

STRIKE AT THE WIND!

by

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ACT ONE

THE STAGE: The stage should sweep from left to right around the front section of the audience. There should be no strict division of main and side stages. The set is constructivistic, not realistic, with a number of welded vertical designs and levels which may be employed as acting areas. Projection screens may also be used. During **THE PROLOGUE**, the **CHORUS** should use this set as a maze through which it moves.

AT RISE: Without warning, (CUE 1) sudden tympani drum beats and piercing erratic flute music begin. Then, a tribal chorus in a guttural chant. Forms appear swiftly, surrounding the audience on many levels. These forms are dressed in a variety of white and Indian dress. Some in very skimpy Hatteras Indian apparel. The **LEADER** occupies a central elevated position. He is partially naked, his hair long and black, chest broad, head erect. A long drape goes from shoulder to ground and he carries a staff. He should resemble an Indian chief in John White's watercolors of Hatteras Indians in 1587. At a sharp signal from the **LEADER**, the music ceases and the **CHORUS** turns swiftly toward the audience, their members speaking with the power and directness of a Greek chorus.)

LEADER

Swifter than all things is the mind of man.

CHORUS MEMBER

It flies from the past more swiftly than the deer before the hunter.

CHORUS MEMBER

It pursues the future more quickly than the sweep of the hawk.

CHORUS MEMBER

It swirves to its own advantage more sharply than the tongue of the snake.

CHORUS MEMBER

It is more difficult to hold than the great water's tide.

CHORUS MEMBER

Easier it is to change the wind's direction than to change one thought.

(CUE 2 Sharp drum beat. LEADER steps forward.)

LEADER

Before our people, was the spirit of our people. To the Eastern Ocean, cradle of our people. And we walked in the sun without memory of hate.

(CUE 3 Music begins, and a slow, stately dance acts out the following.)

. . . . And when we came, the ocean and the land did not belong to us. We belonged to them, and were one. For our tradition was to care for all things made by the Spirit.

FEMALE MEMBER

It was a summer of great heat when the white man came.

MALE

It was a time when we had chosen fish and game for our women to dry in the August sun.

MALE

Our children played in the wild tobacco while we hunted the Hatteras shore.

FEMALE

Our young men courted in the shade of wind-filled trees.

FEMALE

And we gave thanks to the Spirit that our only record of having lived was peace.

LEADER

It was a summer of great heat when the white man came in his floating houses, as he grasped for the setting sun.

(CUE 4 Drum begins a rapid dance, broken off after a few seconds by staccatto beats of warning. Dancers hide as a white Elizabethan SOLDIER, a MISSIONARY, and a COLONIST ENTER. SOLDIER carries sword and scroll; MISSIONARY, cross and Bible; COLONIST, gun and flag.)

SOLDIER

In the name of our most sovereign Queen Elizabeth, by the grace of God, of England, France, and Ireland, defender of the faith, we do this day take possession of this land, and all the land to the north, south, and westward thereof, to have and to hold from this day forth for her and her assigns. Amen.

MALE

You can not hold the land!

LEADER

The land belongs to no man--and to all men, as the Spirit sees fit.

MISSIONARY

(Crossing directly to audience.)

It is a simple thing they cannot understand. There is only one true Spirit, and unless a land be Christian, it must be taken and corrected. It is God's will. The heathen will thank him for it.

LEADER

Food, drink, these are ours to share. Tell your people of our desire to live in peace with the spirits of all men.

MISSIONARY

Tell your people if they will take our God and our names, we shall inherit the kingdom of Heaven together.

LEADER

Our gods have told us long ago of this day. Once Hatteras maize was strong and red--then white maize came and grew and flourished beside the red. So may we be found as brothers.

COLONIST

Tell your people is they will give us all they have, we will ask no more.

FEMALE

And in return. . .

(She removes Indian cape, revealing a colonist dress.)

they taught us the value of . . . shame.

FEMALE

(Revealing dress, swinging youthfully)

England said their colony was lost! --But it wasn't. My eyes are not the color of the sky for nothing.

(As each member speaks, he reveals an appropriate costume beneath his cape.)

MALE

The name is Lowrey now, though once my ancestors pronounced it "Raleigh."

MALE

Breech cloth to britches! Silly contraptions! My wife's name is Sarah Dare.

FEMALE

My great-great-great-great-great-great-grandma was Virginia!

LEADER

It was a winter of great love when the white man loved. And we gave him shelter--gave him strength against the Powatan. When he grew sick we nursed him. When our enemies grew strong, we took him with us from Roanoke, for safety, here along the Lumbee.

FEMALE

And when, by 1700, we were again discovered by Europeans, they could not guess why we spoke English, an English older and finer than theirs.

FEMALE

Personally, I'm glad we took their language, since we took their names. Why else am I called Bonnie Chavis?

MALE

They showed us how to talk in books! How to build houses, not wickiups!

FEMALE

How to plant their gardens

MALE

How to serve their needs!

MALE

How to obey their courts!

MALE

How to fight their wars!

MALE

Tuscarora!

MALE

Revolutionary!

MALE

War of 1812!

(CUE 5 Loud drum beats, like gun fire.
SOLDIERS fire rifles and fall dead.
Soft flute music as they are born off.)

LEADER

Americans by a triple birthright.

MALE

And for all of that, little by little they thanked us with one hand, and with the other took at last the land.

MALE

And with that land he made his towns--where we had no power or vote.

LEADER

He built up churches to worship his gods.

FEMALE

His schools, to teach us the history of his wars.

MALE

His streets, to walk where he pleased.

LEADER

But in all of this we have had a hand! For before our people was the spirit of all people, and it taught us that the greatest thing is not to possess, but to belong to one another. For the man who does not belong is as a blade of grass, and you may pluck him up between your fingers and play him like a flute. You may discard him ruthlessly.

MALE

But the man who belongs is like a field, trod down in morning and yet before the sun may rise, it will spring back, stand fresh and ready. Best of all things is to belong.

LEADER

But the mind of man dreams its yesterdays like a fairy tale,
(Sharp drum beats.)
recounting the past like an old story where the hero always wins. And so we, too, forget how it was we lost and how it was we won.

MALE

What it is we have always kept--a dream to walk in the sun.

FEMALE

A chance to be as all men are forever meant to be --a brotherhood of hope, forever singing.

LEADER

Forever believing that the night is not all. Forever keeping faith that love is the second discovery of fire; and that out of hate grows regret; out of regret, despair; and that out of despair returns the faith that we are not alone. That the tyrant himself shall be chained within; and it shall be told even to the heavens themselves, that no man walks in darkness who has seen the face of freedom--and that no man lives in vain who seeks in truth!

(CUE 6 The CHORUS turns and sings with great conviction.)

CHORUS

Let tyrants clang their iron bars
And slavery shake their chains of war
We fear them not!
We trust in God!
Carolina's God forever reigns!

(The Chorus, humming under the following dialogue, exits slowly.)

LEADER

And so, tonight we celebrate the two realities of man-- what was, what might have been. We memorize our song and make our cause immortal. We celebrate the past, lest we forget. . . and are in turn forgotten.

(CUE 7 He raises his hands. Sharp drum beats.)

For now, let thunder of a distant summer break across our stage!

(He crosses to a YOUNG BOY who has not left the stage with other chorus.)

You, boy?

BOY

Leaving sir! I was just. . . We've read about it, sir!

LEADER

(Taking a history book from the BOY.)

And your verdict?

BOY

A very long time ago, sir. Nothing to do with tomorrow.

LEADER

Take your book, boy. Books don't tell it all. What month is it, son?

BOY

July* --I think.

LEADER

Then July we will make it. The July of 1864. This nation was barely eighty years old. . .

(CUE 8 Snaps fingers, distant drum rolls.)

and its people in Civil War. Your text book doesn't say so, of course, but it was a time like your own--a human time, with passion on both sides for the best. Except for one thing--it was a time when, to strike for justice against some people, was to strike with your fist at the wind!

(CUE 9 At a signal from the LEADER, CONFEDERATE guards enter to a drum beat from R., guarding black and Indian prisoners. The prisoners carry pick axes, etc. They are met by a SERGEANT from L.)

SCENE 1 We begin. . . near Wilmington.

SOLDIER

Halt! --Sergeant Porter--prisoners for duty.

SERGEANT

There are no prisoners here, corporal.

*THIS LINE WILL, OF COURSE, VARY WITH DATES DURING PRODUCTION

SOLDIER

Whatever. And I'd keep a warry eye's I was you. They give me as parcel as trouble as I ever knew, till I laid the law into 'em while back.

SERGEANT

The men are to be regarded as recruits.

SOLDIER

They may be recruits, but they ain't volunteers.

SERGEANT

Few of us are.

(Speaking to the prisoners.)

Men, before this war broke out, many of your own people had owned slaves. Many of you also offered to fight for our side. The state's choice was dictated, unfortunately, not by slavery, but survival.

BLACK PRISONER

And our's ain't?

SERGEANT

This state held out to the end against succession! And I predict, gentlemen, no matter who the victors are, slavery will die first in North Carolina.

BLACK PRISONER

I do believe the man's got gypsy blood!

(White SOLDIER raises rifle, but SERGEANT pushes it down.)

SERGEANT

Soldier! --As you see, there will be no guns here. Your choice is simple--to wait out the war in an army compound, or to work for a just cause.

INDIAN PRISONER

Just 'cause he says so!

BLACK PRISONER

You really believe that melarky, don't you?

SERGEANT

I promise you that there are enough like me in this state to change things when this war is over!

INDIAN PRISONER

More white father words?!

BLACK PRISONER

(Winking at Indian prisoner.)

Now just hold on a minute. Seems to me, sitting" in them stinking compounds, we goin' 'a catch malaria any way you look at it. At least out here, movin' 'round, we ain't goin' 'a go so soon.

(Giving INDIAN PRISONER a playful push.)

Right, Falge Tail?

INDIAN PRISONER

If it's free choice, I don't want to work beside no sweaty nigger.

BLACK PRISONER

Scalp hunters ain't my choice, neither! But like I said--out here, at least, our chances are better, right?

(To the SERGEANT)

Now what is it, boss man, you want us happy darkies to do?

SERGEANT

(Quietly, not angrily.)

To prove me right.

(To white SOLDIER.)

Private, you and your men are dismissed!

SOLDIER

But Sarge, are you crazy?! They'll. . .

SERGEANT

Dismissed, soldier!

SOLDIER

Yes, sir. --I only hope you know what you're doing. You better take this shot gun.

SERGEANT

That won't be necessary.

(The SOLDIER LOOKS at him puzzled, then shaking his head, turns to his men and signals their exit R)

SOLDIER

(As he exits.)

We won't be far, Sarge. You just yell if you need us. --Damn, they ain't nobody goin 'a believe this in camp! . . .

SERGEANT

Men, as you may know, a Union blockade has threatened the entire Cape Fear. Our job is to cut a canal from here to the river. . .

INDIAN

I ain't building no canal!

BLACK

(Lifting pick ax)

You'll build whatever the man feels like building, is that clear?

INDIAN

Whose side are you on, anyway?

BLACK

My own! If he says dig to get my freedom, I'm going 'a dig to get my freedom! And you better dig, too, red man! Don't stand in my way!

(He plunges the ax into the ground and begins to dig, as others slowly

(CUE 9A follow suit. The BLACK prisoner sings
in a deep baritone, to establish a
work rhythm:)

Some of these days
And it won't be long
You're gonna call me
And I'll be gone.
I wish my captain would go blind.
I wouldn't go to work will half past nine....
(Men continue the song as he speaks.)
You must have been to some school, for dumb ideas like this, Sarge!

SERGEANT

V.M.I. --Class of '59.

BLACK

Don't believe I know nobody from that class. How 'bout you,
Locklier?

INDIAN

Sounds to me like you got your sides all mixed up, soldier man.
Where you from, anyway?

SERGEANT

(Picking up a shovel and digging.)
Mountains. Up in the Smokies. Whole family against the war. --I
almost went North.

BLACK

What kept you?

SERGEANT

Union raiding party burned our farm first year of the war. Killed
both my folks.

BLACK

For what?

SERGEANT

Looking for liquor. . . . and black women.

BLACK

So you goin' 'a change things from the inside, is that it? Goin'
'a make the world a better place and kill yourself some Yankees
too? Or is you trying to prove how dark folks is dumb enough to
get took by a sucker story like that?!

SERGEANT

I have my reasons.

BLACK

You hear that, Locklier? The man's got his reasons! Why if he
did't have that .45 strapped to his leg, he wouldn't make no
more sense than a Lumbee!

INDIAN

Which is enough for two niggers with some left over!

BLACK

I told you not to call me that, boy!

INDIAN

You want to try this, boy, you come right ahead!

(The work song stops and the INDIAN and BLACK begin to circle each other with pick ax and shovel.)

SERGEANT

Break it up! I said break it up! It's senseless to fight each other!
Don't you understand that?

BLACK

(Turning on SERGEANT.)

You hear what he said, red skin? The man said, break it up!
I'm going 'a break it up all right!

(He advances on the SERGEANT.)

SERGEANT

(Drawing revolver from his holster.)

I'm going to. . .

BLACK

Break it right over his head!

(He strikes the SERGEANT'S arm with the shovel as the gun fires and is dropped. Almost simultaneously, the INDIAN strikes him in the back with the pick ax which the BLACK has dropped. The SERGEANT falls. The BLACK flings the shovel to the ground.)

They're all alike. Killing each other and telling us to love each other.

(Indian laughs, they both begin to laugh. The BLACK extends his hand and they shake.)

SOLDIER (OFF)

Sergeant? Sergeant Porter? --Hey, Sarge?

INDIAN

Let's get out of here!

(The PRISONERS exit L, running and SOLDIER enters R.)

SOLDIER

Hey, Sarge, --- Sarge?
(He sees the men escaping)

Halt! Halt!

(He fires two loud blasts but no one is hit.)

Renolds, call up the guard! The whole damn parcel's escaped!
And get a stretcher out here!

(Shouting is heard off R. SOLDIER crosses to SERGEANT'S body. 3 SOLDIERS enter R., running.)

Over that way, boys! And hurry!

(SOLDIERS exit L., as RENOLDS and another SOLDIER enters with a stretcher.)

We won't be needing that now, Renolds. The Sergeant's dead.

RENOLDS

What?

SOLDIER

Look for yourself. Hit in the back. Spine's broke. And I warned him, too. No, he says, people could be trusted, no matter what color! Well, there's your lie to it.

(He spits.)

Damn fool.

RENOLDS

Guess he felt like he had to trust his own.

SOLDIER

His own what?

RENOLDS

I thought everybody knew. He never talked about it--but I thought everybody knew.

SOLDIER

Knew what, Renolds?

RENOLDS

You'd never know it to look at him, of course. But it was common knowledge. . . about his mother being a Cherokee. CUE 10 Guess that's why he had to prove his own could be trusted. . . Indians, I mean.

(SOLDIER turns slowly L., then spits again.)

SOLDIER

Fools.

(Lights fade on them as they place the body on the stretcher and carry it off R. The LEADER and BOY cross center.)

LEADER

I-2 There's rule number one, boy. Very few things are as dangerous as self-respect. Don't ever try to prove it.

BOY

But why didn't he tell them?

LEADER

Perhaps it was a lie. Or a dream. At any rate, there's great grief and there's small grief. But here along the Lumbee, there was rejoicing at the escape--for the moment, at least. Look--- that cabin there is part of Scuffletown.

(The actors for the next scene move into place. Rhoda is hanging the days washing on a line down stage R.)

CUE 11

That girl is Rhoda Strong. She's waiting for a boy who isn't worth the wait. But then, she loves him.

(RHODA is eighteen Wesley and Allen are much younger.)

RHODA

Any sign yet?

WESLEY

Sign of pole cat. . .

RHODA

None of your lip. I'm getting worried.

WESLEY

No woman makes a schedule for my cousin. He'll come when he can.

RHODA

It's chilly this morning. When the war is over, I'll have a better coat than this old thing.

WESLEY

Looks fine to me. Fine enough for a Tuscarora.

(continue to p. 13.)

RHODA

I'm proud of that! Don't you forget it. But this old thing, I wouldn't be burried in it.

ALLEN

Or married either.

WESLEY

Looks like she was born in it. 'Spect ol' Henry'll want a woman so rag-tag?

RHODA

Question is, will I want him? Off hiding in the swamps, being shot at. I'm thinking maybe I want a man who doesn't care so much about politics.

WESLEY

Politics? That what you call being slaves to the Johnny Rebs, building forts in their stinking holes in Wilmington? I've survived two lashings and the yellow fever, but I never thought it was politics!

RHODA

Didn't hear you killing off the guards.

WESLEY

Didn't have to. We got papers, Allen and me.

(He removes papers from his pocket.
MARY LOWREY, late fifties, and POLLY
OXENDINE enter. POLLY is seventeen.)

MARY

You can go to your grave with faith like that. Get back in side.

RHODA

They're keeping lookout for Henry, Aunt Mary.

MARY

Better look out for themselves, not that rascal!

ALLEN

Awh, aunt Mary. . .

(She takes a threatening step towards them.)

WESLEY

All right, all right! We're going.

POLLY

He ain't coming anyway, Rhoda.

MARY

Not if his head's on right. And that, I won't admit you.

RHODA

What makes you so sure?

MARY

Polly said he ain't. That good enough for you, Miss Strong?

POLLY

He told me to give you this note.

RHODA

(After glancing at note.)

Get out of here, all of you! (They don't move.) Well can't a girl have a little privacy.

(CUE 12 They exit. RHODA calls angrily.)

Henry Berry, you hear me out there? Then rot where you lie!
Time and the tide. . . and Rhoda Strong--wait for no Lowrey!
You hear me?

(Henry Berry Lowery appears in a dash at up stage center. RHODA unaware of his presence, removes the top of the well & pulls up a bucket of water.)

RHODA

I'll find me a well-scrubbed Yankee from Ohio, maybe--or a gambler from San Francisco who knows how a lady should dress. I'll fix my hair and buy myself a pair of shoes that not even God himself would let the Devil wear. And then you'll be sorry. You've lost the only girl that ever loved you! You hear me out there? You've lost the only girl that. . . .

(HENRY springs from behind the clothesline L and clasps his hands around her mouth, not before she screams in fright.)

HENRY

Quiet, woman! You want the whole Southern army on your head?

RHODA

(Pulling away.)

Henry! You toad, you snake, you river scum! What's the idea of sending this note then sneaking up on me? *

HENRY

See, I'm learning! Maybe there's Indian left in me yet!

RHODA

The devil's all there is in you!

HENRY

It's the truth! I feel him grow a little more inside each day. --Did you bring it?

RHODA

Your father said you're safer without a gun. Long as you stay unarmed, all they can do is throw you in jail.

HENRY

Don't he know to be really safe is to be dead?

RHODA

(Pointing to a basket on porch).

There's ham and potatoes. That's all he could spare.

HENRY

We'll need it. There's a Yank with us now. I heard you was interested in a clean-scrubbed Yank.

RHODA

Might be. If he's better looking than you.

HENRY

Don't know about that. Shoemaker told me just the other day, "Henry, you're a handsome boy with her in your eyes." Meaning you, of course.

RHODA

Didn't think he meant Mary Todd Linclon! --You're thinning out Henry.

HENRY

Three months hiding out in the swamps ain't exactly living high on the hog.

RHODA

If you'd listen to others--turn yourself in. . .

HENRY

You vacant in the head? Don't you know what's going on in Wilmington? They killed a Sergeant only last weel. They're out for any Indian they can get.

RHODA

Your father says the Rebs are losing.

HENRY

If he'd give me a gun I'd prove him right. But they seem more determined than ever.

RHODA

And you ain't scared?

HENRY

What scares me most is, even if the Yankees win, we can't be sure they'll give us the vote.

RHODA

They don't believe in slavery, brown or black.

HENRY

Nor does half the South. But there's all kinds of slavery, inside us. Even our people used to own slaves. --There's all kinds of man inside us all.

RHODA

What kind of man's inside you now? I can't be sure anymore.

HENRY

I can't either. One thing I am sure of. One thing that don't change. . .

RHODA

. . . . How's Shoemaker John?

HENRY

(Coming closer and closer.)
Standing guard. . . one thing I've been meaning to tell you. . .

RHODA

All kinds of people inside us all, maybe. . .

HENRY

I . . . wouldn't marry you, Rhoda Strong. . . unless the war was over seven days and I wasn't in jail.

RHODA

Oooh! I wouldn't marry you, till you hung from a Sycamore and turned white as Robert E. Lee!

HENRY

Then I guess that settles that!

RHODA

Now take that food and get, before I. . . before I

(Suddenly there is a long, low whistle off R)

HENRY

Shhh!

RHODA

What is it?

HENRY

It's Shoemaker.

(A forty year old Black enters running.)

SHOEMAKER

Harris and his men, coming down the road! Let's get out of here, boy!

HENRY

(Starting off)

This way, John. --Don't worry, Rhoda, the day they catch Shoemaker and me, that's the day you'll know the war is over!

RHODA

That's the day I'll know you never loved another soul but yourself!

(SHOEMAKER and HENRY exit R. HARRIS and several men, including FLETCHER, enter. Only HARRIS wears Confederate dress.)

HARRIS

There they go, Fletcher. Don't fire unless you have to. You men check that cabin.

RHODA

Run, Henry! Run!

HARRIS

Wouldn't do that, mam. Fletcher's liable to shoot straight when he's riled.

RHODA

They're both unarmed.

HARRIS

Course they are.

(A gun shot off UR.)

Now just relax. That was a warning shot. We don't want 'em dead.

(MARY, POLLY run out of the cabin.)

POLLY

Rhoda, what's going on?

RHODA

They're after Henry. Mr. Harris--please!

(Wesley and Allen followed by SOLDIERS emerge from cabin.)

SOLDIER

Hey, Colonel, look what we found in the cabin.

MARY

You got no call for them, you hear me! They have their leave papers. Wesley, show them that paper.

SOLDIER

They say they're home on furlough. Claim they've had the fever. Course anybody knows Indians can't catch fever--something in their blood.

RHODA

Wesley, show him that paper.

HARRIS

Won't do no good, mam. Papers forged all the time 'round here. They'll have to come with me till we check them out. If Wilmington says so, we'll return them to you.

(MARY grabs the paper from WESLEY and starts toward Harris.)

MARY

It isn't forged. Look at it!

HARRIS

(Drawing his pistol.)

Now, mam, we're not out here searching for runaway boys. We're after the Indians that murdered Sergeant Porter last week. But we'll have to check your boys, just to be sure.

WESLEY

If I had a gun, you'd be sure!

MARY
Wesley, be quiet! Do you hear me?!

(FLETCHER returns dripping wet from the lake.)

HARRIS
Well, Fletcher, where are they?

FLETCHER
They witched me! I, uh. . . . took a little swim while I was out there.

(MARY makes the mistake of laughing and HARRIS whirls on her.)

HARRIS
Find that funny, do you? --Take the boys.

RHODA
They've done no harm, Mr. Harris.

POLLY
Please, Mr. Harris!

(HARRIS motions the BOYS off with FLETCHER.)

HARRIS
Indians keeping runaways have their dogs shot. I guess yours are dead long ago.

MARY
(Whirling on him with great bitterness.)
Oh, we have dogs, mister. . . We have grey dogs by here all the time.

(She spits at him and stalks off. The MEN find this a great joke on HARRIS until he turns on them. Silence.)

HARRIS
Very well, we'll see about that.

(He motions the MEN off R and they all exit in the direction of FLETCHER.)

RHODA
She didn't mean that, Mr Harris. Wait. . . it's just that her boys. . . Mr. Harris! Let her explain! --They're all devils, every one.

POLLY
Not all, Rhoda.

RHODA
What are you talking about, Polly?

POLLY
Just like pears--some are rotten, some are sweet. . . as can be.

(There are suddenly two loud gun shots off L. RHODA and POLLY runs to R. MARY comes running back into the scene. They come to each side of her.)

MARY

Rhoda? --OH, God, no. Please, God. . . . no.

(CUE 13 The lights fade as RHODA and POLLY holds MARY, her head drops. RHODA and POLLY exit in darkness leaving MARY in a dim light down stage, motionless, holding the papers WESLEY held. Lights come up simultaneously on HARRIS, McGREGGOR, and SHERIFF KING standing on stage at R.)

MARY

(Dazed--- with tears welling in her eyes, she holds up the paper.)
See. . . they have this paper, mister. . . just read it, you'll understand then. . . . they have this paper. . .

(LIGHTS fade on MARY.)

KING

I-3 Damn idiotic action, Harris! They were nothing but kids. What's your excuse?

HARRIS

Don't know! Tried not to lose my temper. Maybe I don't take to being spit on!

KING

I don't mind telling you, Harris, they get to me, those people. The way she looked when I had to tell her what you'd done. You're not fit to be horse whipped!

HARRIS

It just come over me! Saw my son, same age as those two, dead at Manassas. For what? For them two sneaking little bastards to run free?

McGREGGOR

I agree with Ruben. He ought to arrest you right now.

HARRIS

With election coming up? There's lots that feel my way. Look, not a farm in the county ain't been missing supplies and food. We all know it's the Lumbees--just say I caught those boys red handed--get it? Red handed Indian?

KING

Your jokes leave you no grace at all, Harris. Unfortunately, you fall under military jurisdiction, or I'd slap you behind bars so fast your head would spin like a top! Now get out of here! I've an election speech to write--and I'm making a full report to the army!

McGREGGOR

(Taking HARRIS by the arm, descending steps.)
He's right, Jack. Use your head for a change. We want no more of this kind of trouble in Robeson County.

(As they are moving down, HECTOR McCORD, in parson's attire enters and crosses up the steps.)

Well, well, if it isn't our honorable Justice of the Peace!
Good afternoon, Hector! Fine weather!

(They exit quickly down the steps and HECTOR moves up to KING, who is looking over papers.)

HECTOR

Ruben?

KING

Hector! Come in, come in! --You've heard about Mary Lowrey's boys, I guess? Well, nothing we can do, it's army jurisdiction now. What brings you my way?

HECTOR

I came to change your perspective! Here, read this.

KING

(Taking a note.)
It's a note from my wife.

HECTOR

You missed lunch again today. Fourth time this week. You're working too hard, man. I'm seeing you home for dinner.

KING

I have to finish this speech.

HECTOR

If it doesn't finish you first. Now put down those papers and come home.

KING

Not quite yet, Hector.

HECTOR

Come on, Man. (Shaking the note at him.)

(CUE 14 Lights fade on HECTOR and KING as they leave the office and come up on DOLLY KING, side stage R., her back to the main stage, humming, mixing bread in a large bowl. At her feet, ANDREW, making crows' feet with twine. Sounds of HECTOR and KING laughing as they cross the stage make her search for a small pistol. She calls toward the darkness.)

DOLLY

Who's there? What do you want?

ANDREW

(Seeing his father, running to him.)

It's papa! It's papa!

KING

(Picking ANDREW up, hugging him.)

And what other man would your mother be expecting this time of the afternoon, Andrew?

DOLLY

In my day, many a man was found at the latch before supper, come to call. Or do you forget so soon?

KING

You should have married one, Dolly. I'm bushed.--And I've brought company.

DOLLY

Mr. McCord! I didn't see you standing there...I mean, well, come in! Come in!

HECTOR

It's all right, Dolly. I've done a bit of courting on the other side of the latch myself. But you'd better look after this one.

DOLLY

More trouble?

KING

Uhm. Jack Harris and McGreggor. And the rally tonight.

(He takes pistol away from her.)

And enough guns for one day!--What's wrong?

DOLLY

Andrew, run and get cleaned up for dinner. Go on now!

(Protesting, "Ah, maw," ANDREW leaves.)

I didn't want him to hear. There was trouble at Red Springs this afternoon. Two Indians forced their way into old Widow McQueens. She was robbed...and beaten.

KING

(Sitting in chair, tension in his shoulders.)

What would you two say if I told you I've been thinking all day about pulling out of the election?

DOLLY

(Massaging his neck, glancing at HECTOR.)

That you're tight as a knot and need a good...yank.

KING

There's going to be war in this county because of a few men like Harris. I don't want you and little Andrew involved.

DOLLY

What ever you do, we're involved. Besides, mister High Sheriff, what would you do without that badge anymore?

KING

Been thinking of that feed store you always used to talk about. Maybe move to Raleigh, Savannah, open up an emporium, you could sell ladies dresses, and those teas you're always talking about. Why you could be in high cotton-- you wouldn't need that gun.

HECTOR

Ruben, I wonder if there still are such places. There're as many good people in this town as anywhere, and you'd know it if. . . .

KING

If I weren't the Sheriff? By God, Hector, we used to have high times in this town. Remember Martin Locklier and that fiddle? Kept us dancing half the night. That Indian sure could play. And who dances now-- who plays his fiddle?

HECTOR

Well now, I had an old professor at seminary used to say, "There's two things in this world a man can't get enough of. --And the second one's his freedom."

KING

What's the first?

HECTOR

(Laughing)

Never mind, Ruben. . . It has been a long day. Dolly, what's that song you used to sing--- the one about an old man? (hums a little and picks on his banjo.)

DOLLY

You mean. . . I would not marry an old man
I'll tell you the reason why. . .

CUE 15

(She sings.)

His feet are always cold
And his nose is never dry!
No! I would not marry an old man
And reason number two!
The only thing he'll ever learn's
What he already knew!
And I would not marry an old man
I'll tell you reason three
He'll keep his teeth in his wooden leg
And his hair on my best hall tree.

(they all laugh)

Well, come on, old man, haven't you anything to say for yourself?

KING

I would not marry a young wife
I pity men who do
For they spend all day demanding things,
And most of the nighttime too!
I would not marry a young wife
And number two is why,
The minute you think they're free from sin,
They're sure to qualify!
No! Never marry a young wife!
For the third I'll make quite clear,
There's two things that are always false,
Her heart. . . and her brassiere!

(HECTOR continues to play as DOLLY and KING do a short square dance with imaginary partners and with each other. They finish by repeating, simultaneously, the last stanza of their respective verses, and laughing.)

DOLLY

Ah, but you're a miracle, Mr. McCord! An hour ago and he couldn't see daylight!

HECTOR

It's up to us to keep him that way! It's a puny badge, but it makes a difference. --Well folks, I guess I'd better be on my way.

DOLLY

But you'll stay for coffee, surely?

HECTOR

It would keep me awake--and I've an election speech to hear, remember?

RUBEN

I'll try not to wake you --(he shows him to door)
Thank you, Hector for everything.

HECTOR

As he exits.)
Good night friends.

(HECTOR exits. RUBEN closes the door, turns, and goes to the chair. DOLLY again rubs his shoulders.)

DOLLY

Feel better?

KING

Huum. --Still, I don't mind saying I'm tired. Tired of the noise, of listening with one ear and making empty speeches. And for what? Another four years?

DOLLY

All right, let's move. But promise me one thing, no matter where we go.

KING

What's that?

DOLLY

I'm too old for a new man at my door every evening before supper. I'd like to keep the one at hand. He's not much, but he's agreeable.

KING

Dolly, seems the good lord gave me one thing too in this life agreeable. One thing gentle enough to love. One thing warm enough to make me come home night after night.

And what might that be, old man? DOLLY

. . . . Supper KING

Supper? (she starts to move to him, DOLLY
child runs in)

Did somebody say supper? ANDREW

(CUE 16 They all laugh. Sheriff picks
him up and throws him in the air.)

I-5 What's wrong, boy? LEADER

That Mr. McCord. He talks funny for a preacher. BOY

Yes, it's a great moral crisis for the white man with a
conscience. LEADER

What is? BOY

A sheriff-- and no Robin Hood. LEADER

Is the sheriff really going to give up? BOY

Oh, he'd like to. But when a man is blessed with a good opinion--
a brilliant, true, and honest thought, someone else will always
disagree. That is what makes politics in this country, son! LEADER

(CUE 17 He gestures toward C stage. Over a
banjo variation of "Dixie" we see HARRIS and
McGREGGOR talking, while in the distance, a
wagon draws near, surrounded with people carrying
campaign banners reading "KING FOR SHERIFF," etc.)

Every man-jack in the county's getting tired of your tactic
against the Indians, Harris! McGREGGOR

You got any better? HARRIS

Who's the most respected Lumbee in the county? McGREGGOR

Herbert Oxendine - stole that horse from Andrew Carlile. HARRIS

Respected, not suspected! What about your neighbor, old
Allen Lowrey? Thought you was out to buy his farm. McGREGGOR

HARRIS

He ain't selling.

McGREGGOR

Suppose we could prove the old man was a thief? Get the Home Guard out?

HARRIS

What are you talking about?

McGREGGOR

Not now, Jack! Later!

(The crowd has reached the stage by now, waving torches, etc., and singing:)

SONG

Come all ye sons of freedom
And join our Southern band!
We're going to fight the Yankees
And drive them from our land.
Justice is our mother,
and Providence our guide;
So jump into our wagon
And we'll all have a ride.
Wait for the wagon, the secession wagon
The South is our wagon, we'll all have a ride!

McGREGGOR

Ladies and gentlemen! Ladies and gentlemen! I think you all know the incumbent sheriff for Robeson County, the Honorable Ruben King!

(Cheers from the crowd and fireworks.
Much applause, a few heckles, and
KING nervously steps forward.)

KING

Citizens of Robeson County, twelve years ago, when I assumed this office, no one in this state ever dreamed of war with his brothers.

(Several loud boos.)

Nor did we dream of genocide. . . nor of mass capitulation to terror!

MAN

Speak English, Ruben!

KING

But it is not about the present war that I wish to speak to you tonight. I wish to speak to you about a time to come, a time that not even our honorable Republican opponents can fail to see.

(Cheers and shouts.)

No, my friends, I do not mean Southern victory--though that may come. CUE 18 I speak of a time when, once again, we shall show to the world a land of opportunity and harmony. . . a new beginning,

(During this, the LEADER has crossed to a position higher than King,)

where all men are created equal, and shall be treated so!

LEADER

To bear God's ark, to follow his pillar of fire out of the wilderness!

(Cheers.)

KING

To return this nation to peace, and her children to prosperity!

LEADER

Placing a firebrand upon the forehead of prejudice and Iniquity!

KING

Returning this soil to men of freedom and good will! . . .

(Loud applause, interrupted with sporadic jeers. KING continues nervously.)

My friends! Such is my dream for this county. I can see it is the dream of many of you here tonight. I can see . . .

(Lina McNAIR runs up to wagon.)

LINA

Sheriff, sheriff, they've raided our barn! Four Indians and a Yankee soldier!

(Much crowd noise.)

McGREGGOR

Let the little lady up, there, will you? Now, what's this all about, Lina?

LINA

Four Indians and a Northern soldier--I caught them carrying off a lad of winter corn. We shot one--the Yank I think. They carried off his body in my wagon toward the river.

(Crowd reaction.)

McGREGGOR

Well, ladies and gentlemen, you all know the widow McNair, don't you? Know how hard she's worked to keep that farm! Are we going to let them get away with this?

(Crowd reaction.)

Sheriff?

WOMAN

He's thinking it to death!

KING (A deep sigh.)

The law is the law, ladies and gentlemen--regardless of race. And I am sworn to uphold that law until it is changed. --We'll need volunteers--at the court house, in twenty minutes!

MAN

Well, what are we waiting for? A benediction?

(CUE 19 Amid shouts and the campaign song, KING leads most of the men off, just as McGREGGOR is about to exit, he is stopped by a man in

a black parson's frock, REV. JAMES SINCLAIR.
He speaks in a heavy Scotch borgue, not not-
ated here.)

SINCLAIR

Touch of genius, Mr. McGreggor! My congratulations.

McGREGGOR

We didn't set that up, Sinclair.

SINCLAIR

Come, come, man. "Coincidence" is your speciality.

McGREGGOR

And yours, parson?

SINCLAIR

Forgiveness. Forgive a man who steals to stay alive. Our Lord forgave upon
the cross.

McGREGGOR

Our Lord never owned a farm.

SINCLAIR

Neither do many Lumbees, I observe. Or the poor slave.

McGREGGOR

Or the rich parson? A piece of advice, Sinclair. Your father-in-law
owns fifty slaves. Preach to him about injustice, convert him, then
maybe we'll listen. But don't forget the Widow McNair said four Indians
and a white man raided that farm.

SINCLAIR

Did she now? She only said a Northern Soldier, Or do you believe your
only worthy enemies are white?

McGREGGOR

It was the church, parson, that taught us the devil is red and Satan
is black!

(He exits L., puffing his cigar.)

SINCLAIR

May you rot in hell three days before the Savior knows you're there!

(HECTOR McCORD enters.)

HECTOR

Amen! --Sorry, James, I can't resist a worthy blessing.

SINCLAIR

The man's a perfect ass, Hector!

HECTOR

No one's perfect--not even you, James.

SINCLAIR

I sometimes think God has contrived to open my mouth and shut their minds
in a single blow!

HECTOR

Your time will come, James. The Lord moves in mysterious ways.

SINCLAIR

And damn slow ones too! If only he would send me some sign--some indication that he knows I'm here!

HECTOR

Trust him. Trust, that's the thing! I had a professor who used to say, "sleep in your bed till tomorrow, yesterday will take care of itself."

SINCLAIR

What the devil does that mean?

HECTOR

Search me, James--but we trusted him, all the same.

(They exit together as lights come up on
The LEADER and the BOY.)

BOY

You know what I think?

LEADER

No. What?

BOY

I think they both talk funny for preachers. And I think that Lina Woman made it all up--about the raid and all --just to make the white people afraid! Am I right?

LEADER

Do you care?

BOY

Yes, sir! I like to be right!

LEADER

Then we shall see what our Sheriff discovers. In the meantime, the Lumbees. . . well, tell me, son, do you believe in the Great Spirit?

BOY

You mean God? Yes, sir.

LEADER

Good. Because, at this point, He's about to give us. . . .

(CUE 20 He takes a guitar from the darkness
and walks toward a group of people L.,
placing the instrument in HENRY'S
hands.)

. our Robin Hood.

HENRY

I-6

(Singing.)

True love, true love,
Don't lie to me,
Tell me where did you sleep last night?
In the pines, in the pines,
Where the sun never shines
I shivered the whole night through.

True love, true love,
Tell me, where did you go?
I went where the cold winds blow.
In the pines, in the pines,
Where the sun never shines,
I shivered the whole night through.

My sweetheart was
An Indian boy
As brown as a berry's brown
He ran from the Rebs at fourteen years
Now he lies in Scuffletown.
In the pines, in the pines
Where the sun never shines
He shivers the whole night through.

(He puts down the guitar.)

Can't stand this waiting! Ain't that bullet out yet?

SHOEMAKER

Boss still working over it.

HENRY

We got to move! The possee's out.

SHOEMAKER

Quit your fretting, boy. Told Boss not to try the McNair place nohow. Still, I ain't never seen the food she had put up!

HENRY

Almost worth it! Seeing the look on that Yank's face when that sweet Southern lady lowered the boom! Hah, hah, hah!

SHOEMAKER

Rebs make a bad mistake not letting their women fight while they stayed home. They can be some witches, all right!

HENRY

They're all a bunch of witches, white, brown, black, yellow. ...

SHOEMAKER

Course, they got their nice side too, boy, when they're up to it. Where's he from, that Yank?

HENRY

Up North. --Well, don't ask me. All them places sound the same.

SHOEMAKER

Not so, neither. Them Nigerian Falls in up-state New York, that's where I'm going when this is over. How about you?

HENRY

Going everywhere? Goin' a ride the wind, goin' a see me places. Goin' a buy me a horse the color of cream, and fly like lightning. You and me, Shoemaker! Yes, sir, it's going to be some wind we're riding out of this place when this is over.

(BOSS STRONG moves to him and
tosses a bullet into metal bucket.)

BOSS

Well, it's out. A souvenir for you.

HENRY

I ain't collecting. Should be shooting them, .stead of sitting!

BOSS

Restless, ain't you? Well, your father's got a whole Indian arsenal buried under the floor of his cabin.

SHOEMAKER

That true, Henry?

BOSS

Ain't I seen it? The day the war broke out he up and rips the floor boards out and buries 'em, every one. Said no matter what, he was a man of peace, and his sons would never use a gun against another.

SHOEMAKER

Fine sayings. But not practical.

HENRY

You lay off my pa, I'll knock you clean into next week, old man!

SHOEMAKER

You getting down right uppity, boy.

ZACK

What'd your father say about your cousins, Mary Lowery's boys. They didn't look so fat with bullets in their backs, did they?

(ZACK is a young man of Scottish origin.)

HENRY

What we going to do with that Yank, Shoemaker?

SHOEMAKER

There's a school teacher in Lumberton, name of Amanda Nash.

HENRY

Another white woman!

BOSS

This one let it be known she's got a partiality for our side. She spoke out for the vote last time. Spinster, too--no one coming and going. Good hiding place.

HENRY

Then it's settled. Give him an hour, then move him.

SHOEMAKER

Hey, boy, who says you making all the decisions round here all of a sudden?

ZACK

Shhhhh!

(He indicates for them to remain motionless. Then he moves off R. quietly. The sound of a struggle then he reappears, dragging RHODA.)

RHODA

Zachariah McLauchlin, you're mighty brave, grabbing me like that! I ought to. . . .

ZACK

Boss, you been teaching your sister how to fight like a banshee?

RHODA

Let me go, Zack! --It's Henry's pa. They're after him.

HENRY

What are you talking about?

RHODA

Polly was over to Donald McCormick's not two hours back. Colonel McGreggor came looking for him, said they were rounding up the Home Guard. She heard him mention your pa.

SHOEMAKER

Better get yourself home, boy.

RHODA

They were drinking, too.

BOSS

Sis, you know McGreggor don't dare lay breath on Henry's pa. Specially if he's been drinking!

HENRY

Get that Yank to the school teacher. I'm going to see what's up.

BOSS

They'll take you for sure, that way, Henry.

HENRY

Then they'll take more than they reckoned. Join me when it's clear.

RHODA

Be careful.

HENRY

The devil keeps his own, I reckon!

RHODA

He can not only keep you, he can have you. --Henry, don't go.

HENRY

I'm on my own! Keep to the back roads when you come. I'll be waiting!

(He exits R. in a run.)

BOSS

He always was a liberal dose of stubborn! --Now sis, ain't nothing in this world going to get that boy but you. White folks more interested in killy off themselves than they are us.

(RHODA bursts into tears.)

Now what'd I say! People in love ain't in my understanding.

(He moves away. SHOEMAKER comforts her. Musical underscore builds to cover dialogue.)

CUE 21.

SHOEMAKER

Stop that whining--sound like a Northern girl. Speaking of that, I ever tell you about the Nigerian Falls? I got a cousin told me about them, and he ought to know, 'cause when he heard he was having a baby he took his wife there. . .

(Lights fade out on them and up on a group of men whispering as they advance toward a cabin.)

McGREGGOR

Looks like they're asleep inside, Harris. You have those hams hid?

(MURREY a young soldier in a ragged uniform, answers:)

MURREY

Sure have, colonel!!

McGREGGOR

Shhhh! Murrey, you're drunk.

MURREY

Sorry, general.

McGREGGOR

You better be. --Ready, Harris? Then go ahead.

HARRIS

Lowrey! Allen Lowrey! Wake up! I want to talk to you!

MURREY

Hey, Innnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnjun!

McGREGGOR

Get that man out of here, Harris. I want no one hurt.

MURREY

I ain't drunk, honest--no more than Colonel Harris.

ALLEN (Within.)

Who's out there?

HARRIS

It's Jack Harris, Lowrey. Lay down your gun and come on out!

ALLEN

I have no gun. What's this about?

HARRIS

Face to face, Lowrey! Open up!
(To MURREY.)

You sure those hams are good and hid?

MURREY

Put one in the corn crib, personal.

McGREGGOR

I warn you, if anything goes wrong because these men have been drinking, I'll have your head, Harris.

(ALLEN LOWREY, tall, dignified, with white hair, enters from cabin pulling up suspenders. Behind him, his Portuguese wife, MOMMA CUMBO, and his sons, WILLIAM AND STEVE.)

ALLEN

What is it, Harris?

HARRIS

ALLEN

Why do you lie? I steal nothing.

McGREGGOR

Mr. Harris is missing twenty hams, Mr. Lowrey. Where are they?

ALLEN

What you doing here, McGreggor. Where's the Sheriff?

McGREGGOR

No need for him, this is military business. Harris was intending those hams as a gift for the army.

HARRIS

That could mean treason if you don't speak up.

WILLIAM

Harris never gave a thing to anyone in his life! Ain't that right, papa?

(Allen gestures for his son to be quiet.)

MURREY

Hey, colonel, ain't he old enough to be in Wilmington?

ALLEN

We steal no hams. But I hear about you, Harris. You think we forget, but we won't. Go in boys.

MURREY

Ask Momma Cumbo how she cooked them hamhocks and collards tonight? And where they came from!

MOMMA CUMBO

I cook you good, you don't get off our land!

MURREY

(Backing away.)

She means it, too! Momma Cumbo's Portuguese, knows Voodooooooo!

McGREGGOR

Will somebody get this fool out of here!

HARRIS

Boys, tie up the young one.

MOMMA CUMBO

I conjure you! I fix strong conjure!

HARRIS

Go ahead, Momma. --Take the young one out to the wagon.

(ALLEN AND WILLIAM are tied with hands behind their backs. STEVE is taken off L. by two men.)

McGREGGOR

Lowrey, I'm trying my best to believe you, but we'll have to have a look for ourselves.

LOWREY

It is you who steal--our right to live as honest people.

HARRIS

Making speeches like that, maybe we should run him for Sheriff.

(The men laugh and exit with WILLIAM and ALLEN, both at gun point.)

MOMMA CUMBO

I conjure you and all your children! I show what it is to make old Portugal Woman mad! You see what they do, my Lord? You send to me help!

(A low whistle is heard.)

Hah, hah--You see! You see! Thank you, Lord!

(She makes a sign with her hand and HENRY enters from the dark.)

I told them, Henry?

HENRY

Where are they, Momma? .

MOMMA

They down to the barn, many men. Say your Papa stole Harris' hams. Tie up William and papa. Take Steve. But I fix medicine conjure. You go now!

HENRY

How many are there?

MOMMA

Too dark to see. They come back, see you, ship you off, too. Go!

HENRY

All right, but be careful, momma. They're drunk.

MOMMA

Your papa drunk, too, boy, with anger. Now!

(HENRY hesitates, but hears the men returning. Just as he starts off R there are sounds of a scuffle. Someone shouts, "Look out!" "There he goes!" "Get him!" Two loud gun bursts.)

HENRY

Papa!

(He runs in the direction of the shots but MOMMA stops him.)

MOMMA

Henry! I say get out of here!

HENRY

They've shot him!

MOMMA

And what you think you can do, no gun? They only try to frighten us. Go!

(CUE 22 HENRY turns and exits quickly into darkness. As he goes MCGREGGOR enters.)

MCGREGGOR

Get inside, Mrs. Lowrey. That's an order!

MOMMA

What happen?

MCGREGGOR

I said get inside!

MOMMA

Where are they?

MCGREGGOR

They tried to escape. Idiots! Idiots! They just panicked and ran.

(A group of men enters, led by HARRIS. They carry the bodies of ALLEN and WILLIAM toward the cabin. MOMMA turns slowly and crosses herself.)

MOMMA

Oh, papa. . . . papa. . . . what they do to my papa?

(She stands in a daze.)

HARRIS

Well, you saw me try to stop them, didn't you? How was I to know they'd run? Look, this was your idea to begin with.

(By this time the bodies are in the cabin, but a young soldier, McMILLAN overhears this remark.)

MCGREGGOR

Shut up! --This bunch of damn drunks. . . . was not my idea.

MAN'S VOICE (Inside cabin.)

Hey, Colonel, the young one's still breathing!

MOMMA

William!

ANOTHER VOICE

I'll get him, Colonel!

(Before anyone can move, there is another shot within the cabin, music stops.)

MOMMA

Damn you! Damn you!

(She runs into cabin.)

McGREGGOR

Idiots! Can't any of your men stay in order!? This isn't going to sit pretty, Jack. That was cold blooded murder.

HARRIS

You make me sick, you know that? You're a hypocrite! A lousey hypocrite!

McGREGGOR

Let's get out of here. That old woman's going to talk plenty. Better let the young one go.

HARRIS

Sorry, Colonel, but he might just lead us to those McNair raiders you're so hot to catch.

(CUE 23 The men return, elated over their night exploit, singing:)

MAN

Now, I'm a good old Rebel,
An' that's just what I am,
For this fair 'Land of Freedom'
I do not care a damn.
I'm glad I fit against it,
And on the day we've won,
I won't ask any pardon
For nothing 'tall I done. . .

HARRIS

All right, boys, let's go!

MAN

How'd we do tonight, Colonel?

(McGREGGOR only shakes his head and follows their exit R. MOMMA reenters sadly onto porch and HENRY enters and runs to her.)

MOMMA

You saw?

HENRY

I . . . saw . . . Momma. . .

MOMMA

They live to regret it--I promise you that.

HENRY

Promise me nothing, especially that they'll live! I'm tired of promises. Eternal white man's prattle about justice --for some!

MOMMA

It not all white men, boy!

(Pulling back her sleeve)

What you think this is? Part of that run in your veins!

I know! I know!

HENRY

It evil in all men, boy!

MOMMA

Then I disavow that evil! I'll wipe the earth with any one who stands for that evil!

HENRY

(He starts into cabin.)

Where you going?

MOMMA

To make my own promise! My own conjure, Momma!

HENRY

You talking crazy, boy!

MOMMA

Then it's crazy to want to live! And I promise you, I promise Papa, the sun will not go down on his grave before the world hears of this. Starting now, there ain't no one going to be proud in this world if it isn't us!

HENRY

(He exits into cabin.)

It is a bad thing to do the work of the Lord. A bad thing.

MOMMA

(She sinks to her knees. Voices are heard drawing near from R.)

Who there?

It's me, Rhoda. Is it safe?

RHODA

They be gone--Papa and William, and Henry now be gone.

MOMMA

(RHODA enters with BOSS, SHOEMAKER, ZACK, ANDREW, CALVIN, AND HENDERSON.)

What's she talking about?

RHODA

She says they got Henry.

BOSS

No, they not have Henry.

MOMMA

(There is banging inside the cabin.)
But an old woman knows.

(HENRY comes out loaded with guns.)

HENRY

Boss--they killed Papa and William.

(RHODA buries her head in BOSS'S arms.)

You said we should have had these long ago. Papa used to say a good heart was an honest man's justice in heaven. But I'm telling you here on earth a poor man's judge and jury is a gun! Who's with me?

(HENRY calls each name. They step forward and take a gun.)

Boss? Calvin? Henderson? Andrew? Shoemaker? Zack?

MOMMA

It a bad thing, to do the work of the Lord.

ZACK

What she mean by that?

MOMMA

Vengeance be mine, sayeth the Lord.

HENRY

Then the Lord's been slack, Momma. Early tomorrow, I'm paying a visit to Hector McCord.

(He straps a gun on angrily.)

ZACK

You crazy? McCord's on our side.

HENRY

No side in what I'm seeing him about--except yes or no. He's the Justice of the Peace, ain't he, Rhoda?

RHODA

What?

HENRY

Yes or no? I'm asking you to marry me.

RHODA

. Just like that?

HENRY

Just like that. I promised Papa just now that you would. That we'd give him what he wanted, children of peace--our children, if not his.

RHODA

What about those guns?

HENRY

I'll put 'em down--when the Indian has the vote, and the Home Guard pays for their crime! But not until.

RHODA

Then I can't promise.

HARRIS
Maybe. 'Cept this one might know where your Yank's at.

MAN
If he don't, the devil don't.

(STEVE is brought out.)

KING
Hey, this is allen Lowrey's boy. Steve, isn't it?

STEVE
Yes, sir.

KING
The men say you might know where that Yank's at that raided McNairs.

STEVE
What's it to you?

HARRIS
Hey, Rod McMillan, how's that bayonette of yours? Spect you could stick a pig with it?

KING
Put that thing down! All right, Steve, no one's going to hurt you. All we want is information.

HENRY
Don't anybody move!

(THEY all spin in surprise to find HENRY and BOSS standing in the shadows with pistols in their hands.)

FLETCHER
Hey, Colonel, that's the boy done witched me a couple weeks back.

HENRY
The name's Lowrey, Henry Lowrey.

KING
Where'd you boys get those guns?

SHOEMAKER
From the gettin' place, Br-er Sheriff! Now untie that boy, 'fore I forget myself.

(Steve is quickly untied and goes to HENRY.)

KING
Will somebody tell me what's going on? This isn't like your father, Henry. You know how he feels about his sons having guns.

HENRY
Don't much matter now, Sheriff. They shot him and William tonight.

KING

(Defeated, quietly.)
. . . . oh, my God. . . .

HENRY

We want these men arrested, Sheriff, or we're going to open fire.

BOSS

Waited too long now. Go ahead, Henry.

KING

There'll be no more shooting! Now, Henry, you put down that gun and we'll talk this out.

HENRY

I want them to know what it feels like, I want them to lie in their beds at night wondering when or how this bullet's going to come. Fast maybe, when they're playing with their kids or plowing their fields. Or slow, like a hangman's rope. Well, Sheriff? Arrest them!

(KING hesitates.)

BOSS

Go on, --- Sheriff.

KING

Look, Henry, I promise you, we'll bring 'em to trial. Every single one. But first you've got to hand over that gun.

(He begins to advance slowly.)

Come on, son, hand it over. . . . I promise you, we'll punish the men that did it. . .

(He makes a sudden leap for the pistol and it goes off. HENRY, in a trance almost, watches him fall. Everyone backs away. HENRY stares at the body for a moment.)

HENRY

It. . . it just went off.... He wouldn't listen, Damn him, he wouldn't listen!

(BOSS shakes him out of his trance.)

BOSS

Henry, snap out of it! ----- Henry.

HENRY

I tried to give him a choice. --We got to get out of here, Boss!

HARRIS

(While HENRY backs away slowly, snaking his pistol.)
You ain't going nowhere, boy!

(HENRY fires again and HARRIS falls. BOSS, HENRY, and the others turn and run. As they run the HOME GUARD runs for guns. MURREY fires and is hit by BOSS.)

McMILLAN

Stop, men! Stop! They'll cut you down out there in the dark!

MAN

(Inspecting HARRIS.)

He's dead, Colonel. Got him through the heart.

MAN

Sheriff's dead, too, Colonel.

MAN

What about Murrey?

MURREY

They only got me in the arm, fellows!

McGREGGOR

Wouldn't you know. All right, men, let's get those bodies into town.

MAN

Yes, sir, Colonel! Come on, men! You there, get the Sheriff.

(A Second-in command pulls out his sword and the men fall drunkenly into line.)

All right, men. Foreward, march!

(CUE 25 They sing as they exit "Good ole Rebel". One person has remained behind with McGREGGOR. It is McMILLAN.)

McMILLAN

Well, this is what you've been waiting for, isn't it, Colonel?

McGREGGOR

What are you talking about?

McMILLAN

Come, now, sir. Everybody knows you've been bored with this little backwater, waiting out the real war. Now you've really got something worthy of a military man -- your own private war.

McGREGGOR

McMillan, isn't it? I don't know what your're talking about.

McMILLAN

Harris told me it was your idea about the Lowrey murders. Of course, I didn't believe him. Still, if a man can't fight Sherman. . . he still might make a name against the Indians. Right, Colonel?

McGREGGOR

Your enlistment is up in another month, I believe.
With King gone, we'll be looking for a new Sheriff.
A bright one. If, as you say, this Lowrey business was
my idea, we'll need a man who could. . . . keep his mouth shut,
I believe is the phrase. --Have a cigar, McMillan?

(CUE 26 McGreggor exits. McMILLAN turns his
back to the audience, remaining in a
small pool of light. During the next
speech, he turns back toward the audience,
broadly puffing on a large cigar in
thick clouds of smoke. He exits in
darkness R. A SOLDIER steps into a pool
of light DR and reads from a scroll.)

I-9

SOLDIER

Here ye, here ye, by order of Roderick McMillan, newly elected
Sheriff of Robeson County, three thousand dollars is offered for
the capture, dead or alive, of the Lumbee outlaw, Henry Berry
Lowrey, known assassin of Ruben King, Sheriff, and Jackson
Harris, Conscription Officer, C.S.A. In case of capture by
death, evidence must be offered at the County Court House
in Lumberton in the form of the outlaw's head.

(CUE 26A Rapid drum beats at far L.,
A light comes up on Henderson back by
several members of the gang, he too
reads from a scroll.)

HENDERSON

O yez, O yez, by order of Henry Berry Lowrey and his friends
in Robeson County, a reward is offered of six hundred dollars
in lands, cattle, and real money for the capture, dead or alive,
of all members of the Robeson County Home Guard. In case of live
capture, the reward will be doubled as soon as we can vote in Congress.

(CUE 27 Drums beat again and lights out.
Lights come back on the Ramp as people
gather outside, singing a wedding hymn.)

HYMN

O perfect Love, all human thought transcending
Lowly we kneel in prayer before thy throne,
That theirs may be the love that knows no ending,
Whom thou for evermore dost join in one.

(During this first verse we see
RHODA, POLLY, AND MARY on one
side of the stage preparing RHODA
in a simple white dress. HENRY
and STEVE and BOSS on the other
side, preparing.)

O perfect Life, be thou their full assurance
of tender charity and steadfast faith.

(HENRY is forced to give up his gun for the occasion. He meets RHODA and walks toward porch steps where they are met by MOMMA and McCORD. Crowd assembles.)

Of patient hope, and quiet, brave endurance,
With child-like trust that fears nor pain nor death.

Grant them the joy which brightens earthly sorrow;
Grant them the peace which calms all earthly strife,
And to life's day the glorious unknown morrow
That dawns upon eternal love and life. Amen.

McCORD

Dearly beloved, we are gathered here today in the sight of God to join man and woman in the bonds of holy matrimony. If any present can show just cause why this union before me should not take place, let him speak now, or ever hold his peace.

(MOMMA mumbles, but stops.)

Who gives this woman?

BOSS

Right here, Hector.

McCORD

Rhoda Strong, Henry Berry Lowrey, I ask you both, in the presence of God, do you take each other to have and to hold, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, till death do you part?

RHODA

I do.

HENRY

I do.

McCORD

Then by the power invested in me by the state of North Carolina, I pronounce you husband and wife. What God hath joined together let no man put assunder. And may his power be mighty on you. Amen.

(The crowd cheers.)

BOSS

Well, kiss her, Henry!

(CUE 28 Henry kisses her. All cheer and shout forming for a dance.)

HENRY

--Shoemaker, better keep a lookout just in case.

(A lively dance insues with everybody in the action but a few guards. At end of dance:)

HENRY

All right, folks, let's keep it down to a dull roar! Don't want the county to think all us poor folk gone crazy with the heat over here. Martin Locklier, that's a might fine fiddle! Good to hear it play again!

(Crowd laughs and agrees.)

It's been a long time without dancing in this county. But I noticed one thing--ain't everybody dancing! Where's the rich folks here today? Guess the Baptist stayed home too!

MAN'S VOICE

We want no more murdering!

(Gasp from the crowd. Everyone turns. Henry is thrown for a moment.)

HENRY

I. . . . us, I agree with you, Mr. Pert.

ANOTHER VOICE

It's a bad name you're giving all the poor!

(Pandimonium. HENRY quiets them.)

HENRY

I guess--I guess Rhoda and me were wrong, thinking we were just among friends today. But since it is our wedding, I'm going to tell you the last free dream I had.

(Relieved laughter.)

Last night I dreamed you were right, Mr. Chavis--dreamed I gave us such a bad name that people didn't tell us no anymore! Such a bad name that people let us vote and be honest! Such a bad name that your children and mine went to school! And not only went to school, but learned how bad we were to make them good!

(Great applause.)

We thank you for coming--and for being honest! And now the Rev. McCord has some good news!

McCORD

Sherman and his men have won Atlanta and they're sweeping north!

(Wild applause.)

And he's pardoning political prisoners! We're going to get one of those for Henry, if we're lucky! So just keep dancing!

(CUE 28A Another dance breaks out in wild merriment. After only a moment a shot is fired and McGREGGOR and McMILLAN appear with soldiers.)

McMILLAN

Hold it! Hold it, everybody!

(SHOEMAKER and several others spin with their guns raised.)

Put down those guns. I have a warrent for the arrest of Henry Lowrey and his men on five charges of first degree murder.

SHOEMAKER

You take one more step, your teeth goin' a be savoring musketball for dinner.

McCORD

McGreggor, the Union Army's headed right this way. You'd better worry about that and not this boy.

McGREGGOR

And he's going to keep right on marching, McCord. Ain't going to change a thing in this county but the flag. You're the one better worry. --Come on, boy.

HENRY

Let my men go and I'll come peaceful.

RHODA

Henry, no!

HENRY

Think about it. My men shoot straighter than yours. No sense you losing me and your men, if it comes to that.

(The crowd pulls away.)

McMILLAN

He's bluffing.

HENRY

Try us, Sheriff.

McGREGGOR

(After consultation with McMILLAN.)

All right, Lowrey. Come on over here.

SHOEMAKER

Not so fast! You got objection to this boy telling his new wife goodby, you better say your prayers, 'cause living with these Indians I done learned me a blood curdeling yell.

HENRY

(GOING TO RHODA.)

It's all right, it's all right. --The devil keeps his own, remember?

(He whispers something in her ear and she nods.)

McMILLAN

What'd he say to you?

RHODA

Nothing you'd want to know, Sheriff. Nothing.

(She kisses HENRY and HENRY marches to McMILLAN and is handcuffed. A dim shadow L has appeared during this, a shallow-faced creature, exhausted, watching in bare light.)

McMILLAN

All right men, let's go!

(CUE 29 They turn to exit, but see the figure and stop.)

McGREGGOR

Dolly--Dolly, what are you doing here?

DOLLY

(Slowly moving forward, then speaking quietly.)
What kind of people are you? He never wanted anything but to be left alone. But you wouldn't leave him alone, would you? We was . . . going to open up a little store. . . . We would have gotten on. But you couldn't stand that. Day after day, month after month, you killed, you robbed--all of you! Dear God, that it should come to this, and you still at it. Don't you ever learn, white or red or black? Don't any of you ever learn?

(Building to this, she stops and recovers herself.)
I. . . I'm sorry. . . we . . . would have gotten on, you see.

(She moves slowly up stage.)

McGREGGOR (Quietly.)

Will someone. . . get that woman out of here?

McMILLAN

Foreward, march!

(They exit with HENRY. The crowd mumbles and begins to disperse. McCORD takes DOLLY out as the music fades.)

RHODA

She's right, you know. What kind of people are we? They've taken a man that fought for what was right around here. The only man with a dream he wasn't ashamed of. But I warn you--if Henry hangs it will be for nothing! Because he believed. . . and you stood here!

(She runs into the cabin. MOMMA CUMBO goes to SHOEMAKER.)

MOMMA CUMBO

What you do now, black man?
(Turns to BOSS.)

And you, Lumbee? What you do?
(Then to McCORD.)

And you, white man with a vote? How strong that vote? I be getting old now in a country not my own. What you going do for my son. . . . in a country not his own?

(CUE 30 She exits into house. McCORD turns to BOSS and SHOEMAKER. The LEADER and BOY cross from their observation as SHOEMAKER begins to pound his fist and hum slowly, darkly, the Battle Hymn of the REPUBLIC. BOSS, McCORD, and SHOEMAKER all look in the direction of HENRY'S exit.)

LEADER

Summer--1864, And what would your text book say now, boy? A human time, at a time like tomorrow? There you have it--red, white, black, rich, poor, fists pounding, ready for action. But what action? --Well, boy?

BOY

. . . . I don't know. . . . Not yet.

(The LEADER smiles at the BOY and lights slowly dim. END OF ACT ONE. Intermission.)

ACT TWO

(CUE 31 Lights dim and sharp drum beats signal the audience to quiet. LEADER and BOY reappear, behind them the outline of a jail, HENRY as prisoner, PERKINS as jailer.)

LEADER

Before our people, was the spirit of all people, and it taught us that the greatest thing is not to possess, but to belong. For the man who does not belong is as a blade of grass, and you may pluck him up between your fingers and play him like a flute. You may discard him ruthlessly.

(He gestures toward the jail.)

Three weeks have come and gone. The farmer plants, the soldier destroys, and Sherman marches on to glory. General Lee has surrendered his grey men to oblivion at Appomatox, And nothing changes, not the song or the dreamer of dreams, nor the hope of freedom than inhabits the four corners of the sky. But the dream must take new directions, for the mind of man is more devious than the wind.

PERKINS

(CUE 32 Singing and playing a dulcimer.)

On Friday night they hung him high
There was a fair wind blowing
And to his wife he sang this song
That he was homeward going.

The moon rose high, the stars grew bright
She hung her head in weeping
No death shall be on Friday black
To him whose soul God's keeping.

HENRY

Perkins, how many men have you killed with that dirge? Don't you know another tune?

PERKINS

Think I'd be a jailer if I did?

HENRY

Must be a new white man's torture--singing jailers!

PERKINS

If I had my way I'd sing cowboy tunes--join a wild west show. Shoot Indians on horseback! --Sorry.

HENRY

If I had my way, I'd join one, too! Attack a wagon train, and scalp me a white man or two! --Sorry.

PERKINS

The difference is, you could! Me, I ain't possessed of nerve to do what I want. I'm going to miss you, Henry!

HENRY

We all do what we want, I think. My Papa used to say, "Boy, you want so much, you're going to be rich someday--or white!"

PERKINS

I'm going to miss you, Henry! My Pa had a saying, too. "It ain't so bad to be poor. The living ain't much, but the dreams are something else!"

McCORD (Off.)

Perkins, open up! It's McCord.

HENRY

Maybe you're going to miss me sooner than you think, Perkins!

PERKINS

I wish so, boy. But I'm afeared you going 'a make us a fine hanging.

(He lets McCORD in.)

'Bout time. Henry's getting tired of the one song I know.

(PERKINS exits.)

HENRY

Well, what's the long face? You got it, didn't you?

McCORD

I've seen every official in Raleigh, even sent a message to the Governor. They all agree a pardon is justified--but impossible at this time.

HENRY

And what does that mean--at this time?

McCORD

It means the Republicans aren't strong enough, yet to take a chance.

HENRY

But they won the election!

McCORD

Winning votes is not winning power. Not always.

HENRY

Then where is it, this power they haven't got?

McCORD

With the same old people--with the land and the money.

HENRY

Let me get this straight--this country fought a war for four years to change nothing?

McCORD

At the moment. . . . yes.

HENRY

Damn!

McCORD

But the changes are coming, with laws--at least the laws are possible.

HENRY

Sun standing still is possible! Henry hanging by his heels is not only possible--not at this time--it is probable!

(He gives a low sharp whistle.)

McCORD

What was that?

HENRY

Felt like whisteling--care to join along?

McCORD

Don't give up on me, Henry! I've made a special appointment with the Governor.

HENRY

And I've made one with the Lord I don't care to keep!

McCORD

Every poor man in this state is on your side, don't you know that? Every paper on the East coast is turning you into a hero! They won't dare hang you.

HENRY

I never thought to be a martyr! All I want is justice.

PERKINS

(Entering.)

Good news, Henry?

HENRY

Shut up, Perkins, and sing that old dirge. I'm in the mood for it now.

PERKINS

Sheriff's drawing up the plans for the scaffold. It's a hummdinger, too, Henry. Wouldn't desire to go no fancier myself.

McCORD

Grant him, Lord, that wish? --Henry, nothing foolish, I want your word. If you try anything now there's every possibility the whole county will blow apart.

HENRY

I forgot you were a rich man. Thank you for nothing, Mr. McCord. Goodby!

(McCORD starts to speak again but realizes it will do no good. McCORD speaks to PERKINS as he exits. HENRY sits and glares.)

McCORD

I'll come again when I've seen the governor.

(He starts to leave.)

When I was as young as you, I didn't celebrate good sense neither, Henry. Like the Good Book says, "in a glass darkly."

HENRY

What you know good about my people from that good book, Perkins?

PERKINS

Nothing. --What you know good about mine?

HENRY

Nothing.

PERKINS

'Spect we need a new good book?

HENRY

'Spect we need a new translation.

(There is a pause, then PERKINS begins to sing again. There is a knock on the door.)

PERKINS

There's your supper, Henry. You must be a hero, all right, getting vi'tals like that every night.

(He opens the door to a BLACK WOMAN holding a basket.)

Hey, you must be a new one. What's your name?

HENRY

Why that's Essie Shoemaker, old John's wife.

PERKINS

Embarrassed with her English, ain't she? Well, let's see what we've got for our bellies tonight, Henry. Smells like chicken and biscuits and

(He lifts the kerchief over the basket and stares at a gun sticking through the back side.)

Hey! What is this?

SHOEMAKER

Chitt'lin's, honey! Bless my soul, I been cooking all day.

HENRY

You ain't Shoemaker's wife!

SHOEMAKER

No, I'm better, I'm the real thing! --We heard your whistle. We've been waiting.

HENRY

Look, just get out of here, will you? I've changed my mind.

SHOEMAKER

They going to hang you boy!

HENRY

Not yet, they ain't. Look, I can't explain, just. . . .

PERKINS

(Making a break for it.)

Sheriff! Sheriff!

(SHOEMAKER shoots him as he is running.)

HENRY

No, John!

PERKINS

(Slowly turning, collapsing to the floor.)

Where's your new translation, Henry?

(SHOEMAKER runs and takes key from body and unlocks cell.)

HENRY

You didn't have to kill him, did you?

SHOEMAKER

Boy, you gone crazy in the head? (Henry is staring at the body.)
You coming or not? Rhoda's got the wagon outside.

HENRY

I. . . . I. . . .

(CUE 33)

SHOEMAKER

(Taking him by the arm, draggin him out.)

Get out that door! I been standing around like a fool all day,
men pinching me, horses laughing at me, ain't going to stand
here while you changes your mind forty fool times before
somebody comes! I told you once, they going to hang you. . .

(His voice trails off as lights
fade on the scene to a drum roll.
Suddenly, the sound of a reed organ
is heard. Lights up on church
interior. Congregation enters singing
enthusiastically.)

II-2

CONGREGATION

Jerusalem, my happy home
Name ever dear to me
Thy bulwarks with salvation strong
Thy streets of gold are free!

Jerusalem, my happy home
When shall I be with thee
When shall my labors have an end
When shall thy joy I see?

REV. SINCLAIR

(Standing in pulpit.)

Our subject for today is liberals and conservatives. Friends, our liberal Northern brethren have told us that the Conservatives brought us slavery, that if we fought against the South we would be free men. But the Liberals forgot one thing, no man is truly free who can not feed himself. The only difference between a Conservative and a Liberal is that the Liberals have finally succeeded in making slavery legal!

(McMILLAN and several others enter.)

We must. . . we must. . .

McMILLAN

Sorry to interrupt your service, Reverend. It's about young Lowrey and his gang. He escaped last night and murdered the guard.

(Murmur in the congregation.)

I'm asking for volunteers to round them up.

SINCLAIR

Why here? Most of my congregation are relatives of the Lowreys.

McMILLAN

There may be a few here opposed to any more killing, a few who want to see this county returned to law and order.

YOUNG WOMAN

(Rising.)

Sheriff, I. . .

HUSBAND

Hilda!

McMILLAN

What was it you wanted to say, miss. Any information would be valuable.

HILDA

(Eyeing her husband nervously.)

I. . . wanted to say, we're pleased to have you. . . come back again.

(A relaxed mumble in congregation.)

McMILLAN

The real reason that I've come is that he's taken to the river. You people know those swamps. And you know there's still a reward. If you see anything suspicious, no one need know who told me.

SINCLAIR

Are you tempting these people, like Judas, sir?

McMILLAN

I am pointing out the flexibility of our gratitude, Mr. Sinclair. You are not above our offer.

SINCLAIR

Brothers and sisters, I have prayed for years for a sign from God that I might help you. Here, at last is the money! The question is, is this the sign? And I believe. . . I believe it is? Who will help the sheriff?

(There is silence.)

If we could discuss this alone, Sheriff, I believe. . . .

McMILLAN

I'm pleased to hear you speak this way, Jim.

SINCLAIR

The mills of the gods grind slowly, Rod. . .

McMILLAN

Right! We're riding to St. Andrews, boys. Those that agree with the Reverend can meet us there.

WOMAN

There'll be a pew next Sunday, Sheriff.

McMILLAN

What? Oh, yea, we appreciate that. Come on, boys.

(They exit.)

SINCLAIR

. . . . but exceeding fine. You heard the message! If the Lord shall provide us with a cure for our lameness, shall we always hobble? Claude Barton--what say you?

BARTON

I say. . . . I think we ought to ask Henry.

SINCLAIR

Well, Henry, how about it?

(The organist turns. It is HENRY.)

HENRY

What's the Lord's attitude?

SINCLAIR

I can't say he approves, brothers and sisters. I can't say he doesn't. But our Savior sent a thief to Paradise! If he can take the company, I can!

BOSS

(Standing in congregation.)

Me, too! Let's look for ourselves, Henry!

SINCLAIR

Then Amen!

CONGREGATION

Amen!

SINCLAIR

Amen it is! Hymn 164! Safe in Bulah Land!

(CUE 34 They begin to sing enthusiastically. As the light dims, SINCLAIR slowly walks Down Stage, the congregation in silhouette. McCORD enters.)

McCORD

Singing pretty loud and looking pretty smug. What's up, James?
You do something right for a change?

SINCLAIR

(Looking up, smiling toward heaven.)

Not, me; Hector. Not me at all!

(SINGING crescendos as lights fade
and SINCLAIR exits. McCORD crosses
as POLLY OXENDINE runs to meet him.)

POLLY

Mr. McCord! Mr. McCord!

McCORD

Polly! What's the trouble?

POLLY

It's Rhoda. McGreggor's given orders to take her as hostage.
Not only her, but the wives of all the men in Henry's band.

McCORD

Come on!

(They exit L. quickly.)

LEADER

Swifter than the sweep of the hawk! Here, this coat--hang it
on that tree.

(Lights up on McGREGGOR, pacing.
McMILLAN enters, carrying a uniform coat.)

II-3

McGREGGOR

Well, McMillan?

McMILLAN

He's out-foxed us again.

McGREGGOR

What are you talking about? That circle's so tight around
Deep Branch there's no possible way the gang could escape.
They must be out there!

McMILLAN

There is one way. We found this hanging on a tree. There
was a note in the pocket.

McGREGGOR

(Reading note.)

Release our wives by tonight or else. We have never harmed
your women or children, but. . . .

(Turning over scrap of paper.)

we can be taught. Signed by their mark,

H. B. Lowrey
Shoemaker John
Boss Strong
Henderson Oxendine

You mean to tell me. . . .?

McMILLAN

That's right. Henry was dressed like a soldier. Nothing easier than to let his men sneak past.

McGREGGOR

And how did they find out about their wives?

McMILLAN

More to the point, there's a reporter in town from the New York Post. How did he find out?

McGREGGOR

The New York Post? That is exactly the national publicity we don't want! If one of those women is harmed - and you know what I mean - that will make Lowrey the biggest hero in the East!

McMILLAN

And if I let them go, it will make me the biggest laughing stock in the nation!

McGREGGOR

Better your hide than mine, as the saying goes. Release them by sunset!

McMILLAN

But Colonel. . . !

McGREGGOR

By sunset, Sheriff!

(A soldier enters with SAUNDERS and DONAHOE.)

SOLDIER

Two men here to see the Sheriff about the outlaws, sir. A Mr. Saunders and a halfbreed named Donahoe.

SAUNDERS (Approaching.)

The name's John Saunders Sheriff. This is Steven Donahoe.

McGREGGOR (Refusing his hand.)

What's the matter, Donahoe, bounty hunting out in Arkansas dry up on you?

DONAHOE

Save it. It seems Saunders here's been working close to two years now with the Injuns up in Red Springs. Got real sweet on one--- Polly Oxendine. Seems he's also got two children up in Boston Miss Polly doesn't know about-- one with rhumatic fever.

McMILLAN

So?

SAUNDERS

I'm . . . not a widower, Sheriff. Fact is, my wife's an invalid. . . and a Catholic. There's no hope for divorce. --Well, to make it short, I need money-- not for me, but the child. Obviously, Polly knows nothing.

McGREGGOR

So you're been philandering with some little squaw and married all the time. Real pretty business for a doctor, ain't it?

DONAHOE

I've heard worse! --The point is, Saunders organizes shipments of supplies to a brother in Texas twice a year. Chemicals and medical provisions. Plenty of room to smuggle anything out of the state.

SAUNDERS

With a false floor, I could smuggle five, six men out easy.

DONAHOE

And with a patrol at the county line. . . easy as taking rabbits in a sack.

McMILLAN

Lowrey'd never fall for it.

DONAHOE

Never underestimate the power of a woman, Sheriff.

McGREGGOR

Then the girls's in on it?

SAUNDERS

No! --I've simply mentioned to her there might be a way to help her friends.

DONAHOE

But you have to keep the pressure tight on Lowrey, otherwise he'll never take bait.

McMILLAN

This stinks like one of your ideas, Donahoe. You a long-standing friend of Saunders?

DONAHOE

A man who's neither white nor brown has no friends but green ones--the kind you fold and feel in your pocket.

SAUNDERS

Mr. Donahoe will act as go between, and collect the reward. Wouldn't be safe if they saw me with you. But there's one condition--you must take them alive.

McGREGGOR

I knew it was too good to be true!

SAUNDERS

Alive or nothing. I. . . I intend to marry Polly when. . . and if my wife should die. I want no killing on my conscience.

McGREGGOR

I'll tell you, gentlemen, it's been a dry spell since I met two men I wouldn't turn my back on. But the rains have come at last!

DONAHOE

Don't flatter yourself. I'd soon turn you over to the Lowreys, but they can't afford you. You want your man, then you make him desperate enough to try our offer. Otherwise, that bounty on your heads might start to look surprisingly good. Let's go, Saunders. The man can reach us when he makes up his mind.

SAUNDERS

If it weren't for the child, well, you understand how it is.

(SAUNDERS and DONAHOE exit SOLDIER crosses.)

McMILLAN

Son, better watch your step, you might get snake bit from those two.

SOLDIER

That halfbreed's the meanest looking man I ever seen.

McGREGGOR

Indian's don't want him and the whites won't have him.

SOLDIER

Makes you wender, don't it?

McMILLAN

Wonder what, son?

SOLDIER

What it's like to be inside a skin you hate---and no way to shed it.

(CUE 35 Drum roll. Lights dim.
POLLY crosses toward fire around
which sit the gang, HENDERSON
strumming banjo, RHODA knitting.)

ZACK

II-4 Hey, here comes Polly with the News! What's the paper say this time?

POLLY

Whole front page is nothing but stories on Henry and you. Says your toll for the week was five farms raided and two men shot. Plus \$3,000 from McKenzie's store.

BOSS

There's the news for you!

ZACK

It was two farms, three sacks of corn, and a lousy sack of pickles for Rhoda.

SHOEMAKER

That \$3,000 is right. Someone's holding out on old John.

ZACK

You don't shut up, someone's going to hold out old John over the fire and roast him.

SHOEMAKER

How you going to tell when I'm done? Anything there about my old friend Ben Bethea being lynched by that new whatyacallit--
Kly Klur Klen?

BOSS

Ain't no news in such doings.

SHOEMAKER

I'd like to make some! Like to go to one of them Grand Wizard meeting all covered up. Then right in the middle of the cross-burning, jerk off my hood and yell, "BOO!" --Scare 'em sheetless.

BOSS

What you so mum about, sis? Worried 'bout your man again?

ZACK

(Reading over POLLY'S shoulder.)

Hey, would you look here! Says out in Kentucky some guy's formed a band of his own and he's calling himself Henry Berry Lowrey!

BOSS

What's wrong with his own name?

ZACK

Says it's Jesse, Jesse James.

BOSS

Whooooo! Now ain't he a sweetheart! Jesse!

(DURING the laughter following this remark, HENRY enters with MOMMA CUMBO.)

HENRY

Come on, Mama. It's safe here.

RHODA

Henry, what's happened?

HENRY

They tried to burn her out last night. She's staying here with us for a few days.

RHODA

She can't stay here in these swamps, in this damp. Polly, get Mama some soup.

(POLLY takes MAMA to the fire.)

What did you do to your hand?

HENRY

It's only a scratch. Ouch! Leave it be!

RHODA

You've killed someone else, haven't you?

HENRY

No. I'm just tired. Need to rest for a day or two.

RHODA

It's no good lying. I can read it in your face. Who was it this time?

HENRY

Black Owen.

(BOSS whistles, indicating Owen's importance.)

Cornered Steve and me down near the railroad station.

RHODA

And Steve?

HENRY

Left him at Charlie Barton's. Bullet in his shoulder, one in his leg. He may lose the leg.

RHODA

(Turning, running abruptly up stage.)

It's crazy! You're all crazy! I can't take it anymore!

(HENRY turns but stops and runs his hands in an exhausted manner through his hair. He sits.)

BOSS

Little lady been acting queer all day. Ain't much place for the likes of her in these swamps.

HENRY

Wouldn't be safe in town.

(As MOMMA moves down.)

Right, Momma?

MOMMA

That not what wrong, boy. Your woman going to have a baby.

HENRY

I thought with Polly here. . . .

ZACK

Well, I'll be! Henry, didn't you hear your ma--a baby!

(HENRY jumps up and crosses to RHODA.)

BOSS

No wonder she's been so cantankerous lately. Well, old lady, you going to be a grandma and me an uncle!

MOMMA

No celebration for me.

BOSS

Ain't every kid with 30,000 on his old man's head.

ZACK

Biggest bounty in the history of this county, 'cept for ol' Jeff Davis.

MOMMA

He a murderer too?

ZACK

He was only President of the Confederacy, that's who!

MOMMA

Confederacy kill my husband, try to make slaves of you. Now Henry no better than our enemies? You proud of that, you crazy.

BOSS

Long as I'm around, ain't nobody going to collect that bounty.

MOMMA

For thirty pieces of silver, some men do anything.

(HENRY returns slowly to the group.)

Well, boy?

HENRY

Seven months.

(BOSS grabs ZACK and swings him.)

BOSS

Yipeeeeeeee! --Hey, sad face, what's wrong? You are the father, ain't you?

HENRY

Leave me be.

ZACK

Come on Henry! That kid'll be so proud of you, he'll bust a gut!

HENRY

Not like I was proud of Papa. Like we were all proud before.

(RHODA moves down to HENRY. Others move away to leave them alone.)

RHODA

I'm sorry it had to happen this way, Henry.

HENRY

Just wasn't planning on it yet, that's all. It's just the wrong time to be thinking about a child. . . . or a wife.

RHODA

. . . . I see.

HENRY

Didn't mean it that way, Rhoda. I've been running so hard I haven't been able to think about anything but staying alive. It's all wrong, the fighting and the killing.

RHODA

Then let's get out, Henry. Let's get far away from this place and never look back!

HENRY

I want so much for him, Rhoda. I used to dream how it would be. Give him the world, I would in my dreams.

RHODA

I lay on the ground last night and looked at the sky, and I thought, I don't know anything but that this child is good. The same dreams are in this child that are in his father--all the thunder, all the lightning and the wild words. But there's something else, too--what you promised your father is there. Henry---remember?

HENRY

I remember. Grandchildren of peace. But those were wild words too! What's he going to be like, growing up in these damn swamps, being pulled behind us from one hideout to the next. That's all I can give him.

RHODA

No, by God, we'll give him a choice! --Somehow, we'll give him a choice.

(POLLY timidly moves down into the discussion.)

POLLY

Henry...I been talking to a man lately in Red Springs. He mentioned once he had a way to get you out of the state.....if you were interested. All the way to Texas.

HENRY

Who you been talking to, Polly?

POLLY

He's a doctor---helped pull my father through typhoid last Christmas--that's how I met him.

HENRY

What's this way of his to get us out?

POLLY

Just said he had his ways. --He's a good man, Henry . . .and he's asked me to marry him. I was going to tell you about it before, but.

HENRY

You hear that, Boss?

BOSS

All I hear was Texas. Perfer California myself--little dance hall girls.

HENRY

What do you think, Shoemaker?

SHOEMAKER

I look like a cowboy to you, son? Course, now, I got no objection to a little gold mine or two.

ZACK

Cattle! That's where the money is out there. Little ranch, few head of longhorns.....

HENRY

Rhoda, what do you think?

RHODA

If Polly trusts him, I think you ought to talk to him.

HENRY

There's still a chance at amnesty, you know. McCord's gone to see the Governor again.

RHODA

Then you have a choice, don't you?

HENRY

Yes--and so does our son, it looks like --a choice. Hey, Henderson, play something on that banjo! Polly's going to get herself engaged, and I'm going to be a father!

(CUE 36 HENDERSON strikes a dance tune and as BOSS sings, a dance insues.)

BOSS

I'll eat when I'm hungry, I'll drink when I'm dry
The possum is happy and why not I?
My foot's in the stirrup, my bride's in my hand
If I don't make her happy, then no man can.
I'll tune up my fiddle and rosin my bow
We'll have a new baby before the first snow!
Oh, honey, oh, baby, how can you frown?
Prettiest girl in Lumbertown!

(As the dance continues, lights fade at end of dance and rise on McGREGGOR and SOLDIER.)

McGREGGOR

Private! Read this letter.

SOLDIER

It's Sergeant now, sir! --Yes, sir.

Colonel:

If you will support our request for amnesty to the governor and work for the voting rights of our people, we will disappear from Robeson County and never bother you again. Signed by his mark.

H. B. Lowrey

Where'd you get this sir?

McGREGGOR

Your men were on guard last night, were they not, Private?

SOLDIER

It's Sergeant now, sir, remember? Yes, sir, they were!

McGREGGOR

I found this, this morning under my pillow, jammed in the barrel of this gun! Any more questions, Private?

SOLDIER

(Slowly saluteing.)

. . . No, sir.

(SOLDIER exits as McMILLAN enters.)

McMILLAN

McGreggor, you see the headlines this morning?

McGREGGOR

The Governor's stepped right into our trap!

McMILLAN

But he's passing legislation against the Klu Klux Klan.

McGREGGOR

He's also calling in federal troops against the Lowries.

McMILLAN

And that's what you've been waiting for?

McGREGGOR

Mr. Holden has finished the liberals in this state for good. The poor won't vote for anyone against Lowrey and the others won't vote for anyone against the Klan.

McMILLAN

I've got to hand it to you. Republicans won't get one vote in this state for a hundred years.

McGREGGOR

I wouldn't go that far. Lowrey just left us his ballot.

(Hands the gun and note to McMILLAN.)

It's a write-in.

CUE 37

(McGREGGOR exits. Music begins and lights dim on McMILLAN. He turns up stage to indicate scene shift and cautiously makes circle, eventually seeing DONAHOE and SAUNDERS.)

McMILLAN

II-6 Anybody see you?

SAUNDERS

Came the swamp road.

McMILLAN

Wagons greased and packed?

SAUNDERS

We'll move at midnight.

McMILLAN

Wisehart's company's under New River bridge.

SAUNDERS

With instructions not to shoot?

McMILLAN

Yes. Unless necessary.

SAUNDERS

Now look, I told you, no guns!

McMILLAN

Then keep your voice down and it won't be necessary. It's almost time. Better get to the bridge, Donahoe. And you-- just keep your mind on that reward and how happy your kid's going to be.

(McMILLAN and DONAHOE exit. Sound of voices as the Lowrey band approach. RHODA, obviously pregnant now.)

MOMMA CUMBO

What an old woman do in Texas? I told you I don't leave papa.

HENRY

You don't go, we don't go.

MOMMA

I not die out there. I come back to my home.

HENRY

What's left of it. Look, there's Mr. Saunders waiting on us.

SAUNDERS

Everybody ready?

HENRY

Don't know how we can thank you properly, Mr. Saunders. Rhoda wants to name the baby after you.

RHODA

I can see a change in Henry already. All your doing.

SAUNDERS

Don't want thanks for what I'm doing. Wish there was an easier way.

HENRY

After two years in the swamps, being cramped up in those wagons is going to be like dying and going to heaven.

SAUNDERS

The wagons are right down the road. Make yourselves comfortable as possible. I'll be with you in a minute.

(He shakes HENRY'S hand and all exit but SAUNDERS and POLLY.)

POLLY

Goodby, John.

SAUNDERS

What are you talking about? I just wanted to talk to you. I'm not going.

POLLY

I am.

SAUNDERS

You're. . . . you're joking, aren't you?

POLLY

No. I've thought about it, these last months, you and me. . . .
I'm sorry. I told myself I should be grateful to you. Told
myself I want to make you a good wife, want the smell of ginger
and baking powder. . .

SAUNDERS

But I'm white and you're Indian, is that it?

POLLY

That has nothing to do with it!

SAUNDERS

Be honest with me, Polly!

POLLY

Have you been honest with me?

SAUNDERS

What are you talking about?

POLLY

Set the date for us to get married, John, and I'll stay.
Set the date here and now.

SAUNDERS

But I told you, it won't be long.

POLLY

I want to know now, John. If you really mean it. Otherwise
I'm going with Henry and Rhoda.

SAUNDERS

All right. In a year's time. . . maybe six months. . .

(POLLY, her fears confirmed, starts to exit.)

Polly, you are not getting in that wagon!

POLLY

You're hurting my arm!

SAUNDERS

Listen to me, if somewhere along the road, there should be trouble. . .
Suppose somebody found out about the wagons.

POLLY

But how could they? How could they, unless. . . unless. . .
You haven't sold them out have you? Oh, God, John, you haven't,
tell me no. . . please, John!

SAUNDERS

It wasn't me, Polly. It wasn't me, I swear it!

(STEVE reenters.)

Polly, if you're coming, better get a move on.

POLLY

Steve! Get everyone out of the wagons! It's a trap!

SAUNDERS

All right! All right! I can't go through with it anyway. There's a regiment under New River bridge waiting for you.

STEVE

You good for nothing son of a . . .

SAUNDERS

It was all Donahoe's idea. Polly, I needed money.

POLLY

What could have been that important?

SAUNDERS

My children. . . . I was going to tell you, I have two sons. Look, tell Henry someone in Scuffletown tipped you off! We'll tell him. . .

(STEVE fires two bullets into SAUNDERS.)

STEVE

Tell him nothing!

(POLLY turns away and sobs.)

Henry! Henry! It's a trap! Get everybody out of the wagons! Hurry!

(He runs off. POLLY turns and comes down to SAUNDERS.)

SAUNDERS

I couldn't go through with it, Polly. . . couldn't do that to you.

(He dies. POLLY cries, kneeling over body.)

McMILLAN (Off)

Halt! Halt!

STEVE (Off.)

It's McMillan, Henry. Run!

HENRY

(Running across stage, calling back.)

Henderson, get Mama and Rhoda out of here!

(RHODA and STEVE enter, helping MOMMA. A SOLDIER enters in pursuit. STEVE shoots the SOLDIER. Another SOLDIER enters and fires at them as they exit. He drags POLLY off. ZACK enters, being chased by a SOLDIER and McMILLAN.)

SOLDIER

Halt or I'll shoot!

McMILLAN

Fire, boy! Warn him later!

(The SOLDIER aims and fires. ZACK falls dead.)

Good work, Private.

(HENDERSON enters running. He sees the SHERIFF and slides to a stop.)

SOLDIER

There's another one, Sheriff!

McMILLAN

This one's mine, boy!

(McMILLAN and SOLDIER exit chasing HENDERSON. As they exit, SHOEMAKER creeps onto stage watching them go. He laughs softly but turns to be confronted by the SOLDIER who has carried POLLY off. The SOLDIER shoots and SHOEMAKER clutches his side, looking at the blood on his hand.)

SHOEMAKER

Ain't no young whippersnapper going to get old Shoemaker that easy!

(HE advances and SOLDIER fires again. SHOEMAKER drops to his knees. With great effort SHOEMAKER fires at the astonished SOLDIER and the SOLDIER falls. SHOEMAKER doubles in pain.)

No sir. . . not that. . .

(There is one final shot from the dying soldier.)

. . . easy. . .

(CUE 38 SHOEMAKER dies and so, too, the SOLDIER. Slow drum roll. Lights fade and return on STEVE and BOSS sitting by camp fire.)

II-7

STEVE

Don't seem natural. Shoemaker dead and Zack. And now Henderson being captured. No one singing around here anymore.

BOSS

They'll break Henderson out, just you wait.

STEVE

With a hundred and fifty federal troupes guarding the jail?

BOSS

Half the county's up in arms--and they're on our side.

(A low whistle off.)

Come on, Henry, it's safe.

(HENRY and McCORD enter.)

What's wrong, Henry?

HENRY

Henderson's dead.

BOSS

Dead? They ain't had time for a trial yet!

HENRY

Trial lasted thirty minutes. Took him straight from the court house and hung him. But that ain't all-tell 'em, Mr. McCord.

McCORD

Well, you know Henderson wasn't much of a talker, so he didn't have any last words. But he asked for hymn books to be passed out--someone ran to the church and brought back about twenty--and he started singing The Battle Hymn of the Republic.

HENRY

We thought old McGreggor was going to shoot him there on the spot.

McCORD

Pretty soon people started joining in--Indians and whites and blacks--they tried to blindfold him, but he wouldn't stop singing--neither would the crowd. When they finished, there was just a long silence and everybody walked away--they wouldn't watch the hanging. CUE 39 The last we saw there was nobody in the square but McGreggor and the Sheriff staring at each other.

BOSS

Where were you, Henry?

HENRY

On the courthouse roof.

STEVE

But I never knew Henderson could sing before. . . did you, Boss?

BOSS

He couldn't . . . before.

(Lights dim as Indian flute slowly plays the Battle Hymn. Lights slowly return to another part of the stage where HENRY and STEVE pace back and forth.)

STEVE

Calm down, will you! You're wearing a hole in the ground.

HENRY

Can't help it. There must be something I can do.

STEVE

Well there isn't, so face it.

HENRY

Even watching Henderson hanged I didn't feel this helpless.

STEVE

. . . . You scared?

HENRY

No! --Yes --damn it, I don't know. I can't stay here!

STEVE

They're watching the roads, Henry!

HENRY

That can't be helped!

(BOSS comes running in, HENRY draws.)

BOSS

Put that thing away, boy! It's me.

HENRY

Well, don't stand there, what is it?

BOSS

A girl. And Rhoda's fine.

HENRY

Thank God. Thank God.

(McGREGGOR enters UR, followed by two soldiers. STEVE turns and sees McGREGGOR.)

STEVE

Henry, it's McGreggor! Let's get out of here!

(The SOLDIERS fire. STEVE and HENRY return the fire. McGREGGOR is hit. STEVE and HENRY run off L, pursued by all but one soldier.)

McGREGGOR

(Lying on the ground.)

Well, soldier. . . . did we. . . get 'em?

(He dies.)

SOLDIER

You'll never know, now, will you, Sergeant?

(CUE 40 Blackout. Lights up on BOSS, cleaning a gun, whistling "In the Pines." A YOUTH about twelve enters.)

BOSS

II-8 Who's there?

YOUTH

'Xcuse me, sir. I was out hunting with my daddy and we got separated. Do you know where the main road is?

BOSS

Where you from, boy?

YOUTH

Papa and me's from Wilmington. We're visiting my grandma in Lumberton for Easter.

BOSS

Well, I guess you're all right.

(He stands and points L.)

Now the road to Lumberton is through them. . . .

(The YOUTH raises his gun and shoots BOSS in the back. BOSS falls.)

YOUTH

(Calling off R.)

O.K., pa. I got him!

(CUE 41 Drums & segue into "Brown Skin". Blackout. Lights up on Lowrey cabin RHODA sits on steps beside a cradle. She plays a guitar and sings to the child.)

RHODA

(MARY comes out of the door.)

MARY

It's almost summer, the nights are so warm.

RHODA

Ummm. How's Momma Cumbo?

MARY

Stubborn as ever. Ate a spoonful of supper. She won't last the night.

(She sits beside RHODA.)

All she talks about is seeing Henry.

RHODA

Been over a month. Someone said he was seen in South Carolina.

MARY

If anything had happened, we'd have heard.

RHODA

I lie awake at night and wonder if he's still alive. Those were fine times when no one ever heard of Henry.

MARY

No they weren't. I wish I could say what he did was wrong--I wish I could say it was right. All I know is I go into town with my head up a little now, just like white folks. And I pray a little harder--just like Black folks. And I ain't never, never going to know which is better anymore--a high head or a high heart!

RHODA

It's just on nights like this I can see him coming down the road in the moonlight, not a care in the world, a smile from ear to ear. And talking like a preacher!

(She stops, for there, indeed, in the shadows in Henry, tired and thin.)

Mary. . . am I losing my mind?

MARY

It ain't no dream.

RHODA

(Running to embrace HENRY.)

Oh, Henry, Henry. . . !

HENRY

It's all right. Shhhh, it's all right. I heard the news about mama.

MARY

Where's Steve?

HENRY

Keeping lookout. How's my spitting image, Aunt Mary?

MARY

Headstrong! Smart, though, to be part yours. I'll tell your mama you're here.

(MARY exits.)

RHODA

You all right? You look so tired.

HENRY

Steve's dead--I didn't want her to know.

RHODA

When?

HENRY

This afternoon. McGregor's company found us. Steve shot McGregor, but another soldier hit Steve with three shots. --I dragged his body into the swamp where no one could find it for the reward.

RHODA

We thought you'd made it out of the state.

HENRY

I had to come back to see mama. --Then I'll try for Georgia. When I get there, I'll send for you and the baby. Maybe move to Texas, just like ol' Shoemaker wanted to.

(McCORD enters from the darkness.)

McCORD

Henry? It's McCord. I took a chance you might be here.

HENRY

What is it?

McCORD

A telegram. Read it.

HENRY

Ain't never been good at that. You read it.

McCORD

"State legislature, in special session, has voted to extend voting rights to all citizens of Robeson County--regardless of color!" --Henry, it seems you've had more friends out there than you thought. Warrants have been sworn out against every man in the state involved in the persecutions here--including a state supreme court judge.

RHODA

Then that means a reprieve, doesn't it, Mr. McCord?

McCORD

The governor is out of the state, but as soon as he returns I'm sure it will be his top priority. If we can only hold out a few more weeks, Henry.

(HENRY looks at McCORD and goes into an intense and shattering laugh. Then, seeing RHODA frightened:)

HENRY

It doesn't matter! It doesn't matter anymore, Rhoda. There ain't never been a man that reached to touch the sun but he wasn't burned, a little!

(Grabbing the telegram.)

But ain't no one going to put a match to this forever!

RHODA

And will I lose you because of it?

HENRY

Not because of it--for it!

McCORD

I'll. . . I'll be going now, Henry. . . Rhoda. Thought you'd want to know. . . just a few more weeks.

(He starts to take HENRY'S hand, but HENRY grabs him roughly by the neck and kisses him on the neck. Then, embarrassed!)

HENRY

Wouldn't know where a fellow could get slicked up and spruced out to see his girl, would you?

McCORD

Here's a quarter, Henry. Tell the sheriff's barber I sent you.

(He exits.)

HENRY

And you--you got no special star up there? No faith? Look up there--that star is mine--. Looking out for me. Don't look like it's about to burn itself out and die yet. And yours, too, right beside it! Ain't nothing between those two but shining, Almighty God! Keeping them apart a little and holding them together.

(HENRY kisses RHODA gently as MOMMA CUMBO enters, fighting off MARY.)

MOMMA

Get away from me! You smother me! Where's my boy?

HENRY

Mama, what you doing out of bed? Go back and lie down.

MOMMA

Who said you old enough to give me orders? Where Steve?

HENRY

Down the road, keeping lookout. We couldn't both come. We're going to Georgia.

MOMMA

Steve, too? You sure he not dead?

HENRY

No, mama.

I have bad dream about him, Henry.

MOMMA

Just the devil, mama.

HENRY

Hah! That right. . . .just the devil!

MOMMA

That Steve?

(There is an owl hoot off stage.)

Told you it was. --Got to go now, quick.

HENRY

(He runs to RHODA.)

That may be them. Tell them I headed east. Tell the baby we did it for her. Not what we ought to have done, but what we were able. There's new wind blowing in our direction, a strong fresh one!

RHODA

You can tell her that yourself, in a few weeks.

HENRY

That's right, I can--I mean I will. A person of some importance always says. . . I will.

(He kisses her and runs toward L. but MOMMA CUMBO calls.)

Henry!

MOMMA

Yes, mama?

HENRY (Turning.)

You behave yourself in Georgia! Live like I taught you!

MOMMA

. . . . Yes, mama

HENRY

(He looks at RHODA, then turns and crosses to a tree near RHODA.)

Papa said once the English settlers carved "Croatoan" on a tree, for a sign to those that came after, not to give up hope. If any one asks for me, Rhoda. . .

(He tacks telegram to tree.)

show them this--and tell them, "Croatoan."

(He turns and exits quickly L.)

He be all right now, my boy. But it true. He that live by the sword, die by the sword.

MOMMA

RHODA

Mama?

MOMMA

I be getting old now. I not listen for his signal in the nights anymore. He going to be living for a long time now. . . Him and Steve.

RHODA

(Crossing to crib, sitting.)

Yes, mama, for a long time.

MARY

Come on, mama. Let's go in.

(MARY and MOMMA CUMBO exit.
RHODA softly sings a reprise of
"Brown Skin". From the darkness
comes a shout.)

VOICE

Halt! Halt!

ANOTHER VOICE

Fire, me!

RHODA

Run, Henry, run, please. . .

(There is a great burst of guns. Silence.
RHODA slowly raises her head. . .)

CUE 42

Live, Henry. . . . Live. Live!

(Lights dim to a spot on RHODA and
another on the LEADER and BOY.)

II-10

BOY

He's dead, ain't he, sir? They killed him.

LEADER

What does your book say?

BOY

Books don't tell it all. You said so. But Rhoda must know.

LEADER

Like your book -- she never said.

BOY

But they killed him, I know they did!

LEADER

Who, boy? People. . . . or reasons?

(Turning to the actors entering.)

There are the people. . . but where are the reasons?

(CUE 43 Lights come up dimly on stage as
various actors enter slowly.)

We would have gotten on, you see. . . DOLLY

Greatest of all things is to forgive. MAN

Reach out. . . and he never dies. RHODA

The right to coexist in harmony. WOMAN

When will we ever learn? DOLLY

The right to do evil and be punished fairly. MAN

The right to belong to one another. WOMAN

Ain't nothing between us two but shining, Almighty God,
keeping us apart a little for now and holding us together forever. RHODA

Well, boy? What will it be? LEADER

(Looking at his clinched fist, then at actors.)
I was thinking, sir. . . BOY

Yes? LEADER

The fist. . . is also a hand. BOY

(The LEADER smiles. He shakes hands
with the BOY.)

Good, boy! Good! LEADER

(He turns and moves through the
actors toward the audience.)

Upon this ground, Henry Berry Lowrey fought his neighbor, for better
or for worse. And his time was a long time coming! But love is the
second discovery of fire. And to you who have heard this story, we
reach out our hands.

(Reaching RHODA, he looks at her
and the child she holds in her arms.)

May we affirm, from this moment on, that there shall never be another time when to ask for the dignity of any man is to strike, in vain, at the wind!

(There is an immediate chord and RHODA, holding the baby, turns slowly, crossing toward the high platform, and slowly sings.)

Mine eyes have seen the glory
Of the coming of the Lord,
He is trampling out the vinyards
Where the grapes of wrath are stored. . .

(The music builds under this and the remainder of the cast now enters, moving toward the audience slowly, and in a stately final cadence, join the song:)

He has loosed the mighty vengeance
Of his terrible swift sword!
HIS TRUTH IS MARCHING ON!

(The hymn should go no farther than these words. At end of applause, the song begins with "Glory, glory, Hallelujah, etc." and the actors move into the audience, greeting people, shaking hands, etc., in a communion of cast and audience.)

END OF ACT TWO.