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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

A few thoughts on the use of projections

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.

CHORUS 2

I have an electric car.

CHORUS 3

You're gonna electrocute yourself.

CHORUS 2

Ha.

CHORUS 4

You know what your generation is called, Noreen 77?

NOREEN

What's that?

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?

NOREEN

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.)

NOREEN

What did you say?

TRAVIS

I said you're doing a great job.

NOREEN

I thought you were unpacking.

TRAVIS

I am. Just like you.

NOREEN

This'll be quick.

TRAVIS

So will this. Open your mouth.

(NORREN gives him a look.)

The spoon. Open your mouth for the spoon.

(He feeds her a sip.)

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.

TRAVIS

(CHAD gives him a look.)

The spoon.

(CHAD gives him another look.)

Try it, Chad.

NOREEN

(CHAD opens his mouth; TRAVIS feeds him.)

Whoa!

CHAD

Same reaction 100 percent of the time!

TRAVIS

What is it?

CHAD

Crawfish-lobster bisque!

TRAVIS

Good, right?

NOREEN

You tried this? Aren't you Jewish?

CHAD

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

NOREEN

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

TRAVIS

Hey, Noreen, I'm stealing your husband.

CHAD

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

NOREEN

Still do.

CHAD

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.

(TRAVIS exits.)

CHAD

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.

NOREEN

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?

NOREEN

(Beat) Open 'til four a.m.

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.

CHAD

(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-logged 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.)

NOREEN

How's Holly?

CHAD

Great. Spitting image of her father.

NOREEN

Poor thing.

CHAD

Yeah. Back hair and all.

NOREEN

When do we get to meet her?

CHAD
Soon.

NOREEN
And you're still with –?

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

NOREEN
Your rounds?

CHAD
Mm-hmm.

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

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

NOREEN
My marriage isn't that frivolous, Chad.

CHAD
I didn't say it was.

NOREEN
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?

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

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

CHAD
C.O.F.?

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

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

Yup. NOREEN

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

If you say so. NOREEN

I do. CHAD

(TRAVIS enters holding a jar.)

You know where the grippy things are? TRAVIS

Grippy things? CHAD

Yeah, I can't get this jar open. TRAVIS

(CHAD opens it easily.)

Huh. *(Beat)* I loosened it! TRAVIS

(TRAVIS exits.)

Grippy things. CHAD

Do you know their proper name? NOREEN

Yes. *(Beat)* Grippers? All righty, I'm out. CHAD

We'll see you later, then? NOREEN

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.

(CHAD 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 left-overs.

(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

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

NOREEN

And you didn't even tell me?

JENNIFER

CHAD

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 –

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 starting 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?

CHAD

Yeah. Like protestors.

NOREEN

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

CHAD

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.

NOREEN

I felt very sixties.

JENNIFER

Then, they had me and Noreen tied up together.

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

TRAVIS

Wow. How "Showtime After Dark."

JENNIFER

You would've liked it.

TRAVIS

Does that count as research?

NOREEN

Research. Don't talk to me about research.

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

TRAVIS

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

NOREEN

The wave of the future.

TRAVIS

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

NOREEN

No one wants to see my ugly face.

JENNIFER

Beautiful face.

NOREEN

It's not credible.

TRAVIS

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.

TRAVIS

Sounds good.

JENNIFER

Til tomorrow, then.

NOREEN

Bye, Jennifer.

(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?

It's all...
NOREEN

(NOREEN pauses, as she reads an email.)

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

Really?
TRAVIS

NOREEN
Yeah. All my interviews with FEMA victims, it's all...

It's all what?
TRAVIS

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

Wow. Stuffy professors still exist.
TRAVIS

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.
NOREEN

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.

NOREEN

(Pause) Maybe we should run.

TRAVIS

For President and vice?

NOREEN

I was thinking "to Canada."

TRAVIS

How's your French?

NOREEN

Almost as good as my Cajun.

TRAVIS

We'll fit right in.

(CHAD enters. He is wearing brown.)

CHAD

Hey, kids.

TRAVIS

Hey. Whoa.

NOREEN

I'm thinking...monkey poo.

TRAVIS

The color of independence.

Cute.
CHAD

What's with the get-up?
TRAVIS

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.

TRAVIS
And he told you...brown.

CHAD
"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.

TRAVIS
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?

CHAD

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?

NOREEN

Holy shit!

CHAD

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 xenophobically 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 peel 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? NOREEN

New ribs. TRAVIS

Anything else? NOREEN

A brown uniform. TRAVIS

(NOREEN reacts.)

So I can piss on it and burn it.

(TRAVIS sits.)

My piss is mighty flammable.

Did you see Ramon? NOREEN

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. TRAVIS

You're not going back tomorrow. NOREEN

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

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

I wish Chad would come by. TRAVIS

NOREEN
Be careful what you wish for.

TRAVIS
I would really like to -

NOREEN
Kick his ass?

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

(A knock on the door. CHAD enters.)

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

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

CHAD
You two okay?

(Long pause.)

TRAVIS
Can you think of anything to say to him?

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

CHAD
He attacked a woman.

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

CHAD
He ATTACKED A WOMAN.

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

NOREEN
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.

CHAD

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

TRAVIS

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.)

Nope. Broken.

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?

That? It's...
NOREEN

(She looks at her computer.)

I can't access any of them.

Any of what?
CHAD

The websites. Move On. United oh eight.
NOREEN

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

For what?
NOREEN

Anti-American activity, I think.
CHAD

My God. Has McCarthy been raised from the dead?
NOREEN

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

Streaming it.
NOREEN

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

Tapping private phones.
NOREEN

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

Tapping...phones? *(Beat)* You son of a bitch!
NOREEN

What? CHAD

That was *you*? *THAT WAS YOU?!* NOREEN

Where? When? CHAD

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

Oh, that...well... CHAD

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

(No response.)

I'm calling the police.

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

But, what? NOREEN

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

(Shows it to her.)

Oh my God. NOREEN

I was trying to help. CHAD

HELP, HOW?! NOREEN

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!!! CHAD

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.

HARRISON

Indian. You mean from India?

STANZ

That's where Indians come from.

HARRISON

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

STANZ

That is also correct.

HARRISON

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?

STANZ

(Glares at him) Is that a serious question?

HARRISON

Yes, it is.

STANZ

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

HARRISON

From the threat of the illegal immigrants?

STANZ

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

HARRISON

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

STANZ

Do you own a car?

HARRISON

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

Prima, dime si escuchas de Ramon. No. Voy a cerrar el restaurante por ahora. Tengo un prestamo para negocios. Pero tu sabes. Lo voy a resolver. Talvez habra el negocioso en unas semanas. Gracias. Mandame un beso y un abrazo a los nin~os. Cuidate. Ciao.
{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.

TRAVIS

(Beat) Noreen's not here.

CHAD

I know.

TRAVIS

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?

CHAD

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?

TRAVIS

I'd like to think differently. So, what brings you here? *(Beat)* Some people have questions, right?

CHAD

Something like that.

TRAVIS

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

CHAD

You ready?

TRAVIS

I'm not going to fight you, Chad.

CHAD

No?

TRAVIS

No. But I'm not coming with you.

(HARRISON appears on-screen. His speech overlaps with the action on stage for the rest of the act. Note: the actor playing HARRISON should not pause to allow for the action, nor should the action on stage interrupt HARRISON'S speech.)

HARRISON

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)*

(CHAD presses a button on his shoulder-mounted walkie-talkie.)

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 1 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.)

CHAD, *Continued*

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 I.)

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?

(STANZ 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 SPIIIIIIIIIIIIIIN!

(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 REPOTERS; 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.

REPORTER 3
There's a reason! I knew it!

REPORTER 4
He was suspected of Anti-American activity.

NOREEN
Innocent until proven guilty?

REPORTER 1
No, no, no, that's bad melodrama.

REPORTER 2
As opposed to *good* melodrama?

REPORTER 3
I feel kind of sorry for her. It's a human interest story.

REPORTER 4
Yes...a human interest story!

REPORTER 3
Proud Bitch tries to find terrorist husband!

(They stop and face front.)

ALL REPORTERS
Bingo!

(They begin to skip.)

REPORTER 3
Is your name Martha Mitchell?

REPORTER 1
Patty Hearst?

REPORTER 2
Hillary Clinton?

REPORTER 4
Mary Magdalene?

REPORTER 3
Sad, lost bitch?

REPORTERS
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
A. Very. Clear. Message.

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.)

MINUTE MAN

What do you call these?

NOREEN

(Beat) 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 nosey roommates.

NOREEN

(Beat) Maybe...Travis...

JENNIFER

You think someone has seen him?

NOREEN

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?

CHAD

We'd listen.

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

JENNIFER

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.

CHAD

I have a TV.

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!

(CHAD 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

HARRISON, *Continued*

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 a 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