have to go to Sweden to become a writer.

JOEY

I can't live here any more.

HOLLY

Why? We have lots of good writers.

JOEY

It's impossible to live in America without being part of the problem.

HANK

Come on.

JOEY

Look at all of you. You don't even know what you're doing. The clothes you wear - how do you think they're manufactured? How do you think cell phones are assembled? Or coffee beans harvested? You can't do anything without supporting sweatshops that exploit children--

HANK

Hold on, hold on. Listen to yourself. You're too damn smart not to see how much you're exaggerating the problem. Which has been recognized, by the way.

JOEY

Because Nike got caught and claims to have fixed everything? Do you believe them? Do corporations have a history of telling the truth? Do governments have a history of telling the truth?

ANGELA

What is your point?

JOEY

My point is, we're all slaves marching to a corporate drummer. Mr. Franks calls us a new species: Homo consumerus.

HOLLY

Joey, I think you've been brainwashed.

JOEY

By Mr. Franks? At least he makes an effort to understand history. Do any of you do that? How do you deal with your heritage being about stealing America and then trying to exterminate the natives who lived here first? How do you deal with the political coup that killed President Kennedy and

overthrew the government?

ANGELA

Kennedy was shot by Oswald.

JOEY

Mom, that's what they want you to believe but it's not what happened. I'm not making this up. There's evidence all over the place. Every doctor that saw the body come into the emergency room said the back of his head had been blown off by a shot from the front. A film shows--

HOLLY

(Interrupting)

Many of us realize there was a conspiracy, Joey.

JOEY

Exactly. But nobody does anything about it. Doesn't history count for anything? Aren't we supposed to learn from it? Corporations poison the air and water and land, they exploit children, but we still buy the products. The only way to live a moral life in America is to be a Zen monk on a hunger strike.

ANGELA

I try very hard to be careful about what I buy.

JOEY

Mom, you're in the ozone so much you don't even notice when I steal your booze. When's the last time you checked on your hand gun?

ANGELA

What about my gun?

JOEY

I've had it in my room for over a week.

ANGELA

Why?

JOEY

Why do you think?

He begins the process of getting up and leaving on his crutches.

ANGELA

This is the last straw. I'm getting you some help.

JOEY

If you want to help me, send me to Sweden. I'm tired of being part of the problem.

ANGELA

You are not going to Sweden.

JOEY

When I'm eighteen, I can go anywhere I want.

ANGELA

But that's not today.

HANK

Joey, can you and I talk privately?

JOEY

Sorry, my appointment calendar's full ...

He exits.

ANGELA

This is the last straw. I'm calling 911. I'm taking him to the emergency room.

HANK

Let me talk to him first.

ANGELA

All we've done is talk.

HANK

At least let me get the gun back. Angela, I can deal with him.

ANGELA

In five minutes I'm calling 911.

Hank hurries off.

ANGELA

I'm calling now.

HOLLY

Give him five minutes like you said.

ANGELA

Not one second more.

A silence.

HOLLY

You never told me you were redecorating the house.

ANGELA

I made it up as I was talking.

HOLLY

It's a wonderful idea.

The sound of a single GUN SHOT.

ANGELA

Oh my God ...

(Close to collapse)

No, no ...

HOLLY

Angela, it's probably just an accident ...

ANGELA

Dear God, no ...

HOLLY

Hank will make sure everything's okay ...

Hank appears. He's in a state of shock.

HANK

Call 911. Call the police.

Holly will make the call.

ANGELA

Hank?

HANK

... I go in his room, he has the gun to his head ... I say, Joey, put down the gun, you don't want to do this ... I definitely want to do this, he says ... Joey, if you really wanted to do this, you'd have done it by now. Hesitation means you don't ... Uncle

Hank, you don't know what it's like, I truly want to ... No, Joey, you don't because it's not that hard, all it takes is pulling the trigger ... So he pulled the trigger ... I think I killed him ...

Blackout.

Scene 13

Darkness.

AUDIO

Futurist Malcolm Peters of MIT calls himself an optimist. Despite the social and political breakdown affecting one third of the Earth's population, despite widespread famine, riots over food and water shortages, Peters sees a bright future. "You can't stifle the human spirit," he says. "You can't stop human ingenuity from getting itself out of the most hopeless looking jams." Peters believes the colonization of Mars will begin in his lifetime. This is the Guardian Radio Network.

Lights up.

Halloween.

Holly shoots video of Angela.

ANGELA

Hello. This is Angela Hart. I'm Joey's mother. I've just come home from the memorial service for my son, and I wanted all his many followers on Facebook to know how perfect it was. So many people spoke, especially young people, and all of them were so flattering to Joey. He was called a pioneer. He was called a visionary. He was called a saint. One young man, an Indian, from North Dakota, or maybe it was South Dakota, with the most beautiful long silky black hair, which wasn't even braided, and one of those lovely poetic names that Indians

sometimes have, something about the sky, he said that Joey was the reddest white man he ever met.

Near the end of his life, Joey told us he wanted to be a writer. I had no idea, but we found a lot of writing in his room. His uncle thought I should read something. He picked out this one.

"The profound silence ... Of a dark night ... Is like solar energy ... For the soul"

Joey had a religious side, a spiritual side, he didn't share with many people. He never shared it with me.

She is close to losing it ... Recovers.

I'm not very Facebook literate, so I don't know what happens to this page with Joey gone, but hopefully some of you can see this message before they take it down.

Please keep the memory of my son alive in your hearts. Thank you.

Holly stops taping.

HOLLY

Are you okay?

ANGELA

I'll be fine.

Hank and Brian enter from front door.

BRIAN

I've been in this racket a long time, and I'm telling you an opportunity like this only comes your way once in a lifetime.

ANGELA

I'm getting into something comfortable before the trick or treaters come.

She exits.

BRIAN

Once in a lifetime, Hank.

HANK

I'll give it serious thought.

BRIAN

So are we going out for dinner or what?

HOLLY

Angela and I are staying home for the trick or treaters.

BRIAN

People still do that? How about breakfast then? My flight doesn't leave until noon.

HANK

Sounds good to me.

BRIAN

I'll give a holler in the morning. Opportunity, brother.

He exits.

HANK

I can't remember the last time he called me brother. He must be desperate.

HOLLY

What opportunity?

HANK

He wants me to invest in his new project.

HOLLY

Which is?

HANK

Some new car technology I don't understand. The air the car pushes through as you drive somehow generates energy and combines with solar to make a car that never needs fuel. Brian says it's a game changer.

HOLLY

Wow.

Angela enters. She's been crying.

HOLLY

Sis, what's wrong?

ANGELA

I'll be alright. I was just thinking about how much fun the kids will have tonight and what a terrible job we've done giving them a decent world to grow up in.

The doorbell rings.

HANK

Our first customers.

ANGELA

I'll be alright. Holly, would you bring the candy bowl?

The doorbell rings again.

The threesome exit to answer it.

Blackout.

Lights up.

A few hours later. Everybody sitting, waiting.

HANK

I'd say we're done here.

ANGELA

Let me check that no one's down the street.

She exits.

HOLLY

How are you doing? You seem a little better to me.

HANK

I think I am. I'm giving myself a vacation.

HOLLY

Good for you. Where are you going?

HANK

I'm touring the art galleries of Europe next spring.

HOLLY

That's fantastic! I wish I could think of something appropriate like that.

HANK

Finish your degree and get a job teaching theater.

HOLLY

What kind of recommendation are you? All you did was complain about how teaching took too much of your time.

HANK

It's different, you're in a collaborative art form. It would be like having your own subsidized theater company. Access to all the actors you need, you can direct them, act with them, write for them, all with no demands from the marketplace. Sounds pretty good to me.

HOLLY

I never thought of it that way.

HANK

You don't look very excited.

HOLLY

The world's in such a mess. There's so much suffering. Who am I to have a future?

HANK

Wrong question. The world is what it is. You can't fix it. The question is, How are you going to spend your time?

HOLLY

Dance on the Titanic?

HANK

And try not to step on your partner's toes.

Angela enters.

HANK

Are we done?

ANGELA

One more.

Entering behind her is a very old man. He wears the Halloween costume of an Indian chief. He holds a trick or treat bag.

HALLOWEEN CHIEF

Only after the last tree has been cut down. Only after the last river has been poisoned. Only after the last fish has been caught. Only then will you learn that money cannot be eaten.

Trick or treat?

Blackout. The play is over.