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As We Speak

A Play in Two Acts by

John Patrick Bray

Commissioned by the (re:)Directions Theatre Company

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As We Speak
by John Patrick Bray

CHARACTERS:

NOREEN; Mid/late 20’s
TRAVIS; Mid/late 20’s
CHAD; Mid/late 20’s
JENNIFER; Mid/late 20’s
HARRISON; 40’s-50’s
STANZ; 40’s -50’s
MALE CHORUS 1
MALE CHORUS 2
FEMALE CHORUS 1
FEMALE CHORUS 2

SETTING:

A re-imagined early twentieth century/various locations in Buffalo, New York

ETC:

As We Speak may be performed with or without intermission
As we approached the full production of *As We Speak*, we began to realize the enormity of the need for clean and efficient multi-media design, for which I am extremely grateful that we had the talents of David Bengali. The NYC production by no means was the *only* way to bring about the sense of the media but we wanted to pass onto you how we handled it. The set consisted of an isolated circle downstage to represent the apartment, with a chair and a low, wide table for Noreen’s laptop, notebook and, later, typewriter. Upstage, there was a wide platform about the width of the stage with stair units on either side and a wide stair unit coming downstage center from the platform; also, a chair for Harrison stage right. Behind the platform there was a very large screen which served as the surface for the projections; it was doctored to resemble a TV or a computer screen. There were two cameras, on either side of the apartment section of stage, pointed towards the stage left and right sections of the platform. This is where all of the media, YouTube and Harrison sections took place, except for the more abstract or organic media moments. The cameras were connected to a live feed, simultaneously projecting those moments onto the screen. There were several pre-recorded cues that were controlled by stage management. It was initially intended to have most of the media pre-recorded but this left my ensemble with little to do, and quickly got expensive and complicated. We also used several old presidential campaign songs as pre-show; i.e. “Get in a Raft with Taft” to They Might Be Giants’ “James K. Polk Song.” Most are public domain and the rest’s copyrights are easily obtainable. We did not use any kind of multi-media during the workshop, choosing instead to use direct address and differences in tone to distinguish these moments; that was due to the lack of space and the emphasis of the workshop on preparing the text for the full production. I’m eager to see how future directors tackle the show. - Tom Berger

Playwright’s note: I would like to thank Tom Berger and Erin Smiley, and the entire (re:)Directions Theatre Company team for this commission. It was an honor working with you all! – John
CREDITS

As We Speak was originally presented as a workshop at Manhattan Repertory Theatre, NY, NY in June of 2008. It was directed by Tom Berger and presented by (re:)Directions Theatre Company. The cast was as follows:

Noreen – Kasey Williams
Travis – Andrew Schechter
Chad – Michael Littner
Jennifer – Amber Hurst-Martin
Harrison – Paul Pricer
Stanz – Stephen Hershey
MALE CHORUS 1 – Cary Hite
MALE CHORUS 2 – Chris Bennett
FEMALE CHORUS 1 – Anais Koivisto
FEMALE CHORUS 2 – Erin Smiley

As We Speak was subsequently given a full production at the 14th St. Y Theater, NY, NY in November of 2008. It was directed by Tom Berger and presented by (re:) Directions Theatre Company, in association with Hypothetical Theatre Company. The cast and staff were as follows:

Assistant Director / Costume Design – Erin Smiley
Production Stage Manager – Courtney Ferrell
Assistant Stage Manager – Megan Cody
Projections Design – David Bengali
Sound Design and Original Music – Henry Akona
Lighting Design – Tim Kaufman
Set Design – Jack Blacketer
Fight Choreography – Kathryn Lawson
Publicity – Emily Owens PR

Noreen – Alisyn Brock
Travis – Anthony Rand
Chad – Michael Littner
Jennifer – Michelle Rabbani
Harrison – Michael Bertolini
Stanz – Rajesh Bose
M1 – Cary Hite / Kyle-Steven Porter
M2 – Case Aiken
F1 – Kathryn Lawson
F2 – Sarah Engelke
As We Speak
by John Patrick Bray

ACT I

(A screen can be seen upstage. On stage, there is a desk, a chair, a small sofa, and a few boxes. A series of video boxes appear on the screen. Each Reporter is introduced with a synthesized “News at 11” type of effect; the actors should not wait for these but jump on them like a cue.)

REPORTER 1
Though Presidential hopeful Senator Robert Madison has declared that the levies will never be fixed in New Orleans, Republican Kip Shaw believes that with, as he puts it, “God’s help,” the city may be brought back one day.

REPORTER 2
The price of crude oil is down today, making the national average three dollars and ninety-three cents a gallon for gas. Several oil companies are under suspicious of price-gauging.

REPORTER 3
You-tube; myspace videos; facebook videos: the next wave of grass-roots journalism, or harmless fun?

(NOREEN watches from her laptop. She looks around at the other screens and shakes her head.)

REPORTER 4
Presidential hopeful Senator Kip Shaw is to speak before Congress, today; his agenda: stopping the flow of illegal immigrants from Mexico.

REPORTER 1
Senator Madison has now distanced himself from his controversial past, hoping to appeal to, as he calls it, "neutral America."

REPORTER 3
For the latest news -

REPORTER 1
For weather –

REPORTER 2
Sports -
ALL
And the political campaign, tune in to your most trusted source:

(They all speak three different letters. They all smile as their faces overlap each other on the screen. All of the screens go blank, except for NOREEN.)

NOREEN
To hell with this.

(LIGHTS CHANGE. NOREEN is on stage with CHORUS members. They are in a chat-room. Each line is accompanied by an “AIM--esque” sound.)

CHORUS 1
What we really need are alternatives to oil.

I have an electric car.

CHORUS 2
You're gonna electrocute yourself.

Ha.

CHORUS 3
You know what your generation is called, Noreen 77?

What's that?

NOREEN
Liberal you mean?

CHORUS 4
The soft-generation. You've all let yourself get soft.

NOREEN
Liberal you mean?

CHORUS
Everything. Your belly soft? You do sit-ups every day?

NOREEN
(Looks at belly) Of course.
CHORUS 1
People are forgetting what it means to be a democrat.

CHORUS 4
I like the idea of getting out of war. It's a democrat idea.

NOREEN
No, if you're a democrat it means you want more government involvement.

CHORUS 4
No it don't. It means you don't listen to war-mongers.

NOREEN
Those are social issues.

CHORUS 4
I don't want the government raising my taxes, whether for oil or war. We need a candidate who will do away with taxes all together.

CHORUS 1
This isn't the libertarian room. Hey, Noreen, Harrison's coming on.

CHORUS 4
You guys like Harrison? I like him, too!

(NOREEN returns to her computer and clicks a few buttons. CHORUS exits. LIGHTS CHANGE. She groans.)

TRAVIS, Off-stage
You say something?

NO.

TRAVIS
You sure?!?

NOREEN
Yes! (Beat. To herself)

(A video box appears on screen. A voice can be heard: "And now, Brother Harrison, and his Christian Patriots," which is also written on the screen in the most Nationalistic font available. HARRISON appears on screen.)
HARRISON

All authority is an extension of God's authority. Many of us don't like the sound of that. We are asked not to question authority; not to say "Whoa, hey, I have rights! God gave me unalienable rights!" No. God said "you are free. But with that freedom, you must be ready to submit. So we don't have violence in the streets."

(TRAVIS enters with a pot in his hand.)

TRAVIS

Great job unpacking the computers.

(NOREEN tries to shoo him away. She puts on earphones.)

(Beat) I can’t believe you’re listening to Harrison. Man, ever since NPR went all republican, you’ve been obsessed. (Beat) You’re not listening to me, are you? (Beat) Can’t hear me at all? (Beat) Okay, then, I’m making some rules for this marriage. One, I will not unpack all of the boxes myself. Two, unpacking and hooking up the computer is not unpacking. Three, having the internet enabled two days before we actually move in, also not unpacking… wait…these aren’t rules…I think I’m just telling you off via a list.

(Beat.)

What did you say?

NOREEN

I said you're doing a great job.

TRAVIS

I thought you were unpacking.

NOREEN

I am. Just like you.

TRAVIS

This'll be quick.

NOREEN

So will this. Open your mouth.

(He feeds her a sip.)

The spoon. Open your mouth for the spoon.
TRAVIS, *Continued*

Well?

NOREEN

Whoa!

TRAVIS

Right?

NOREEN

What is it?

TRAVIS

Crawfish-lobster bisque.

NOREEN

That's incredible!

TRAVIS

I know!

NOREEN

Feeding a Jew two different kinds of bottom-feeders.

TRAVIS

It just means I love you.

(CHAD enters carrying a heavy box.)

CHAD

I could use a little love right now.

(CHAD sets it down.)

What's in there?

TRAVIS

The bodies of Noreen's previous husbands.

CHAD

Wouldn't that make you next?

NOREEN

Testosterone’s getting thick in here.
Speaking of thick: open your mouth.

(CHAD gives him a look.)

The spoon.

(CHAD gives him another look.)

Try it, Chad.

(CHAD opens his mouth; TRAVIS feeds him.)

Whoa!

Same reaction 100 percent of the time!

What is it?

Crawfish-lobster bisque!

Good, right?

You tried this? Aren't you Jewish?

Travis plans on opening a Cajun-New England Fusion Restaurant.

We’ll also have Lobster-Squash Etouffé, and Crawfish Corn Chowder.

Hey, Noreen, I’m stealing your husband.

He’s French, Chad. (Beat) Chad always hated the French.

Still do.
TRAVIS
My last name is Fontenot.

CHAD
You’re married to Norrie, you don’t count.

TRAVIS
Merci beaucoup.

CHAD
You have a place yet for your restaurant?

TRAVIS
A couple of places I saw online. We’ll see what happens.

(CHAD exits.)

SERIOUSLY, what’ve you got in these boxes?

NOREEN
Those are my books.

CHAD
All of them?

NOREEN
Some of them.

CHAD
Ah. PhD student. Lots of books. Right. (Beat) So, did you transfer here or was it –

NOREEN
No. It doesn’t work that way. No, I waited a couple of years and started reapplying. I’m starting all over.

CHAD
Huh. What are you researching?

NOREEN
Looking at the use of digital media in determining the next election. I used to do chat rooms, but blogs have become more useful. I even have my own.

CHAD
Good for you. (Beat) You’re a communications major?
NOREEN
English. Rhetoric, really. (Beat) Just glad I could do it at home here in Buffalo.

CHAD
Yeah, with Mr. (In a bad Cajun accent) Etouffé and Bisque.

And French pastries.

CHAD
He’s gonna get you fat.

NOREEN
If the drive-through daiquiri bars didn’t do it, I don’t think Travis’ cooking will.

CHAD
Louisiana has drive-through daiquiri bars?

NOREEN
It’s the saddest thing about getting Katrina’d out of school, and leaving in general. No more drive-through daiquiris, or daiquiris in the cinema. At one of the grocery stores, they had a lady giving out samples, and you know what she handed me? A shot of Bacardi Peach. “You wanna try our new Bacardi peach, baby?” At ten o’clock on a Tuesday! I took it, of course. Not gonna be rude and refuse free booze. But the drive-through daiquiris. They were the best.

CHAD
They have drive-through wedding chapels, too?

(Beat) Open ’til four a.m.

NOREEN

CHAD
Good to know.

NOREEN
Got your eye on a lucky lady?

CHAD
Nah. I’d probably get there past closing anyway. (Pause) Noreen, you…

NOREEN
Chad, the next few words coming out of your mouth should be “get off the computer right now, you lazy woman, and help me and YOUR HUSBAND unpack.”
CHAD

As a matter of fact, they were.

NOREEN

Good. I am NOT a lazy woman, you sexist pig, and NO, I’m not getting off the computer. I have a few more things I need to add to this.

(Chuckling) Your damn liberal causes.

NOREEN

I’m not a liberal, Chad. I’m just not an idiot. (Beat) You should have seen the place, Chad. Everything smells like rot. Swamp rot. Water-loged bodies. Houses that can never be...and with FEMA letting EVERYONE down. And Jefferson Parish...when people tried to leave the flood...most of them were black...they were greeted by the white law enforcement of Jefferson Parish...and told to turn around...turn around and drown...

(CHAD starts massaging her temples.)

CHAD

Shhh...you're home now.

NOREEN

Home. My parents moved to Pennsylvania. My sister's in Iowa. The only ones left are the high-school losers. (Beat) I don't mean you.

CHAD

Of course not. I was a high-school winner.

(They have a moment. She pats his hand and he moves away.)

How’s Holly?

NOREEN

Great. Spitting image of her father.

CHAD

Poor thing.

NOREEN

Yeah. Back hair and all.

CHAD

When do we get to meet her?
Soon.

And you're still with –?

(Beat) Yeah. (Beat) I'm taking Holly with me when I do my rounds on Monday.

Your rounds?

Mm-hmm.

You’re bringing your baby with you on your garbage route? At Four A.M.?

Just before four AM, actually. Figure we’d find her a man and hit a drive-through chapel.

My marriage isn't that frivolous, Chad.

I didn’t say it was.

You said it without saying it. (Beat). So, she’s going to what, be riding in the truck next to you while you’re driving?

Actually, she’ll be riding with Stuart. I’m one of the outside guys.

I really should be outraged right now, but as it is I’m suffering from C.O.F.

C.O.F.?

Chronic outrage fatigue. I have one nerve left, and you’re not allowed on it.

So, you probably won’t be happy when Shaw wins the election. He was our Senator, you know.
NOREEN

Yup.

CHAD

He’s a good guy. Stands up for the working man.

NOREEN

If you say so.

CHAD

I do.

(Travis enters holding a jar.)

TRAVIS

You know where the grippy things are?

CHAD

Grippy things?

TRAVIS

Yeah, I can’t get this jar open.

(Chad opens it easily.)

TRAVIS

Huh. (Beat) I loosened it!

(Travis exits.)

CHAD

Grippy things.

NOREEN

Do you know their proper name?

CHAD

Yes. (Beat) Grippers? All righty, I’m out.

NOREEN

We’ll see you later, then?

CHAD

(Beat) I’m only going to say it once, and I’m going to say it. He’s boring, Norrie. Really boring. If it’s one thing we weren’t, Norrie, it was—
NOREEN
Don’t call me “Norrie.” (Beat) He’s not boring, Chad. He’s just…Mr. Laidback. And a damn fine cook. You threatened to steal him yourself, remember?

(TRAVIS re-enters.)

TRAVIS
You staying for dinner?

CHAD
Nah, early day tomorrow. And, uh, Jennifer is expecting me.

TRAVIS
Jennifer, huh? (Beat) Be sure to bring her with you next time. (Beat) Dinner will be just underway in just a moment… if I could just find the box with the pans…ah, it’s under this one.

(TRAVIS tries lifting a box and has trouble. CHAD takes it from him easily and sets it aside.)

CHAD
You loosened it.

(CHAID nods to NOREEN and exits.)

TRAVIS
Chad: a man’s man. But he prefers married women.

NOREEN
That he does.

TRAVIS
And he has a woman at home, and a kid. (Beat). Should I be worried?

NOREEN
Yes. Because I’m going to kick your ass for not letting me listen to Reverend Harrison.

TRAVIS
Keeping an eye on the enemy?

NOREEN
He's not the enemy. Just has a different opinion.
TRAVIS
Download it.

NOREEN
Oh, I hate downloading! I like my information to be fresh. Downloading makes it feel like leftovers.

*(TRAVIS starts to exit.)*

Hey. Mr. Laidback. I love you. You will never have anything to worry about.

TRAVIS
I know. (Beat). Dinner beckons.

*(TRAVIS grabs a couple of pots and exits. NOREEN begins typing.)*

AND unpacking!

NOREEN
I am! -

*(NOREEN sighs. Types quickly.)*

TRAVIS
NOREEN!!

*(She finishes typing and heads out of the room as a patriotic country-rock song comes on, sung by two women. All the music in the show, especially Harrison’s exits and entrances, are variations on this theme. LIGHTS CHANGE. HARRISON is on screen.)*

HARRISON
I want to thank The Mud Flap Girls, as always, it’s heart-warming to know that such a talented and respected group of young musicians would put in the time to write and record a theme song for you. Thank you, girls. *(Beat) It is the interest of self that has taken over the mentalities of this nation. And it’s no wonder why, with all of the distractions of today’s world. You may leave your TV set today, and think, “By thunder, I’m going to do some good. Right away, I’m going to help my fellow man.” But how many little incidents can occur between that thought and your leaving the front door? You turn off your television, and the phone may ring. It may be your mother, wife, sister, somebody who has a problem or a complaint that they need you to hear. Will you listen though? Is this the good deed for the day? *(Beat) How about you do this good deed: you reach out; you open your arms and heart to someone different; someone who needs a hand; someone who is looking to work for*
HARRISON, Continued

their family, or so they lead you to believe. Maybe they stay for a week. A month. A year. Pretty soon...and in the name of doing good, you have become an enabler. When we hear that our test scores at schools are going down, that the dollar is becoming inflated because there's too much under the table activity, that our families now need to learn a second language just to get by in the community we built...do you see where I'm going with this?

With our brother, avid listener and supporter, Kip Shaw as our president, I know that we will say to these illegal immigrants: it's time. Become a citizen, help build this English speaking country...or go home. If we don't ask them to do this, if we enable others out of pity...aren't we just being selfish?

(LIGHTS CHANGE NOREEN is typing.
TRAVIS, CHAD, and JENNIFER enter, TRAVIS is talking excitedly.)

What's the verdict?

NOREEN

It’s perfect.

TRAVIS

Really?

NOREEN

Absolutely perfect.

TRAVIS

If you’re a roach.

NOREEN

They’re the city cousins of crawfish.

TRAVIS

I’m never eating bottom-feeders again.

NOREEN

Wait, when did you see it?

TRAVIS

NOREEN

Chad brought me by yesterday. You two were reading to Holly in that used books store.

JENNIFER

And you didn't even tell me?
I mentioned it six times.

(TRAVIS)

(Beat). Was it when I was reading "Green Eggs and Ham?"

(NOREEN)

Yup.

(TRAVIS)

That explains it. The world stops when I read that book. It's a chef's favorite.

(JENNIFER)

Along with “If You Give a Mouse a Cookie!”

(TRAVIS)

Chad, you really came through for me. There's enough room for a Hobart, a couple of deep fryers, maybe. I saw this industrial stove in a catalog. Twelve gas burners. Man. Plenty of space for booths and tables. I can't believe no one has picked it up yet. How did you find that place?

(CHAD)

It’s on my route.

(NOREEN)

Nothing on Elmwood Strip?

(CHAD)

You couldn’t afford Elmwood. (Beat) By “you,” I mean the editorial you. “One” cannot afford—

(NOREEN)

Got it.

(CHAD)

But, this is close enough. Anyway, I know a guy who knows a guy, so if you want it: it’s yours.

(JENNIFER)

It should be condemned.

(TRAVIS)

IT SHOULD BE DIPPED IN BRONZE! (Beat) I mean, I really like it. Enough to, you know. Have it bronzed. (Beat) It's a good place.
NOREEN
You really think so? *(TRAVIS smiles)* Then go for it.

TRAVIS

CHAD
I'm calling him right now.

*(The two men exit to another room.)*

NOREEN
Look at this.

JENNIFER
What is it?

NOREEN
I got a hit on my blog.

JENNIFER
You have a blog?

NOREEN
Yeah. Part of my research deals with political chat-rooms. I keep a blog to keep me sane. Huh. Looks like I'm anti-American. A real "America, love it or leave it" type. God, I always hated that expression. It sounds so Communist.

JENNIFER
*(Reading)* "This is exactly the kind of Anti-American sentiment that we need to educate ourselves against. Why do you think there have been so many outbreaks of strains of flu in the Southwest that antibiotics can't touch? It's because we're loosening our borders."

NOREEN
"Allowing too many illegal immigrants in here from Mexico, from Russia, and they're bringing their diseases with them. If you allow the disease to spread, it means you're part of the virus. Is that what you want to be remembered as?" *(Beat)*

JENNIFER
Man, I wouldn't wanna know that guy.

NOREEN
They're staying anonymous.
JENNIFER
Coward. (Beat) It means, you know, you're saying something important. If someone gets pissed, it's cause you're doing something right, you know?

NOREEN
Yeah. Part of me can't wait until the election is over. This will all calm down for a while.

JENNIFER
Depends who gets in.

NOREEN
No...no, it really doesn't.

(CHAD enters.)

CHAD
Hubby's talking terms. Looks like he has his place.

JENNIFER
Hey, we need to get Holly.

CHAD
Right. (Beat) Well, computer girl, keep fighting the good fight. Don't let anything on your blog get you down.

NOREEN
How'd you know about that?

CHAD
(Awkward pause) I was eaves-dropping. Sorry.

(They exit. TRAVIS re-enters on the phone.)

TRAVIS
It's a Cajun-New England fusion place. See, the Nova Scotia folks were booted all the way down to Louisiana. Few hundred years later, there was a large Quebecois community that grew in Boston. So, the fusion is natural, see? Because they're both from the same place! In a way, they're the same people!!

(LIGHTS CHANGE. NOREEN and TRAVIS exit. FEMALE CHORUS 2 on screen. As she speaks, LIGHTS will reveal NOREEN who is typing.)

FEMALE CHORUS 2
In local news, Mayor Turngreen has officially decided to turn against her party in favor of Republican Kip Shaw. This is what her Honor had to say:
FEMALE CHORUS 1
I've been a life-long democrat, but it just feels like my party is staring to leave me. Madison is practically a socialist. Universal health-care is *socialism*. If we have that, then we might as well open up our borders for a health-care smorgasbord. *We need* immigration reform, if we want to keep our health care affordable.

FEMALE CHORUS 2
This comes in stark contrast to former Governor Spangler, who stated that the nation's most pressing concern is health care, not illegal immigration. Spangler resigned following these controversial remarks:

MALE CHORUS 1
Look, I don't know when people got the notion that democracy and capitalism were the same things. If you stop and think about it, the two can't co-exist. You ever play monopoly? That's what capitalism is. You know how a good game of monopoly can go on for weeks? Here, it just takes years. Keep playing and playing until there's one winner. *One* winner. *(Beat)*

FEMALE CHORUS 2
Some very charged comments. This years’ campaign is being hailed as an all out political war!

*(LIGHTS CHANGE. NOREEN is typing. CHAD enters.)*

CHAD
Heya.

NOREEN
Hey.

CHAD
Can I come in?

NOREEN
Door's open.

*(CHAD approaches NOREEN.)*

CHAD
How would you like to be an actor?

*(NOREEN gives him a look.)*

The army's in town. They're looking for volunteers to—
NOREEN
No, wait, wait. Hang on.

(She quickly shuts the computer, turns to him, crosses her legs, studiously.)

CHAD
So, now I get your full attention? The army is staging...a demonstration of sorts, and they're asking people to volunteer to be, you know...arrested.

NOREEN
Arrested?

Yeah. Like protestors.

CHAD
(Beat) They want actors to pretend they're being arrested? And brought where?

NOREEN
Well, they have this little area with some barbed-wire that...what are you, trying to catch flies?

NOREEN
(Mouth agape) It denotes "shock."

CHAD
Well...

NOREEN
They want to practice rounding people up and herding them in camps?

CHAD
No...no, not like that...just...practice. You know.

NOREEN
What??? Basketball practice? Instead of shirts and skins, it's armed vs. civilians?

CHAD
Look. Forget I asked. Jennifer and I are heading down—

NOREEN
Chad! Wait, you gotta take me with you.

CHAD
No. Forget it.
NOREEN
I have to know what it's like!

CHAD
I thought it might be...you know, something to do. But if you're gonna get all crazy and liberal—

NOREEN
Oh, I'M CRAZY?! (Beat) I'm coming with. I'm keeping my mouth shut. Let's go. Let's see how an army can take out a town.

(They EXIT. A REPORTER is on-screen.)

REPORTER
This Youtube video has received thousands of hits across the country.

(A Youtube video appears.)

MALE CHORUS 2
My brother is in the Marines. They were training downtown in a small town in Michigan. Running around with their guns and their gear. You should have seen the news. People walking their dogs and then all these soldier boys running around. (Beat) I think they have their hearts in the right place, but not their guns. (Beat) Then, the local authorities contacted the Marines and asked if they could move their training someplace else. Someplace that wasn't so “populated” and “residential.” So, where did they send them to? The mall and the junior high school. True story. Look it up on you-tube if you don't believe me. You can check the links in the sidebar (Jerks his thumb to the left) It makes you wonder...why are soldiers training on home-turf? What's on its way?

(LIGHTS CHANGE. Chorus exits. TRAVIS sits on the computer, checking his e-mail. From offstage, we can hear NOREEN and JENNIFER joyfully chanting “Hell, no, we won't go!” They enter, dissolving into laughter.)

TRAVIS
How was the re-enactment or whatever it was?

NOREEN
Bizarre.

JENNIFER
They had us all put on these plastic zip-line handcuffs, and we were supposed to shout stuff like "hell-no-we-won't-go." It was awesome.
I felt very sixties.

Then, they had me and Noreen tied up together.

(JENNIFER bats her eyes at TRAVIS as she cuddles up to NOREEN.)

Wow. How "Showtime After Dark."

You would've liked it.

Does that count as research?

Research. Don't talk to me about research.

(NOREEN pushes TRAVIS away from the computer and hurriedly starts typing.)

Why not? (Beat) Doing your blog? (Beat) There was a report on TV about video-blogging.

The wave of the future.

The wave of now. (Beat) Why don’t you get involved with that?

No one wants to see my ugly face.

Beautiful face.

It’s not credible.

And Fox news is?
NOREEN
It’s not making a contribution to research.

JENNIFER
Don't you guys ever get sick of talking about politics?

TRAVIS
If we didn't talk about politics, all we'd have to talk about is food.

JENNIFER
That doesn't sound so bad. Okay, kids, dinner at my place tomorrow, and you're bringing the wine.

Sounds good.

TRAVIS
Til tomorrow, then.

JENNIFER
Bye, Jennifer.

NOREEN

(JENNIFER exits.)

TRAVIS
So, why isn't the internet credible?

NOREEN
Unreliable sources. Mostly teenagers singing into their cameras at home. Trying to sound like Gwen Stefani or Lisa Loeb.

TRAVIS
(Shock) What’s wrong with Lisa Loeb?

NOREEN
For starters, she ruined hip glasses for everyone.

TRAVIS
You of all people. Snobby against the internet.

NOREEN
Travis, do you know what people in my class think of stuff like you-tube? It’s the equivalent of porn.

TRAVIS
And what's wrong with porn?
NOREEN

It’s all…

(NOREEN pauses, as she reads an email.)

Travis. My professor asked me to take down my blog.

TRAVIS

Really?

NOREEN

Yeah. All my interviews with FEMA victims, it’s all…

TRAVIS

It’s all what?

NOREEN

(Reading) “Putting it online gives up copyright. Anyone can use your work for whatever reason they want.” So, it’s suspect.

TRAVIS

Wow. Stuffy professors still exist.

NOREEN

Now, if I put it in print, get it published somewhere, it’s protected and is looked upon as a primary source for research. (Beat) I have never heard anywhere that…you can’t use…I just…I just don’t know what I’m doing here anymore.

(HARRISON appears in a box, wearing a tacky brown suit.)

HARRISON

As you all must have heard by now, our Great State of Texas has employed the Minute Men, privately, to watch our borders. Now, Mexico is questioning our border. Y’see? They’re saying that some of the oil that was on Texan land is actually…Mexican. Can you believe that? Isn’t it enough that we have Mexicans crawling all over our country, lowering our educational standards, inflating our dollars, using our bought and paid for health insurance that we have to spend more and more on because they’re not willing to pay their share? It's time to say "enough is enough?" That is the motto of the Minute Men, the legally sanctioned private border patrol, whose numbers have been increasing along the border of Texas, and throughout the US. What should we say to these people?

(LIGHTS CHANGE. NOREEN is listening, not typing. TRAVIS enters. SOUND of a storm from outside.)
TRAVIS
I would say “thank you, Mexico.” Don’t know what the hell I’d do without Ramon and his cousins.

NOREEN
I thought Ramon was Puerto Rican. (Awkward Pause) That’s great. We don’t know the difference between a Mexican and Puerto Rican. What kind of country do we live in?

HARRISON
Enough is enough.

(NOREEN clicks her mouse. HARRISON freezes.)

NOREEN
Ramon isn’t an illegal immigrant.

TRAVIS
Nope. But he’s good with soup, and great with children.

NOREEN
Children, huh?

TRAVIS
Yup. I went in the back, and he was pretending to shut three ten year olds in the Hobart. They just laughed and laughed… (Beat) The oven was off, you know, it was...funny. (Beat) I have a sick fascination with cooking equipment and children.

NOREEN
Shh. I’m listening to my left-overs.

TRAVIS
Oh.

(NOREEN clicks her mouse. HARRISON becomes unfrozen.)

HARRISON
I am sitting at my microphone right now, wearing brown. Brown, just like Mr. Shaw ’s log cabin in Vermont. Brown, like the bark of the trees in the woods, where our forefathers fought for our independence. The Minute Men. The Sons of Liberty. If you are listening, and you agree with what I’m saying, be sure to march to the polls in your uniform of brown. After all, Brown is beautiful.

TRAVIS
Isn’t that slogan taken?
(Harrison’s Theme starts playing. NOREEN closes the window; the screen cuts to the corner and plays, in intervals, an electoral map, a pie graph and a talking head; the graphics show a slow and steady win for Shaw.)

TRAVIS, Continued
Catchy theme. Is that The Mudflap Girls?

NOREEN
Don’t make me kill you. (Beat) I miss Tulane. I miss Louisiana. (Beat) I can’t believe I just said that. You heading to the restaurant?

TRAVIS
In a bit. I was gonna bring you up some Indian Pudding.

NOREEN
That sounds great.

TRAVIS
Dinner of Champions.

NOREEN
I didn’t think you were working tonight. I thought Ramon –

TRAVIS
Ramon and his buds are joining the March of Illegal Immigrants.

NOREEN
I can’t believe they’re doing this on election night.

TRAVIS
It’ll be crowded.

NOREEN
What time is it, anyway?

TRAVIS
It’s time for you to take a break and get to the polls.

NOREEN
Mmm.

TRAVIS
Hey, if you don’t exercise your right to vote, you forfeit your right to bitch.
(They embrace. A moment. NOREEN notices a magazine in his back pocket.)

What’s this?

NOREEN

Porn? (Beat). All right, it’s Consumer Review.

TRAVIS

I see that. Why is it here?

NOREEN

The guy that runs this magazine...is...a third party candidate, so I—

TRAVIS

Oh, no.

NOREEN

It doesn’t matter anyway!

TRAVIS

You didn’t!

NOREEN

Shaw is going to win New York whether we like it or not —

TRAVIS

That’s not true!

NOREEN

So, I had no choice.

TRAVIS

A vote for a third party —

NOREEN

– is a vote for Shaw.

BOTH

But I don’t believe that’s true.

TRAVIS

Whether you believe it or not, that’s what it is.
TRAVIS
What can I say? If it weren’t for Consumer Review, we might have bought that damn baby seat for the car.

NOREEN
Oh, Travis.

TRAVIS
If you WATCHED the news, you would have seen that blessed thing throw the baby free, and tumble into the front seat, hitting the driver. Scary stuff.

NOREEN
Travis, I admire your responsibility for a child that we don’t have.

TRAVIS
Yet.

NOREEN
Yet. Or ever, if people like Shaw keep getting elected. Perpetuating war after war.

TRAVIS
So, you’re answer to conflict is: stop breeding.

NOREEN
It sounds so simple, doesn’t it?

(TRAVIS kisses her on the head.)

(Beat) Travis, what do you really think? About Shaw?

TRAVIS
I think…I think he isn’t so great on one hand…but on the other, I can’t remember anything he’s said or hasn’t said. Mostly I just hear Harrison’s voice whenever I try to think of Shaw.

NOREEN
And what do you think of Madison?

TRAVIS
All we ever hear him say is "it's time for a change.” What's his plan? What's the change? How are we going to change?

NOREEN
Did Fox News teach you to think that way?
TRAVIS
No, but...let's say the Shaw campaign is right. We vote for Madison, we get some kind of
"change." Would that change be a decrease or increase in military spending? Rights for gays
or not? War with Iran or Mexico or Palestine or Afghanistan or...I don't know...Hawaii.

NOREEN
We’ve been hopping from war to war like a frat-boy at a bar crawl. Don’t you think that a
democrat in office will help?

TRAVIS
Do you really think that if Madison got in that the democrats say, "hey, Thank God, no more
war. Ever?!" That’s not the way the political machine works. Our economy is built on
weapon sales and oil. There will always be a reason for us to occupy someplace. Democrats
just have to work a little harder at finding a reason for us to stay in.

(Pause) Maybe we should run.

NOREEN
For President and vice?

TRAVIS
I was thinking “to Canada.”

NOREEN
How’s your French?

TRAVIS
Almost as good as my Cajun.

NOREEN
We’ll fit right in.

(CHAND enters. He is wearing brown.)

CHAD
Hey, kids.

TRAVIS
Hey. Whoa.

NOREEN
I’m thinking…monkey poo.

TRAVIS
The color of independence.
CHAD

Cute.

TRAVIS

What’s with the get-up?

CHAD

Harrison has asked all working men to unite. Stand up for every cent that we make. Protect our language. Our education. Our health care. (Beat) So, we’re the counter-protest.

And he told you…brown.

TRAVIS

“Brown is Beautiful!” (Awkward Beat) I think it’s just so we’ll recognize each other. Artists kinda cornered the market on “black,” and green is…too Irish.

You don’t like the Irish either?

CHAD

My last name is “Sullivan.” (Beat). You kids vote yet?

TRAVIS

Yup.

(Holds up Consumer Review.)

CHAD

(Chuckles) Ah. And President Shaw thanks you. How about you, kiddo?

NOREEN

Might as well.

TRAVIS

You two go ahead. I gotta head down to the restaurant.

NOREEN

So, you’re really buying into this? The whole “Minute Man” thing?

CHAD

We’re constitutionalists, like Harrison and Shaw. We’ll have our place in history.

TRAVIS

Yeah. Remember when all those guys showed up dressed like monkey poo?
Funny.

NOREEN
Remember when Shaw won because of all those third party throw-away votes?

CHAD
And remember when the Minute Man, that true patriot, thanked you for it?

TRAVIS
I voted the way my heart told me. I will rest well tonight.

CHAD
How about that Raymond guy at your restaurant?

TRAVIS
Ramon.

CHAD
Right. Him and all his friends. They legit?

TRAVIS
(Pause) "Legit?" What, are we nineteen thirties gangsters now? "They legit? On the straight and narrow? On the up and up?" Chad. Go home. You look ridiculous.

CHAD
As ridiculous as a Cajun-New England Restaurant?

TRAVIS
As ridiculous as hovering around a married woman trying to recapture past glory?

Holy shit!

NOREEN
You will NEVER have...

TRAVIS
Have what? Jennifer and a child, Chad? Isn't that where you should be? With your family?

CHAD
I wasn't going to say—

TRAVIS
Then what were you going to say?
NOREEN
Hate to interrupt your country song, but YOU get to the restaurant. And YOU...just go.

CHAD
Just like that.

NOREEN
Thanks for everything. Now go.

CHAD
(Pause) Fine. Let's just hope your boys are "legit, straight and narrow, up and up," blah blah blah.

TRAVIS
Go fuck yourself, Chad.

CHAD
Blah, blah, blah.

(CHAD exits.)

TRAVIS
Remind me why we hang out with that guy?

NOREEN
You know, I can fight my own fights. I'm sitting right here. (Beat) He'll go away.

TRAVIS
Be still my broken heart. (Beat) How do you think Jennifer feels about his hanging around here all the time? (Beat) You need to vote.

NOREEN
I will.

TRAVIS
Be careful out there.

(TRAVIS exits. LIGHTS CHANGE. Stock footage of a highly vocal protest. The bodies in this scene are up on the platform, so the protest footage is overlapping their bodies. NOREEN is on the steps, notating the protest. In the background, we hear sirens and the chant of “Somos Americanos (“We are Americans”),” with occasional other shouts in Spanish like, “Give me my rights” and “My parents were
born here,” etc. A young Latino man (MALE CHORUS 1) is handing out flyers, starting with NOREEN, then trying to get in FEMALE CHORUS 1’s shot. FEMALE CHORUS 1 is reporting.)

FEMALE CHORUS 1
Outside of City Hall the March of the Immigrants has stopped traffic. Many voters are unable to get to the polls. Just a moment ago – excuse me

(MALE CHORUS 1 is getting more abrasive, trying to get his flyer into the shot.)

– Rob, I’m having difficulty out here. Can we cut to an aerial shot? Rob, can you hear me?

(MALE CHORUS 1 approaches FEMALE CHORUS 2, trying a few times to aggressively give her a flyer; she is xenobically trying to get around him. Finally, FEMALE CHORUS 2 freaks out and starts wailing on MALE CHORUS 1 with her purse, knocking his flyers in a torrent to the ground. In self-defense, MC1 takes the purse from her and tries to calm her down, but she falls. The chanting gets louder and more rhythmic. At that moment, CHAD and MALE CHORUS 2 enter, dressed in brown and see FEMALE CHORUS 2 fall. They jump on MALE CHORUS 1, who shakes them off and pushes them. He turns and extends a hand to help FC2 up, but CHAD and MC2 only see his back as they pull their guns and fire. NOREEN is moving to help just as the shots ring out and the crowd becomes completely silent; NOREEN is caught in the spray. There is a beat of silence. Then the screen goes to static as screams peal out and panic ensues. All exit and as a “rewind” sound cue plays, the screen comes up on a completed electoral map, showing Shaw’s clear victory.)

HARRISON
Senator Kip Shaw has reportedly won by a landslide! This is a glorious day for us all! We have our president, and The Minute Man has kept this country safe for his family in the face of rioters – illegal immigrants. Valued American citizens who pay taxes, who work hard to build a better, safer tomorrow stood up in the face of violence and cast their vote for decency and justice. When Shaw takes the oath of office in January, rest assured, that we will fasten
HARRISON, Continued

our borders. And we will demand, not ask, that all illegal immigrants register as citizens. This is our plea for peace.

(LIGHTS CHANGE. NOREEN and TRAVIS’ apartment. NOREEN is carefully wrapping an ace bandage around TRAVIS’ ribs.)

Can I get you anything?

New ribs.

Anything else?

A brown uniform.

(NOREEN reacts.)

So I can piss on it and burn it.

(TRAVIS sits.)

My piss is mighty flammable.

Did you see Ramon?

No. I didn't. I didn't see anyone. One minute, I'm standing in the restaurant door, watching the crowds of people take to the streets. Then I see you, I see the crowd, I run out... and... don't know who hit me. Or why.

You're not going back tomorrow.

The window's busted. The whole world feels busted. (Beat) How are you doing?

I'm all right. Nothing that spending the rest of my life in therapy couldn't cure.

I wish Chad would come by.
Be careful what you wish for.

I would really like to -

Kick his ass?

I was gonna say "throw him out the window," but kick his ass is fine.

(A knock on the door. CHAD enters.)

I know I'm the last person you want to see.

I wish for a million dollars. (Beat) It was worth trying again.

You two okay?

(Beat) It was worth trying again.

Can you think of anything to say to him?

No. Not really. I thought I'd be able to say "hey, I just saw you kill a man. For no reason."

He attacked a woman.

I also thought I'd live my whole life without watching someone die in front of me.

He ATTACKED A WOMAN.

Would you want to call him on that bullshit? About attacking a woman?

Oh, at least.
CHAD
I'm right here, and YES. I did what I thought was right.

NOREEN
You shot him?

CHAD
I don't know. We both fired. Me and another. I don't know which one of us hit him.

TRAVIS
So, there's a missing bullet. Wonder who it landed in.

CHAD
We need to talk about this.

NOREEN
I think you need to take Travis' advice, and fuck off.

TRAVIS
Actually, it was "fuck yourself." But close enough.

TRAVIS
Travis...I'm sorry things got out of hand.

An election night we'll never forget.

CHAD
(Beat) That friend of yours. Ramon? He's not a legal citizen. (Beat) None of your kitchen staff are.

(Silence.)

They've been filing under the same social security number.

NOREEN
How do you know this?

CHAD
All social security numbers of suspected citizens have been made public.

NOREEN
Public?
CHAD

An hour ago.

TRAVIS

They can't...they can't do that.

CHAD

Whether or not they can, they did. And President Shaw thinks it's a great idea.

TRAVIS

He's not President yet.

CHAD

Yet. But our current president sees eye to eye with him.

TRAVIS

(Pause) You spent the last couple of hours doing this?

NOREEN

I watched a man die. Travis is broken –

TRAVIS

I'm fine –

(He tries to stand in a threatening way towards CHAD, but fails.)

NOREEN

Why are you doing this?

CHAD

I just...I thought you should know, Travis.

(JENNIFER enters.)

JENNIFER

What the hell are you doing here?

(CHAD opens his mouth to speak, but is interrupted.)

Shut up. I...I saw what happened.
CHAD
You were there?

JENNIFER
I saw...two of you...shoot at. (Beat) MY LAST NAME IS RAMIREZ. You wanna shoot at me, too?

CHAD
You're a legal citizen. YOU WERE BORN HERE!

JENNIFER
And what about my mother? And my father? And my Uncle? Should they all be lined up and shot?

CHAD
It's not like that!

JENNIFER
And Holly? What about her?

TRAVIS
Great. Now I've got drama in my living room.

(Awkward silence. JENNIFER storms out.)

CHAD
Jennifer!

(TRAVIS throws CHAD some keys.)

TRAVIS
Keys to your restaurant. Hate to think I owed you a favor.

(CHAD tosses the keys back.)

CHAD
I will never be in charge of illegal labor.

NOREEN
What do you call the Minute Men?

CHAD
The second amendment.

JENNIFER
The right to be an asshole.
(CHAD exits.)

(Beat) How much you want that PhD here?

NOREEN

You think it'll be different anywhere else?

TRAVIS

(Beat) Listen.

NOREEN

What?

TRAVIS

It's actually quiet out there.

NOREEN

Yeah.

(They hold each other.)

NOREEN

Does that hurt?

TRAVIS

Well, it...no. Not really.

(LIGHTS FADE. LIGHTS UP on HARRISON.)

HARRISON

The Mudflap Girls were once a patriotic and freedom-loving band. The fact that they have turned on our nation and moved to, of all places, FRANCE, just shows us that their songs about country-living, and family values were just a pack of lies. (Beat) However, despite the irksome sadness that we all feel...in our souls from such a...betrayal, there is some joyous news: President-elect Kip Shaw has given me and the press of the United States of 'Merica the pleasure to joyfully announce that the Minute Men are the official Homeland Militia of the United States of 'Merica. The Second Amendment states (reading from a notecard), “A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms shall not be infringed.” That means that only Minute Men, as members of the “well-ordered militia” may own firearms, so if you want to continue to own a firearm and protect your nation, I'm looking at you, NRA, say it for real and join the Minute Men!

(LIGHTS CHANGE. NOREEN is in the apartment, and moves to a chat room. CHAD is
silently sitting at a laptop in the corner of stage, just watching.)

NOREEN
This is Noreen 77. Is anyone else in here?

MALE CHORUS 1
Hey. Long time.

NOREEN
Hi, smiley-man 23. I've been surfing around political chat-rooms. They're ghost towns.

MALE CHORUS 1
We have to be careful.

NOREEN
Why?

MALE CHORUS 1
There's someone else in here. Logged on awhile ago. Leftist2.

NOREEN
Leftist2?

MALE CHORUS 1
It's a trap. He's one of them. But he's in here. I've been trying to call him out.

NOREEN
I don't get it.

MALE CHORUS 1
There's been a bomb-threat at Grand Central Station in New York.

NOREEN
I read that.

MALE CHORUS 1
And something's going on in San Francisco.

NOREEN
What?

MALE CHORUS 1
I don't know. I have to sign off.
NOREEN
Bye. (Beat) Who else is in here? (Beat) You signed on...about an hour ago. Are you still
listening? (Beat) We don't really scare easily. (Beat) I have a few questions I would like to
ask you. One: have you ever actually read anything by the founding fathers of this country?

(CHAD closes the laptop and exits.)

Enough with this shit.

(MALE CHORUS 2 enters in a brown hoodie
and walks to the very periphery of the light. He
takes a cell phone from his pocket and dials.
The phone rings in NOREEN'S apartment. She
answers it.)

Hello? (Beat) Hello?

(She waits. MALE CHORUS 2 smiles and
watches. She stands up.)

Really. That quick? (Beat) I know you're there, I can hear you gloating. In stereo. (Beat) That's pretty impressive. How does this work, is this the same Minute Man that hounded me
in the chat-room or is there a relay, like a bucket-brigade? (Beat) While I have you on here, I
have a few questions, one:

(MALE CHORUS 2 hangs up. He watches her,
and exits. NOREEN hangs up. She moves back
to her computer and starts typing. LIGHTS
CHANGE to REPORTERS, who stand on the
apron, silhouetted.)

FEMALE CHORUS 2
We have unconfirmed reports that several oil-lines have been hit by Mexican terrorists in
Lafayette and in Texas...

(She continues speaking; whispering, as if
spreading gossip.)

MALE CHORUS 2
...Puerto Ricans have been statistically the most likely to spread HIV/AIDS to white
women...

(He continues speaking; whispering, as if
spreading gossip.)
FEMALE CHORUS 1
...this will mark the third barge filled with Russians, mostly Jewish, who have attempted to gain access

(She continues, whispering, etc.)

MALE CHORUS 1
But what of the Minute Men? The new militia? Folks have had this to say.

(All REPORTERS stop abruptly.)

ALL
I don't mind giving up some civil liberties, if my rights are protected.

(CHORUS steps back to reveal scene. LIGHTS CHANGE. CHORUS exits. NOREEN is typing. She is having problems. A KNOCK on her door.)

NOREEN
Go away!

(CHAD enters.)

That's the opposite of go away.

CHAD
I brought Chinese. Figured you and Travis would be hungry.

(She gives him the finger.)

Yes, this is me trying to make amends.

(She gives him the finger again.)

CHAD
Seriously, Noreen. (Beat) What are you doing?

NOREEN
I can't access my blog.

CHAD
Oh. That's too bad.

NOREEN
Yup.
CHAD
Maybe you can just type it all now. Cut and paste it later.

NOREEN
I will. I have back ups of everything.

CHAD
Good idea. You save it all on your computer?

NOREEN
(Pause) Chad.

CHAD
I didn't shoot anyone. The bullet...that hit the...it wasn't mine. Mine went into a wall some feet away. I know it doesn't make it better...

NOREEN
No. It doesn't. (Beat) You should go before Travis gets home.

CHAD
He's at the restaurant.

NOREEN
So, you came knowing he wouldn't be here.

CHAD
Well...yes. I hope that isn't creepy.

(She reacts.)

I really want to be close with you two, and I mean you two. Things are getting better with me and Jennifer. I think there's a chance for us –

(NOREEN stands up, gives CHAD the bag.)

NOREEN
Go have dinner with her, Chad.

(She returns to the computer.)

CHAD
I will. I mean, I have. I mean...yes.

(She vehemently hits a key several times.)

What's that?
NOREEN

That? It's...

(She looks at her computer.)

I can't access any of them.

CHAD

Any of what?

NOREEN


CHAD

Oh. Maybe they're just all having a glitch? (Beat) I did hear something about the federal government looking into those websites.

NOREEN

For what?

CHAD

Anti-American activity, I think.

NOREEN

My God. Has McCarthy been raised from the dead?

CHAD

Oh, it's not as bad as all that. (Beat) Have you been watching the news?

NOREEN

Streaming it.

CHAD

Seems like everyone is doing your research now. Man on the street interviews, tapping public opinion.

NOREEN

Tapping private phones.

CHAD

Well, that's in the Patriot Act, love. Along with suspending Habeas Corpus. The price of freedom, I'm afraid.

NOREEN

Tapping...phones? (Beat) You son of a bitch!
CHAD
What?

NOREEN
That was you? THAT WAS YOU?!

CHAD
Where? When?

NOREEN
LEFTIST NUMBER TWO?! Jesus. (Beat) THAT WAS YOU ON THE PHONE?!

CHAD
Oh, that...well...

NOREEN
And asking about my blog? Were you the "love it or leave it guy?"

(No response.)

I'm calling the police.

CHAD
You can't. Well, you could. But...

NOREEN
But, what?

CHAD
I'm a member of the government militia. Got a badge and everything.

(Shows it to her.)

NOREEN
Oh my God.

CHAD
I was trying to help.

NOREEN
HELP, HOW?!

CHAD
Because! Look, all of the websites are being looked into! The Minute Men have been given some free reign. It's up to us to keep our friends safe, and if it's me looking after you, then you're safe!!!
NOREEN
Monkey-poo. It really does look like monkey-poo. (*Beat*)

CHAD
There are some threats right now –

NOREEN
Threats from whom?

CHAD
I don't know. Mexico? Russia? Dominican Republic? The Ukraine? The world is AFTER our health care, AFTER our education—

NOREEN
Are they after our TRASH, Chad, are you keeping our TRASH safe?

CHAD
Maybe, I –

NOREEN
Get the fuck out of my apartment!

CHAD
I don't have to leave, I—

NOREEN
GET OUT! GET OUT! GET OUT! GET OUT!!!

(*CHAD stands up. NOREEN throws the CHINESE FOOD at him.*)

NOREEN, *Continued*
Take this with you. I fucking hate Chinese food, Chad.

CHAD
Since when? Since you discovered the joys of boudin and cracklings? You know what cracklings are?

NOREEN
Yes. And I love them.

CHAD
And chitterlings?

NOREEN
Love them too.
CHAD
How about bull testicles? They serve those out west; you like them?

NOREEN
Bull testicles are like mother's milk to me.

(A beat.)

CHAD
Do you remember the night...out in Hyannis. The air was cool. You made a guacamole dip. We were sitting in the sand. I asked you to marry me.

NOREEN
Don't.

CHAD
Why did you say yes?

(NOREEN does not respond.)

It's safer if I'm the one watching you. You can throw me out if you like. But it won't make me stop caring.

(CHAD EXITS. LIGHTS CHANGE. LEE STANZ is projected side-by-side with HARRISON.)

HARRISON
I am talking live via satellite with Lee Stanz. Mr. Stanz will be named as the head of Homeland Security when Harrison takes office next month. Thank you for joining me, Mr. Stanz. May I call you Lee?

STANZ
No.

HARRISON
For my listeners who don't know, Lee Stanz is the former governor of Louisiana. As I look at you I can't help but ask, as our listeners would want to know, what is your race?

STANZ
My...my race?

HARRISON
Yes, sir, Lee. What are ya?

STANZ
(Awkward pause) Indian.
Indian. You mean from India?

That's where Indians come from.

And you were educated at Princeton and Yale, am I right?

That is also correct.

You are a real credit to your race.

(STANZ begins to interject but HARRISON cuts him off.)

Lee, the people of the United States of 'Merica, want to know what steps you are taking to make sure that they don't have to lock their doors at night?

(Glares at him) Is that a serious question?

Yes, it is.

This is the twenty-first century. Lock your doors.

From the threat of the illegal immigrants?

It has nothing to do with a threat. It has to do with common sense. Lock your doors.

But from what, Mr. Stanz? Why do we need to lock our doors?

Do you own a car?

Yes.
STANZ
When you go to the store, park in a parking lot, get out of the car, don't you lock your doors?

HARRISON
Yes.

STANZ
Why?

HARRISON
Common sense. Oh, I see what you're saying! Very good, Lee!

STANZ
No problem…Jim.

HARRISON
Please, call me Jim.

STANZ
It's a shame that we live in a society that needs to lock its doors, Jim. But it's also ignorant to pretend that we don't need to.

HARRISON
And what about Mexico? Our neighbor to the south?

STANZ
There's been some concern about their activity.

HARRISON
Perhaps you'd like to share those concerns with us?

STANZ
(Beat) We have reason to believe that the Nation of Mexico is testing Nuclear Weapons in their hopes of gaining the oil reserves in southern Texas. This comes at a time when illegal immigration is at an all-time high, creating deficits in health care and education.

HARRISON
My God. And what can the Minute Man do?

STANZ
Well, the Minute Man's job has just become that much more important.

HARRISON
But what can we, as 'Mericans do?

(Pause.)
STANZ

(Directly into the camera) Lock your doors.

(LIGHTS CHANGE. TRAVIS is alone in the apartment. He is on the phone, speaking in Spanish. ENGLISH SUPER-TITLES.)

TRAVIS

{Please. Do tell me if you hear from Ramon. No. I'm closing the restaurant for now. I have a business loan, but I'll figure it out. Maybe re-open in a few weeks. Thanks. Love to the kids. Bye.}

(TRAVIS hangs up. A knock on the door.)

It's open.

(CHAD enters.)

CHAD
You should listen to Harrison. Lock your doors.

(Beat) Noreen's not here.

TRAVIS

I know.

CHAD

Okay. (Beat) Not sure she'd be happy to see you. Last time you were here, didn't you end up wearing Chinese food? (Pause) How goes the disappearing business?

I don't know what –

TRAVIS

People. Disappearing. Ones who were supposed to register as legal immigrants. A bunch did. Just what the government asked, marched on down to Washington and New York, ready to become citizens and...poof! (Beat) I'm guessing they're not all dead, right?

CHAD

You really think it's that cut and dry?
I'd like to think differently. So, what brings you here? (Beat) Some people have questions, right?

Something like that.

Ah. And you're here to make sure that I'm safe, right?

You ready?

I'm not going to fight you, Chad.

No?

No. But I'm not coming with you.

All authority...is an extension of God's authority. Read Romans 13. What is the first word? "Submit." Not many of us like that word. What does that mean to submit? Does that mean I have to suspend some of my rights? (Beat) God says "you are free." But the government grants you rights. All authority is an extension of God's authority. Think of the early Christians. They believed in Christ, they followed him to the letter, and guess what? They refused to pay taxes. The Emperor did not like that. Christians became socially undesirable. A THREAT. (Beat) A social threat. (Beat)

Jesus Christ himself submitted to Pontius Pilate, submitted himself to governmental authority. We must do the same.

(The telephone rings. TRAVIS picks it up.
MALE CHORUS and FEMALE CHORUS I and
2, dressed as MINUTE MEN enter; though the change to uniform can be gradual, it’s important that, from this point on, they have the appearance of an actual military uniform.

TRAVIS

Hello?

(TRAVIS sees the MINUTE MEN enter.)

You have the wrong number.

(TRAVIS puts down the phone. LIGHTS UP on NOREEN, who is on her cell.)

NOREEN

Wrong number? TRAVIS?!

(She tries to redial. TRAVIS takes the phone off the hook. LIGHTS DOWN on NOREEN who exits.)

MINUTE MAN

We just have a few questions about the men you hired, that's all.

TRAVIS

Okay. Ask.

CHAD

You need to come with us.

TRAVIS

You don't have a warrant.

CHAD

We don't need one.

TRAVIS

Haven't you heard of illegal search and seizure?

MINUTE MAN

Haven't you heard of the patriot act?

TRAVIS

Okay. Let me get my coat.
(TRAVIS picks up his coat. CHAD walks behind TRAVIS. A beat between CHAD and TRAVIS. CHAD helps TRAVIS put on his coat. TRAVIS socks CHAD in the jaw, and tries to run; MALE CHORUS 1 catches across the back with a nightstick and FEMALE CHORUS 2 hits him across the face, while FEMALE CHORUS 1 begins slamming furniture over in the apartment. Over the next section, they drag him back to center, kick him in the stomach repeatedly and drag him up the steps to the platform.)

HARRISON
These are difficult times. Dark times. (Beat) This is not the time to question...authority. You are either with 'Merica....or you are not. It's that simple.

(LIGHTS CHANGE. CHAD is alone in the apartment. NOREEN enters. She goes pale at the sight of CHAD.)

NOREEN
What have you done?

(She moves towards CHAD.)

Oh my God...where’s Travis? Did...did something happen to Travis?

(Terrible pause.)

CHAD
I don't know.

NOREEN
Where...

CHAD
I saw the door was open...I came in. I just walked in.

NOREEN
I just called a few minutes ago. Someone was here with him.

CHAD
Could be the Minute Men. They've been rounding up –

(NOREEN runs out the door.)
Hey! It isn't safe!

(THE MINUTE MEN handcuff TRAVIS and put a black hood over his head, so he is kneeling. USC and the MINUTE MEN are standing facing US in a militant stance with HARRISON’s face over them by the time he says “We must submit.” After NOREEN’s exit, CHAD looks reluctantly at her laptop, then confiscates it and exits. Shadow of barbed wires across the stage.)

HARRISON

All authority is an extension of God's authority. (Beat) And in a time of crisis. We must do what the Lord would have us do. (Beat) We must submit.

(LIGHTS FADE. End of Act 1.)

ACT II

(A pre-recorded series of stills accompanies the following speech. It shows a bold and handsome leader against an American flag, scenes of happiness and industry, line graphs showing statistics of high employment, low crime, etc. The VOICE OF PSA is soothing, giving an overall impression of comfort and productivity. At the end, the last line is projected, followed by “Paid for by Friends of President Shaw.”)

VOICE OF PSA

In his three months as President of the United States, President Shaw has kept his word. Our borders are protected from threats. Our children can learn in an environment without fear for their safety. Decency and Morality are on the rise, as the employment rate and country morale are at an all time high. Thank you, President Shaw for keeping me safe.

(LIGHTS CHANGE. REPORTERS enter, and address the audience, as if each were speaking to a camera.)
REPORTER ONE
Following the initial assault on Mexican soil, President Shaw has declared Martial Law in Texas.

REPORTER TWO
Shaw has said, "The idea is to close up shop. No one gets in. No one gets out."

REPORTER THREE
Texas, so far, has been pleased with this idea.

REPORTER FOUR
Although there were some concerns about a military presence, most citizens have felt relieved. Secretary Stanz

REPORTER FOUR
has suggested in Congress that the nation look at the Northern borders as well. A proposed time of isolation could help the problems of illegal immigration and home-land terrorist activity. But, what do the people say?

(Stan at a podium, a news conference; the REPORTERS clamor to STANZ with cries of "Mr. Stanz!" and "Mr. Secretary!")

STANZ
The people understand the importance of this move. After all, it is the move the American people have voted for. The following states will be under Martial Law for the next three months: Texas, Louisiana, California, Florida; and to the North: Michigan, New York, Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Montana, and Idaho. There is a strong Mexican, Dominican, Cuban, and Russian presence in each one of these states. We want to make sure that EVERYONE is a citizen of the United States of America. Then, we can discuss Health Care and Education, all as citizens.

(LIGHTS CHANGE. The REPORTERS furiously scribble down what STANZ has just said or rewind their Dictaphones. NOREEN ENTERS and stands with the four CHORUS MEMBERS, who are still REPORTERS, for the first time on stage. They smile broadly.)

NOREEN
I'm looking for my husband.

(The REPORTERS descend on her.)

REPORTER 1
Oooh! Good story. Woman desperately seeks husband.
REPORTER 2
Oh, we like it! Would you say you have suffered in your plight?

NOREEN
Yes!

REPORTER 3
An incredible story of a woman's journey to find her husband, who has been taken...by terrorists!

NOREEN
Well, something like that.

REPORTER 4
It's the spin, Noreen.

REPORTERS

THE SPIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIN!

(They spin her into the middle of them. HAPPY MUSIC, a variation on HARRISON’s theme, plays on a calliope while they almost skip joyously around her. The following dialogue is very fast and flows into each other as if it’s one line. NOREEN smiles.)

NOREEN
The spin!

REPORTER 1
Desperate woman.

REPORTER 2
Strong woman.

REPORTER 3
The bitch.

(MUSIC stops, as do the REPORTERS; they look at REPORTER 3.)

We need a counter point.

REPORTERS

Oh, right, of course, etc.
(MUSIC. THEY SPIN around NOREEN.)

REPORTER 4
When someone asks how Noreen overcame her obstacle –

REPORTER 1
She made a fist.

REPORTER 2
She opened her palm.

(NOREEN confusingly tries to do what they suggest.)

REPORTER 3
She removed her shoes, and walked on the land as if it were holy.

(MUSIC and REPORTERS STOP and LOOK at REPORTER 3.)

The bitch!

(REPORTERS LAUGH and continue with MUSIC.)

NOREEN
He was taken shortly after the election.

REPORTER 1
A political prisoner!

NOREEN
Taken by the Minute Men!

(SOUND OF A RECORD SCRATCHING, ENDING THE HAPPY MUSIC. A slow, dissonant version of the theme begins as the REPORTERS all turn the opposite direction and begin slowly marching militantly to the theme.)

REPORTER 1
Now wait a second.

REPORTER 2
If the government took your husband.
There's a reason! I knew it!

He was suspected of Anti-American activity.

Innocent until proven guilty?

No, no, no, that's bad melodrama.

As opposed to good melodrama?

I feel kind of sorry for her. It's a human interest story.

Yes...a human interest story!

Proud Bitch tries to find terrorist husband!

(They stop and face front.)

Bingo!

(They begin to skip.)

Is your name Martha Mitchell?

Patty Hearst?

Hillary Clinton?

Mary Magdalene?

Sad, lost bitch?
That's the story:

REPORTER 1
Sad, lost woman…

REPORTER 2
Tries to find suspected terrorist husband…

REPORTER 3
Who is being held for questioning.

REPORTER 1
A woman has been searching for her husband...

REPORTER 2
Travis Fontenot, who employed illegal immigrants, and tried to hide it from the government -

REPORTER 3
Several arrests have occurred in relation to the employment of illegal immigrants.

REPORTER 4
All franchise owners are being asked to carefully screen each employee. If you suspect something, say something, or it may end in your arrest.

REPORTERS

NOREEN
But where is he? Where has he been taken? IS HE EVEN ALIVE?!

(REPORTERS turn on their heels and march offstage. NOREEN reacts. LIGHTS CHANGE. NOREEN is in her apartment. She sits on her couch. LIGHTS UP on NOREEN’S apartment. Outside her window, there is barbed wire. Occasionally, there is the sound of a helicopter going by. A moment. JENNIFER enters with two suitcases.)

JENNIFER
I left him. (Pause) Holly...Holly is with her grandmother. In Arizona. But...I waited too long...now I can't leave. You know? (Beat) Chad is...still stationed here. And...I hate him...but I can't...I mean...don't tell him I was here, okay? (Pause) So...no word? I saw you on TV, asking about...I'm sorry that they made you look like a...you know... (Pause) I'm not
JENNIFER, Continued
the enemy. Okay? I'm here to say...I'm not the enemy. (Beat) And here I am. Can't get out of the city. Can't stay with...my next option is the streets. Which is fine, you know? (Beat) Okay. Guess I'll...here.

(She opens up one of the suitcases. It's an antique type-writer.)

It belonged to my father. You can have it, you know? It might do you some good. You like to write. Maybe...maybe you could write...I don't know...notices or something. Hang around town. Asking about Travis. Maybe someone knows something.

NOREEN
I could just ask Chad. Have you seen CHAD around? He stopped coming by here. Out of the blue.

JENNIFER
He knows nothing.

NOREEN
Right. Nobody knows anything. Look at this shit, "keep us safe, keep us strong." Jesus. What's next, duck and cover? Buy duct-tape? Duct-and-cover? If Chad were here—

JENNIFER
He knows NOTHING. He's a son of a bitch. But he knows nothing. (Pause) He's...he's making mistakes. Okay? I'm not making excuses, you know? But...he knows nothing. He just blindly...if he knew something, I wouldn't have left him, you know? It would mean...can't you get a lawyer?

NOREEN
No. Habeus Corpus. It's gone.

JENNIFER
That doesn't mean someone can just take a man out of his home and keep him detained for however long they feel like it. (Beat) Does it? (Beat) You want me to make some soup? Or...something to eat?

(NOREEN doesn't respond.)

He couldn't have had anything to do with it. Okay? He couldn't.... (Pause) What are you going to do? Just...wait?

NOREEN
Do I look like I've been just...waiting?
JENNIFER
How can I help? I mean...other than finding Chad?

NOREEN
That typewriter have ink in it?

(JENNIFER NODS. LIGHTS CHANGE. Sound of static. We hear HARRISON speak, and the sound of an old typewriter clicking.)

HARRISON
The present 'Merican way of isolationism has created a utopia in Texas, the likes the people have always dreamed. Utopia literally means (Reads from a notecard) "no place." And to quote a little lady in ruby red slippers, "there's no place like home." This is the fine model that my brother and yours, President Shaw, has decided, along with the 'Merican people, is best. Business is booming. Threats are diminishing. You are protected. I am protected.

(LIGHTS UP ON NOREEN in her apartment, typing at a type-writer. She stands up and smashes her radio. She smashes it a few times. Has a moment. Then she tries to fix it. She smacks it a little. Plays with the batteries. Plays with the antennae. Some distorted sounds are heard. HARRISON resumes under a red light as his voice is tinny - not tiny, tinny, as in sounds as if it were coming from inside a can.)

HARRISON, Continued
I heard Democratic Senator, Madison ask, "protected from what?" From tyranny, Mr. Senator. From the kind of fascism that liberalism eventually leads to. Our children can now walk home alone - minding the eight o'clock curfew, of course. Women no longer need to fear dark alleys. Men can go to work, with only the complications of work being on his mind, and his family's blessing lightly touching his heart. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

(NOREEN clicks off the radio. LIGHTS OUT on HARRISON. MALE CHORUS 2, dressed as a MINUTE MAN enters.)

MINUTE MAN
Mrs. Noreen Fontenot.

NOREEN
Yes.

MINUTE MAN
Do you know a woman named Jennifer Ramirez?
NOREEN

What's happened to her?

MINUTE MAN

Nothing.

(FEMALE CHORUS 1 dressed as another MINUTE MAN, enters holding JENNIFER by the arm. She has a fast food bag in her other hand.)

NOREEN

Jennifer?

(MINUTE MAN holds up fliers under NOREEN's nose.)

What do you call these?

MINUTE MAN

I...I don't know...

MINUTE MAN

Right. Make sure we don't see anything like this again. You are either with America, or you are against it.

NOREEN

My husband is still missing.

MINUTE MAN

That's not my business.

NOREEN

Did you kill him?

(MINUTE MAN grabs NOREEN's arm and twists it around.)

MINUTE MAN

I can arrest you. Just for asking that. I don't need a warrant. (Pause) Would you want that? (Beat) I could arrest her. Would you want that? (Pause) Keep a tighter leash on your friend. I'm a helluvalot nicer than the other guys out there. (To JENNIFER) And you. Know the drill: go to work. Come home. Go shopping only when needed. Curfew is at eight p.m. Consider this a warning.
(MINUTE MEN exit.)

NOREEN
What the hell were you doing?

JENNIFER
I stopped at the Alamo. That's the new name for Taco Bell. The Alamo. And they don't call them "burritos" anymore. Know what they are? (Beat) Freedom wraps.

NOREEN
With this? What were you doing with this?

JENNIFER
If we still had a computer, you'd be posting it on a blog somewhere. You know? So, I figured—

NOREEN
You'd try to get us killed?

JENNIFER
You're saying a lot of good shit in here.

(NOREEN rips the paper out of JENNIFER'S hand.)

NOREEN
Of course I'm saying a lot of good shit. You think I don't know my own damn work?

JENNIFER
Other people are doing it, too, you know. Starting underground zines. Communicating with each other. Trying to figure out just...just how to survive all this. Freedom wrap?

NOREEN
How did you copy this?

JENNIFER
I have an old scanner in my apartment. I snuck over when I knew Chad would be out doing...whatever it is he does as a paid Minute Man. Can you believe he's getting paid for this now? Gives them incentive, right? (Beat) Come on, your name isn't even on the ones I copied.

NOREEN
Right, and what did Monkey-Poo boy just call me? (Beat). I'm writing to keep my sanity. It's off-the-record, not for public consumption, and for fuck's sake, NOT FOR YOU.

(Beat. JENNIFER sees the beaten-up radio.)
JENNIFER

Guess the radio had it coming.

NOREEN

(Beat) Why are you still here?

JENNIFER

Figured we could eat.

NOREEN

Doesn't Chad miss you? Don't you miss him?

JENNIFER

I...I try not to think about him.

NOREEN

What do you think it would take...for him to actually try and find you? (Beat)

JENNIFER

If he doesn't want to look for me, that's his business. Or, he knows I'm here, and doesn't want to face a shit storm.

NOREEN

Right.

JENNIFER

We both had our men taken from us. Maybe...maybe in time they'll both come back. (Beat)

(JENNIFER looks through some of the fliers/zines.)

Hmm...look at this. Another Zine. This is from someone who's trying to find her daughter. The Minute Men took her last month. (Beat) There's a rumor of...a...a camp.

NOREEN

Concentration camp?

JENNIFER

Yeah...just...outside of Michigan.

NOREEN

Let me see that. (Beat) This was written by someone in Michigan.

JENNIFER

Yeah.
NOREEN
So...somehow, these are coming in. Getting distributed.

JENNIFER
Yeah. Probably just like-minded people, copying them, passing them around. Or they could all be private journals that are getting passed around by nosy roommates.

(Beat) Maybe...Travis...

JENNIFER
You think someone has seen him?

I don't want to hope.

JENNIFER
No? Why not? If there isn't any hope, then...why don't we just crawl up and die?

(Pause NOREEN goes to the typewriter and begins typing.)

JENNIFER, Continued
I'm going to grab my scanner. Be back in a bit, okay?

(NOREEN gives a "thumbs up," and types.)

By the way...that was the first time I heard you say his name. In two days.

NOREEN
I'm not going to start. (Beat) I have this superstition. The less I talk about him...the more likely he'll be alive. (Beat) I've got some more typing to do.

(JENNIFER starts to exit.)

Jennifer. Be careful out there. No more Taco-Bell or Alamo or whatever. The Minute Men probably love that place.

(JENNIFER gives her a thumbs up, and exits.

LIGHTS CHANGE. JENNIFER goes to the SL camera and holds it up to MALE Chorus 1. MALE Chorus 1 appears in a shaky box; a hand-held camera A sense of danger. Occasionally, there is the sound of a passing vehicle, making MALE Chorus 1 react.)
MALE CHORUS 1
You recording this? (Beat) Keep your head down. That van keeps going by. Fuckin' Minute Men. (Beat) My name...I'd rather not say my name. I just saw these fliers you and your sister have been making. (Beat) You got a boyfriend? Oh. That's good. Everybody needs somebody at this time. Well, it's like I say. My boy and I, we been hitting shop-rite. Rite-aid. Anywhere we can get food, bandages. Whatever. The Minute Men. They say we lootin'. You know? Know what they call it when White people do that? "Survival skills." Me? I'm lootin.' Everybody say "oh, some nigga stealin' shit. Cap his ass. 'Nother cheap creation. Do him in." (Beat) Your writer-friend...she say she from New Orleans? I mean on this thing here, this zine you got. She say she from there. (Beat) Crypts did the same thing there, ya know. When the "real" police don't show...when the army comes in to terrorize the people...they stepped up, you know? They took care of the people. I'm doing the same. Taking care of the people. And the Minute Men? (Beat) Brought down two yesterday. They died screaming for their mothers. (Beat) You better go. Just saw that fuckin' van circling again. (Beat) Tell my story (Beat) And be careful. I think someone in that van might've seen you.

(While JENNIFER resets the camera SL, a REPORTER appears on-screen.)

FEMALE CHORUS 1
The New York chapter of the Minute Men in Buffalo have continued to find evidence of illegal immigrant activity. Stanz has authorized the Minute Men to use aggressive force if needed. Right now, activities are said to be at a level orange. So, if you're a citizen, lock your doors.

(LIGHTS CHANGE. CHAD is sitting in NOREEN's apartment with his feet up on the desk. JENNIFER enters, starts when she sees him, then comes in after a silent moment between them.)

CHAD
Guess I know where you're staying. (Looks at the fliers) Good way to get hurt, passing these around.

JENNIFER
Blah blah blah.

CHAD
I'm just saying!

JENNIFER
Blah Blah Blah
CHAD
Idiot. *(Beat)* What do you think you are, some kind of, what, hippie protestor or something?

JENNIFER
Stay out of my way.

CHAD
What we're doing here is RIGHT.

JENNIFER
Really?

CHAD
Yes. *(Beat)* The country is in peril, and has been for a hell of a long time. You know me, I'm not some conservative—

JENNIFER
Fascist.

CHAD
I'm not a fascist!

JENNIFER
Police state? Everyone locked down?

CHAD
It's just so we can see who belongs here, and who doesn't, and whoever doesn't is asked to REGISTER. How HARD IS THAT?

JENNIFER
You think that's...all this is?

CHAD
People won't come quietly if you ask them. We have to use these means. YOU KNOW THAT. What are we supposed to do, open our borders and say "everyone in, unless you intend to use us?" That's the same as opening all your doors and window, and saying "butterflies, come on in, but no mosquitoes please."

JENNIFER
Asking everyone to be legal, to have a social security number, that's one thing. But to make all social security numbers of people who are even suspected public? And who suspects them? And why? What means do they have to—

CHAD
Fight back?
JENNIFER

Negotiate.

CHAD

(Beat) If you'll notice there are a lot of people who are happy with what we're doing. Children are safer –

JENNIFER

Everyone's terrified. What happens if any one of them spoke out?

We'd listen.

(JENNIFER sweeps her hand across the desk, sending dozens of fliers at CHAD.)

And are you listening now?

CHAD

Where's Holly? I want to see my daughter. She upstairs?

JENNIFER

No. She's with my mother.

CHAD

Your mother? (Beat) You took Holly to Arizona?

JENNIFER

No. She traveled by herself.

CHAD

You're kidding. She must be up...

(A moment between them.)

She's really not here. How could you – ?

JENNIFER

It's okay, Chad. The country is safe now for children!

CHAD

That doesn't make it right to – !
JENNIFER
THEY HAD A LOCK-DOWN AT HER PRE-SCHOOL! DID YOU KNOW THAT? (Beat)
I see her, sitting on the asphalt, saying "excuse me, excuse me," like a little...like a polite
little girl, and the Minute Man, he looked at her and...touched her...

(JENNIFER strokes her own cheek.)

Children, sitting in a circle, with those VULTURES –

CHAD
THEY. ARE. NOT. VULTURES.

JENNIFER
And then I have a sick thought...we're not married...if it came down to custody...I'd rather see
you dead. But then, who would raise her? (Beat) She's safe. She's in Arizona. Don't bring her
back.

CHAD
You can hate me all you want, but don't do this!

JENNIFER
Don't do this?? (Beat) How many people have said that to you? "Don't do this. Please. Stop.
Stay away from my family."

CHAD

JENNIFER!!!!

JENNIFER
She's fine. She's with my mother. I've heard from her. Can't talk to her anymore, since our
phones were first tapped and then taken away, and we can't leave. You know that? We have
no phones here. Very few people have TV's.

I have a TV.

CHAD

JENNIFER
Good for you.

(JENNIFER tries to walk away from him.)

CHAD

I miss you.

(JENNIFER EXITS. LIGHTS CHANGE.
FEMALE CHORUS 1 as REPORTER is
projected on-screen.)
REPORTER
Although President Shaw still has an eighty-three percent approval rating, according to the Moral Family Network, there have been those who are resisting the military state. A number of guerrilla styled photocopied magazines known as "zines" have been spreading in numerous cities across America. Many of these zines contain coded messages, by which illegal immigrants are able to communicate with one another in an attempt to undermine the government.

(LIGHTS CHANGE. NOREEN is at her typewriter. She hears something, and covers the typewriter. CHAD enters.)

CHAD
(Trying to keep his voice low) Is she here?
(No response.)

It's you I want to talk to anyway. So, if she won't see me, that's.... (Beat) I am...not good for you. I realize that now. I just thought...if it was me, taking care of you, then...then maybe things would be better. I know that I'm wrong. I thought if I was the one taking Travis away, that I could protect him...see, the system works, whether or not I take part in it. Where's Jennifer?

NOREEN
I don't know.

CHAD
She's not in the other room?

(He exits into the bedroom.)

Jennifer?

(Pause. He re-enters.)

Did she get out?

NOREEN
I don't know.

CHAD
Do you know what they do to women who are walking around? At this time?

NOREEN
Kidnap their husbands?
(Pause. A realization.)

CHAD

Oh my God!

(CHAAD races out. LIGHTS CHANGE. REPORTER in a box, wearing a brown uniform.)

REPORTER

Meanwhile, Lee Stanz has enjoyed his spring break by giving an open-to-the-public lecture at Duke University. Duke is one of the first colleges to follow a complete positivist corporate model, an extension of "No Child Left Behind," in the hopes of providing, as Stanz calls it, a pragmatic and responsible education.

(STANZ at a mic, amplified.)

STANZ

We are in a post-theory age. Pragmatic definitions of education and reform are being used in colleges across America. It is my hope, as it is President Shaw's hope, that every student will have the ability to learn their history, their arts, under one universal roof which takes a responsible approach, with our future of tomorrow. I will also add this: YOU are the makers of your destiny. THERE ARE NO FREE HANDOUTS.

(SOUNDS of CHEERING, which swell to deafening by the end.)

STANZ, Continued

We live in a day when EVERYONE is responsible for their actions! So make sure your actions are positive!

(LIGHTS CHANGE. NOREEN'S APARTMENT. NOREEN is typing. MALE CHORUS 2 as MINUTE MAN enters.)

MINUTE MAN

Mrs. Fontenot? Sit down.

NOREEN

What do you want?

MINUTE MAN

Your friend...she didn't take the warning. She's still passing out those...fliers that you two are creating. I'm guessing you're the brains of this operation, and she's the muscle. Right? Is "muscle" the right word? (Beat) Maybe I mean teeth. Sit down, Mrs. Fontenot.
NOREEN
Where is she? If you've done anything to her –

MINUTE MAN
It's illegal to threaten me. (Beat) She's alive.

NOREEN
Alive?

MINUTE MAN
Yes. As I have said...I am kinder than most around here. (Speaks into his walkie-talkie) Bring her up.

(Walkie-talkie static.)

Sit down, Mrs. Fontenot. I want to tell you a story. When I was a boy, I had a dog. Black lab German shepherd mix. Loved that dog. Roscoe. Big. Tough. His full name was K.C. Roscoe. The K.C. stood for "killer canine." It was a joke, really, because this dog was gentle as a lamb. Except for this one time. My parents had a few neighborhood children over. We had a crystal clear pool: four feet on one side, eight on the other. It was in the shade of a few oaks, keeping the water frigid. All the kids were running around. Roscoe was in the garage, watching sleepily. A few of the kids got outta the pool and went running through the garage. That garage was Roscoe's territory, but he didn't seem to mind too much. Just kept his eyes open and his ears up a little. Kevin O'Terry, that was the little shit's name. Irish looking. Red hair and all that. He starts messing with Roscoe a bit. Sticks his foot in Roscoe's food. Shouldn't have done that. Roscoe gave him a good, clean "snap!" Almost took off two of Kevin's toes. So, some time passes, and the question came up, whether or not we should put Roscoe to sleep.

(MINUTE MAN 2 enters, carrying JENNIFER. We can't really see her face, as her hair is wild all around her. She is in an oversized, unbuttoned Minute Man shirt. MINUTE MAN 2 slowly takes her cuffs off.)

But I had a different idea. The dog wasn't dangerous. It just had teeth. So, I had the answer: why kill a perfectly good dog, when you can just remove the problem? So, I took a bottle of Evan Williams, and put it in his dish, and made it drink. When the poor thing was tired from all the whiskey, and past the point of fighting, I took my dad's pliers, and piece by piece I saved the dogs life.

(NOREEN finally sees JENNIFER as she's let go and collapses to the ground; NOREEN staggers back in horror.)
MINUTE MAN, Continued

Twitched a lot. Whimpered a lot. Like it was having a bad dream. (Beat) Throughout the crunching and the blood, I reminded myself, I was doing something good. Something important. (Beat) I saved that dog’s life. Remember what I said, Mrs. Fontenot. I saved that dog’s life. There are others out there who are a helluvalot worse than me. (Beat) We’re done here.

(MINUTE MAN 2 takes the typewriter and exits.
CHAD races in, frantic.)

CHAD

I heard a report...what have you...?

(MINUTE MEN and CHAD have a moment.
MINUTE MAN gestures towards the couch.
MINUTE MEN EXIT. JENNIFER is crying, and in pain. CHAD races in and sees the two women.)

Oh, God, no! Jennifer! No...

(CHAD and NOREEN cross over to JENNIFER, who collapses back in CHAD’s arms. LIGHTS CHANGE to the platform, where the REPORTERS, FEMALE CHORUS 1 and 2, and MALE CHORUS 1, are pursuing STANZ.)

STANZ

The President has no comment today.

VOICES OF PRESS

What? No comment?

STANZ

None today.

VOICES OF THE PRESS

But Mr. Stanz! Wait a minute! Just another question, please! I’m not buying any of this.

FEMALE CHORUS 1

Mr. Stanz, Dawn Hamilton, K-U-N-T radio. How long will we be engaged in a war that has no possible benefits other than oil?

STANZ

No benefits? No benefit to keeping this country safe?
FEMALE CHORUS 1
Mr. Stanz, what about the Required Residencies? How long must we keep American Citizens in concentration camps?

STANZ
There are NO concentration camps in this country. Never have been, never will be. If you don’t believe me, consult your history books.

FEMALE CHORUS 1
You mean the one your publishing company is peddling to High schools?

STANZ
People who are suspected of Anti-American activity are being asked to stay put in their houses. We're keeping an eye on them. The Federal Government is paying their bills: they just need to sit at home. Very lenient treatment, if you ask me.

MALE CHORUS 1
What about those who aren't kept at home? Those who are transported?

STANZ
I have absolutely no idea what you're talking about.

MALE CHORUS 1
What about democracy?

STANZ
Surely, you all must realize that winning a war that is being waged on your own home soil is a tough process. A tough process. And we have to make tough decisions. Many people are cooperative. They allow us in their homes. They are –

FEMALE CHORUS 1
What about the cases of Minute Men beating and raping women?

STANZ
I know of no allegations.

FEMALE CHORUS 1
Minute Men. Huh.

MALE CHORUS 1
It's time for US to have another Boston Tea Party!

STANZ
Tea party? If you have a tea party, let me know. I'll leave it up to you ladies to plan it.
FEMALE CHORUS 1
The American people have the right –

STANZ
– to Life, Liberty, the pursuit of —

CHORUS
Happiness!

STANZ
No! Property! Americans have a right to property. Physical tangible space. Any American who is a suspect is not robbed of their space. They have plenty of space. Anyone who lives in the Zones of Required Residency –

FEMALE CHORUS 1
Martial Law!

STANZ
– are being asked not to leave their zone until we have this crisis in hand. See? They have property. They still fulfill our definition of a citizen. (Beat) I want what you all want: justice and peace. Are we securing citizens suspected of trying to undermine our government? Yes. That has never been a secret. But you call being asked to stay at home, to listen to the radio, watch TV, to hang out in the comfort of your own home, you’re comparing that kind of Required Residency to a concentration camp? These people have heat, and air conditioning. Microwaves. Fully-stocked refrigerators. And you call what we’re doing an INJUSTICE to the people that we are holding? No. We are being quite just. We believe by showing mercy, compassion, and understanding that those who may have wandered off the straight and narrow path, will come back to society with a clear head, embracing rational moral values. That is all.

MALE CHORUS 2
I stand with you, Mr. Stanz! This is America!

FEMALE CHORUS 2
(Singing; tentatively at first)

“God Bless America,
Land that I love
Stand beside her and guide her
Through the night with the Light from above
From the mountains, to the prairies, to the oceans
White with foam!”

(MUSIC swells as everyone joins in, a huge, recorded version of the song deafens us and
fades, overlapping with NOREEN as the CHORUS exits.)

ALL. Singing

God bless America
My home sweet home
God bless America…

(LIGHTS CHANGE. NOREEN is discovered cradling JENNIFER.)

NOREEN

This land is your land, this land is my land from California, to the New York Islands...to Arizona...

(LIGHTS CHANGE. TRAVIS appears at the edge of the apartment, warmly looking at NOREEN. She gets up and crosses to him. They have a moment. CHAD ENTERS.)

CHAD

Noreen. Look at me. (Beat)

(NOREEN doesn't stop looking at TRAVIS. LIGHTS SLOWLY CHANGE. CHAD crosses to JENNIFER and holds her hand, speaking to both of them.)

CHAD, Continued

I...I can't make this up to you. Any of it. I wouldn't know where to begin looking for Travis. But I doubt he's anywhere near here.

(TRAVIS slowly exits as NOREEN shakes out of the memory and begins really listening to CHAD.)

There is...one thing I can do for you. For both of you. (Beat) I can get you both out of here. It might take me a few days. But, you'll be able to go somewhere. Away from the Minute Men. Away from all of this.

NOREEN

Give up?

(Pause.)
CHAD

Take it or leave it.

(Long pause.)

I'm being...I'm being honest. If I was going to take you away, if ANYONE was going to take you away. They would have done so by now.

NOREEN

Why haven't they?

CHAD

They...they want to make an example out of you two.

NOREEN

(Pause) Which "they"? I'm having trouble keeping track.

CHAD

In general, the Minute Men. Specifically, the two who are zoned in this building. They might get a promotion for... (To Jennifer) Your teeth were just the beginning of it, love. If you stay here...in this...zone...the Minute Men have been given free reign to do...whatever they want. (Pause) I'll let you think about it a few minutes. (Beat) But then...you should up and move someplace safe.

NOREEN

Where?

CHAD

Arizona. With the rest of Jennifer's family. Still free out there. For the time being. Make the next move from there. (Pause) Please...please do this.

(CHAD EXITS.)

NOREEN

Chad...REALLY...knows how to bring good news. You know? Maybe that's what he wanted. Maybe he wants me rattled...if the Minute Men scare enough of us into leaving...it's because we're making a difference, right?

(Pause. A moment between JENNIFER and NOREEN.)

So, that's it, then, right? We...we make a run for it. (Beat) Maybe...maybe we can do better someplace else. Maybe if we're out in the free...not in the thick of it...we can...I like this apartment. It isn't so bad without all the barbed-wire and raping storm-troopers. (Beat) The only reason why I'd even consider staying is if Travis... (Beat) I met him in my second week in Louisiana. He was...he was a cook. On TV. There's a station that comes out of Lafayette
NOREEN, Continued

that I used to get from my illegal cable box. And he was cooking up a gumbo. He looked so
happy cooking. So, I check out his website, and I'm looking everywhere for signs of a wife,
of kids, you know? And I couldn't believe that he wasn't with anyone. I was at a point, you
know, I'm in a new town, had a burst of genius to call it off with that asshole you...sorry... so,
I'm down there, and figure, why not go out on a limb? I send him an email and ask if he has
a good recipe for dirty rice, one of the easiest damn things to make. And he responds right
away, "you hitting on me?" And I tell him, "yeah, I try to pick up men all the time asking for
easy-to-make recipes." We met two days later. Cafe Ole's and beignet. Held hands by River
Walk. He was just so funny. I never knew anyone could be that funny. And quick. And a
good cook. And I start falling for him. Almost instantly. And it's not just because he's funny
and can cook; if that were the case, I would have been all over that Wok with Yan guy years
ago. I saw a spark that I had never seen before. His parents are real laid back. Salt of the
earth people out of Jefferson Parish. A little old fashioned in their ways, but they really
embraced me. Which, for Southern Christians whose son was in danger of marrying a Jew, is
really saying something. And then...he asks me. It wasn't near a river or the ocean, but...it
was over dirty dishes. We were washing dishes together, and he asks me. And my answer
wasn't "yes," it was "of course." Because that's how it felt; an actual click inside my head. It
wasn't a movie moment with swelling violins, and stars sparkling in the sky. Just the sound
of running water. And the click in my head. The click that made me think "this makes sense.
Wow! This really...makes sense." (Beat) We need to get you out. Get you...get you to a
hospital.

(JENNIFER grabs her arm and shakes her head
"no." She sits.)

I don't have enough pain-killers and antibiotics. Shit, someone could die from a HANG
NAIL in this town, and you...you. (Beat). And Travis. Oh, God, I can't stop saying his name.
Travis, Travis, Travis. Oh, God, no!

(She falls in front JENNIFER.)

At least you're alive. At least I have you. I can't lose you. There's too much...

(CHAD ENTERS.)

There's still too much to lose.

(LIGHTS CHANGE. HARRISON somberly
appears; no MUSIC cue this time.)

HARRISON

Senator Madison has fled authorities, after being asked very tough questions in regard to his
heritage, and his outrageous opinions about President Shaw. If you know the whereabouts of
Madison, say something. Do not aid and abet a political prisoner. We're looking at you,
Canada. If he's there, say something. (Beat) And let me just say this, there has been some talk
in these "zines" that have been circulating around of a "final solution." We remember that term from World War II. It seems that zine authors would have you all believe that there are concentration camps where illegal immigrants, and those who would aid them, are being detained, but that is not true. There are no concentration camps. There is no proposed "final solution." Anyone who tells you this...well, they're part of the problem, aren't they?

(LIGHTS CHANGE. NOREEN'S apartment. NOREEN and JENNIFER are sitting on the couch. TWO MINUTE MEN enter with CHAD.)

MINUTE MAN 1
Hello again, Mrs. Fontenot. Chad tells me you two haven't learned your lesson yet. I need you two to come with -

(CHAD PISTOL WHIPS MINUTE MAN 1 on the back of the head. MINUTE MAN 2, a woman, turns to CHAD. He has his gun on her.)

CHAD
Okay. Let's get your uniform nice and easy.

(JENNIFER and NOREEN start removing their shirts and handcuffing them with their own cuffs.)

MINUTE MAN 2
You'll never get away with this.

CHAD
I could just shoot you.

This is Not the End of the Play
Ending Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes

Properties List Next Page
PROPERTIES LIST

Cardboard Boxes
Cooking pot
Wooden spoon
PC
Hood/sack
Typewriter
Pliers
Magazine ("Consumer Review")
Pamphlets/Fliers/Photocopied "Zines"
A purse
Keys
Handguns
Chinese food boxes/egg roll wrappers
Walkie-talkies
Phone
Podium
Radio