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Signature:

Nicholas Surbey

04/14/2010
Date

Infinite Country: A Frontier Play

by

Nicholas Surbey

Adviser

Jim Grimsley

Playwriting Program

Jim Grimsley

Adviser

Lisa Paulsen

Committee Member

Laura Otis

Committee Member

Scott Stewart

Committee Member

04/20/2010

Date

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Jim Grimsley

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Abstract

Infinite Country: A Frontier Play By Nicholas Surbey

Infinite Country is a full-length stage play that deals with issues of story telling and the making of American heroes and mythology. Set in 1863, the year of The Battle of Gettysburg, in a small frontier town in the Western Territories, the play follows Jim and his youthful, romantic stories about Imogen, the mysterious daughter of a con-man. Through the course of play, Jim, along with his friend Kip, discover that Imogen's father, Mr. Grant, is duping the townsfolk of their money. When Jim forces Kip to put a stop to the con, Kip must choose to play the part of the hero or let Mr. Grant's evil plot prevail to save his own skin. Traditional portraits of the Old West are examined and turned on their heads in a play about the fabrication of heroes and martyrs.

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Table of Contents

List of Characters.....1
Infinite Country: A Frontier Play.....1

CHARACTERS

Jim.....A young boy(16-22)
 Kip.....Jim's best friend (16-22)
 Mr. Grant....A con-man(40-50)
 Clancey.....A retired cowhand (50-65)
 Imogen.....Mr. Grant's daughter (16-20)
 Dolly.....Mr. Grant's housekeeper (40-60)
 Ted.....Bartender and owner of the town bar (45-60)
 Marianne.....Ted's wife (40-50)
 Helen.....Marianne's friend (35-50)
 Customers and other men.

Time: Summer, 1863

Place: Western Territories of the United States, a small frontier town

Prologue

GRANT struggles with THE BODY: the corpse of a middle-aged man. It looks as if it has been shot with arrows. Three of them stick out of its abdomen. GRANT holds THE BODY under the arms in front of him, as if THE BODY could stand on its own, but is leaning on GRANT for support. GRANT drags THE BODY a few feet, then sets it down gently. He makes a few adjustments to the position of THE BODY on the ground. THE BODY is stiff, uncooperative; GRANT struggles. He stops, looks down at THE BODY, then walks off stage.

GRANT

(Off)

Help! Come quick! Someone's hurt!

Scene One

TED's bar: a spacious, saloon style bar, sparsely decorated, mostly wood. A door stage left is the entrance to the bar, another door in the up stage wall leads to the kitchen. GRANT and CLANCEY sit at the bar, TED behind the counter. Other customers sit around the room in small groups.

GRANT

He was just lying there, dead as a buck shot through. Arrows still sticking out - three of them like this; here, here and here. Flint arrowheads lodged deep inside. I'd never seen anything like it.

TED

You're tellin us it musta been Indians?

GRANT

Don't know who else could have done that. Three perfect shots? Had to be. Wild ones, too, from the look of it. Makes you think.

TED

Bet you used to see Indian action all the time in the Rangers, Clancey. When you were young?

CLANCEY

Might have been. Pass me that drink you're holdin and I'll search my memory.

TED

You know Clancey, Mr. Grant? Grant's new in town, Clancey, so be on your best behavior.

GRANT

Pleasure. Say you've had run ins with Indians?

TED

Clancey here used to be an honest-to-God Texas Ranger, didn't you?

CLANCEY

I did, for a bit. In my younger days.

GRANT

Texas Ranger Division. Is that so?

CLANCEY

Yes sir, Mr. Grant. That is so.

GRANT

You'll appreciate this then, partner, 'cause this fella I was talkin about, I swear, it had to be Indians that got him. Ted, I'm tellin you, you ain't never seen a thing like it.

TED

If it was - Indians I mean, and mind I'm not saying I believe you - poor bastard's lucky that's all he got.

GRANT

What do you mean, lucky?

TED

What with the rest of him kept intact. Usually take off the scalp and - you know what else they like to take from a guy. So he don't even die a man.

CLANCEY

(Taking a drink)

Now, I do seem to recall one or two instances in which I might have run in with a particularly nasty bunch. Didn't take too strong a liking to me, either.

GRANT

What was that like?

CLANCEY

Oh, I don't know. I'm not much in the way of tellin stories. It was Indians. You got an imagination, don't you?

TED

Personally, I think Clancey here's seen about as many Indians as you and me seen of kangaroos hoppin around, but we let him go on anyway.

GRANT

Come on now, Ted. If he says he's seen 'em, we've no reason to doubt that. Not coming from an old Ranger. There's pride in that, ain't that right?

CLANCEY

Thank you, Mr. Grant. I appreciate that.

TED

(To Clancey)

You'd appreciate another drink more. *[Turning to GRANT]* Where were you going with all this Indian business, Mr. Grant?

GRANT

Well, this whole thing put me on to thinking. What if something like that were to happen to me, or you? Just makes you wonder why we do it.

TED

Do what?

GRANT

You know - live all the way out here. We all got our reasons for comin out West. Find more room, more life, something better than back East - everybody's got a story. More people coming now that the war's gettin bad back there. But all of us - we risk our lives just bein here, unprotected.

CLANCEY

Stories.

GRANT

‘Scuse me? You say something, friend?

CLANCEY

Just sayin, all that stuff - ‘bout Indians around here, nothin but stories. No Indians near town for years now. Further west, Texas, California, sure. But Indians been run off this land a long time ago. No reason to come back either. Nothin they’d want, nothin here.

TED

He’s right, Mr. Grant. Don’t seem possible what you’re sayin.

GRANT

What do you mean?

TED

Can’t account for what I ain’t seen but-

GRANT

I’m tellin you, I saw it. With my own eyes. It had to be an Indian attack. You got a better explanation, or just callin me a liar?

CLANCEY

Hold on a minute, Mr. Grant, I’m sure no one meant anything like that. You’re new here, and maybe somethin just scared you- thought you saw something you didn’t...

GRANT

(Standing up)

You listen here-

GRANT is interrupted as JIM flies through the door, KIP running in behind. The tension quickly dissipates and the men settle back down.

JIM

We’re here!

GRANT

Sorry fellas - I got carried away. Forgive me.

TED

No need, Mr. Grant. *[Turning to JIM and KIP]* You’re late. Again.

KIP

Sorry, sir. It won’t happen again.

JIM

He’s lyin, sir, it probably will.

KIP

Jim!

TED

Quit horsin and get to work. Kip - in the kitchen. Jim, you're out here.

KIP goes into the kitchen.

TED

Alright, Jim, what was it this time?

GRANT

Don't be so hard, Ted. You remember bein young, don't you? Runnin crazy, gettin up to all sorts of secret stuff, chasin after some girl. Isn't that right, Clancey?

CLANCEY

That's right, Mr. Grant. You let them boys be young, Ted.

TED

I was just wondering what story Jim here was gonna tell me. You ain't ever heard lies like this boy can tell, Mr. Grant

JIM

I don't mind telling where we were. But it's no lie. Not that I 'spect Ted to believe me. Never does.

TED

Experience, kid. *[Beat]* Go ahead, and listen real good, Mr Grant. It's a regular spectacle what comes out of this boy's mouth.

JIM

(Settling in to tell the story)

It was Kip, see - he was telling me all about what happened last night, and we got carried away and forgot all about workin.

CLANCEY

Is that right?

TED

And what was he tellin that you couldn't make it here on time?

JIM

Alright, here's how it went - God's honest truth about it: There's this girl-

GRANT

What'd I tell you, Ted? There's always a girl involved.

CLANCEY

She pretty, Jim?

JIM

Like you never seen. Beautiful, and refined. Not like most girls out here. And Kip is perfect for her; a knight in armor and just what she needs. So, here's what he does: he paints himself all up in Indian war paint-

GRANT

Indians!

JIM

What?

TED

Nothin, boy. Just keep on.

JIM

He paints himself up so you couldn't tell him from Big Feather, and crawls up to her window. There she is, just lyin there, sleeping so sound she could be dead. Course, he coulda woken her up and had her right there, but Kip's not the type for all that. He's better'n that.

TED

Right about that. Kip's always been different.

CLANCEY

He's a special kid.

JIM

No, being Kip, he had to make her fall in love. Well the next thing this girl knows, she wakes up on the back of his horse, ridin out of town, with Kip at the front, who she thinks is some Indian all got up in war paint and whoopin like hell.

CLANCEY

Kip done all that?

JIM

Yes sir. What he does then, is rides her out to the woods, just out of town, and ties her up by a fire, tellin her he's going hunting for dinner, so she's to stay put. "And just in case you're thinkin of runnin," he says to her, "there's a whole tribe of us just in the dark beyond the fire." So he leaves her there, and after a bit, comes back, all cleaned up and in regular clothes, lookin like Kip again. She sees him comin and starts wigglin around crazy 'cause she thinks he's come to rescue her. Course he acts surprised to find her like that, and unties her. Then, she starts telling the whole story about being stolen by Indians.

GRANT

Isn't that something!

JIM

She thought she'd die till Kip came along. She called him her hero and kissed him. And I suppose that's what he is, a hero, of a sort, to think of something like that. She kissed him right there and called him her hero.

TED

That really is somethin. Hero, I don't know - but somethin.

JIM

And after that, he took her back to her room and told her: "I'll be back for you one night. One night I'll come for you and we'll escape, together."

KIP re-enters from the kitchen.

KIP

All done in the kitchen.

TED

Come here, you. You're really somethin, you know that?

KIP

What?

GRANT

We've just been hearin from your friend here all about what you done. He's been tellin a marvelous story. You better be careful, son - you really are somethin else, from what your friend says. Mind like that - don't let it get you into trouble.

KIP

What you been sayin?

JIM

Nothin - just... about you and that girl...

KIP

Ain't no girl. He's lyin, sir. He's just makin up stories. You know how he lies. Everything out of his mouth. I'm gonna clean the tables, that alright, Ted?

TED

You go right ahead.

JIM

(Aside, to KIP)

What'd you do that for, say I was lyin? I wasn't hurtin anybody, was I?

KIP

I'm not gettin into trouble for all the crazy things you make up. I'm not lettin you get me into any more trouble.

TED

Jim-

GRANT

Hold on a second, Ted. Let me ask you somethin, boy, come over here. You believe in Indians? For real, now - not just stories.

JIM

Sure I do.

GRANT

Around here, I mean. You ever seen a real Indian attack?

JIM

I ain't seen one myself, but yes sir, I believe they're out there, in the shadows- could strike at any time.

GRANT

Marvelous!

CLANCEY

It ain't true though. I seen Indians, and there aren't none here.

GRANT

You'll forgive my sayin so, partner, but I don't believe you'd know an Indian if it came up and killed you.

TED

Now hold on, Mr.-

KIP

(From across the room)

If Clancey says he's seen Indians, he's seen 'em. Isn't that right, Clancey?

CLANCEY

Go on now, Kip. I can handle myself, I believe. *[Turns to GRANT]* Maybe you're right. Maybe I haven't seen an Indian or anything else at that. Whatever the case, I don't give much credence to stories of Indians round here now-a-days.

DOLLY bursts through the door stage left, panting, out of breath. She slams the door behind her and runs into the middle of the room. Everyone rushes to her.

DOLLY

(Wildly, out of breath)

They chased me. Right into town, right through the middle of it. Out of nowhere.

TED

Who?

DOLLY

Indians!

GRANT

Indians!

DOLLY

Yes, sir. A pack of ‘em appeared and all I could do was run for my life. I tell you, I never knew myself so close to death as I was a moment ago. Look, they shot at me. Shot an arrow straight for me, aimed at my heart I’m sure. I’m only lucky it was dark and they missed. It only just got my leg. See?

There is a long cut across DOLLY’s leg. It is bleeding.

GRANT

God Almighty!

TED

Give this woman a chair. Sit her down! Jim, get her a drink. Now, what’s your name, darlin’?

DOLLY

Dolly, sir. Just Dolly.

TED

Well Dolly, I’m Ted, and you’re safe now. No Indians gonna bust in here with all of us sittin around.

GRANT

That’s right, Dolly. You sit and relax. We’ll take good care of you.

TED

Why don’t you tell us, calmly if you can, just exactly what happened out there.

DOLLY

I can’t say that I know for certain, sir, ‘cepting what I said already.

GRANT

What were you doin out so late, all by yourself in the dark? That’s askin to be attacked, in a dangerous place like this.

DOLLY

I know, sir. And I'm desperately sorry, you can see that I am. Only, I - I was...coming to give you a message.

TED

A message for Mr. Grant?

GRANT

Ah- yes, Ted... Dolly came out here with me and my girl. She keeps house for us.

TED

Why didn't you say so?

GRANT

Didn't think it mattered. I was too frightened on her behalf- only wanted to hear what had happened. Terribly frightening. A second Indian attack!

DOLLY

Second?

GRANT

I'm afraid so, Dolly. I was telling these gentlemen before you came in that I found a man massacred with arrows, like what must have stuck your leg.

DOLLY

Oh Lord, it's not safe out here.

CLANCEY

Didn't seem to be no trouble till you two came along.

TED

You shut your mouth. Look at that poor girl's leg. Bleedin all over the place. That's real. She ain't lyin.

GRANT

Thank you, Ted. I hope you'll take what I've been saying seriously now. I mean - these attacks - so close together, those Indian's are bound to come back. The whole town could be raided one of these nights.

TED

You think?

GRANT

Yes, I do.

DOLLY

Please, Mr. Grant. It's not safe all the way out here. We need protection. I'm afraid. All the women around here are, only they don't speak up. None of them will say it, but we all fear bein carried off by Indians for a fate worse than death!

GRANT

I hope all you men heard what Dolly just said, and I hope you will take that into consideration. I've got this collection going, see? Taking up a collection to guard the city against attacks from Indians or anyone else. Money for protection, a militia, that sort of thing. *[Turns outward and addresses the entire bar]* So everybody listen up.

The room falls quiet. Everyone listens to GRANT.

GRANT

I'm taking collection. For the protection of your families, all our families. This money will help establish a permanent security force to protect our town from Indian invasion. To protect your wives, your children. Some of you been livin out here too long, gotten used to livin this way and can't see the danger starin right at you.

The customers shift around uncomfortably. No one makes a move to contribute.

DOLLY

Think of it as an investment - in your future - in the future of your families - the future of all of our families, in case the Indians come back and God only knows what could happen then.

GRANT begins to walk around the bar, no one gives him any money.

TED

I'll give you some money, Mr. Grant. Seein that poor thing there *[indicating DOLLY]*, I wouldn't have a heart if I didn't give somethin. Hear that all of you. We got to protect our women.

No one moves. GRANT comes to CLANCEY

GRANT

Well, what about you, Clancey? You got anything to contribute?

CLANCEY

I don't think so, Mr. Grant. It's a nice story, like Jim's story there, but I don't believe either one. No Indians around here.

GRANT

No Indi- I'm telling you what I saw. Three flint arrows.

TED

It's alright, Mr. Grant, don't take it personal. Clancey's just drunk. Too drunk to know what's goin on about him.

GRANT turns away. CLANCEY, by this time very drunk, lumbers to his feet. DOLLY, now limping around on her hurt leg, stumbles suddenly and rams her shoulder into CLANCEY's back, pushing him over into GRANT. GRANT whips around and punches CLANCEY in the face. CLANCEY loses his balance and teeters clumsily to the floor. KIP watches.

DOLLY

Oh! I'm sorry, I'm so sorry, my leg! I tripped and I couldn't help it. Oh forgive me, forgive me!

GRANT

Here, let me help you up.

CLANCEY

I don't need-

CLANCEY tries to get up on his own, but is unsuccessful. KIP crosses to him and helps him up. The two move off to a corner.

CLANCEY

Don't make any kind of sense.

KIP

I know.

DOLLY and GRANT move aside to speak.

GRANT

Are you hurt?

DOLLY

Not badly, the cut's not too deep. I only broke the skin with a kitchen knife.

CLANCEY

(To Kip)

I don't know what that man is up to, but I'm not havin any of it.

KIP

I know.

CLANCEY

You're a good kid.

GRANT

(To Dolly)

Smart girl. You saved me.

DOLLY

It's not you I'm doin this for.

KIP looks at CLANCEY's face where he has been hit. From across the room, GRANT watches the pair. CLANCEY sees him watching.

CLANCEY

Go back to work. I'll be alright on my own. Go on.

KIP looks at CLANCEY, then crosses back to JIM. The customers, frightened by the outburst of violence, now reluctantly hand over money to GRANT.

GRANT

Thank you everyone. Thank you for giving so generously. It's this kind of spirit that makes us strong, that makes our nation strong, united. Your donations will be put to excellent use.

Scene Two

The next day on the street outside GRANT's house. The front of the house has two curtained windows, one on the left, the other on the right. HELEN and MARIANNE stand in front of the house, talking.

MARIANNE

And he never would have done anything like that before we were married, Helen. Never

HELEN

No, they're never like that when they're young. They have ideals then, vision. Now they have drink.

MARIANNE

Well that's the ticket, isn't it? These men in bars, doing God knows what.

HELEN

(Suddenly remembering)

Marianne! You heard about the Indian attack?

MARIANNE

It's all Ted could talk about this morning.

HELEN

They say someone found a body- a dead body. That Indians killed someone in this very town.

MARIANNE

I don't know. It doesn't seem real, does it? Haven't heard that anyone lost a family member, and everyone I know's still alive.

HELEN

For better or worse.

MARIANNE

Helen! It must have been an outsider.

HELEN

Personally, I don't believe any of it. Nonsense, all of it. Just men in bars, telling stories to pass the time they should be spending with their wives.

MARIANNE

It really is terrible what they get up to.

HELEN

I don't know how you stand it, Marianne. With Ted running the bar, he must be worse than the others.

MARIANNE

To be young again. When love was simple.

JIM rushes in, dragging a reluctant KIP behind him. As they enter, HELEN and MARIANNE move off to the side and continue their conversation silently.

KIP

Can we be quick about this. I promised Clancey I'd help him with the rabbits on his property. Over-running the place.

JIM

(Pointing up to the left-side window)

She's up there now, only just gettin out of bed. Your love, your princess. She's a real lady, which means she sleeps late until the maid wakes her up to comb out her hair. In a moment she'll open her bedroom window - you listening? Kip!

KIP has not been listening. JIM jabs his arm.

KIP

Ouch. I'm listening - opens that window and- *[KIP points to the right-side window]*

JIM

The other window! That one, on the left. Now - the window opens and at first she won't see you, 'cause you hide behind this post, see? So she doesn't think to cover up all the way, lady-like, and a piece of fabric slips off her shoulder... she opens the window and -

The window opens violently, DOLLY appears and quickly spits, then slams the window shut again. The boys below pause a moment, then JIM drags KIP to the right-side window.

JIM

The other window, then. That's bound to be it: her bedroom.

KIP

What are we doing here, Jim? I don't know her, never even seen her.

JIM

You're gonna meet her today, Kip. You gotta meet her so you can fall in love and -

KIP

Jim... I can't stand here waitin for -

JIM

Just hold on another second. You aren't gonna regret it. You don't know what it's like, Kip, but you will. Once you fall in love, you won't mind waiting all day long under her window. I promise.

MARIANNE

(Indicating JIM)

That's the kind of thing I mean. What they lose later.

KIP

Just watchin won't do any good. What if she never looks out?

JIM

(Suddenly shouting)

Hey!

JIM throws a rock and it hits the right-side window.

KIP

Jim! That's not what I meant. *(JIM throws another rock)* Jim!

JIM

(Throwing a third rock)

HELLO?! Anyone there?!

The right-side window flies open, but no one appears beside it. DOLLY struggles with someone within.

DOLLY

(Within)

Don't fuss. Just sit down. SIT! *[DOLLY appears at the window and calls down]* Who's that down there? Screamin and throwin rocks. You'd think bandits were come to town the way you're carryin on.

JIM

Please, ma'am, I was hoping to speak with...the... girl who lives up there.

DOLLY

(Starting to close the window)

You go on now and throw rocks at someone else's window before Mr. Grant comes back and -

KIP

Mr. Grant! *[DOLLY opens the window again]* I know you. You're his housekeeper, aren't you? Last night, you got chased by Indians.

DOLLY

Yes, young man, and it was an experience I'm not altogether too pleased to relive, so if you'll excuse me, Mr. Grant's daughter-

JIM

The daughter! She's the one I mean.

DOLLY

(Suspiciously)

Imogen?

KIP

(To JIM)

Jim, I don't want to do this, and I- [*JIM swiftly punches KIP in the arm*] Fine. I've got better things to be doin anyway.

KIP exits.

JIM

Kip! Kip!

JIM watches him go, then calls back up to DOLLY

JIM

Please, Ma'am. It's a matter of love!

MARIANNE

(Ecstatically)

I knew it!

JIM

It can't wait.

DOLLY

I'm sure you don't know what you're talkin about. How do you know Imogen? The truth now.

JIM

The truth? I... I don't. I only seen her through the window, really. But my friend, the one who was here, he had to go and -

DOLLY

It's what I thought. You don't know the poor girl. If you did you wouldn't be carryin on like this. She can't talk to you. You run along and - catch frogs or whatever it is boys do. Thank God I never had any, daughters all, quiet and peaceful children they were, too. Not like you boys, all the way out here, no law, no discipline. I'd have half a mind to-

A VOICE

(Within)

DOLLY!

DOLLY begins to shut the window again.

JIM

The war! [*DOLLY opens the window*] Between the states. The big one back East. You must've heard about it. He's... goin off to fight it. The war back East. Kip, the one who left, he's going off and just wants to see her, to talk, and tell her how he feels...

HELEN

(To Marianne)

It won't last, those feelings. He'll grow up and lose all that -

MARIANNE

What age is it that boys stop being heroes and start being men?

DOLLY

(Calling down to JIM)

North or South?

HELEN

(To Marianne)

Hush, I want to hear.

JIM

Sorry?

DOLLY

I said, North or South? Which one he fighting for? 'Cause the family's from New England, and if he were to be goin off to fight for the other side, then I'm afraid I couldn't let you nowhere near Imogen.

JIM

The North! Definitely, the North.. He's.. he's on your side - so you see, the war's on and if he don't get to speak to her now he might die and never get a chance to -

MARIANNE

(Calling up to DOLLY)

You must! You must let him!

DOLLY

(Considers for a moment)

I don't know what your game is boy, but I'll play it for a while at least. But not now. Go and tell your friend not now. The master could come back any time and I don't wonder he wouldn't like it, you two bein around his daughter and all - considering the way things are. Go away now.

DOLLY closes the window and the women wave fondly to JIM. JIM looks up at IMOGEN's window.

JIM

Imogen. He sees you. But you don't see him. He hides himself behind the post. Your dress slips, just a little... And there it is: that shoulder. You speak -

The window opens suddenly.

IMOGEN

(Calling down to JIM)

Hello?

JIM

Hello?

IMOGEN

Hello down there. I'm Imogen. You wanted me?

JIM

You're... the woman before, she said you couldn't-

IMOGEN

That's just Dolly. She says too much.

JIM

I'm Jim.

IMOGEN

Hello Jim.

JIM

Hi. I was here because- I guess I wanted to see you.

IMOGEN

So I heard.

JIM

Because I hadn't before.

IMOGEN

And now you have.

IMOGEN begins to close the window.

JIM

Wait! I have a friend-

IMOGEN

I don't.

JIM

You don't...

IMOGEN

Have a friend. Any friends. All I have is Dolly, and she talks all the time. No friend like you. I don't know anyone here.

JIM

They say you don't come out of your house, ever.

IMOGEN

Do they? I suppose I don't. And do you suppose that's my own choice?

JIM

What do you mean?

IMOGEN

I mean, do you think I would stay inside all the time if I had a choice about it.

JIM

Your father keeps you locked up in there?

IMOGEN nods.

JIM

And Dolly?

IMOGEN nods.

IMOGEN

What did you come here for, Jim?

JIM

So- so you would fall in love.

IMOGEN

With you?

JIM

No... My friend.

IMOGEN

Your friend. But he's not here. You're here.

JIM

He was here. But he had to go.

IMOGEN

And he's in love with me?

JIM

He will be.

IMOGEN

But you aren't in love with me.

JIM

Well I-

IMOGEN

Don't you think I'm beautiful?

JIM

Yes.

IMOGEN

Just not for you. Enough for your friend, but not for you.

JIM

I... It's not that- of course you're-

IMOGEN

Forgive me, Jim. Please. I'm in a state today. They come and go. Only you've caught me at a peculiar time.

JIM

I see.

IMOGEN

If you had come another day, there'd have been no need for any of this. I would have treated you much differently.

JIM

Oh?

IMOGEN

Good-bye, Jim. I hope you don't find me in any mood other than this. This is how I'd like you to know me.

JIM

Good-bye- [*IMOGEN shuts the window and JIM gazes upward, repeating her name like an incantation*] Imogen. Imogen... Imogen.

JIM notices HELEN and MARIANNE watching him and quickly runs off.

HELEN

I don't suppose it will amount to much in the end.

MARIANNE

How could it, after all?

GRANT enters and passes by the women on his way to the front door. They both nod to him, and he gives a slight bow back. He pauses at the door, listening to the end of their conversation.

HELEN

If only he didn't have to grow up. If none of them ever did.

MARIANNE

I'm telling you, it's the drink. What it does to a man. It's terrible, really. Better to do away with it entirely and keep them all like that.

The women pass off stage. GRANT watches them go, then goes inside as JIM comes back on. JIM looks up again at the window. From within, the sound of a struggle, a scream, broken glass. JIM looks around but does nothing. He runs off.

Scene Three

CLANCEY is alone on stage. Around him are scores of rabbits in cages. To one side of him, a pile of dead rabbits. He takes a rabbit from the cage closest to him, snaps its neck, then throws the rabbit onto the pile of carcasses. KIP comes hesitantly on stage. After a moment, CLANCEY speaks without looking at KIP. He continues to kill the rabbits and throw them on the pile.

CLANCEY

Thought I was going to end up alone today. *[Snap]* I started without you.

KIP comes closer, he picks up a live rabbit and holds it, looks at it, gently pets it.

KIP

Sorry. It was - Jim.

CLANCEY

(considering for a moment)

You follow that boy around like a lost little puppy dog. Ears pricked up, little tail down there waggin all around at the sight of -

KIP

It's not like that. *[CLANCEY snaps a neck]* Jim and I have been best friends- forever I guess. Grew up together.

CLANCEY

Oh believe me, kid, I don't blame you. Mighty good lookin, that boy... when you step back and compare. No - I don't wonder you'd rather spend your time sniffin 'round there darlin.

KIP

(Putting rabbit back into its cage)

Fine. Have it your way.

KIP begins to exit.

CLANCEY

Hold on now. Never met a boy that had a harder time taking a joke. You get your skinny ass back here and get to work. Can't go this whole lot alone.

KIP saunters back and picks up a rabbit. He takes out a knife and makes to slit the throat.

CLANCEY

What the hell you doing? Not that way. Just snap the necks. Too much blood when you do it with a knife.

KIP

With my bare hands? Just like that.

CLANCEY

Oh for Christ's sake.

CLANCEY grabs KIP's rabbit and snaps its neck, throws it on the pile.

CLANCEY

You told me you'd culled rabbits before.

KIP

I lied.

CLANCEY

No kidding. *[Snap]* But you're here now and I need the help. Get to.

KIP picks up another rabbit and holds it. CLANCEY kills another, throws it on the pile.

KIP

Yesterday, at the bar...

CLANCEY

Yeah?

KIP

What they were sayin about you- that you never saw an Indian- *[Clancey looks at him, snaps a neck]* never fought Indians and all that... I just wanted to tell you, I don't believe that. I believe you.

CLANCEY

And why would that be?

KIP

I just do. Everything you talk about, all you've done. It's something to look up to.

CLANCEY

Shouldn't do that, little doggy. *[Snap]* Lots of people tellin lies for all sorts of reasons. I ain't no kind of role model for anyone. Never done a thing worth mentioning.

KIP

But everything you said-

CLANCEY

You never said a thing that wasn't true? To make yourself feel better about what you haven't done, or what you have? *[Beat]* No- you're young.

Silence. KIP holds his rabbit with one hand, twirls his knife around with the other.

KIP

I don't believe you. I don't want to. You were a Ranger, a war hero, everything- all of it. That's you. That's what you are.

CLANCEY

Oh don't get me wrong, kid, I was a Ranger - for a week, maybe less. Joined up and rode out with a fine bunch of fellas - ran back to the nearest town at the first sign of danger. Didn't even think to take my horse: just ran. Too scared to shit for days. *[Snap]* No, I ran from all that, that kind of life; ran away. But you don't have to. *[Beat]* Been thinkin about the war back East.

KIP

Thinkin what?

CLANCEY

About joinin up.

KIP

To fight a war that don't concern you? You want to go off and get yourself killed? Men back there bein... culled, like rabbits.

CLANCEY

Didn't mean myself there, kid, but I thank you for the vote of confidence. *[Snap]*

KIP

You mean me? I should be fightin'?

*Silence. KIP plays with his rabbit, twirls his knife.
CLANCEY goes on culling. After a pause:*

CLANCEY

You don't want to be stuck out here your whole life. Out here... Hardly room enough for a man to breathe like he wants to. Breathe, and grow. *[Snap]* Sure, we got land enough, and space enough, but all that... Just an abyss of space. Not even a proper state in the Union. Just a territory. Man needs - something else...

KIP

But the war? I couldn't- could never...

CLANCEY

Just the right age. Strong. You could really make something of yourself. Not like me. I'm here for life, kid. Lost in this abyss of space, but you don't have to be. You could make something of yourself. Be a hero.

KIP

Die, you mean.

CLANCEY

Die a hero at least. Die a somebody, 'stead of a nameless nobody, out here in the abyss.

KIP

That's it then? You don't want me here? Want me to leave?

CLANCEY

Kip -

KIP

No. No. I'll go if that's what you want. Don't have to send me half way across the world to get rid of me, Clancey.

CLANCEY

That's not what I'm sayin, kid. I just... want you to have the opportunity to be someone. Do what I didn't have the guts to do and become a hero. An American legend.

KIP

Out there with boys bein culled like rabbits. That's an opportunity?

CLANCEY

Forget it. Just, thought you would want to do better. You're... special, Kip. You know that, don't you? You ain't like everyone else around here. You're better. And I don't want to see that wasted.

KIP

Fine. Just - Fine -

KIP tightens his grip on the rabbit and his knife as he grows angrier.

KIP

You always say that, but I don't want it. I don't want to be special. I'm not different. I don't want...

CLANCEY

Calm -

As he speaks, KIP, somewhat unconsciously, stabs his rabbit repeatedly. The blood flows freely.

KIP

You want me to go off and get myself killed? Fine. But that won't make me special. Getting killed, that ain't nothing - anyone can do that. Getting killed don't make a hero of no one; just makes you dead!

KIP stops, comes to himself, is silent. CLANCEY looks at him.

Kip... Kip, come here.

CLANCEY

KIP steps closer to CLANCEY, within an arm's length. CLANCEY reaches out to him. Touches him on the shoulder. Brings him closer. Wipes a bit of blood off his face. KIP looks up at CLANCEY.

Just sayin...

KIP

CLANCEY

I know, Kip. I just thought- that you could have a life better than me.

KIP

I don't mind that. The way you are now - that's enough.

CLANCEY

Come on kid. You gotta wash off all that blood 'fore I send you home.

KIP

Alright. Alright.

CLANCEY draws him closer. They look at each other for a moment before CLANCEY begins to lead KIP offstage, into his house.

CLANCEY

Come inside, darlin. We'll wash you up.

KIP

Alright.

Scene Four

TED's Bar. The place is empty except for TED who stands behind the counter, cleaning glasses. Marianne enters from the door stage left.

MARIANNE

I don't think I've ever been in here before.

TED

Marianne? Is something wrong?

MARIANNE

Why should something be wrong?

TED

You said yourself: you ain't never been in here before. It's strange.

MARIANNE

I can leave if you like. See you at home?

TED

Fine by me.

MARIANNE

Alright. *[Beat]* It's only.... I don't see you as much as I used to, and there's no one here right now. I could sit with you, we could talk, like we used to?

TED

Stay then. Just me, and Kip in the back. Plunk your sweet self down in a chair.

TED pours himself a drink.

MARIANNE

You're drinking? Now?

TED

Don't start. You came here. I can do as I like. *[Beat]* You look out of place here.

MARIANNE

I feel out of place. I don't belong here.

TED

No.

They are silent for a moment, then MARIANNE plunges in, gallantly.

MARIANNE

I was out today with Helen. We saw one of those boys you have working here. He was after a girl.

TED

Oh yeah?

MARIANNE

Mr. Grant's daughter, in fact.

TED

You don't say.

MARIANNE

Peculiar girl, so I hear.

TED

Grant's a good customer, and I don't pay much mind to gossip. *[Beat]* What do they say?

MARIANNE

Oh the most bizarre sort of things. That she never goes out of the house, and her temperament is somewhat- violent. Passing by the house sometimes, you can hear wailing, and all kinds of noises-

TED

Ghost stories.

MARIANNE

Maybe. Banging, shrieking, yelling...

TED

Same old story, in every town from here to the Mississippi. Girl locked up, noises and all that. Just stories.

MARIANNE

They say she's wild. *[Beat]* I saw her.

TED

Did she look wild to you?

MARIANNE

No- She spoke well. Very pretty, composed.

TED

Must just be gossip then. You women and your gossip. Just about ruined poor Clancey - the things people say about him. You seen him, he's not much of anything, harmless really. Should be left alone is what I think.

MARIANNE

I have seen him, Ted, but the things that get said about that man-

TED

Terrible rumors, that's all.

MARIANNE

Even if they are only half-truths... what they say he's done with young boys-

TED

Enough. People talkin about that kind of stuff only brings trouble. Rumors like that can get people killed. You want that Marianne, you want to kill that harmless old man?

TED drinks from his glass.

MARIANNE

I do wish you wouldn't do that. I came here in the middle of the day to be with you and you insist on-

TED

My bar, Marianne. If you don't like it, you can leave.

MARIANNE

I just... feel like- when you drink you...

TED

What?

MARIANNE

Nothing. Never mind. I'll see you at home. I may be asleep when you come back.

TED

You usually are.

As MARIANNE exits, GRANT enters and they stop a moment in front of one another.

GRANT

Well hello, Marianne. Ted treatin you alright?

MARIANNE

Oh- yes. Of course. *[Beat]* It's early in the day to be drinking, Mr. Grant, don't you think?

MARIANNE exits and GRANT moves to the bar. JIM enters, blowing past him.

JIM

(Yelling)

Kip! KIP!

KIP enters from the kitchen.

KIP

What is it, Jim? I've got a lot of work to do.

JIM

I've been looking all over for you. You ran off so quickly yesterday.

KIP

I had to-

JIM

Doesn't matter, 'cause - no thanks to you - that woman agreed to let me see Imogen and told me to come back, with you. Isn't that great? This is your chance, Kip.

KIP

Great.

JIM

That's not the best part though. After that lady left, she came to the window. Imogen. I saw her.

KIP

And? What was she like?

JIM

Strange.

KIP

Strange?

JIM

But beautiful and interesting and- I'm telling you Kip, she'll be the girl of your dreams once you meet her. I know you'll love her, and she'll love you twice as much.

KIP

Listen-

JIM

You're not getting out of this. You're perfect for each other.

KIP

If she's so perfect you should want her for yourself.

JIM

I've got girls, Kip. I know what they're like, and I have fun and all, but you- you're not like that. It's gotta be perfect with you, 'cause that's just the way you are. I can see that in you, and maybe there ain't nobody else that can. You're different, you always have been.

KIP

I'm not. You keep sayin that, but there ain't nothin special in me. That's all in your head. It's all just stories.

JIM

I thought you liked stories, you always used to. We could sit for hours and tell 'em. Wild things, about growin up and discovering the unexplored country. You used to say things like that.

KIP

I don't know what you want from me. Things are different now is all. Used to be we didn't have to worry about girls and love stories or nothin, and now - you changed the story. Somehow got it into your head to put me in a role I don't belong to. It's not fun anymore.

JIM

But you're the hero, Kip. Like that man Mr. Grant found dead. Imagine being killed by Indians - killed fightin for land, fightin for a home. If you ask me, that man was braver than anyone I ever met - fightin those Indians.

KIP

You don't know anything about it. Besides, Clancey says it wasn't even Indians.

JIM

Clancey don't know what he's talking about. He's nothin but a washed-up old drunk. But you Kip, you're gonna be a hero. You've gotta have the girl, see? That's the way it goes. Please?

KIP

I - I can try. I'll try to be what you want, Jim, but you're only gonna be disappointed.

JIM

I won't, I couldn't be! There are a few things we gotta work out. We've gotta find you a war uniform, like what you'd be wearin if you was about to go and join up.

KIP

What?

JIM

I told her you were going to war. It was the only way to get the woman to agree and let you see the girl. I'll explain everything later, but first- Kip, after you left, and after I saw her, I heard somethin from inside. Screamin, like a struggle and I don't know what all.

KIP

What does that mean?

JIM

I don't know. That maybe she's being hurt in there. And I don't know about you, but I can't sit still if that's the case. We've got to find out, make sure she's alright. Somethin's goin on in that house and she might need us to save her.

KIP

What do you want us to do?

JIM

I have a plan.

JIM pulls KIP back into the kitchen.

TED

You ever heard the like of that?

GRANT

(Concerned)

No sir. Can't say I ever have.

TED

Boys. *[Beat]* Marianne said something to you on her way out?

GRANT

Something goin on? In trouble with the wife?

TED

Always. *[They both laugh]* Always.

Scene Five

Inside GRANT's living room. The entrance to the living room is stage left, and there is a giant window in the up stage wall. A cabinet stands stage right. There are two chairs facing the audience. THE BODY sits propped up in the chair stage left. JIM appears at the window looking into the living room, KIP in tow. They do not see THE BODY in the high-backed chair. JIM slides the window up and crawls through, followed by KIP.

KIP

What are we looking for?

JIM

I don't know. I just know something's not right. And we gotta find out what it is. She's in trouble, I know she is.

They creep around the room, then see the body in the chair.

KIP

Jim! It's... a body- and... it's dead.

They hear GRANT entering at the door . JIM quickly looks around the room, sees the cabinet, jumps inside. KIP is transfixed by THE BODY. As the door opens, KIP pulls himself away from THE BODY and hides in the cabinet. Both boys are hidden from GRANT. GRANT pours himself a drink and sits down in the stage right armchair, looking at THE BODY. DOLLY enters and sees GRANT.

DOLLY

Thank goodness you're here, sir. The little miss, she's awake and...

DOLLY sees THE BODY. She stops talking and stares at it. She looks from GRANT to the body, horrified.

DOLLY

I keep on tellin ya, and I'll have to keep on till Kingdom come: you can't go leavin that thing propped up around the house like that. So much of my time here is spent cleanin, makin everything look nice for you - not to mention the time that goes into dressin that thing up for whatever idea comes into your head next. What I mean to say is, that it's a shame to have to see all my hard work soiled like that. My God it smells. I don't know how you stand it.

GRANT stares at her for a moment.

GRANT

Of course, you're right. I apologize.

GRANT crosses to THE BODY and tries to lift it out of the chair.

DOLLY

I didn't mean you should move him now. Just something to think about for the future. Not that he looks as if there's much of a future in him.

GRANT

You can't expect the dead to stay young and fresh forever.

DOLLY

Certainly you can't, and I don't. I sometimes wonder if he's worth all the trouble you have us go to. Look at the poor soul. Sitting there, rotten. Like he's rotting, right there in my chair- your chair- that I cleaned. Rotting.

GRANT

I never meant we could keep it up forever. But I thought I'd make a little more money out of it first.

DOLLY

You could always get another one.

GRANT

Dolly!

DOLLY

Oh, there's plenty of people about and who'd mind one less is all I'm sayin. Only you could consider finding a proper place to keep the next one, somewhere not in the living room maybe.

GRANT

I couldn't kill anyone.

DOLLY

I don't see why not. You killed this fellow, didn't you?

GRANT

That was an accident. I keep telling you, I didn't mean to...

DOLLY

I'm not passing judgement, lord knows that ain't my place. You come home one night, this fella draped across your shoulders like you'd shot a wild beast and you tell me it was dark, you ran him down, couldn't see him, and I don't ask questions, follow you blindly, as ever. It don't make sense-

GRANT

It's the truth!

DOLLY

I'm not sayin that. I meant the business with him, what we're doin. Dressin him up as if we'd lost our minds completely.

GRANT

It will work, Dolly, it will. When those men found him, lying there looking like Indians had got him, they were truly frightened. They would have given anything if I said I could protect them from the same things happening again. It was only later, telling the story at the bar, that people got skeptical.

DOLLY

You're lucky I came in when I did. I told you it wouldn't work.

GRANT

But it could have.

DOLLY

It didn't. It's only on my account you were able to get anything from the men in that bar at all.

GRANT

I'm grateful. What do you want?

DOLLY

I want to go back to the way things were, before the body. It used to be easy, peddling physics and cure-alls like every other half-brained con-man in the country. Charlatanism suited you, and more than that it worked. Why change, especially when we're so close-

DOLLY is cut off by banging sounds from above.

DOLLY

Oh Hell.

GRANT

Please, just- go take care of her, please.

DOLLY

As you wish. You got me talkin, but I came down tryin to tell you in the first place that your daughter was awake, and not in one of her better moods.

DOLLY exits. Slamming the door. KIP, inside the cabinet, is startled by the sound and hits his head, letting out a small yelp. GRANT looks around, but dismisses it. He looks at THE BODY.

GRANT

What about you? What do you think? She's right, isn't she? Go West, go West, get out, my head kept telling me. Take the girl and give her a chance out West. Open space, no neighbors to give a damn about anything save themselves. Take her with you and go West. Hide her away and try to give her some kind of a life. Even here it's the same. We could keep going, farther and farther till we fall off the edge of the world, but there's not a place between here and there where she can really live free.

DOLLY re-enters, looking as if she has been in a scuffle.

DOLLY

She's wild, that girl is. And getting worse judgin from how she's been lately.

GRANT

I know, I know. Sit down, Dolly.

DOLLY looks for a place to sit, the only other seat being occupied by THE BODY. She remains standing.

GRANT

Tell me what to do.

DOLLY

Tell you, sir? With the girl? *[Beat]* or him? *[Gesturing toward THE BODY]*

GRANT

Both. Either. *[Pause]* Oh don't look like that, you've never been short for words before.

DOLLY

Oh alright. Here's how I see it. You can't go back home without money. Creditors write constantly. *[Takes letters from her apron and shuffles through them]* "Dear Mr. Grant, urgent payment needed," "response required," "action taken," and on and on with the like.

GRANT

Home. Back East, but with the war on and all- they haven't forgotten all that?

DOLLY

The war's only made everyone more conscious of debt than ever. They all need money now, and going back without it would be suicide.

GRANT

So we push on west?

DOLLY

No, sir. I'm sorry, but we can't do that either. There's as many letters from doctors as there are from creditors.

DOLLY produces more letters and drops them on the ground, creating a small pile.

DOLLY

And those are just the ones from back home. Hundreds more come in from country doctors across the continent. Little towns where we stopped for a while, little towns where you thought she could stay, and in each one a doctor, telling you the girl needs a cure.

GRANT

Cure. Always the cure. They're crooks, all of them. New technology they've discovered in the war - a medical miracle, this war - good for something I suppose. Save her life, make her normal. Charlatans.

DOLLY

All the same, you have to agree that there's nothing for her out there. She's only getting worse. The farther out we go, the harder it is to keep her in, the wilder, stronger she gets. And here I am, cooped up in this house, caring for your daughter, cleaning up after you, and you telling me: "Hold them off another week, another month, while I gather the funds." All the while we're gettin farther and farther away from everyone we know, from civilization, from society, and cleanliness. And now you've landed yourself and your daughter here in this miserable place and it's your responsibility to see that we get back.

GRANT

I'm trying. It should be easy. If you find the right angle, there's no end to what people will give if you put it to them just the right way. The body was supposed to do that. It should be faster than peddling scams, get us everything we need.

DOLLY

You asked for my advice, sir, and here it is. Quit messin around with this body. Get rid of him. Go back to the way things were and be patient.

GRANT

I can use him, I know I can, just once more. He's got one more in him, and I've got a plan. This one, the final scam, just this one and we'll have enough to go back.

DOLLY

He's rotting away. He's stiffening, everything's locking up and becoming more difficult to manipulate. It won't work.

GRANT

It will with your help. Please. If you want to get back to your girls, you have to help me, please.

Crashing noises from above, shrieking and pounding.

DOLLY

Alright, I'll help you, but you'd better make this last one work. Listen to that noise, sir. She's up there right now, wailin and thrashin about. She needs her father.

GRANT

I'm trying. Really, I am.

DOLLY exits, GRANT looks at THE BODY, downs his drink, then follows.

KIP and JIM come slowly out of the cabinet. They look at THE BODY. JIM opens the window and they both climb out.

Scene Six

The next night. At the bar, GRANT, DOLLY, HELEN and MARIANNE stand with a crowd around them. The women are obviously excited. KIP lies on top of the bar, as if dead. The customers and TED look on.

DOLLY

Just lying there, gentlemen.

HELEN

Drunk as you please -

MARIANNE

- and dead!

TED

I don't see that this has anything to do with you, Marianne.

MARIANNE

But we saw him there. *[Pointing to KIP]* Just like that.

HELEN

And smelling like pure sin, just reeking from alcohol and only God knows what else.

MARIANNE

He smelled rotten is what he smelled like. Rotten all the way through, and I'm sure I can tell you why.

GRANT

I know you don't want to believe it, Ted, but what they say is true. Right outside your establishment they found him.

HELEN

Dead drunk. And it wouldn't be the first time, either, I shouldn't think.

MARIANNE

Lucky Mr. Grant was nearby when we found him, too. We wouldn't have known what to do without him.

HELEN

As calm as you like, Mr. Grant bent down to examine him, while Marianne and I could barely control ourselves -

MARIANNE

Almost fainted from fright and that terrible smell. I assure you, I'd never smelled death before, gentleman but it's somethin you can smell a mile away.

DOLLY

And there's whiffs of it in the air here tonight!

HELEN

That's right! Now, Mr. Grant bent down and gave him the once over and declared the poor fellow dead. Told us he had drunk himself to death -

MARIANNE

- dead drunk -

HELEN

We were only too glad of your help, Mr. Grant. So calm, honestly I don't know how you could stomach it. Almost like you were used to the sight of such things, and the smell-

GRANT

Well, I haven't, I mean- it was the least I could do, really-

DOLLY

A civic duty some might call it! He was only doin what was right and proper!

TED

Fine. The guy had too much to drink, lies down, doesn't get back up again. [*Pointing to KIP*] What's the kid got to do with it.

GRANT

Merely a visual aid, sir. Trying to illustrate for you and your patrons the shock which these ladies must have undergone when coming across the unfortunate body.

KIP sits up slightly.

KIP

Can I get down now, Mr. Grant?

GRANT

(Pushing KIP back down)

Another moment.

TED

You say this happened right outside?

MARIANNE

Yes, Ted, that's exactly what we've been saying.

TED

Now you lot listen here, you too Marianne. Ain't no one here tonight seen anything like the man you been talkin about. I don't know what you're playin at, but you better do it somewhere else. You've been at me to close down the bar for a long time now, Marianne, but you aren't gonna get your way like this.

MARIANNE

How could you think something like that? That I could make up something so terrible?

DOLLY

She's tellin the truth, sir. We all saw him. Isn't that right? [*The women agree*] He was lying right outside, dead drunk, and all the while you lot were yippin and carousin in here, heedless of the tragedy right on your very doorstep. Downing drink, after drink, never knowing you were drowning.

TED

I don't know where all this is comin from, Mr. Grant, but surely you aren't comin in here to preach the evils of drink to us. You been in here as much as any of the rest.

GRANT

I can't deny what you're sayin is true. I've been given to temptation in the past. But now I consider myself a reformed man.

TED

Fastest change in a man I ever seen.

DOLLY

If you'd a seen this fellow, drippin with alcohol-

HELEN

Like he'd just poured it all over himself, jumped in a barrel full of it-

DOLLY

Yes ma'am. Clothes wet, eyeballs bulgin out, like there was a flood inside him ready to burst out of every hole he got, blood and sick pooled up around him, spilled this way and that -

MARIANNE

It should happen to you!

DOLLY

All I'm sayin is that if you'd seen him, why, you'd never touch the stuff again. Just like Mr. Grant here, isn't that right, sir?

GRANT

Yes, Dolly, quite right.

TED

This is my place and you don't get no say in my running of it or what these gentlemen choose to get up to.

GRANT

That's a fine position for you take, now, Ted, but you aren't the only one responsible here.

DOLLY

(Addressing the customers)

Look at the lot of you! Going home each night so blind you end up sleepin in the dog house just to have a roof over your head. With your wives and children wondering where you've got off to, worrying themselves sick -

HELEN

That's right!

DOLLY

And all 'cause you don't got the power to stop. It's taken you over, and pretty soon it's gonna ruin this whole town, the whole country. Look at this poor boy, lyin right in front of your faces. This boy is the future of our country, and look at what's gonna become of him. Growin up around all this, spendin every night here, and God only knows what it's doin to his young mind. He'll grow up just like you lot if he continues down this track. Is that what you want?

HELEN AND MARIANNE

No!

DOLLY

Now I got two girls back home in New England. Beautiful girls that I think about each and every day. And if I thought for one second they were bein brought up like children out here, I'd run straight to the gallows and hang myself! I followed Mr. Grant out here because I needed the money, but I left those girls at home where they'd be safe! Safe from the corruption and scandal of a life out West!

As the women shout, JIM bursts into the bar, looks around, then quickly runs over to KIP.

Kip!

JIM

KIP sits up as JIM takes him by the arm and drags him away.

JIM

What's going on. Have you told anyone what we saw? Did you tell Ted, you promised you would. What's going on in here.

KIP

He did it again, Jim. They used the body again, like what they must have done before, with the Indian attack. They're tellin everybody he drank himself to death, and I don't know what for.

JIM

And you're just lyin there not doin a thing about it? You're about as good as a corpse, aren't you? Lyin there and not saying anything while all this goes on around you.

KIP

I don't- I couldn't. Jim, please.

KIP runs out, Jim follows.

HELEN

The youth of this country is going two ways, gentlemen. One half is fixed on ending up right where you yourselves sit, drinking for no reason and for every reason you can think of.

MARIANNE

The other half is marching off to fight that war. North against South, the whole country eating itself up. Swallowing itself whole, like a snake that starts eating its own tail and can't stop till it's dead.

TED pulls MARIANNE aside.

TED

I don't know what you think you're up to, Marianne, but you better put a stop to it right now.

MARIANNE

And you had better listen to what we're saying, Ted. Mr. Grant is trying to help you, help all of us.

TED

Go home, Marianne, we can talk about this there. You wait up for me.

DOLLY

(To the crowd)

And both them roads lead right to the same conclusion, gentlemen. On the one side they end up drunk and alone outside places like this one all over the country, to be found by unsuspecting ladies.

MARIANNE

(To Ted)

You're drunk. I can't talk to you when you've been drinking. It's like you're a different man.

DOLLY

And those that don't die drunk get shot down by their own countrymen. Line 'em up, and shoot 'em down. Either way it ends up just the same.

MARIANNE

Not the man I want you to be, at any rate.

TED

Maybe that's just it, then. I can't be what you want me to be. Things don't work out like that. I can only be what I am. Not what you think.

GRANT

And I know, I know, gentlemen, that this isn't what you want for your children, and your children's children. Just think of this country in a hundred year's time. Two hundred, three. We've got to act now.

HELEN

Here, here!

GRANT

Which is why we are forming here tonight The League for Temperance and Moral Advancement.

TED

Go home, Marianne. Go home.

MARIANNE turns away and exits. TED rejoins the group.

DOLLY

Listen to me, all of you, listen to the words of a mother. I know that each and every one of you don't want to see your children rotting away. I think of my girls gettin caught up in a world like this out here and it's enough to drive me to murder. I think of them ending up faceless bodies, lying in a gutter and I thank my stars they're back home and safe.

Safer there even with the war goin, that's how bad it's gettin out here, that's how bad you all have gotten. Useless, and rotting. So open up your wallets and be the first to contribute to lasting reform. You can be heroes, each one of you, heroes to your families, to your nation, to me and my girls back home. Just by giving money for Moral Advancement.

The customers, roused by DOLLY's speech, begin to give money.

GRANT

Thank you, gentlemen, thank you. *[Aside to Dolly]* Thank you. You really hit the mark.

DOLLY

Don't I always?

HELEN

(To the customers)

You're doing the right thing. Aren't they, Marianne? *[She looks around for MARIANNE]* Marianne?

Scene Seven

*Outside the bar, immediately following the action inside.
KIP runs on, JIM follows.*

JIM

Kip. Wait! Kip! Slow down, stop running.

KIP

What! What do you want from me?

JIM

Just talk. Talk to me for a minute. Just. Talk.

KIP

I can't, I tried Jim, I did. What we saw, in Grant's house-

JIM

It was bad, I know. But he's gotta be stopped.

KIP

It's not any of my business.

JIM

But- but you gotta do something about it You have to.

KIP

No, I don't have to do anything. I'm scared, Jim. Why aren't you scared?

JIM

A hero wouldn't be scared. He would do what was right.

KIP

But I'm not that, Jim. I told you, you're wrong about me. I'm not a hero. You just believe I am but that don't make it so.

JIM

You're special, Kip. I know -

KIP

Stop saying that! Please- leave me alone. I don't want to keep doing this. Let me be regular. And alone.

JIM

I don't believe that-

KIP

Believe what you want. You always have anyway.

JIM

You can't just walk away from this. Someone's gotta stop him. That body- that poor girl. We've got to rescue her. Who knows what goes on inside that house -

KIP

Christ, Jim. Not everyone needs rescuing.

JIM

Maybe they do.

KIP

Then you do something about it. You tell someone.

JIM

No one's going to believe me. Like you said, I make up stories all the time. Whose going to believe something like this coming from me? It has to be you. They'll believe you. You saw that body, Kip. You couldn't let him go on like that.

KIP

I just- want everything to be okay. I want things to be normal. Ordinary problems, not - this. Not dead bodies in living room chairs. All this is because of you. You got me into all of this, and why? Hell if I know. Hell if I know what you want from me. I don't want any of this.

JIM

That's not the way it goes. You don't always get to choose to be a hero; sometimes you just have to be one. Whether you want it or not. And you saw what's going on in there, so this is one of those times where you don't get a choice.

KIP

But-

JIM

You don't get a choice.

KIP

Yes I do. I always have a choice, and I'm not saying anything.

JIM

Coward, damn coward!

KIP

Jim!

JIM

You are. Just a coward, scared of everything, can't do anything good or bad, just sit still and don't do nothing. That's a coward. And maybe it's true what you say, that you aren't special, that I invented all that as a story. But now, it's not a story anymore. You have to be a hero. You don't have to talk to me ever again if you don't want, but you've got to tell someone. You have to.

CLANCEY has entered. He spots the two boys.

CLANCEY

(To the boys)

Knocking around here in the dead of night. Must be up to something.

JIM

Oh. We were-

CLANCEY

Hey, hey. No need to explain to me. I was young once, too. Isn't that right, kid?

As CLANCEY looks at KIP, JIM sneaks around behind CLANCEY, mouthing the words "Tell him" as he exits.

KIP

(Calling after Jim)

Jim!

CLANCEY

Run off after him, doggy, or you'll never catch up. Go. Before the scent gets stale. *[No response]* What's the matter? He bite too hard for you? Prefer an old hound dog that don't got no teeth left to hurt? Safer that way, in't it. Go if you're goin. Whatcha waiting round here for?

KIP

I've gotta- I need to talk to you about something.

CLANCEY

Can't talk to your little friend about it?

KIP

It isn't that- I... no. I need to talk to someone else. An, adult.

CLANCEY

Alright then, darlin. I've always got time for you. Let's hear it.

KIP

Alright. I... I've gotta...

CLANCEY

Come here, kid. What is it? You got a look about you like a spooked horse. Pawin at the ground, eyes wide - not sure if you're gonna run off or bite. Come here. Calm down.

Let me tell you, kid - from a guy who spent his whole life running - It's better to open your mouth and chomp down. Hard.

Only ever had one horse did that to me. Got that look, and I thought she woulda bolted out into the plain, any other horse would have. But this one... bit down real hard, right into my shoulder. Best horse I ever had. Those are the only ones worth keepin around.

So - What's it gonna be, kid?

KIP

I... just want to stop. Just for a minute.

CLANCEY

World ain't gonna stop for no one, kid. Gotta hold on tight or you'll get bucked. End up like me.

KIP

Don't say that.

CLANCEY

Gotta stay seated, no matter how hard the mare might try to throw ya. I let go.

KIP

That isn't true-

CLANCEY

But you - Kip. You've got the chance not only to stay seated, but take the reins and lead the way.

KIP

The war.

CLANCEY

That's right, gorgeous. Gotta stop running away from everything and bite down hard.

KIP

I'm not running. I want to stay here.

CLANCEY

No-

KIP

With you.

CLANCEY

What you want with a worn-out cow hand, boy? Nothing much left in me. I'm just sittin here. Rotting.

GRANT enters, leaving the bar. He almost passes by, but decides to stop and talk instead.

GRANT

Evening.

CLANCEY

Evening, Mr. Grant.

GRANT

Don't suppose I can impose on you for a donation. New fund. Leading the way to Temperance.

CLANCEY

That's a nice one comin from you-

GRANT

No. Didn't really think I'd get anything from you. Take away your drink, and there wouldn't be much of you left. Isn't that right, Clancey?

CLANCEY

Go to hell.

GRANT

(To Kip)

You be careful, boy. Awful bad influence this one. I hear he gets up to all sorts of secret things.

GRANT exits.

CLANCEY

That man-

KIP

(As if suddenly remembering)

Yes! Him, I need...

CLANCEY

What?

KIP

(Suddenly)

Come away with me.

CLANCEY

What're you at?

GRANT re-enters, but stops short at KIP's words and hides himself. He watches the couple.

KIP

Just... let's go away. Together. We could go somewhere else. Be on our own, you know? Just- just be. All this land out here, and there's gotta be a place we can just be. Regular, peaceful.

CLANCEY

Ah, kid. I couldn't let you do that with your life. You're too good for that- end up with a guy like me. That Grant's right about one thing maybe. I am a bad influence on you.

KIP

No-

CLANCEY

I am. I am. I know it's true. And you know it, too. You've gotta get out of here, kid. You just have to go or I'll never forgive myself for what I've done to you. And that war over there is your ticket back to real life. Where people do things because they have to. It's too much responsibility out here. Too much land. Too much possibility, and we just don't do anything. But you've got a shot at a real life. You gotta take it.

KIP

I don't... I don't want any of this.

CLANCEY

I know, kid. I know. *[Clancey kisses Kip]* Let's get you home.

Scene Eight

At the bar, TED and the customers are gathered around, listening to JIM's story.

JIM

After we heard all those noises, we couldn't just leave it, could we? Had to find out what was going on in there. So we creep up to the window, slow and silent-like, so we don't give ourselves away. And what do we see in there? The man is makin up some sort of potion. Witch stuff, Indian medicine, and I don't know what all was in it, but it was boiling fierce and red like blood. We see him add one last thing, and I had to squint real hard to make it out. Deadly nightshade: poison.

TED

How do you know what that stuff looks like?

JIM

Because I do, alright, now shut it.

So we see him planning to poison somebody, right? And he pours it into the most delicate little teacup you ever seen in your life. Pink, with white flowers; innocent; and you couldn't believe something like that could hold something as evil as it did - like it should have broke and shattered from that stuff inside. And we see him take it up the stairs to his daughter's room, and all of a sudden, Kip realizes what's goin on. He's gonna kill her. His own daughter.

Near the beginning of JIM's speech, GRANT has entered and sat down at the bar, half listening to JIM.

TED

Why?

GRANT

Yes, boy. Why would he want to go and do a thing like that?

JIM

Well... you see Mr. Grant, bodies, you see, they can be dead useful things, don't you know? All kinds of secret mischief can be gotten up to - like magic, I mean.

You can dress ‘em up, play tricks on people, and the body don’t know a thing about it. He’s dead.

GRANT

Tell us what happened next.

JIM

Well - so Kip says we gotta go in and rescue her, cause she couldn’t know what’s comin up the stairs in that pretty little cup, and from the hands of her own father no less. So- so we run ‘round the back of the house and climb up to her window, see, and Kip, because he’s been courting her all this time, goes into her bedroom and tries to warn her. Her father bursts in, hollering like crazy. Telling Kip to get out, and that little teacup shakin in his great big hand, the poison potion spilling this way and that. But Kip, he runs at the father, all heroic like, but also with this kind of crazy look in his eye, too. And the father has no choice but to go backwards out of the room and down the stairs. We follow him, right? And that’s when we see what he’s really been up to. It was a room full of statues, only they weren’t statues, they were real people - or, they had been, but now they were dead. All dressed up, and placed around the room, set up, like for some kind of party- and he had been keeping them there, like a collection - for God knows what - and that potion, you see, was going to do that same thing to his very own daughter. It was just lucky that Kip was passing by to save her, cause if not - She could have ended up just another dead doll in his collection.

GRANT

That’s a nice story, boy. You’ve got some ideas in that head of yours. You could write a fiction some day. You’d be real good at it.

JIM

Yes, sir. I reckon I would be. *[Turning to the customers]* That’s all folks, I gotta go.

JIM turns to leave, but GRANT grabs on to his arm and pulls him away from the crowd.

GRANT

Hold on a minute, boy. I’m gonna need a word with you.

JIM

Yes, sir. I thought you might. Only, see, I wouldn’t be caught dead talkin to you. If you know what I mean.

GRANT

I see. Yes, I think I do.

I don’t know what your game is, boy, but I warn you: tread lightly, or you’ll fall in out of your depth. You don’t know what you’re on about. Not everything fits so nicely into your love story categories. Just some friendly advice.

JIM

Yes sir, thank you sir. I'll be sure to keep that in mind for the future, sir.

JIM breaks free and exits. GRANT sits down.

TED

Drinking?

GRANT

Yeah.

TED

I knew it wouldn't last.

Scene Nine

Inside GRANT's living-room. DOLLY sits in a chair, holding a drink. In the opposite chair sits THE BODY. GRANT enters, DOLLY stays seated.

DOLLY

Miss is upstairs. She's resting now. We both are. When she sleeps like that, you'd never know that when she wakes up- what she's like. Reminds me of my own girls, sleeping so peaceful. You didn't know if they were even breathing. Like they'd been transformed into angels without you ever even knowing.

GRANT

I see.

DOLLY

You never ask me about them.

GRANT

What?

DOLLY

My daughters. You never ask me about them. I talk about my girls all the time and yet you never ask, never care.

GRANT

You left them, came with me instead. I didn't know it mattered.

DOLLY

I meant what I said at the bar, that they're safer back there. Away from all of this. I only came with you for the money. For them. You told me we'd make a fortune out here, more money than I could imagine. Either I can imagine a lot more than you counted on, or you lied to me.

GRANT

Dolly-

DOLLY

Either way it amounts to the same thing. My angels have grown up without me, while I've been playin mother to your monster.

GRANT

I think someone knows.

DOLLY

About Imogen? It was only a matter of time with those boys sniffin around-

GRANT

What?

DOLLY

Those two boys - the ones from the bar.

GRANT

What about them?

DOLLY

They were here. Well, one of them was. A few days ago, asking after Imogen, talkin about love and war and all sorts of romantic notions. I don't know where boys get that kind of thing. Like something they're born with, then lose growing up. These heroic ideas. I meant to tell you before now. So someone found out? They always do, then we pick up and move on. I don't want to do that again. Not anymore. I've followed you and believed what you told me, but I don't anymore

GRANT

I should have... I heard them talking about a girl, but I didn't know... It doesn't matter anyway. It's over for us.

DOLLY

But you didn't know any of that?

GRANT

No.

DOLLY

What did you mean, then? Someone knows what?

GRANT

About him. About the body. And what we've been doing. We'll be arrested, charged, killed. It's only a matter of time now.

DOLLY

Oh Lord. You had better take care of this. You take care of whoever it is, 'cause I will not let this be ruined. We're at the very end of it, all the way out here, and I will see my daughters again, so you take care of this, sir, or else find another way to get me home.

GRANT

Stop! Stop talking, for once. Please, I need to think.

Riotous crashing from above.

DOLLY

She's awake. I'll go tend to her.

GRANT

No- let me. Let me help her.

GRANT exits.

DOLLY looks towards THE BODY, she addresses it.

DOLLY

What good have you been? Just stink up my living room. Disgusting. And a good lot of help you are, sitting there like that. Now you'll be the death of us all. Who would have thought I'd be here- the middle of an endless continent - talking to a corpse? I should be home- with my girls. Not here, with you. Things should have been different. Help us. You need to help me get away from here.

GRANT enters, panting heavily. He has obviously been in a struggle.

GRANT

Dolly, I- I can't. She attacked me and I... struck her.

DOLLY

Sir!

GRANT

I couldn't help it, Dolly. The madness in her, it's violent and I couldn't- I couldn't even look at her, she was so terrible. I don't know what she is anymore. She can't be controlled. What is she?

DOLLY

She is your daughter, sir, and it's your responsibility to protect her. Which is exactly what I'm going to help you do.

GRANT

What do you mean?

DOLLY

Who is it? Who is it that knows?

GRANT

A boy. Just a boy. Jim.

DOLLY

I might have figured. Same one was here, asking after Imogen. He needs to be taken care of, sir. And your friend is going to help us. [*She motions toward THE BODY*] We can get rid of the boy and the body both.

GRANT

How?

DOLLY

Set him up. One last time. Dress it up like a murder scene and frame the boy; let the rest play out naturally. He'll be found with the body and no one will ask questions, no one will believe a criminal caught with blood on his hands.

GRANT

But how? How can we be sure he'll find the body?

DOLLY

I'm leavin that up to you, sir. I'll take care of everything else, and all you need is to make sure he's there. Make sure he's the one who finds it. Everything else, I'll do. And sir...

GRANT

Yes, Dolly?

DOLLY

Once this is done, I'm going home.

GRANT

But- you have no money.

DOLLY

I'll find a way. One way or another, I'm going back east.

Another crashing sound from above.

DOLLY

Lord, we should go to her.

GRANT

You go. I can't. I can't look at her again. Not now. It was like I couldn't control what I was doing. Like she took me over. I'm afraid of what could happen, what I might do. She's too strong.

DOLLY

I'll go. You sit here and wait for me to come back. We have work to do.

DOLLY exits. GRANT sits down and waits.

Scene Ten

TED's Bar. GRANT sits at the counter, TED stands behind.

TED

I get home and there she is. Sittin up still - God knows what hour - hasn't been to sleep, and not even out of her day clothes.

GRANT

What do you do? With a woman like that?

TED

You were married, yeah?

GRANT

Yes, sir, and the finest woman you ever saw, too. Laid down to deliver that child, didn't get back up again.

TED

Happens, I guess.

GRANT

I guess it does. You were saying?

TED

So Marianne, right? Sitting there, and the woman I been married to for twenty years, says she don't want to live like this.

GRANT

What do you do? You pick up and go on. That's when we started moving west: after she was born. Couldn't stay one place too long, not with the girl bein the way she is - always someone finds out.

TED

Says she wants to move on - the next town over, maybe, all on her own.

GRANT

On to the next we go, because it takes more money to return to the start than to start over, and now she's only getting worse.

TED

So I'm lookin at her, 'cause I'm thinking she's lost her mind. She must've done to think about livin on her own.

GRANT

And there are good times. Times when she's settled, normal, almost. But when she loses it, she's lost. Times when we have to tie her up so she won't hurt herself. No bringing her back until she's ready. Untrained. Untamed, just wild - like nothings holdin her back. Nothing to be done, and now without Dolly...

TED

She tells me her friend Helen's been doin it for years, and I tell her that Helen's been widowed and has a grown son to take care of her. And I ask, "Whose gonna care for you, Marianne? Whose gonna take care of you?"

GRANT

And now - everything gone and ruined, has to be stopped.

TED

Everything ruined.

MARIANNE enters in travelling clothes, with a small suitcase. TED sees her.

TED

Marianne.

GRANT

Talk to her. Make her stay. She's all you got.

TED

What are you-

MARIANNE

I'm giving you a choice, Ted.

TED

For Christ's sake-

MARIANNE

Come home with me now, and don't come back here, ever. Close it down, leave it open, I don't care, but don't come back. Or - or I won't be coming back from where I'm going.

TED

You're crazy. She's gone crazy. You can't be thinking you'll survive on your own. You can't. It just isn't done.

MARIANNE

I will. I have to, Ted. Because I can't live with you anymore. It wouldn't be right- not proper. I didn't marry you, and we can't live together if we weren't never married.

TED

This is crazy- Of course we are married! We-

MARIANNE

I married a Ted- but not this one. Not you, the man standing in front of me now. The man I married was young-

TED

We get older-

MARIANNE

-at heart. Such youthful energy and so much hope, so much love. The man I married told me we'd make something all the way out here - make a life for ourselves. A new life with every possibility and this was the place to do it because it was a clean slate. Nothing at all. And we could shape it into anything we wanted. It could be anything. And I married him because I believed it.

TED

That was just talking, Marianne. Just kid talk. We were young.

MARIANNE

But we did come here, and now: look at you. I really do believe you've been changed-

GRANT

Marianne-

MARIANNE

Excuse me, Mr. Grant, but this does not concern you. *[Back to Ted]* Now, I don't know if it's liquor, or this place, this open country, or what it is that makes men like they are - maybe it's just something in your blood but it's making you rotten, from the inside out, and I won't be married to a- a rotting corpse, because that's what all of you are becoming. Like that man we found outside the bar- dead. I look at you, and all I see is that corpse, dead from drink. I didn't marry a corpse, and I won't be married to one now.

TED

Livin out here, Marianne. I don't know. There's just nothing. And a man can't make anything out of nothing - not out here. Can't even make hope from nothing. It just kills hope.

MARIANNE

I look at everyone around here and, all of us- we all married our grand ideals and got trapped. We've come to the middle of an infinite country and just laid down to die. You say this place kills hope, but I refuse to let mine die. I can't let it and I won't. I wanted so much from you. For you.

TED

I can't change what I am. And neither can you.

MARIANNE

I know that. I do know that, so I have to leave. You don't understand it, but I have to hope for something better, even if somewhere deep down I know that nothing better's coming. Because if you give up hope, if you let those youthful dreams go - you just die. There's nothing else left and you stop moving, stop living. I've seen it too often out here to let that happen to me. I've got to keep dreaming. Good-bye, Ted.

MARIANNE calmly exits. TED calls to her, but she does not respond.

KIP enters, hurriedly.

KIP

I'm late - I'm late. I know.

TED

... It don't, matter. Just...

KIP

(Seeing Grant)

I'll just work in the kitchen.

GRANT

Actually, mind if I have a word with your young barkeep here, Teddy?

TED

Whatever you want.

GRANT

Come here, son. I'm not gonna bite you, just come here a minute.

KIP

Please, leave me alone. I don't know anything, I don't-

GRANT

I'm not gonna hurt you, boy. I- I just need to talk for a minute, alright?

KIP nods.

GRANT

I need you to do something for me, son - so listen close. You listening? [*KIP nods*] Now, from what I gather, your friend's been lookin into things that would have been better left alone, things he shouldn't be getting into. You know what I'm talking about? [*KIP nods*] Now here's what I need from you. And believe me, kid, I wouldn't be doing this if there were another way, but this is what's gonna be best, for everyone. You're gonna tell your friend to meet you in the woods at the edge of town - just a few steps inside, not to far. By that little pond - you know which one I mean? [*Kip Nods*] Good. Tell him to meet you there tomorrow at midnight.

KIP

Why? What are you gonna do to him?

GRANT

Don't worry about that. I'm not gonna hurt him. I promise.

KIP

I don't believe you. Why should I?

GRANT

I need- we need to get him out of the way. You don't understand, but everything depends on that. What he could tell people...

KIP

I was there, too. I saw everything.

GRANT

But you're not gonna tell anyone. I'm sure of that.

KIP

Tell me what'll happen to Jim.

GRANT

It's only a set-up. He'll be fine but, they'll find him with- with that body you saw and charge him with murder.

KIP

That'll kill him. They can kill him for that.

GRANT

Maybe. There's a chance-

KIP

I won't - I can't.

GRANT

No. But you will..

KIP

And why is that, Mr. Grant? Because the way I see it, you can't make me do a goddamn thing.

GRANT

It's admirable, Kip. Playing the hero, standing up for your friend. I hate to say it's a little late in the play to be changing roles, but its very noble of you. Believe me, if I could have picked a part to play in all this, it wouldn't have been this one. It would have been different. Go on, stand up to me, play the hero - wonderful show.

KIP

It's not a show. I... I won't help you.

GRANT

Is that what your friend Clancey would have you do?

KIP

What?

GRANT

Your friend, Clancey.

KIP

I don't know what you're talking about.

GRANT

I told you I would have had all this be different, if it could have been, but the way things have played out, I've got to be the bad guy. I'm talkin about secrets, Kip. Your's and mine. We all got secrets. And let me assure you - if my little secret happens to get out, your's is coming out right along behind it. Now, you know what that means, don't you?

What happens to a man like that, like you? If your secret gets out, you know what'll happen to your old friend Clancey?

GRANT leans over and whispers into KIP's ear

KIP

How do you- when did you... Why are you doing this to me?

GRANT

It takes a lot to be a hero, and when it comes down to it, most of us just don't have what it takes. What do you think? Is the sacrifice worth it? You want to be a martyr now? Is it worth being the hero to save your friend... or is it better to run away and keep your little secret. You have a choice.

KIP

I don't-

GRANT

Just say you'll do it.

KIP

...I'll do it.

GRANT

Thank you. You're saving my life, Kip, you really are. Don't beat yourself up, no one ever follows through with the hero stuff. Can't keep up the part, Lord knows I couldn't. It just gets to difficult in the end.

Scene Eleven

JIM

Everything's all set up for tonight, with Imogen. You can still have her. You can talk to her, fall in love, save her, if you want.

KIP

Jim...

JIM

I didn't think so. Only hoped.

KIP

I will. I'll do it, tonight. Meet the girl, fall in love, rescue her, all of it. If it's what you want. If you still want it.

JIM

Kip! You won't regret it. I know you won't. Here put this on.

KIP

A soldier uniform? I have to?

JIM

It makes a better story: young maiden carried off by local boy war hero. Don't you think?

KIP

Then what?

JIM

That part's up to you, then, isn't it? You climb up the window and... see what happens.

KIP

Love at first sight, it should be?

JIM

Take her away. Run away with her, start a new life. All this land out here. You can find a place to make your own kingdom. You could do - everything.

KIP

I can't do that. You could, Jim, but I can't. It's too much. I want to help you, to rescue her, and fall in love, I want to, but- I need you to help me do it.

JIM

Of course, anything. I'd do anything to help you. This is how it has to be. Anything you need.

KIP

Alright.

JIM

Alright?

KIP

Imogen. You have to get her. And- and bring her to me. I would, Jim, really, I would, but I just can't go back to that house, back to that body. What you said about me being a coward was right. But I don't want to be, I just need help. So you go, and climb up her window- you've told about it hundreds of times in stories. Climb up there and bring her down, to me. That way, she gets rescued, and we'll fall in love and everything will work out the way it's supposed to. Will you do that?

JIM

I'd do anything to see you happy, Kip. It's the least I can do. It's what you deserve.

KIP

You'll bring her to me?

JIM

Yes, if that's what it takes.

KIP

Alright. Alright, bring her down and - and meet me in the woods - in the place, just a few yards inside - by the pond. You know where I mean?

JIM

Sure.

KIP

Ok. Just, just- you get her and, and meet me there tonight. At midnight.

JIM

You'll wear the soldier costume?

KIP

I'll wear the soldier costume.

JIM

Alright. Shake on it.

KIP

Shake on it.

Scene Twelve

IMOGEN's room. Complete darkness. All we here are sounds and JIM's voice.

JIM

Imogen? Hello! Hello?! I can't see anything. It's too dark. Are you in here? I've come to rescue you. To save you from-

A thud as JIM runs into something hard.

JIM

Ow! Is that the bed? Oh... Didn't you hear me? What is this? Did he tie you up here? Don't worry. Stop- stop struggling, settle down, I'm here to help you. I have a knife, I can cut you free.

JIM cuts IMOGEN free from the bed. There is a moment of silence, then IMOGEN begins to make a long, loud, sorrowful sound.

JIM

What's wrong with you? You aren't-

Sounds of a scuffle.

JIM

Help! Somebody, help. She's... an animal. Help, she's a monster! A monster! Please! Wild! Get off, get off, GET OFF!

Silence.

JIM

Oh... God. Oh... I gotta get out of here.

Lights up on Jim by the pond, blood on his hands and on his clothes. He holds a knife in his hands. He does not notice THE BODY lying near him, also covered in blood.

Lights simultaneously up on IMOGEN's bedroom. She lies on the ground, covered in blood. GRANT rushes in and sees her.

JIM sits down. GRANT picks up his daughter.

JIM notices THE BODY and goes to inspect it. As he does, two men enter and discover JIM.

MAN 1

Oh my God.

MAN 2

Hold him.

MAN 1

What the hell is going on? You... There's blood on his hands!

MAN 2

Hold him, hold on to him. I'll get the sheriff. Make sure he doesn't get away.

MAN 1 grabs JIM and holds on to him. JIM barely struggles.

DOLLY runs into IMOGEN's room and sees GRANT with the body of Imogen.

DOLLY

I heard yelling... I heard...

GRANT

Dolly-

DOLLY

Don't talk. Don't say anything. I told you I was leaving, and that's exactly what I'm gonna do.

GRANT

What are you talking about?

DOLLY

I'm taking everything, the money we made, all of it, and going back home. I'm gonna see my girls again, Mr. Grant. I told you I would.

GRANT

Please, stop talking and help me.

DOLLY

No one will even ask questions. What questions are there to ask, when the criminal is caught in the act? Blood on your hands, and me the only witness. *[DOLLY goes to the window]* Help! Help me please!

GRANT

Quiet. Stop shouting. Be quiet!

DOLLY

Murder! Murder!

GRANT

I said stop yelling!

DOLLY rushes out, yelling.

DOLLY

Murder! Help! Murder!

Scene Thirteen

*CLANCEY's house. KIP enters, and looks around.
CLANCEY is not there.*

KIP

Clancey? Hello? Hello?!

CLANCEY

(Calling, from off stage)

That you, kid?

KIP

It's me. Where are you?

CLANCEY

(Off)

I'm comin, I'm comin. Always over-eager, aren't ya?

KIP

Cut it out. I need to talk to you.

CLANCEY enters with a drink in his hand. He is so drunk he can only just keep himself up. He sees KIP in the soldier uniform and looks him up and down.

CLANCEY

Oh my...

KIP

(Seeing that CLANCEY is drunk)

Oh - God.

CLANCEY

Let me tell you something, kid-

KIP

Don't. You're... you're too drunk.

CLANCEY

Guess I better own up to that one, then. Yes, sir. I've been drinkin for... oh, I'd say goin on two days now. Hard to tell time, though.

KIP

I wish you wouldn't.

CLANCEY

I wish I wouldn't, too. But that ain't always the way it works. 'Specially when it's all you got left. You won't know about that, now.

KIP

Please... I- I need you to sit down so I can talk to you. I need you to be quiet and listen to me.

CLANCEY

(Not listening, not responding)

Not yet anyway. No, you'll get there though. Let me tell you, kid, you'll end up here one day, too. Just like me.

KIP

Please...

CLANCEY

'Cause you see - I was just like you - once. When I was young. Scared shitless at everything. Couldn't make a decision to save my life. Wouldn't stand up for myself or anyone else. Just too damn scared.

KIP

I'm not-

CLANCEY

And you never stop running away. You'll keep on running, too. Till one day... one day, when you're old enough - and drunk enough... it turns out... there ain't no one chasin you, and you spent your whole life runnin away from nothing.

KIP

Please stop.

CLANCEY

Alright. Have it your way, doggy. I'll shut my big old yap about it. Now - Come here and let me see you in that thing.

KIP

That's not why I'm here.

CLANCEY

(considers for a moment)

What good are you then, to a guy like me?

KIP

You don't mean that. I know you don't. You're just drunk.

CLANCEY

Maybe.
That uniform though-

KIP

Stop it. Please, stop making this so difficult.

CLANCEY

If you've got something, spit it out, kid. And that's not something you'll hear me-

KIP

I'm leaving! God... you're sloppy and disgusting and-

CLANCEY

Leave then. Come back tomorrow if you want.

KIP

No. That's not what I meant. I'm leaving, for good. Forever.

CLANCEY

What's that now?

KIP

I guess it doesn't make much difference now, anyway. Not with you like this. But I wanted to tell you that I'm going away. Going East - to - to fight - in the war over there. It's what you wanted. Isn't it?

CLANCEY

Oh. Oh, I see.

KIP

Do you?

CLANCEY

Lookin for a good time over there? All those soldier boys-

KIP

It doesn't have anything to do with-

CLANCEY

Then what?

KIP

I- I've done something... bad. Something terrible that makes me... a bad guy. I'm no one's hero anymore and I gotta leave. All this time, everyone's been tryin to make me into something- something other than what I am. You, and Jim... And now I've only done what I had to do to save- what I had to do. I can't explain it. Not here, with you.... But I'm leaving and it's the best thing, for everyone.

CLANCEY

Few days ago you wanted to stay with me, remember? What happened to that? Find a place - live on our own. What was that? Stupid kiddy dreams. *[No response]* Done some growin up?

KIP

I-

CLANCEY

Good. 'Bout time, too. Can't go through life just hangin on to those kinds of ideas. Don't work out in the end. Kid stuff, all of it. Just a kid.

KIP

Stop it. You're... you're...

CLANCEY

Say it, kid. What am I? No good? A bad guy? A bastard? A drunk, useless, rotting? Festering boiling oozing wretched rot? Can't say anything about me I don't already think about myself, darlin - so don't be shy. Have your say or get out.

KIP

You're a monster. I'm leaving.

KIP begins to back up to leave.

CLANCEY

Run away, then, Kip. Run away from the monster. You keep on runnin. And remember me when you're older. One day - you will. 'Cause you'll wake up in a puddle of your own sick and realize you ARE me. You will be. Stuck and rotten and dead before you die. There's only one end for men like us, Kip, and you're lookin at it.

KIP leaves, CLANCEY yells after him.

CLANCEY

Keep running, kid. Eventually, you'll run straight back into me. Go! Run!

CLANCEY takes a moment, staring at where KIP has run off. He takes a big gulp of his drink and sinks down.

END OF PLAY