

Nightwalking

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ACT ONE

At Rise:

Margot stands in the spotlight.

MARGOT

It is written that God put Abraham to a test. He told him to take his beloved son, Isaac, to the land of Moriah to be offered as a sacrifice. On the third day of their journey, they left the other young men behind, and Abraham took his son ahead to the place where they would make the sacrifice. There Isaac found the wood and made the fire and then looked up at his father, whom he loved and whom he trusted and asked, "But where is the lamb, father?" Abraham looked at the boy whose eyes still burned with his youth and answered "God will provide a lamb my son, God will provide."

(There is a clap of thunder. Frank Woodson sits at the kitchen table drinking coffee and staring at the TV which may glow or show footage. Catherine takes his plate.)

CATHERINE

Didn't you like the eggs.

FRANK

What?

(Catherine turning down the sound)

CATHERINE

You hardly touched your eggs, Frank, was there something wrong with them.

FRANK

They were fine.

CATHERINE

You hardly touched them.

FRANK:

I'm waiting for the news.

CATHERINE:

They said there were over 1,000 National Guard on that truck strike but they're sending them back home now.

FRANK

To school, Caty, up to that campus. Not home.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CATHERINE

They said they might be leaving today. That it's probably over.

FRANK

As long as they're on that campus it's not over.

CATHERINE

Patty Miller's son, Larry, is in the guard.

FRANK

And that's supposed to make me feel better?

CATHERINE

He said those teamsters had guns out on the turnpike.

FRANK

They let that kid guard the turnpike?

CATHERINE

That kid is twenty-one.

FRANK

I got socks older than that kid.

(Catherine lets out a small laugh)

I heard that on TV.

CATHERINE

It's funny.

(Frank momentarily embraces her)

FRANK

You're the only person in the world who thinks I'm funny.

(Frank pulls away and pours coffee)

So what did Larry say was happening out there all week while he was guarding our precious turnpike.

CATHERINE

You didn't eat the toast either.

FRANK

Third shift makes me tired, not hungry,

CATHERINE

I imagine those boys are tired too. And scared.

FRANK

They better be.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CATHERINE

Patty said they were shooting right off the bridge overpass down at each other.

FRANK

When people have guns and they're pissed off - they shoot. Those truckers were real pissed off.

(Frank mimics shooting)

Pop... pop... pop.

CATHERINE

That isn't funny.

FRANK

Even truckers got their rules, Caty.

CATHERINE

Patty was very upset. The boy went in the Guard to keep away from all that fighting in Vietnam. And now all this.

FRANK

First mistake.

CATHERINE

Nobody wants their son to go there, Frank.

FRANK

Pay or play.

CATHERINE

You just have to watch the TV to see how bad it is. To see how scared they are. What they look like when they come home.

FRANK

Nothing should have scared Larry after that father.

CATHERINE

Patty's my oldest friend.

FRANK

She still married a jerk with an arsenal.

CATHERINE

She divorced that jerk - I mean Jack - and the arsenal.

FRANK

And he was also very ugly.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CATHERINE

- and you should not speak ill of the dead.

FRANK

Jesus, I forgot the son-of-a-bitch died.

CATHERINE

Lung cancer.

(Frank pulls out a pack of cigarettes and then puts them back in his shirt)

FRANK

He was still a very ugly man.

CATHERINE

You didn't even eat your home fries. Frank, you have to eat.

FRANK

Coffee's fine.

CATHERINE

You know what the doctor said about your ulcer.

FRANK

I didn't have the cigarette, Cate, and I can't drink beer.

CATHERINE

You have to work third shift again tonight?

FRANK

Unless old Jack left me a million bucks.

CATHERINE

He didn't leave Patty or Larry a dime. Gambled it all away.

FRANK

Like I said - he was always a jerk.

(FRANK paces)

Mike here?

CATHERINE

(warmly) It's cold in bed when you work nights.

FRANK

It's May, Caty, a very warm May and you're trying to change the subject on me. Where did Mike go?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CATHERINE

I was thinking that now that Annie's in high school I could start thinking about full-time work.

FRANK

(abruptly) He didn't go up there, did he?

CATHERINE

He left before I was up.

FRANK

He told me he didn't have classes today.

CATHERINE

Now you're changing the subject.

FRANK

The bills are paid, aren't they?

CATHERINE

Why don't you want to talk about me working?

FRANK

You know how I feel about it Caty. Making minimum wage you might as well stay home. That's all I have to say.

CATHERINE

Annie's going to be thinking about college soon and Mike's going to be graduating next year -

FRANK

Now, I hope to hell that's a fact.

CATHERINE

I need to do something Frank. I need to get out.

FRANK

Just a minute now, the news is coming on.
(Frank turns the set up)

ANNOUNCER

"In international news, Soviet Premier Alexei Kosygin assailed President Nixon this morning for sending troops into Cambodia."

(Catherine goes turns the TV down)

FRANK

Leave it a minute, Caty I want to hear this.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANNOUNCER

"Kosygin warned that the action might lead to a further complication in the international scene and a worsening of Soviet American relations."

(Catherine goes to turn the TV off)

FRANK

What're you doing?

CATHERINE

It scares me.

FRANK

It's just a game.

CATHERINE

Like that Cuban missile thing, I guess that was just a little joke too because if it was supposed to scare me it worked.

FRANK

It was supposed to scare you and me and them and it did work.

CATHERINE

Too well. I still get nightmares.

FRANK

Kennedy should have sent those god damn teamsters to the Bay of Pigs and finished it off right the first time.

CATHERINE

That's not funny.

FRANK

That wasn't a joke.

CATHERINE

And that's why you are NOT the President.

FRANK

I could do it. Just let me at it. Send in the Teamsters - Mafia - hell throw in the whole fucking Ku Klux Klan and watch those guys run. What are you looking like that for?

CATHERINE

Like what?

FRANK

Like a deer caught in the headlights. Come here.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CATHERINE

I'm fine.

FRANK

You're not fine.

CATHERINE

I told you - sometimes I get scared. Today, I'm scared.

FRANK

Come here. Tell me what's making you so scared.

CATHERINE

Promise you won't laugh?

FRANK

Cross my heart.

CATHERINE

I think it could be the end of the world. And don't even think of smiling.

FRANK

The real end of the world? Like in the Bible?

CATHERINE

I don't know if it's just like they say, but I do think someday someone could get so mad they could just go in to one of those little rooms and push that button or use that phone or whatever it is that blows up everything... and it'll be all over.

FRANK

Just like that? We'll all die?

CATHERINE

Yes. It could happen.

FRANK

We're all dead.

CATHERINE

You promised not to laugh.

FRANK

Look at my face. Very serious.

CATHERINE

But not scared.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRANK

Scared but sure we're going to win this race and sure no one's ever going to push that button.

CATHERINE

How can you be so sure?

FRANK

Because we're right and they're wrong. That makes me sure.

CATHERINE

Just like that?

FRANK

It is just a test, honey, a test to keep us on our toes. Like that little Ruskie banging his shoe on the table? Just to scare us. But in the end we will win.

CATHERINE

Why?

FRANK

Cause the shoe's made here.

(Cathy stares silently)

Evolution. It's 1970 not 1963 and we're a whole lot smarter. Evolution. I believe in it and you should too.

CATHERINE

I'm still scared, Frank. But I'm not helpless.

FRANK

I said I didn't have anything more to say about that.

CATHERINE

I'm not helpless. I can work. I can do something.

FRANK

We'll talk about it later.

CATHERINE

I have two good arms and two good legs. I have a brain. I'm going crazy with all the things happening everyday and I need to do something.

FRANK

We'll talk about it later. I promise, but right now I got to hear this news.

(Frank turns the set back on)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANNOUNCER

"And now in local news. President Nixon's announcement has prompted demonstrations throughout the country including many of our own local college campuses"...

FRANK

Now that scares me.

(Frank shuts the TV off.)

CATHERINE

I'm sure he didn't go up to the campus.

FRANK

What makes you so sure?

CATHERINE

He doesn't have any classes.

FRANK

He didn't have the last time they were up there screaming and waving but that didn't stop him from getting arrested.

CATHERINE

I'm sure he's not there.

FRANK

Then where the hell is he? Getting a haircut!

CATHERINE

He's twenty years old.

FRANK

I pay his bills. I put food on his table! I'm still his father.

CATHERINE

It's just hair.

FRANK

No, it isn't just his hair and he should have to tell me where he's going if it might get him killed.

CATHERINE

Don't talk that way, please. Don't make jokes.

FRANK

It's not a joke... believe me, this is not a joke.

(Richard walks up to an imaginary door, and knocks as Margot runs up behind him.)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARGOT

I'm sorry I'm late.

RICHARD

It said noon in the paper.

MARGOT

I guess you're the first one here.

RICHARD

It said noon.

MARGOT

In the next century parking and traffic will run the campus.
In the 90's they still just make life hell.

RICHARD

I can come back.

MARGOT

Then you'll never get a space.

(Margot unpacks her tape recorder as Richard
paces nervously)

I'm actually better at this than it looks. I even worked in
public television for a while - Channel 45, you might
remember me, I was the one that was always asking for money.

(Margot stops a moment and poses with her
microphone and starts her routine)

"We know that many of you out there have been watching
Masterpiece Theatre for a lot of years before contributing...
and we're just here to make you feel guilty as hell!"

RICHARD

You had different glasses.

MARGOT

They called me the "Goddess of Guilt."

RICHARD

And your hair was shorter.

MARGOT

I did that interview program no one watched.

RICHARD

You were good. I remember now. You were great. I watched.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARGOT

I asked for money which made me feel guilty. I'm lousy with guilt or money.

RICHARD

Don't apologize. You got me to call.

MARGOT

My fifteen minutes of fame.

RICHARD

You look.

MARGOT

Older?

RICHARD

No... well, maybe a little.

MARGOT

I'm turning fifty next month and I should be looking older. That's one of the reasons I left television. They're more interested in what you look like than what you say. I would be out and someone would always stop me and say "Aren't you Margot Bloom from Channel 45"- and just when I was about to get in to a deep discussion about my last interview they'd throw in -"Boy you're a lot shorter than you look on TV!"

RICHARD

I thought you were taller myself.

MARGOT

See what I mean.

RICHARD

I just watch McNeil/Lehrer now. I hate the local news.

MARGOT

I quit in '85. Too much local politics. Damn! They gave me the wrong cord.

RICHARD

I can come back.

MARGOT

Our daughter says you can never trust anyone over 30 to program your VCR.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RICHARD

Our son programs ours.

MARGOT

My husband believes it's a conspiracy by all those disgruntled AV boys.

RICHARD

Sounds like my son. He prefers computers to girls - but he's only thirteen.

MARGOT

Right now computers might seem a lot safer.

RICHARD

He makes electronic music which I hate until I remember that my parents hated my music and I hated them for not liking it.

MARGOT

Dylan?

RICHARD

I can still sing every song.

MARGOT

Today it's just talking, no singing. Give me a one... two... three for the level.

RICHARD

One... two... three for the level... You like Dylan?

MARGOT

I like Dylan, but I was partial to Baez and Judy Collins,

RICHARD

You sing?

MARGOT

Opera when I was in college. Now there's a real tool for social change. You still sing?

RICHARD

Peace Mass, that sort of thing. My son hates it.

MARGOT

I've almost got this. We took our daughter to see Peter, Paul and Mary and they sang every song I remembered.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RICHARD

Did your daughter like it?

MARGOT

Hated it.

RICHARD

You look too small to sing opera.

MARGOT

Another myth. The world is made up of many myths and a good number of lies.

RICHARD

I saw Madame Butterfly two years ago.

(Margot assumes Madame Butterfly stance)

MARGOT

American sailor falls in love with small Asian woman, woman marries him in Japanese ceremony, sailor leaves with his ship, woman gives birth to baby, husband returns with new American wife, woman gives up baby, man leaves with new wife and new baby and Asian woman commits suicide. Like I said, a real instrument of social change.

RICHARD

You're very good.

MARGOT

I've become more dramatic in my old age. I figure it's one of the benefits.

RICHARD

What do you do now?

MARGOT

I went back to teaching.

RICHARD

You should do more TV.

MARGOT

And you should be doing the talking. Were you actually on the campus the day of the shootings?

RICHARD

No! I wasn't ... actually there.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARGOT

Are you all right?

RICHARD

It's been twenty-five years. I didn't think it would feel like this.

MARGOT

A lot of people would like it to just go away.

RICHARD

Maybe it has been too long.

(Richard starts to pick up his briefcase.)

MARGOT

We'll be here all week.

RICHARD

(Stops) My son thinks it's all ancient history.

MARGOT

My daughter still wants to save the world so maybe there's still something left we need to say to each other.

RICHARD

Some people never move on. I worry about that. They just stay frozen. My son worries a lot more about drugs, guns and a hole in the ozone than what happened here in 1970. I don't want to grow old and angry and bitter. I want to make peace with that time, but I'm afraid that making peace means forgetting or... worse.

MARGOT

You don't seem bitter.

RICHARD

I'm a little nervous.

MARGOT

Maybe you want to do the interview by yourself. I can leave.

RICHARD

I saw the article in the paper and something snapped inside. Leave your story behind, it said. I thought, "Gee, I could do that." Like a light bulb went off in my head and it was as if it was all happening again. I'll bet it was your idea.

MARGOT

Guilty as charged.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RICHARD

It's a good idea. Leaving something behind.

MARGOT

My daughter says it's my way of holding on to things but lately I've been thinking that telling the stories might be a way of letting them go. Are you ready?

RICHARD

I never thought about where to start.
(Richard stands quietly)

MARGOT

Testing one... two... three... this is the first of our May 4th interviews... one... two... three...
(The lights dim. Michael appears casually dressed.)

MICHAEL

My father worked in a factory where they made molds for automobiles. He left high school when he was seventeen to fight in World War II and never went back. He said "D"- Day was the proudest day of his life. "Changed the world" he'd say and get that far away look I didn't understand. He didn't read books, but he read the morning newspaper like some people read the bible. When we could afford a television he used that to keep him company too. He wasn't easy with his affection though he danced with my mother in the kitchen when they were young and I even found them kissing in the hall more than once. He had a distance he had learned from his own parents who were cool, almost cruel with him. And he always said the army was a better parent than they ever were. He told me he vowed to be a better father to his son than his father had been to him and in his own way he was. He vowed his children would go to college and his dream was to see his son walking down the aisle of West Point or Annapolis and run out to shake his hand when he graduated - one man to another. Being his son was not difficult when I was young. I was on the verge of my own manhood when the silences began. We could no longer celebrate my touchdowns on a football field or making the honor roll over bowls of spaghetti and he knew it. I started to look more like him and he would often stop and watch me combing my hair which was now too long and too much like my new friends who were increasingly unlike him. That's when the silences became a scream and he knew though I was still his son, his dreams were no longer mine.

RICHARD

Stay for a while. Just until I can get started.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARGOT

Okay... ready?

RICHARD

Yeah.

MARGOT

We can start with your name.

RICHARD

My name?

MARGOT

Just say your name, first and last, right into the microphone - or you can stay anonymous. It really doesn't matter.

(Shannon stands in a spotlight holding a microphone.)

SHANNON

Hello? Hello? My name is Shannon Hofstettler. H-O-F-S-T-E-T-T-L-E-R... I'm forty -what the hell's wrong with this machine!

RICHARD

Richard... My name is Richard Perry - like the Admiral, but we're not related. Is that okay?

MARGOT

Good. Good.

SHANNON

Hello? hello? My kids always program the damn VCR because nobody but a six year old can understand it. Hello? Can anyone hear me?

MARGOT

Mr. Perry?

RICHARD

Richard is fine. (Pause) Do I look like an old man to you?

MARGOT

No. Why?

RICHARD

I was thirteen when my older brother left for the army and I thought he was an old man. Now I'm more than twice as old as he was when he left and I feel like that boy that watched him go.

(Margot hands him the microphone and then turns
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RICHARD
and picks up her handbag)
Aren't you going to stay?

MARGOT
You don't need me.
(Margot starts to go)

RICHARD
Do you have a story too?

MARGOT
Me? (Pause) I guess I do. Thanks.
(Margot walks out into the darkness)

RICHARD
On May third 1970 my father was admitted to the intensive
care ward of the county hospital.
(Kent is standing holding his jacket).

KENT
They told my Daddy I was too smart for my own good. They
would say that and smile that smile and he knew that we'd
have to leave Alabama if I was going to grow up in one piece.
So one day my Daddy packed up everything and put us in his
brother Arthur's car, and we came to Ohio so I could be smart
and still live. Those were the choices my Daddy had in 1966.
Some people don't have those choices now.

RICHARD
Actually I guess I should start at the beginning.

KENT
In 1966 my Daddy could still work at one of those good jobs
in the rubber plants. The pay was good and the benefits
better. He thought he had died and gone to heaven but he
hadn't. They closed the plant before he was ready to grow old
but was still too young to retire. Now he says to watch out.
Heaven is never as close as it looks.

RICHARD
In 1970 I was twenty-one years old and I had my whole life
ahead of me... if I didn't get drafted.

KENT
He fishes a lot now and keeps telling my kids to make sure
they finish school.

SHANNON
I was fourteen when they shot those kids and I just have had
to tell someone about it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RICHARD

I wasn't actually on the campus that day, but I might as well have been.

SHANNON

I just had to tell someone.

RICHARD

God, I hope this is recording.

SHANNON

For years I've been thinking about it. Sometime I'll be cutting someone's cuticles or gluing on some of those really long acrylic nails and I'll have to stop what I'm doing and leave the room.

MARGOT

I wanted people to tell their stories. To have a way of leaving that day behind them. Of understanding what it all meant. Of finding the one person who would know what really happened. I wanted to know the truth.

SHANNON

I do hair and nails but I want to be a nurse someday.

RICHARD

I thought I wanted to be a musician.

SHANNON

I'm a very compassionate person.

RICHARD

But I guess in the end I was too scared to go on the road.

SHANNON

My brother was a bleeder and we still worry every day.

RICHARD

I guess some people would say I'm just a bleeding heart liberal.

SHANNON

I'm basically a pretty conservative person when it comes to things like sex... you know what I mean... people think just because you've been married and had babies that you can't still have those dreams you had when you were young - but take it from me, they don't die.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RICHARD

I lost a brother in Vietnam.

SHANNON

Somebody has to kill dreams because they can't just commit suicide.

RICHARD

I figured that was enough for one family to give.

SHANNON

Then two years ago my husband Jason left me after we lost our trailer in that last big tornado, so I know all about dreams.

RICHARD

I was student teaching junior high school science.

MARGOT

I was a newlywed in 1969.

SHANNON

That tornado was sort of the last straw for Jason who lost his job when the plant moved south.

RICHARD

I know all the jokes about junior high kids and most of them are as right as they are wrong. But besides keeping me out of the war, it kept me in touch with myself - with my dreams.

SHANNON

We lost everything in that wind. Everything.

MARGOT

My parents lost their business in 1968. Everything.

SHANNON

But I have my children.

MARGOT

The war was everywhere that year. My old boyfriends were going off to Canada if they couldn't get into graduate school - or shooting their toes off. I wasn't sure I ever wanted children. And then I met my husband and everything changed.

SHANNON

Sometimes I think having those twins is all I have.

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RICHARD

My mother was against that war all the way. My father wasn't. He believed in it to his last breath even though we didn't talk about it anymore. At least not in the house. We couldn't. Not after my brother died and they sent what was left of him home in a box. At least we think it was him. They told us we would have to trust them. That we could never open it. Just trust that it was really him in there. And we did. What else could we do. We needed him home.

MARGOT

Somewhere along the way I made a good life, wanted a child and changed my life all over again.

RICHARD

They were looking for men teachers, role models they said, and they needed science teachers - all that racing to the moon you know. I also ran track, even won a few state championships so I had this coaching thing to fall back on. Believe me, in those days every little bit helped.

SHANNON

Jason didn't have a lot to fall back on. Who am I kidding. Jason didn't have anything to fall back on or look forward to but I didn't see it. Hell, I didn't see anything but love.

RICHARD

There's just no way to describe the mind of a 12 or thirteen year old. They're so raw - they either come out of those years stronger - or they don't come out at all.

MARGOT

My husband was a photographer. Coming to Ohio was his first teaching job. When they called he thought it was Penn State. We'd never been west of the Pennsylvania line.

RICHARD

Sometimes those are the best years of their lives.

MARGOT

1969 was the best year of our lives.

RICHARD

Sometimes they're the worst.

MARGOT

Then suddenly it was the worst.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RICHARD

They're always in love.

MARGOT

We were really in love.

RICHARD

And then there's always the sex.

MARGOT

And we were really in lust.

RICHARD

Love and hate are the strongest emotions in their lives.

MARGOT

That first year was like a roller coaster. Moving, marrying - yeah, we did it in that order. I mean it was the sixties.

RICHARD

And sometimes there's no difference.

MARGOT

We figured we were coming to a new place and we should start off married.

RICHARD

The world can be a terrible place when you're just starting out.

MARGOT

It was a wonderful time to be in love when your husband's too old for the draft.

RICHARD

My brother went to Vietnam in '67. He said it was a special kind of hell and I believed him. He was my big brother and though he was grown up and gone before I had a chance to really know him, I knew he'd never lie to me.

SHANNON

I said, Hell Jason, you knew they were closing those factories since we were back in junior high. You should have prepared. "Prepared," he says, looking at me like I was from Mars. "Who prepares for hell."

RICHARD

A lot of my students ran to the army - begged into the navy - dreamed of flying for the air force and dropped out early to

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RICHARD

get there faster. The only time they were sad was when they couldn't get anybody to take them in. Then they would show up back at the school wondering what the hell they were going to do with their lives.

SHANNON

"Who prepares for hell," and I'm supposed to answer that?

RICHARD

They say the miners took canaries down with them into the mines to warn them when there was gas. Just watch the canaries, they said. And when they die - run like hell.

SHANNON

Jason had beautiful eyes when we met - full of hope.

RICHARD

Sometimes when I look into the eyes of those kids they look just like those canaries.

SHANNON

Believe me, I would never have fallen in love with a boy with no hope.

RICHARD

So much hope in September and by June it's gone.

SHANNON

We may have only been thirteen when we met - but he had hope. And dreams like the kind you see in the movies.

RICHARD

They do want to be somebody.

SHANNON

We both did.

RICHARD

They need to be somebody.

SHANNON

We needed each other.

RICHARD

When I get them they're only thirteen.

SHANNON

When you're thirteen you think you know everything. Especially about sex. And if you don't know it, you fake it, which is mostly everything since you really don't know

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SHANNON

nothing and when you're thirteen sex is everything you think about - at least if you have nothing else to live for. Hell, we thought we knew a lot more about sex than anything else and we didn't know anything about anything else at all.

RICHARD

But by June it's gone. Dead as fish eyes.

SHANNON

He wanted to be something then. We both did. We were thirteen. What the hell did we know.

MARGOT

Before we came here we'd never been west of Pennsylvania.

RICHARD

Just old enough to think about the world and where they want to be in it.

SHANNON

We thought Ohio was the center of the Universe.

MARGOT

I thought Ohio was just one big hay field.

RICHARD

But not old enough to be defeated by it. No, not yet.

SHANNON

Then Jason hit high school and he found out he wasn't so good at much out there and I just made hair my life.

KENT

I was a Junior in college that May and I was on scholarship. Most white folks asked what position I played and though I kept saying academic, they kept hearing athletic, so I gave up and told my Daddy everything was fine. I told myself I didn't have to take this shit, but I took it anyway.

SHANNON

Coming up here to this place saved my life. Jason said it made him nervous, like everyone thought he was trash, but I told him nobody could tell who was trash 'til you graduated. My older girlfriend had a car and we came up all the time. We'd say we were at work or baby - sitting but we weren't. We were just hoping some of that smart would rub off on us.

(The ANONYMOUS WOMAN starts across the stage clutching her handbag.)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANONYMOUS

I came to talk about what happened when they shot those children because it wasn't all they said.

KENT

The night the Governor called out the National Guard a bunch of the brothers got together to talk.

ANONYMOUS

I knew some of them that were there and some were innocent and some weren't. Some were lost before and some after. I came to tell you about the one I knew - but you can't use my name.

KENT

Everybody says they remember where they were when they heard Kennedy was shot, well I remember where I was when I heard those little black girls were killed in that church in Alabama. I remember because I was in that church a hundred times before and I could have been there that day, too. I remember what it looked like, how the wood smelled and what the pews felt like under your fingers. I remember because it could have been me. My mother and father are God fearing people so I don't ask them why those children died.

ANONYMOUS

I lived through a lot of dying in my time but I never expected shooting here.

KENT

After they sent in the soldiers, some of the brothers talked about whether we should stay on the campus. Time and death had made us a lot less trusting than those little girls.

ANONYMOUS

No, not here where I worked.

KENT

There were the two Kennedy brothers and Medger, Martin and Malcolm and a lot of other people with names I have forgotten. I remember dying in lots of colors.

ANONYMOUS

I've lost my husband to the diabetes, one child to high blood pressure and a grandchild in an automobile so I know about dying. I didn't know about it that day, but I was told there would be trouble and so I wasn't there.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KENT

I always thought it was safe at school till they brought in those troops, and then I didn't sleep all night.

ANONYMOUS

I watch the TV news every night and I worry everyday. There's a lot of violence out there. A lot of guns.

KENT

I had memories of nice scrubbed white boys with guns.

ANONYMOUS

A lot of dying everyday.

KENT

No dogs or hoods or firehoses to threaten but any self-respecting black man knows the Klan didn't need a gun to kill you and the government did.

ANONYMOUS

No, I was told there would be trouble and I believed it.

MICHAEL

On May 4th 1970 I was three days shy of my twenty-first birthday. I had won an appointment to West Point when I was eighteen and left when I was nineteen - that was the first time my Dad had stopped talking to me. The silence lasted almost two months. After I moved back home, I got a part-time job, started attending the University but I still didn't know what I wanted to do with my life. My father was impatient for me to find myself in him and make him happy and less lonely. But I was falling in love with questions he could not or would not answer and every new question was like a bone in his throat and every new answer hung around our house like that war outside that was now our war too. Everyday there were new wounds and like that other war, there seemed no honorable way out.

(The lights will go up and Michael will become transformed and move effortlessly into the past. There is the sound of a car stopping and a door opening and closing)

CATHERINE

See, Frank, here's Michael now.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MICHAEL

Even now, so many years later, when I speak about those times I can feel his voice rising in my head, my stomach drawing tightly into knots as she holds out her hand to me, my whole body recoiling as we are drawn desperately together even as we were driven inevitably apart.

CATHERINE

(Running towards Michael)

You're home, I told your father -

MICHAEL

(interrupting) I can't stay.

CATHERINE

Where are you going now?

MICHAEL

I'll call you later.

(Michael starts to leave but Frank stops him.)

FRANK

Your mother asked you where you were going.

MICHAEL

Out.

FRANK

She deserves an answer.

MICHAEL

What difference does it make where I am going?

FRANK

It makes a difference if you're going up there.

MICHAEL

Either way I am going to get it from you, aren't I?

CATHERINE

You promised you wouldn't go up there again if there was going to be trouble.

MICHAEL

That's my school, Mom. It's where I live.

FRANK

You live here, son, unless you've moved out.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CATHERINE

Please, Michael, your father and I don't want trouble.

MICHAEL

I told you I wouldn't get in to trouble.

FRANK

You just said you don't have classes. Why would you go there if you don't want trouble and you don't have classes.

MICHAEL

You don't learn everything in a classroom.

FRANK

Is that what they're teaching you now? How to stay out of class? Or is that what your friends are teaching you.

CATHERINE

I don't think that's what he means Frank.

FRANK

Maybe you don't need a real education anymore. Maybe you've already learned everything you need to know.

CATHERINE

We're just concerned, that's all.

MICHAEL

I don't want to be hurt and I don't want to hurt anyone. But there's more to life than what you read in a book and there's more to living than watching it all on TV.

CATHERINE

There are terrible things happening out there. I'm afraid.

MICHAEL

Maybe I'm afraid too.

FRANK

I didn't think you were afraid of anything.

CATHERINE

Let him speak Frank, please. What are you afraid of?

MICHAEL

Of doing nothing. Of watching this country fall apart. Of seeing us become our own worst nightmare.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRANK

And what do you think you're doing about that running around in the streets waving your arms in the air holding up signs and doing God knows what else?

MICHAEL

I'm trying to do my part, that's all.

FRANK

You think you can change the whole damn government by yourself. You think you can stop that war when nobody else up there can? You think you're God!

CATHERINE

Stop it Frank. He didn't say that! He just said he wanted to try.

MICHAEL

I need to do something so I can live with myself.

FRANK

And what are me and your mother supposed to live with?

MICHAEL

I'm doing this for all of us, not just me. All of us.

(Michael picks up his bag)

I gotta go.

FRANK

I don't want you to go there today Michael.

MICHAEL

Just like that?

CATHERINE

We're just really worried.

FRANK

If you don't have any business there you don't go.

MICHAEL

I have business.

FRANK

I mean your education.

MICHAEL

So do I.

(Michael packs his knapsack)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CATHERINE

Michael, please, promise me you'll leave if it looks like trouble.

FRANK

If you go there and you don't have classes, you don't have to come back here.

MICHAEL

Is that an ultimatum?

FRANK

If you want it to be.

CATHERINE

He's our son.

MICHAEL

Fine.

(Michael starts out and Catherine stops him)

CATHERINE

No, you can't leave this way. I know your father's upset and I'm upset too. But Frank, I won't have our son thinking he can't come home again. I can't live like that. I hate what's going on up there and I don't know anymore what's wrong about the government, but I know what's right in my home and I can't turn my son away from me. Do you hear me, Michael? I can't stop you from going up to that campus today, even though I want to tell you not to go. But I can't do it. Even though I want to keep you here with me - forever if it means you'll be safe, but I know I can't do that either. So you go up there if you have to, but you come back home when it's over. No matter what happens, you come back here.

(Frank walks away)

MICHAEL

I promise I'll leave if there's trouble.

(Michael kisses his mother, walks around his father and exits)

MARGOT

That morning I kissed my husband as usual and went to teach school.

GUARDSMAN

I was in the National Guard in 1970 and my parents were happy I could stay in school, earn some money for my tuition and not get my head blown off in Vietnam.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARGOT

We didn't talk about the soldiers that morning.

GUARDSMAN

We didn't talk about the war, but it was always there.

MARGOT

But they were there and we knew it.

KENT

Some of the brothers said to leave this protest to those boys on the hill with their guns and those kids standing up to them with rocks in one hand and their fingers raised up like a weapon on the other. I said it, too, but I don't know if I believed it.

GUARDSMAN

We knew lots of people whose kids were there - even my cousin Barbara was going over as nurse.

KENT

More brothers going over to Nam everyday. Nobody came back like they went.

GUARDSMAN

We lived outside of Pittsburgh and my Dad seemed a lot more worried about the jobs leaving than the boys coming home. He was a good man, but he understood work not war.

RICHARD

It's important to listen to be a good teacher.

KENT

Nobody was listening to anybody anymore.

GUARDSMAN

The Valley was humming like the old days. But it wasn't the old days and nothing was ever going to be exactly the way it was before.

RICHARD

You got to make them feel a part of the process.

GUARDSMAN

I'd been on duty with the Teamsters before Kent and I was tired. They told us the old ROTC building on campus was burning and the protesters were throwing rocks at the fireman and police, and cutting the hoses. I hadn't slept in my bed for a week but when they told us to move out, I went. It

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GUARDSMAN

wasn't Vietnam, so why was I so scared?

RICHARD

Or you might lose them.

GUARDSMAN

The old ROTC building wasn't much of a building, but it was a helluva symbol.

KENT

I'd seen them out there Saturday night, the fireman trying to keep the water going, the flames leaping up and licking the sky - and those dark figures cutting the hoses.

ANONYMOUS

I remember that building since I came here.

KENT

That building was history.

GUARDSMAN

That Sunday morning was bright and sunny and the smell of the burned building still hung in the air. I saw a lot of faces I knew. Faculty and students, boyfriends and girlfriends, dogs and frisbees. It looked a lot more like a picnic than a protest. Until the Governor showed up at the firehouse.

ANONYMOUS

I'm a Democrat myself so I hadn't voted for the man.

MARGOT

The Governor said those protesters couldn't continue to set fire to buildings worth 5 and 10 million dollars.

ANONYMOUS

They said that old building was worth about \$35,000 - twice as much as my home. I was really surprised since my home looked a whole lot better.

RICHARD

The Governor said these people move from one campus to another and terrorize a community.

SHANNON

He called them worse than those brownshirts...

ANONYMOUS

And the Communists...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KENT

And the nightriders.

GUARDSMAN

They're the worst type of people we harbor in America, he said.

MARGOT

And we're going to eradicate the problem.

ANONYMOUS

I was afraid. I'm not ashamed to say that now.

SHANNON

I didn't know what the hell ERADICATE was supposed to mean or I probably would have been a whole lot more scared than I was.

MARGOT

The Governor came down that morning and he changed the mission of the Guard from protecting property and lives to breaking up any assembly, peaceful or otherwise.

KENT

That's when I started thinking about leaving.

MARGOT

Pounding his fist repeatedly he said,

RICHARD

"We're going to employ every force of law that we have under our authority... We are going to employ every weapon possible."

KENT

Any self respecting nigger in 1970 knew that white boys in uniforms don't carry weapons for our health.

GUARDSMAN

I was a student at Kent but I lived in a private home off-campus and the people liked me because I was clean cut, clean shaven and in the military.

ANONYMOUS

You'd be surprised how many people in the town used to talk about how nice it would be to have a university with no students.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RICHARD

When that building went up in flames and they broke those windows something snapped.

KENT

I was a nigger and a student which made me a nigger twice.

GUARDSMAN

When we arrived on campus that Saturday night we knew there were guns out in the town and we were told to keep those students up on that campus so nobody got shot.

RICHARD

Nobody was listening to anybody.

GUARDSMAN

I had a friend who was in my unit. He got in trouble and they sent him over to Nam the next weekend. He didn't follow the rules and they sent him over because that's what happened when you messed up.

KENT

Why didn't somebody guess those guns were loaded.

GUARDSMAN

No questions, no excuses. Just "Here's your ticket to Saigon." We knew the rules. We were already a well trained unit - maybe some others weren't - but the message was simple - carry a gun at Kent State or in Da Nang.

RICHARD

It's important to listen to be a good teacher.

GUARDSMAN

I just had to make it through one more hour.

RICHARD

It's important to listen when people are talking to you so you don't miss what they have to say.

GUARDSMAN

I was happy because I didn't want to be carrying a gun on that hill one minute longer than I had to.

(Catherine and Frank stand alone in the kitchen)

CATHERINE

You've always said he was a good boy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GUARDSMAN

I was a hunter since I was ten. I knew how to hold a gun and track a deer. I wasn't afraid of guns. I respected them.

CATHERINE

Frank, are you listening to me?

GUARDSMAN

But this was no forest. And there were no deer.

CATHERINE

You always said Michael was a good son.

FRANK

Because then he was a good son.

CATHERINE

Don't turn away, Frank. Everything's going to be all right.

FRANK

How can you be so sure?

CATHERINE

He promised.

ANNOUNCER

"President Nixon said today that the United States is not widening the war"

FRANK

Everybody lies Caty! That's the only thing you can ever be sure of.

(Margot stands in spotlight).

MARGOT

I got up that Monday morning and took my shower, dressed, ate my breakfast and kissed my husband good-bye as if it was just another Monday. I knew he was going to the campus and I knew there were soldiers there. I had seen them, walked among them, but as I drove out of town, I wasn't afraid. No, I wasn't afraid at all.

BLACKOUT

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

At Rise:

Frank stands in the dark kitchen.
Richard walks onstage.

RICHARD

The cross country coach dropped dead of a heart attack. Boom! Dead on the first day of my student teaching. Left a wife and two small children. Had a physical six months before but it didn't matter. The doctor said he was a walking time bomb. Everybody said it was a tragedy - but not a disaster. A disaster would have been if the football coach had died.

KENT

I was at the university on an academic scholarship because my father wouldn't have it any other way.

RICHARD

I ran track in high school but nobody gave a damn.

KENT

My Dad said those bigots might cheer you on the field but that doesn't mean they want you to live next door to them.

RICHARD

The only thing anyone gives a damn about is football.

KENT

No, he'd smile, curling that upper lip, they don't mind us running that pigskin or fighting their wars. Hell, he'd laugh, they might even like us fighting their wars.

RICHARD

My brother was a big star. All-American everything.

KENT

Kill two Niggers with one bullet if you're lucky, he said 'cause the enemy - the enemy is always the nigger.

RICHARD

Everyone loved him except the Viet Cong.

KENT

So you do it on your brains, he told me, and then if you're smart enough - maybe you won't have to fight for them, run for them, or live with them.

SHANNON

I loved this place. It's hard to explain now, but I really felt free here.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANONYMOUS

I worked up here on the campus until I retired.

SHANNON

We'd cut out of school to sit in the cafeteria and hang out.

ANONYMOUS

I worked preparing food for the cafeteria.

SHANNON

Drinking pop, eating junk food and french fries.

ANONYMOUS

It was a good job. A decent job.

SHANNON

When I was here I thought I'd died and gone to heaven.

ANONYMOUS

Vegetables and chicken, meat loaf with gravy and mashed potatoes. Good food. It's important for young people.

SHANNON

Eating from those machines.

ANONYMOUS

I hated to see those children eating from machines.

SHANNON

I had my first cigarette here but I don't smoke anymore. My girl's got asthma - but not from me.

ANONYMOUS

And those girls smoking cigarettes would break my heart.

SHANNON

They said it was probably from the mold. Ohio has a lot of mold including some wild mushrooms growing right in the basement of my parents' house. That's where we lived til we got our trailer which didn't have a basement. Not having a basement is hell in Ohio. When the tornado comes there's no place to hide.

ANONYMOUS

I like my food fresh and I cooked for those students just like they were my own family. That's the only way I work.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHANNON

There were plenty of mushrooms in that house. Not that I would ever think of eating them. My friend Brinna said if you eat the wrong kind of mushrooms you can become a vegetable... and that's no joke. No, I want all my food frozen or wrapped in plastic.

ANONYMOUS

God didn't mean for human beings to eat their food frozen or wrapped in plastic.

SHANNON

I was smoking those cigarettes for women. The ones that made you look so cool and they had the little gifts when you bought a whole carton. I swear I wouldn't have started if they hadn't looked so good. And I didn't think they were allowed to sell you something that could really kill you.

ANONYMOUS

You have to cook with love 'cause bad cooking can kill you.

SHANNON

I left home when I was sixteen. Things just kept getting worse so I just packed up and left.

ANONYMOUS

I was sixteen in Charlotte, North Carolina when I took my first job cooking. Moved up here when I was nineteen to live with my Aunt. I met my husband when he started working on the automobile assembly line and we married when I was twenty. We had three children, two girls and a boy.

SHANNON

Jason and me got married when I was nineteen.

ANONYMOUS

We moved here when my children were ready for school and I started working in the elementary school cafeteria.

SHANNON

You wouldn't believe the little town I grew up in.

ANONYMOUS

My husband thought a small town was a better place to raise a family.

SHANNON

It was so small they had to bus us to another school with kids from two other towns smaller than mine.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANONYMOUS

Sometimes he was right.

SHANNON

It was hard to make friends and sometimes those kids were meaner than my own family.

ANONYMOUS

My husband was a very good man. I miss him everyday.

SHANNON

My Dad drank a lot and I don't miss him at all.

ANONYMOUS

I worked at the elementary first.

SHANNON

My Mom just took it all. The drinking and the fighting.

ANONYMOUS

But I didn't have seniority and I was the first to go.

SHANNON

I'm telling you, she didn't ask for it.

ANONYMOUS

I went up to the college where they had civil service.

SHANNON

The truth is that she did have a tongue that could rip your heart out, but I never read where that was a capital offense.

ANONYMOUS

The civil service made me feel safe.

SHANNON

Believe me, she knew just where to go and I can show you scars that'll never go away. But I can't think that's enough to knock her teeth out or turn her eyes black or break her nose. Hell, no, I don't believe it's in the constitution that you have the right to knock someone's brains around just because they're a bitch.

ANONYMOUS

And when I got old enough I retired.

SHANNON

I never took abuse from nobody, ever, and yes, I always looked like this.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANONYMOUS

My oldest is gone now - and my husband too. I just need enough to take care of myself and leave a little behind for my grandchildren.

SHANNON

My mother's dead now too. Killed defending six gas pumps and a cash box with fifty-five dollars in it. Nobody's life should come down to fifty-five dollars. In the end - we even buried her in that damn Quickie Mart uniform.

ANONYMOUS

My husband drank a little wine on the holidays and lived long enough to collect two months pension.

SHANNON

The truth is that I never did find out why she stayed with him so long. Now I can never ask.

ANONYMOUS

The truth is that people should have a little more in this life. But that isn't always what life is about.

RICHARD

The truth is that if you can get the students young enough they still have hope. And if you don't lie to them they can keep it.

KENT

The truth is that nobody seems to know how things really happened anywhere you really care about.

(Michael runs in and goes to the TV)

MICHAEL

Did you hear what happened ?

FRANK

Leave it off.

CATHERINE

You're okay now, that's all that matters, right Frank?

MICHAEL

Don't you care?

FRANK

No!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CATHERINE

Everything's all right now.

MICHAEL

They shot four students, Mom. Nothing's all right.

CATHERINE

We heard it was soldiers, Michael.

FRANK

They shot the Guard is what happened.

MICHAEL

No, it's not!

CATHERINE

That's what we heard son.

MICHAEL

You heard it wrong, damn it! It's a lie. They didn't shoot any Guard. They shot students. The fuckers shot them dead.

FRANK

Watch your mouth son. You're not out on the street now.

MICHAEL

I saw it... damn it... I was there. It was terrible. Terrible.

MARGOT

They came in to my class and told me they had shot four national Guardsman dead on the campus.

KENT

People lie when they don't know the truth and they lie when they do. It just depends on whether they want the truth or need the lie.

MARGOT

They said the university had been closed, there was martial law in the town and I couldn't go home.

KENT

Sometimes it's lying for the good, sometimes it's just lies. It doesn't matter unless it hurts you and it doesn't make any difference unless it helps you -

MARGOT

I didn't know what to believe at first.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KENT

Lies come in all colors.

ANONYMOUS

It was right in the paper that it was soldiers shot and they were looking in the river for the gun that started it all.

KENT

A gun they never found and shots no one heard.

ANONYMOUS

It was right on the front page that afternoon.

MARGOT

The phone lines were jammed.

ANONYMOUS

If you don't believe the newspaper, who can you believe.

MARGOT

I kept trying to get my husband but all I got was a busy signal. And now I'm scared. Real scared.

ANONYMOUS

This young girl I want to tell you about worked with me in the cafeteria was probably up there on that hill. If there was a gun she probably knew who fired it. But they never found the gun and I never saw that girl again.

MICHAEL

No, you heard it wrong, it was students who were killed. And they were just going to class.

FRANK

Now that just shows you it's a lie because if they were just going to class, God damn it, they wouldn't be dead.

(Michael moves to the TV)

Leave that damn thing off!

MARGOT

The roads coming into town were empty and quiet except for the sound of the helicopters overhead. (Pause) I thought it was the end of the world.

RICHARD

My mother called me at my school and told me to come to the hospital. It was almost noon and my father had been in the intensive care ward with a stroke. The doctors told her he was now in God's hands.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MICHAEL

Dead soldiers is what you expect, isn't it.

FRANK

I don't like dead soldiers any better than I like dead students!

MICHAEL

But it's what you expected.

FRANK

And what did you expect when you went up there? A welcoming committee?

MICHAEL

You think they got what they deserved, don't you.

FRANK

You said that, not me.

MICHAEL

But that's what you think, isn't it?

FRANK

Now you know what I think too. If you're so damn smart how come you didn't know what was going to happen up there.

(Michael seems frozen. Frank continues.)

Well?

MICHAEL

Pay or play, shut up and listen, don't talk back, do what you're told, do your duty, follow the leader, and if they don't listen just blow their heads off, one, two, three, four, and then we can all go home and go back to our lives like nothing ever happened.

FRANK

Are you done?

MICHAEL

If you all love this god damn war so much then why don't you just go over and fight it and leave the rest of us alone -

FRANK

(Interrupting) -you think it's all a game - fucking hair down to your butts waving your little fingers in the air, well it's not a game, god damn it, and I won't have you and your friends -

(Frank grabs a kitchen knife and grabs Michael

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRANK (cont'd)
by his long hair. Catherine watches in horror
as Frank holds Michael down at his knees, the
knife above his head)

CATHERINE
Oh, God, Frank please don't hurt him.
(They all freeze)

MARGOT
So Abraham and Isaac went together to the place that God had
told him.

RICHARD
And together the father and the son built the altar.

ANONYMOUS
And they laid the wood down...

GUARDSMAN
Then Abraham bound Isaac,

KENT
And laid his son upon that wood.

SHANNON
And the father stretched forth his hand,

KENT
Then lifted his knife to slay his son,

SHANNON
Whom he loved,

TOGETHER
And for whom he was willing to sacrifice everything.

MICHAEL
What are you waiting for? If that's what you want to do, damn
it, just go ahead and do it. DO IT!

MARGOT
But the angel of God called Abraham to lay down the knife -
and he did.

(Frank lowers the knife and Michael falls to
the floor as Catherine rushes to him)

CATHERINE
Thank God, it's over.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARGOT

And God commanded Abraham to sacrifice the lamb instead.
(Frank starts to walk out and Michael stops him)

MICHAEL

Dad? Is it really over?

MARGOT

I was teaching school that day when they ran into my class and told me I couldn't go home.

CATHERINE

Look at him. He's our son.

ANONYMOUS

This young girl I worked with was a good girl. Then she met this boy and everything was different.

MARGOT

After some anti-war demonstrators had been arrested, one columnist wrote in the local paper that - Quote, "Some of the demonstrators who called themselves non-conformists were the usual disheveled lot with torn clothes which hadn't seen a cleaner or wash for months sandals, combat boots or moccasins; and, of course, dirty uncombed long hair." Unquote.

ANONYMOUS

The boy said this revolution would be the real one.

MARGOT

On the other hand, the reporter noted, a few of the females seemed well-bred, properly dressed young women, but the majority were as unattractive as the men.

ANONYMOUS

This time they would get it right.

KENT

It was warm that Sunday the guard came on campus.

ANONYMOUS

I know there are things wrong with this country. I know. But that boy scared me. He still does.

KENT

The soldiers tried hard not to look at the young girls. The kids tried hard not to see those guns.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARGOT

True, the reporter wrote - clothes don't make the man, but these clothes were something else!

ANONYMOUS

I've heard plenty of crazy Republicans and Democrats but he didn't sound like any of them.

KENT

They just kept flashing their peace signs at those guns. They didn't get it at all.

ANONYMOUS

After a while the girl stopped talking to me about the war, but she was still taking care of that boy while she getting to be all skin and bones. She was full of secrets now too. Then that building burned and she came to see me in the cafeteria. It was Sunday and I only served one meal. She looked so frightened that when she made me promise to go home and not come back til the soldiers were gone, I said yes.

KENT

The black students had already walked off this campus once. But it wasn't about the fight in Vietnam. No, it was about the fight to make us part of a system that acted like we didn't exist. We walked and we got something. Not everything. But enough.

ANONYMOUS

She kissed me right on my cheek and disappeared.

KENT

I never saw any faces like mine in books except Harriet Tubman and Booker T. Maybe it was too late for us, but we walked for the ones that were still to come.

ANONYMOUS

I don't want to leave my name but you can be sure I'm telling you the truth.

KENT

So when America marched into Cambodia I knew it wasn't because we loved Asians. And when they sent those guards up to the campus it wasn't because they loved students.

ANONYMOUS

She knew something was going to happen. She told me to go. I think lots of people knew something bad could happen. Why even the President of the University was gone.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KENT

Those guns were loaded. They are always loaded.

ANONYMOUS

Then the girl - Mary was her name - was gone.

RICHARD

Even though some things between us would never be settled, he was my father and he was dying and I had to go.

ANONYMOUS

I don't have to leave my name do I?

KENT

Bang. Bang. Bang. Bang.

RICHARD

My Dad didn't think much of teaching as a profession.

ANONYMOUS

It's like a family up here too.

RICHARD

He used to say that those who can, do - those who can't, teach. A lot of people still say that. They think teaching is a joke, and they pay them that way.

ANONYMOUS

And no one likes you to talk bad things about the family.

KENT

One... two... three... four.

MARGOT

My father loved Richard Nixon. I loved my father but I didn't understand him anymore. I loved him, but I hated Richard Nixon.

ANONYMOUS

Keep the bad things inside the family is what they feel.

RICHARD

But there was a magic inside my head when I was in the classroom.

ANONYMOUS

I really just have that one story.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RICHARD

And that magic slowly was just one more gulf between us.

ANONYMOUS

But maybe it needs to be told.

MARGOT

I left for college in 1962 just as the family business was already going to pieces - but nobody said a word.

FRANK

If you had just stayed in that damned Academy...

MARGOT

My mother just started to water down my father's scotch and I learned to be afraid of being home.

FRANK

You wouldn't be worried about who was going to shoot you - but who you were going to shoot!

MICHAEL

Look at me Dad. For once really look at me.

MARGOT

Dad sold his business to a man who made helicopters for the Vietnam war. He made a fortune and my father went broke. The man took the business - as a tax loss, and it was legal. An amazing country when losing money was better than making something. It didn't make sense then and it doesn't make sense now. So my parents' retirement was no retirement at all. My father sat in a chair in Florida from September until December of 1969 thinking he was safe. But by the spring of 1970, the business was gone, kaput, closed its doors and he was left staring at a quarter of a million dollars of worthless paper.

ANONYMOUS

I came to tell what I know but you can't use my name.

MARGOT

He never really worked again. But he didn't blow his brains out either.

RICHARD

Funny how something that could make you feel so good - could separate you from the people you loved the most.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARGOT

He just sat in front of his television with a glass of scotch in one hand and his life in the other and watched Richard Nixon til he died.

MICHAEL

Just who was I going to kill?

MARGOT

I wonder what I would have done if my life had disappeared.

MICHAEL

He looked at me and he knew...

CATHERINE

You're home now. That's all that matters. Tell him you're happy that he's all right. Frank! Tell him.

MICHAEL

We were strangers.

CATHERINE

Maybe we can't all agree about this war but we can still be a family.

MICHAEL

You have to believe things can change.

FRANK

I don't like change.

CATHERINE

Your father and I are just trying to make a good life for you and your sister.

FRANK

I don't like the hair. I can't get used to the talk and sex and the drugs. I don't like the world I fought for and I don't know what to do about it.

MICHAEL

You used to be interested in talking to me.

FRANK

You used to be interesting to talk to. We had things to do together. You had good hands. We don't play the same games anymore.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MICHAEL

You don't want to talk to me anymore.

FRANK

You changed. I didn't.

(Frank walks into the darkness.)

RICHARD

It was very quiet in my house. My Mother hated the war, my father supported it. At some point the arguments stopped and so did the talking.

MICHAEL

Suddenly my father and mother were alone in the room and I was gone from the discussion.

FRANK

I believe that if this protesting keeps going on there will be more bodies laying in the streets of America than there will ever be laying in the streets of Hanoi.

CATHERINE

How can you say that?

FRANK

You can't disagree every time you don't like something. Sometimes you just have to shut up and take what you're given.

CATHERINE

But you don't think we should hurt them, Frank. That isn't what you mean, is it?

FRANK

Don't push me on this Catherine.

CATHERINE

But I want to understand. Frank I need to understand.

FRANK

Don't push me Caty

CATHERINE

I just want you to tell me how you feel about those students and the soldiers -

FRANK

(interrupting)

-- if they have to shoot a few to shut them up then do it! Is

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRANK

that what you want to hear because that's how I feel. If it takes some dead ones to make the peace then that's what I mean.

CATHERINE

But you always said that even though you and your father disagreed, in the end you still loved each other.

FRANK

(Pause) I lied.

MICHAEL

I saw her back stiffen and her shoulders fall. His eyes went dark. There are things we only learn about those we love at the end of it. I knew she would never leave him, I also knew she would never love him quite the same way again.

ANONYMOUS

They never found a gun and they said it wasn't the students who shot but they don't know everything and they don't say everything they know. You can be sure of that. I mean really know why it happened. But I think that Mary knew. I do.

KENT

When you're a black man you learn early to respect the gun. You don't go up against it unless you're willing to use it - or run from it. That weekend - a lot of the brothers left.

ANONYMOUS

Her name was Mary Eugenia, but everyone called her Mary and even though she said she didn't know God anymore - she told me to stay home from work and I did.

KENT

We have two children and no guns in our house. I expect my children to go to college. I want to believe that their lives will be better. I need to believe that things will get better.

RICHARD

On the day of the shooting, I would have been on campus but my class was giving me a party - or I might have been lying in a bed next to my father in that hospital ward.

KENT

In the end I didn't leave. It was my school, too - my country and my war.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANONYMOUS

Mary's father had been rich and they had lived in a big house. Then something terrible happened and he died by his own hand and she lost her mother from the breast cancer the year after. I love God, but God is a mystery.

MICHAEL

Twenty-five years later my father is dying of bone cancer. He is old and frail and his lungs have forgotten how to do their work. His mind fades in and out, and sometimes, when they give him the drugs, he speaks of times long gone.

ANONYMOUS

I remember watching the news that night and wondering where she was and what she was doing.

KENT

Bang... Bang... Bang... Bang.
(shooting in slow motion)

ANONYMOUS

I know she stopped caring about most things by the time that boy got to her.

MICHAEL

Of "D"-day and his wedding.

KENT

Bang... Bang... Bang...

ANONYMOUS

But she never stopped caring about me.

MICHAEL

Of work and my childhood.

KENT

Bang... bang... bang...

MICHAEL

And the day those students died.

ANONYMOUS

I don't know why those children were shot, but I believe that God does and Mary might too.

MARGOT

I have a recurring dream that Abraham has taken Isaac up that mountain. I see him with his hands raised high above Isaac's

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARGOT

head, the knife shining, the boy's eyes full of terror... and I try to remember what is supposed to happen next because I have heard this story every year of my life, and I know that something is supposed to happen to save him, but in my dream, nothing is happening and I am afraid.

RICHARD

I was on my way to the hospital to see my father. He had a stroke and my mother called me at the school and told me to come right away. He was failing - that's how she put it.

MARGOT

I run to find God or the Angel or my Mother because I am afraid that nothing will happen. And then I wake up.

ANONYMOUS

I worked with that girl two years and I saw her change.

SHANNON

Jason changed everyday we were married. He wasn't -

ANONYMOUS

She wasn't -

SHANNON

The boy -

ANONYMOUS

The girl -

SHANNON

I loved.

MARGOT

In 1969 I moved to Ohio and started a new life without my parents.

KENT

One... two... three... four.

MARGOT

Even in their pain I missed them.

RICHARD

When I got to the hospital my mother was standing in the hall.

ANONYMOUS

She disappeared and I never saw her again.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RICHARD

She was dead calm.

ANONYMOUS

I tried to write to her but there was no forwarding address.

RICHARD

She was standing in front of the doors of the intensive care and she was smiling a funny smile I'd never seen before.

ANONYMOUS

I've never seen her again.

RICHARD

I told her I was sorry I was late. She said it didn't matter.

ANONYMOUS

I've always thought I was a good mother.

RICHARD

I asked her where Dad was and she said he was gone.

ANONYMOUS

Soon I'll be gone and it won't matter where that girl was that day.

RICHARD

I looked at her and asked if she meant he was dead.

ANONYMOUS

Some things have a life of their own.

RICHARD

She said he was dead but that it was all right and I didn't need to cry. She said it was over now and it was all going to be fine.

ANONYMOUS

And that's why I came here today.

RICHARD

She said they had brought all the wounded students into the ward and it was terrible - all the blood and the confusion and the fear. She said you could smell the fear. Even some of the nurses didn't want to touch them. Then one of the doctors came in with the x-rays of the one boy, the one that was shot in the spine, and the doctor was crying he'd never seen a bullet shatter a spine so badly. Mom kept talking about the

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RICHARD

students and she was smiling now. She said it was all going to be fine. She said the others would all live now.

ANONYMOUS

She must be a woman now... if she's still alive.

KENT

I cried for the kids who died. They were like me. Young.

ANONYMOUS

But she'll always be that young girl to me.

RICHARD

My mother stood there and smiled and said that no one else would die because she had made a pact with God and it really was all over now. She took me in her arms and she smiled because she said the trade had been made - the life had been taken and no more would die. She said it was finally over now and we could go home.

ANONYMOUS

I made her eat to keep her alive but I wouldn't let her take food to those boys. I swear, I'm a good woman. I paid for every meal I gave her.

RICHARD

She told God that it would be all right to take her husband if the wounded children could live.

KENT

Bang... Bang... Bang...

RICHARD

If only the ones that were wounded wouldn't die...

KENT

Bang.

RICHARD

God could take my father to his eternal resting place.

ANONYMOUS

I've always wondered where she was in the world.

RICHARD

Where he could join his son.

ANONYMOUS

Was she alive? Did she miss me?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RICHARD

And she promised not to mourn either of them anymore.

ANONYMOUS

Did she know what really happened?

RICHARD

Just let them live and she would never say another word.

ANONYMOUS

I never heard another word.

RICHARD

On a warm day in May.

ANONYMOUS

Did she have children?

RICHARD

My mother stopped asking questions.

ANONYMOUS

Did she finish school?

RICHARD

When my father died in a hospital in a little town near where he was born.

ANONYMOUS

Or was there another story I'll never know.

RICHARD

My mother made peace because the children lived.

KENT

One...

ANONYMOUS

I guess there's some things we never know.

KENT

Two...

RICHARD

All the others lived.

KENT

Three.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RICHARD

And we went on and never spoke of it again til now.

KENT

Four.

ANONYMOUS

But in my mind - she's always kind of frozen in that time.

MARGOT

Some people ask if Sarah knew about the sacrifice and if she ever tried to stop Abraham. Some say Abraham never told her before he went to Mount Moriah and some believe they only spoke of it in passing when he returned. That Abraham told her of the lamb but never spoke of the knife or the binding or the terror in his son's eyes. No one speaks of Isaac. No one writes of how he felt about his father after that day on the mountain. No one writes about the son at all. Some say that Sarah died soon after because of the pain in her heart. Some say Sarah just died because she was old and tired. Some say it was just a test. Some say it was more. Some say that in the end Abraham would never have plunged the knife into his son's flesh. Some say he would. Some say the questions never end to this day and that is the way God wants it.

(Michael and Frank do not speak to one another
but out to the audience)

FRANK

I went in and I didn't complain. And I won't complain about the ones who don't fight, but I won't have them shoving it down my throat. Because I don't know what I would have done if I could have got out of that shit hole war and everything else would have turned out the same.

ANONYMOUS

The revolution was coming the boy said, and this time we would get it right.

KENT

Then just a few days later they were shooting on another campus except this time they were all black.

FRANK

Soldiers don't carry empty guns and don't ever forget it.

KENT

And nobody gives a damn about them at all.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARGOT

In the fall of 1969 I was a newlywed. I took a job teaching high school English, started buying furniture and believed in the power of love. I had never been to a protest or seen a tank. I never thought about the guns being loaded.

FRANK

No matter who's carrying the gun - you be real scared.

GUARDSMAN

We were on lock and load all weekend. People don't understand that. We were told we could fire anytime we felt our lives in danger. People need to know that.

ANONYMOUS

A few minutes before noon I started walking up to the campus.

MICHAEL

We heard the bell ringing on the other side of the hill.

KENT

This was the end of the line.

SHANNON

It was warm and I took my jacket off and laid it down on the ground.

GUARDSMAN

The students started coming. We could see them... fifty... a hundred... a thousand walking towards us.

KENT

This assembly is unlawful... the voice bellowed. The crowd must disperse at this time.

SHANNON

Off the pigs... Off the pigs...

KENT

Fuck the pigs... Fuck the pigs...

RICHARD

One... two... three... four... we don't want your fucking war.

MICHAEL

Two... four... six... eight... we don't want your fascist state.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GUARDSMAN
Disperse, the bull horn blared.

MARGOT
Disperse...

SHANNON
Disperse...

ANONYMOUS
Disperse...

GUARDSMAN
A rock arched out from the crowd...

ANONYMOUS
Then a brick and a stone...

RICHARD
A few minutes after noon the guard formed a single long line
in front of the ruins of the old ROTC building...

MICHAEL
They put on gas masks...

GUARDSMAN
On order they moved out in a skirmish line, bayonets fixed
and unsheathed.

MARGOT
Disperse...

SHANNON
Disperse...

ANONYMOUS
Disperse...

MICHAEL
Two...

RICHARD
Four...

KENT
Six...

SHANNON
Eight...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TOGETHER

We don't want your fascist state.

FRANK

You be real scared when you see a gun. Real scared.

MICHAEL

The President had left the campus and no one was in charge.

ANONYMOUS

I tell you it wasn't so innocent up there.

MARGOT

My father died raving at a television and loving Richard Nixon.

ANONYMOUS

I hear that one of the fathers said his daughter's death would always be on that President's head.

MARGOT

Sometimes when I miss my father I think I love Richard Nixon too.

(There is a burst of gunfire.)

GUARDSMAN

STOP FIRING!

TOGETHER

Stop firing. (repeats overlapping like gunfire)

ANONYMOUS

They say after the shooting started a man in a uniform ran up and down in front of those boys on the other side.

GUARDSMAN

He hit my gun so hard his stick broke.

KENT

He was yelling "Cease-fire, cease-fire!"

MICHAEL

And it was all over.

ANONYMOUS

I heard the screaming, but I never got further than the front gate.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KENT

I hadn't gone home that day.

RICHARD

My father died but the others lived.

GUARDSMAN

The truckers had stopped when we stood in the doors with our guns. But the students didn't. I wanted to tell them if they came too close we would have to shoot and someone might die - but it was all over before I could speak. I wanted to shout that this was not a test. Sometimes I wake up and my mouth is still open in a scream.

MARGOT

Maybe I wanted to hear the stories so I could make sense of it where the others had failed.

GUARDSMAN

We were lucky because we had these old guns - not the new ones. We were lucky because with the new ones there would have been a massacre.

ANONYMOUS

Sometimes I think about that girl and I can't sleep.

GUARDSMAN

"Don't fire, don't fire" he screamed and when I think about those few moments in my bed at night - our fingers poised, my eyes wet from the gas - my ears ringing from the chants - I am grateful for the old guns. Then I close my eyes and try to sleep.

MARGOT

I wanted to understand it all.

GUARDSMAN

I can't say that my life hasn't been good since then. I have been a happy man.

MARGOT

To have it all fall into place.

GUARDSMAN

I thought someday it would all make sense.

TOGETHER

Now I'm not so sure.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARGOT

My father died the day after Nixon resigned. Now Nixon is gone too.

ANONYMOUS

I thought the President of the University would know the truth but he died and never left a word.

FRANK

You don't know everything, son. Believe me, no one does.

GUARDSMAN

I had been on a night patrol on Saturday night when we got into this skirmish near the front gate. Suddenly we were hand-to-hand with some students and before I knew it I had pinned my bayonet into his hand and stopped - just for a moment when we seemed to be looking at one another though his face is as much of a blur now as it was then - then pulling out the bayonet we all ran away into the darkness. I can still feel that moment when the steel went into his hand. I can still remember wiping away the blood with my handkerchief.

KENT

I have a dream about all the dead of that year - They dance around me singing "Don't worry, little brother, the best is yet to come."

GUARDSMAN

I was really happy when they said we'd be leaving that morning. Then they said to unpack and go back to the hill.

ANONYMOUS

I think about that girl and wonder what she thinks about.

RICHARD

I think about my brother and he is a ghost like my father.

ANONYMOUS

Seems wrong to lose your loved ones too young.

SHANNON

I had a fight with Jason and my mother had been giving me hell all night so I came up here for a little peace. I hitchhiked all the way and when I got to the campus I stopped and took off my jacket. It was hot and there were people throwing things and Guardsmen and gas and then suddenly there were shots and screaming and I fell and when I looked up there was this boy bleeding - I had never seen anything die

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHANNON

before but you could see it in his eyes. Like the fish my daddy would bring home from the river.

RICHARD

My Dad was dead and none of the others died and I didn't know how to feel.

SHANNON

Gone.

RICHARD

Gone.

MARGOT

Gone.

KENT

Gone.

FRANK

I thought what I did made a difference. Now I just don't know.

RICHARD

When my brother was in Vietnam he used write us letters home every week. He called them his breakfast visits because he would come back from night patrol and write to us before he fell asleep. One of the things that happened to him, he told us, was that he had developed the ability to walk in the dark and see without light. He called it - nightwalking - and he said that somehow, in the middle of all this killing, it had made sense of his life. To nightwalk you needed to forget everything you had been taught. To stop thinking in the same way you had been taught to think - and to stop seeing in the same way you had been taught to see. You needed, he wrote, to "trust the earth in a way no one ever teaches you to - and believe in something that you can't find in churches or schools." He believed that even in the terrible hell that was Vietnam, something greater, something higher than what he had come to think of as God... and something more important within the human race than we had yet learned - would come out of all that pain. Those were his words as I remember them. He was sure that the nightwalking would lead him to the truth of his own life... and perhaps the truth of life itself. And when he came home he was going to teach all of us - including his little brother - to do it too. That was the last letter he wrote. He stepped into a rice field mined with bamboo triggers. They said he died before he knew what hit him. But I like to think he had already found what he was looking for. Now on warm nights, when I go walking in the

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RICHARD

woods near our family home, I feel him, right there beside me, reaching out his hand, taking my hand, now as large as his and we walk together and talk together of all that we have learned, and done and believed. On these nightwalks I am at peace with that day in May and all the other days that have come between my brother and me.

FRANK

It has to make a difference.

KENT

Bang... Bang... Bang...

MARGOT

And the angel called to Abraham a second time and told him that because he had not withheld his son, he would be blessed, his descendants would be made as numerous as the stars of the heaven and as the sand of the seashore. All this, the angel said, "because you have obeyed my command."

ANONYMOUS

They said there were 54 shots fired in 13 seconds.

KENT

It could have been any of us.

ANONYMOUS

If I had just walked a little faster up that hill.

KENT

I think about the space between life and death.

SHANNON

If I hadn't stopped to take off my jacket.

MICHAEL

It could have been me, Dad.

KENT

It could have been me.

GUARDSMAN

If I had just been on the other side of the hill...

MARGOT

Would my husband have died? My daughter never born? My life a different story.

GUARDSMAN

Would I have shot them down?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARGOT

My daughter never born.

GUARDSMAN

My life a different story.

TOGETHER

Would anyone remember?

MARGOT

I like to think that Sarah would have wanted to stop Abraham. That she wouldn't have let him raise the knife to his son no matter who asked. I like to think that but I'm not really sure.

SHANNON

I had to tell somebody about what happened because it changed my life forever.

ANONYMOUS

I wanted somebody to know that girl saved my life.

SHANNON

I left that day and didn't wake up 'till 1975.

GUARDSMAN

Now I just want it over.

SHANNON

Sometimes I think I'm not awake yet.

MARGOT

I came to hear the stories and I hoped to learn the truth. In the end there are only the stories and the truth must be found by someone else.

CATHERINE

Your father and I love you Michael. Don't we Frank?

KENT

Is it finally over?

MARGOT

My father loved Richard Nixon.

CATHERINE

Tell him you love him Frank. No matter what. Tell him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MICHAEL

Dad?

(Margot is alone in a spotlight)

MARGOT

In our life there are markers to help us see how far we have come. Birthdays, anniversaries, awards - to help us look at how well we have passed our time here and how much there is still to do. Sometimes the markers are there for all of us to see. A war won or lost... a revolution failed or still ongoing... a millennium about to change hands. Sometimes they are much more private - a prayer for our dead parent... a graduation for a dear child... an anniversary with a beloved mate. (Pause) When I was born my father paid double because he wanted me so badly, but he would die without knowing much about me at all except that he loved me and that has had to be enough. If we are not vigilant, this life will come and go and we will miss it and leave it behind without a trace. If we are not vigilant, we can become bitter or lost or worse. If we are not vigilant, we will mistake the markers for the meaning, and fail the test completely.

BLACKOUT

END OF PLAY