

Act Two

7.

Inside the house. A spacious living room with antique and rebuilt furniture, old mirrors, psychedelic items, kerosene lamps, candles, some books, musical instruments, etc. A huge Huey Newton poster, the one with spear and gun, is on one of the walls. On another is a poster-sized picture of THOMAS. The kitchen can be seen to the rear. Stage right is the stairway leading to the second floor, and beyond that, another room.

As the lights come up, the GAME WARDEN and DEPUTY SHERIFF are in the process of sitting down. MARTHA is in the kitchen.

WARDEN

That dog of yours just killed a deer back in the woods, other side of the Williams place.

THOMAS

She did?

WARDEN

She did.

DEPUTY

You seen her out there all covered with blood now, didn't ya?

THOMAS

I did.

DEPUTY

Well, what the hell then, man?

THOMAS

What you mean, what the hell? I don't understand why you two boys are coming down on me for what the dog done.

WARDEN

It's a twenty-five-dollar fine. Dogs killing a deer is a twenty-five-dollar fine.

THOMAS

Well, then get it from the dog.

DEPUTY

What?

THOMAS

I say get the twenty-five dollars off the dog. (*He goes to the door.*) Stella! You quiet down now, hear! (*Returning*) She sure don't seem to like you boys.

WARDEN

You ought to keep that bitch penned up and there wouldn't be no trouble.

THOMAS

I wouldn't do that to a dog.

WARDEN

How about what she done to the deer?

THOMAS

I didn't do nothing to the deer.

DEPUTY

Is that your dog?

THOMAS

Yes, she lives here most of the time.

DEPUTY

Then you're responsible for that dog.

THOMAS

No, I ain't.

WARDEN

Yup.

THOMAS

No more'n she's responsible for me.

DEPUTY

You got to keep a wild dog like that penned up and you

got to pay a twenty-five-dollar fine if she goes out and slaughters a deer.

THOMAS

You people don't pay no twenty-five-dollar fine every time one a you goes out and kills himself a deer.

WARDEN

That's different.

THOMAS

How's that different?

DEPUTY

Listen here, you know how many deer we killed in this state last year?

THOMAS

No, I don't.

DEPUTY

One hundred and twenty-eight thousand. And you know how many we killed off this year?

THOMAS

How many?

DEPUTY

One hundred and forty-five thousand.

WARDEN

You know what kind of problem we'd have around here if we didn't keep them deer thinned out?

THOMAS

Well, yeah. So you boys can lay back a while now and my dog'll take up the slack for ya.

WARDEN

That ain't it.

THOMAS

It is too. You're coming around my house now complaining about a deer being kilt off and then you tell me the deer's got to be killed to keep the herd thinned out. You ought to give my dog twenty-five dollars.

WARDEN

You know there was an old couple back in there on that dirt road watched that dog kill that deer?

THOMAS

Then why didn't they turn their heads away? I don't see

why you guys are so disgusted. Killin' a deer is killin' a deer, right?

MARTHA

(From the kitchen) They prob'ly had a good time watching the dog kill that deer.

DEPUTY

Now that ain't true, either.

THOMAS

Nobody forced those people to watch my dog kill the deer.

DEPUTY

You'll have to pay the twenty-five-dollar fine and pen your dog up or we'll be forced to shoot the dog.

THOMAS

Go on ahead. That's between you and the dog. *(DEPUTY rises, pulls his revolver and moves for the door.)*

WARDEN

(Restraining him) Hold up a minute, Jim.

THOMAS

Go on ahead, she's right outside here.

MARTHA

(From the kitchen) Go on and shoot that dog.

WARDEN

You'll still have to pay the twenty-five-dollar fine, just the same.

THOMAS

After my dog done helped you keep the deer thinned out and after you done killed off my dog?

DEPUTY

(Sitting down) Look, it's the law.

THOMAS

Well, it's the dog who ought to know the law, then. They got just as much right to be here as we do. *(A silence.)*

DEPUTY

You want to take it to court?

THOMAS

No, I don't want to take it to no court and get into no hassle with no judge. A judge is only human.

WARDEN

Look, the dogs got to be controlled, too, same as the deer.

THOMAS

I know that.

DEPUTY

You know what would happen if we didn't control the dog population?

THOMAS

Who knows what would happen.

WARDEN

We'd get overrun by packs of wild dogs.

THOMAS

I understand what you're saying.

MARTHA

(From the kitchen) There's no way of knowing that.

THOMAS

(Loudly) Well, Martha, it's like these dogs here get up every morning and get themselves a groundhog. It ain't the groundhog they're after, it's his meat. Same with the deer. Be too many dogs around here, pretty soon they'd run out of groundhogs for breakfast. Who knows what they'd go after then.

WARDEN

A wild dog is a pretty mean creature.

THOMAS

Yeah, it's hard for a carnivorous animal to stay peaceful.

DEPUTY

Then you understand what we're talking about and why you got to pay a twenty-five-dollar fine.

THOMAS

See here, I drowned many a puppy right here in the lake back of this house so as to keep from having too many dogs, but that don't make it right.

DEPUTY

That's not relevant. Someone's got to deal with this problem, and somebody's got to be responsible.

WARDEN

Same as you're responsible for your dog.

THOMAS

You can't expect me to give my bitch Stella the chance of life, equal to me, and then tell her, even if I could, save for locking her up, which she's better off being drowned, that she can't go out and hunt herself a deer.

DEPUTY

You ought to feed your damn dog.

THOMAS

I do. I feed my dog.

WARDEN

Why does she have to go out and kill for her food then?

THOMAS

I don't know. Ask the dog. (*Laughs.*)

DEPUTY

I'm getting mighty tired of all this smart talk.

MARTHA

(*In the kitchen*) He ain't smart.

DEPUTY

He sure acts smart.

THOMAS

I ain't smart, I just know what I know, man. And you're draggin' my time as much as I'm draggin' yours.

DEPUTY

Well, you know you got to pay this fine, then, don't you? You know that.

THOMAS

Are you being rude, sir?

WARDEN

(*To DEPUTY*) Take it easy, Jim. (*To THOMAS*) We're just having a hard time understanding each other, Mr. Dinwiddie. Let's all of us try and be patient until we can work this thing through.

THOMAS

You know it's all right with me, Earl. But I won't take anybody being rude to me no more. No kind a way.

WARDEN

I understand that, Tom.

MARTHA

(*From the kitchen*) You ought to tell that partner of yours to keep a civil tongue in his mouth.

WARDEN

It's all right now, Mrs. Dinwiddie. Jim here is just trying to do his job.

MARTHA

(*In the kitchen*) Well, do it then.

DEPUTY

I'm trying to, ma'am.

THOMAS

You be civil with me and I'll be civil with you. I'm through taking that stuff. You're supposed to be courteous when you deal with the public.

MARTHA

People think if you got long hair you're some kind of creep.

THOMAS

I went down in front of the Justice of the Peace's place a month ago with my two kids. We was all painted up; I had my five-year-old on tambourine, and the little one on penny whistle and we marched up and down, up and down, singing religious songs. People didn't know what to do.

WARDEN

I heard about that.

THOMAS

I ain't gonna kowtow no more and I ain't gonna feel like a criminal for bein' poor and wearing my hair long.

WARDEN

We don't have nothin' to do with people's religions or whether or not they get a haircut.

DEPUTY

We ain't interested in that. (*STELLA barking at something, off. The DEPUTY rises as if to check it out.*)

THOMAS

(*Heading him off*) I'll tell you what, boys—how 'bout if I play you a song. (*Gets his guitar*) Sit down, Jim, I'd like to play you a song. (*JIM looks at EARL. EARL nods. JIM sits. The barking fades. A pause as THOMAS tunes the guitar.*)

MARTHA

Sing "Rabbit in the Log."

THOMAS

All right, that's a good one for these boys.

(Sings)

There's a rabbit in the log
 And I ain't got my dog,
 And how will I get him, I know,
 Well, I'll take me a briar
 And twist it in his hair.
 And that's how I'll get him, I know,
 I know, yes I know,
 That's how I'll get him, I know—
 I'm gonna take me a briar
 And twist it in his hair
 And that's how I'll get him, I know.
 Well, way up ahead
 There's an old farming shed
 And that's where I'll rest my
 Weary bones, weary bones,
 And that's where I'll rest
 My weary bones.
 Way up ahead
 There's an old farming shed
 And that's where I'll rest
 My weary bones.

(MARTHA comes out of the kitchen, shaking her ass and rattling a tambourine. They play the song through again up-tempo, stop and laugh together. MARTHA sits down.)

THOMAS

How'd you like that, boys? That's an old song I know.

WARDEN

Oh, sure, I can remember hearing that song when I was a boy down in the Virginia hills.

THOMAS

That's the same place I got it from myself, Earl. You like that song, Jim?

DEPUTY

Very nice.

MARTHA

"Rabbit in the Log" is a good old song.

WARDEN

Thank you very much, Tom.

THOMAS

Don't think nothin' about it, Earl.

DEPUTY

Well, we got to fill these here papers out for the county files.

THOMAS

That's a song by country folk, which is something I understand; I understand how the country folk feel about dogs. They can be a chore and a hardship and if they get to be too many they get dangerous.

WARDEN

If your dog is gonna roam, then he's got to be licensed. Otherwise you got to keep him penned up some way.

THOMAS

Seems to me like a dog is here on this earth just like the rest of us animals and plants and bugs and things, cooking in the same stew, and he should have a right to live out his own life any way he wants to.

DEPUTY

What if that dog decided to eat one of your kids?

THOMAS

I'd have to shoot him.

DEPUTY

Well then, you get the point.

THOMAS

I draw the line right there.

MARTHA

Thomas, I think we should shoot that dog anyway. It's just terrible the way she comes around here with blood all over her and everything. Ohhh, it's disgusting, Thomas. And I just don't want to live this way!

THOMAS

What way?

MARTHA

Ohhhh!

WARDEN

We got to be on our way soon, Mr. Dinwiddie.

THOMAS

I'm not holding you up, am I, boys?

WARDEN

We're just putting a twenty-five-dollar fine on you, Tom.

DEPUTY

You don't pay the fine, we'll have to take it to court.

MARTHA

We just don't have it. We don't have twenty-five dollars to give to you people.

THOMAS

Especially for what the dog done. (*The sound of LUKE blowing on his harmonica and singing his mantra drifts in. They all listen for a moment.*)

WARDEN

(*Rising*) All right, then.

THOMAS

All right.

WARDEN

Let's go, Jim. (*JIM rises.*)

MARTHA

Oh, Thomas, pay the fine! (*Goes into kitchen.*)

WARDEN

That'd be the best thing to do, Mr. Dinwiddie.

MARTHA

(*From the kitchen*) What's he doing out there?

THOMAS

Who?

MARTHA

Luke, for Christ's sake! Don't you hear him?

THOMAS

I thought you meant Stella.

MARTHA

Well, what's he doing?

THOMAS

He's singing a song, Martha.

WARDEN

What'll it be, Tom?

THOMAS

I guess I got to pay it, Earl. I just don't feel up to arguing with a judge these days. They don't hear you anyhow. They got it fixed up in their minds, just like you boys, they don't want to know anything else. Their heads is closed up tighter 'an a golf ball.

WARDEN

That may be, Tom. (*Sitting down again*) There's judges and then there's judges.

THOMAS

They're all the same, Warden. They're all just laying down the law on the poor people. (*Goes into the kitchen.*) I'll be right back. (*EARL motions JIM to sit down. JIM makes an exasperated face, EARL waves it away. LUKE can still be heard doing his thing.*)

THOMAS

(*In the kitchen*) Where'd you put that money I gave you, honey?

MARTHA

Oh, Thomas. It's in the cigar box there in the drawer.

THOMAS

All right.

MARTHA

Oh, Thomas.

THOMAS

What?

MARTHA

What are we going to do?

THOMAS

I don't know. We got to pay it now.

MARTHA

(*Shrill, frustrated*) I know. What a drag.

THOMAS

(*Coming back into the living room*) You boys ought to feel foolish. Going around collecting money from poor people and then giving it to the state. You're acting like slaves. (*Counts out three fives and a ten.*)

DEPUTY

I don't feel that way one bit, Mr. Dinwiddie.

WARDEN

(*Taking the money*) I reckon everyone is entitled to his political views.

THOMAS

Political views ain't what I'm talking about. (*Gruffly*) Damn. I usually don't let any kind of police at all on to this property.

DEPUTY

Most people in this world have a job to do and they do it.

MARTHA

They should be worrying about their souls more and not working so much.

THOMAS

Amen.

WARDEN

Sorry for taking up so much of your time, Mr. Dinwiddie. We'll be going along now. (*STELLA growls nearby.*) And if you'll just take care to keep the dog corralled up better we'll consider the business closed.

THOMAS

I'll tell you the truth, boys, it hurts me to see two grown men acting like this for the state and not having any idea at all about what's going on.

DEPUTY

What's going on, Mr. Dinwiddie? What's going on we don't know about?

THOMAS

(*Angrily*) Well, you don't know how you're acting like slaves. You don't know what these people are doing to ya for your hundred dollars a week.

DEPUTY

Is that right?

THOMAS

That's right. (*LUKE's thing ceases. A silence.*)

WARDEN

Let's be getting down the road, Jim. (*They all three come out onto the porch.*)

THOMAS

Look at that automobile. Time was when an automobile was a joy, a simple pleasure. Old people used to smile when they mounted up an automobile to go for a ride. There's no joy no more in a car; they're just a big problem in your life. You get hounded for stickers and registration papers and licenses and you got to be feeding them dollars your whole life. They're too big and they burn up too much gas and they're polluting the air with it, and you can't live nowhere anymore you don't hear the sound of machines going by on the highway.

WARDEN

(*Acting friendly*) What kind of car is that you got there, Tom?

THOMAS

That's a Karmann Ghia.

WARDEN

How's she run?

THOMAS

She runs good. I can't use it, though.

DEPUTY

What year is it?

WARDEN

(*To THOMAS*) How is that?

THOMAS

It's a '65. I can't use it 'cause I don't have a sticker, and I don't have the sticker 'cause I don't have the money to put it into the car so the motor vehicle bureau will consider it a fit car to drive in.

WARDEN

(*Politely*) You say she runs all right, though?

THOMAS

Yeah, she runs good. Suits me.

WARDEN

(*Trying to move off*) Well, good luck with it.

DEPUTY

(*Anxiously courteous*) Yeah, you ought to get it back on the road. Looks like a pretty good little car. (*They are moving steadily toward their own car.*)

THOMAS

Hell, man, they don't build 'em for people.

WARDEN

I know what you mean.

THOMAS

Sure, they build 'em so they begin to run down on ya piece by piece by the time they're three years old.

DEPUTY

That's the truth, ain't it?

THOMAS

Sure it is. (*JIM and EARL are about to enter their own car, off right. STELLA growls viciously.*) Stella! You hush up, now! (*She subsides.*)

MARTHA

(*At the front door*) I wish you'd just get rid of that car, Thomas. And the damn dog, too.

WARDEN

(*Getting into his car*) So long, Tom, we'll be seeing you. You be sure and take care of that dog, now.

THOMAS

I'll do what I can. (*The car starts.*)

WARDEN

Good night, Mrs. Dinwiddie!

MARTHA

Good night!

THOMAS

(*As the car drives off*) You boys think about what you're doing. You think about what I said! (*A silence. MARTHA goes back to the kitchen. The interior of the house blacks out. Crickets. THOMAS takes up his guitar, picks on it aimlessly a bit, then begins to play the melody of an old spiritual, "Mansion on the Hilltop," then quietly sings the first two verses.*)

I've got a mansion
Just over the hilltop
In that fair land
Where we'll never grow old,
And someday yonder
We will never more wander
But walk on streets
That are of pure gold.

8.

JOHN

(*Whispering, off left*) Thomas!

THOMAS

(*Startled*) Yeah? What? What is it?

JOHN

It's me, John. Are they gone?

THOMAS

They're gone. You can come out now. (*JOHN enters carrying the revolver in both hands, as if it were some kind of offering.*)

JOHN

I can't find Luke. Do you know where he is?

THOMAS

No, I couldn't tell you, John. He might have gone off someplace to die.

JOHN

He did? . . . (*To himself*) Yes, he did. He went off to die.

THOMAS

I don't know. Maybe he did and maybe he didn't. Leastways, I don't know where he is.

JOHN

Oh. Yeah. (*After a pause*) I been having visions.

THOMAS

You have?

JOHN

Yes.

THOMAS

What kind of visions?

JOHN

Visions of flesh and water. Water becoming flesh, flesh becoming water. The way fish will go after blood in the water—if you stand in the water with a cut on your foot, the fish will come and nibble. They take little sucking bites on your flesh. Unless he's anchored down, a dead man will float on the surface of the water. After a while, he will disappear into the water. He becomes a part of the water. It's only a question of time.

THOMAS

(*With a profound nod*) I think I know what you mean.

MARTHA

(*From inside*) Thomas! Thomas! (*It frightens JOHN.*)

THOMAS

(*Jumping up*) What? What happened?

MARTHA

Would you please come in here? It's the dog! It's the goddamn fucking dog, Thomas! It's the dog!

THOMAS

Hang on, Martha, I'm coming. (*He goes inside. JOHN sits down on the porch stoop.*)

JOHN

This house fading. This house in smoke. Fire. The dogs. Screaming. No, the house fading, winter light. A glare, a mirage. The foundation, the foundation is left. It crumbles with time. Screaming. Bodies. They have murdered one another. She has murdered the children. Dead bodies in all the rooms. Silence. The dogs come. Only the dogs are left. They sniff around. One day it gets out of hand. Blood is shed. The dogs sniff around, they're uncertain. They're quiet at first. They get into the house. They're hungry. There's dead meat in all the rooms. Fire. . . . (*THOMAS can be heard out back somewhere chasing the dog, throwing rocks at her; shouting, barks and yelps. A sudden silence, then a door slams.*)

MARTHA

(*In the house*) I've had it, Thomas. I can't take another fucking minute of this.

THOMAS

Take it easy now, Martha. It's going to be all right.

MARTHA

Thomas, you always say that. This house could be burning down and you'd say everything's gonna be all right, Martha.

JOHN

Yes. And then the rains. Lush. Rich and green. A jungle. Everything fades. It's only a question of time. . . . (*A flashlight beam approaches, left; it is attached to the voice of an OLD MAN.*)

9.

OLD MAN

(*Still off*) Hello! Hello, there! (*An OLD MAN and an OLD WOMAN enter, left, both with walking sticks, and she with a large sack. JOHN hurriedly conceals the revolver.*)

JOHN

Yes, rain. More rain.

OLD MAN

Looks like it. Might rain.

JOHN

Forty straight days of rain.

OLD MAN

Wasn't that something, now! I believe this to be the rainiest summer since '55, the year we had the flooding; ain't that right, Mother?

OLD WOMAN

Yes, I believe so.

OLD MAN

Are you Mr. Dinwiddie?

(*Note: Throughout this scene, JOHN's focus is predominantly on the OLD MAN. It is as if he were trying to become him, to take on his attributes, his agedness and lameness.*)

JOHN

No. (*A terribly long silence.*)

MARTHA

(*In the house*) I think someone's out there, Thomas.

THOMAS

It's John, talking to himself.

MARTHA

No, besides John.

OLD MAN

Hello! Mr. Dinwiddie?

THOMAS

(*Coming out, MARTHA behind him*) Yes! Hello!

JOHN

And then the rains stop and it's a nice day. A nice, warm day in Indian summer. About one o'clock in the afternoon. With raisins in your pocket and time to kill . . . And you ring a little bell first . . .

OLD MAN

Yes, the weather's changing. You can feel the cold in the air now when it gets toward evening.

THOMAS

This is John, a friend of mine.

OLD MAN

Howdy, John.

JOHN

No, it doesn't matter what time it is. Any old time will do. Only executioners worry about what time it is. And forget the bell, too. That's all ego shit. (*A pause.*)

MARTHA

(*Embarrassed*) Oh, John.

JOHN

Isn't that right, Thomas?

THOMAS

I don't know. I'm not sure I know what you're talking about, John.

JOHN

Yes . . .

OLD MAN

The missus and I saw an awful thing earlier this evening, didn't we, Mother?

OLD WOMAN

Awful, an awful thing.

THOMAS

What was that, Mr. Jones?

OLD MAN

It was a dog that had a young doe, I think it was, by the throat; it was a painful thing to watch, I can tell you that, Mr. Dinwiddie.

OLD WOMAN

Oh, it was a torture, purely. The doe was fighting for her life, but that dog would not let go, and there was a bunch of smaller dogs, must have been puppies I'd say, snapping at its heels, and that doe made the most terrible cry.

OLD MAN

The deer's blood went gushing out all over for yards while she was still alive. It was a long while before she went down, isn't that so, Mother?

OLD WOMAN

Oh, yes! (*Quivering*) Oh, it was awful!

MARTHA

(*Showing sympathy*) Oh, what a shame. That poor deer, Thomas!

THOMAS

Yeah, I saw a terrible thing today myself, Mr. Jones.

OLD MAN

What was that, Mr. Dinwiddie?

THOMAS

I saw some men blowing holes in that mountain right there so they could build themselves a parking lot.

OLD MAN

Oh, yes, we heard those explosions.

MARTHA

Dynamite! Two truckloads of dynamite went by here. It was really frightening to see it.

OLD WOMAN

(*Indicating the sack*) I brought some of these clothes over for you, Mrs. Dinwiddie. I see where you like the old style, long skirts and such. I have no use for these anymore, and I thought you might like them.

MARTHA

Oh, yes. Thank you very much, Mrs. Jones. They're just lovely.

THOMAS

People won't leave old Mother Nature alone. They think if they don't keep busy trying to improve on nature that they're not doing their duty somehow.

OLD MAN

Now there's something I'm always saying myself. Isn't that true, Mother?

OLD WOMAN

Yes, it's true. He says the same thing.

MARTHA

(*Encouragingly*) That's nice. That's nice to hear.

THOMAS

I mean, you got to treat nature like a woman, with some respect. She ain't gonna like it if you go round blowin' up holes in her head and pulling her hair out.

MARTHA

That's for sure.

OLD MAN

I like the way you look at it, Mr. Dinwiddie. Now, I'll ask you: Do you hear any birds? (*A pause.*) Not at the moment, of course. Not at night, but think a minute, did you hear any birds today? (*A negative silence.*) Correct, you did not.

MARTHA

It's true.

THOMAS

I'll be damned.

JOHN

No birds. No more birds.

OLD MAN

No, and they have not just gone away, either. No, a lot of them have died, and I'll tell you why.

THOMAS

Why?

OLD MAN

DDT, that's why.

THOMAS

Jesus.

OLD MAN

I'll tell you something else, sir. You have noticed no doubt how this has been a very bad year for mosquitoes.

THOMAS

Yeah, but they don't bother me much. My hide is thicker than an alligator's.

MARTHA

Oh, but it's true enough, Thomas. This was a terrible year for mosquitoes.

OLD MAN

This was by far the worst year for mosquitoes that I can remember. Now, you might be wondering why. Most folks don't have any idea. So, what I do is, I take the young folks that come by from time to time to my shed out back and I show them the tanks.

OLD WOMAN

That's where he keeps his fish. In the tanks.

OLD MAN

And what I do is, I take a couple million mosquito larvae and I lay them down in a tank with some fish in it and I say: "Now let's go away for five minutes and come back." Naturally, all those larvae are gone when we go back and those young folks get some idea about what's going on. Isn't that so, Mother?

OLD WOMAN

Yes, they do get some idea, then.

OLD MAN

I'll tell you what else about mosquitoes. You know them sky ponds? This section of country round here is full of sky ponds.

THOMAS

Yeah, sure.

OLD MAN

Now, I think those sky ponds ought to be filled with shiners,

because a sky pond is a breeding ground for mosquitoes. Now, you might say to me, "Bucky—"

OLD WOMAN

That's his first name, Bucky.

OLD MAN

"Bucky," you might say, "what happens to them shiners when the pond dries out?" Well, I'll tell you that when a shiner gets ready to die, he turns over and he shows his belly to the crows, and the crows will come down and eat those fish . . . (*Gasping for breath*) You can't breathe! It's the air! It's soggy!

OLD WOMAN

We gave up our car.

OLD MAN

That's correct! We walk! You don't need it! It's not healthy! And the littering, the littering! Here—(*Pulling documents and clippings and assorted papers out of his pockets*) look at this, and this—read that! Plastic! Everything is plastic! It's a violation!

OLD WOMAN

Garbage.

OLD MAN

Yes! . . . Where was I?

THOMAS

The crows.

OLD MAN

(*Near collapse*) Right, the crows. The crows will come down and eat those fish. And so you see how nature takes care of the problem without any meddling from us.

THOMAS

She's got it all covered, don't she.

MARTHA

God, it's amazing.

JOHN

(*Suddenly speaking his thoughts aloud*) . . . like a judge who has sentenced himself to death, who will escape at dawn into a field full of statues and flies.

MARTHA

Oh, John, what does that have to do with anything?

JOHN

Nothing. I was just thinking. . . .

MARTHA

(*Sarcastic*) Good.

OLD MAN

(*Overcoming embarrassment*) Oh, well, we should be getting along now, Mother.

OLD WOMAN

Yes, I know. It's quite late, dear.

THOMAS

We appreciate your coming by, Mr. Jones.

MARTHA

And thank you for the clothes.

OLD WOMAN

You're most welcome to them.

MARTHA

They're really very lovely.

OLD WOMAN

Yes.

THOMAS

It's always good to listen to someone who makes sense when they talk.

OLD MAN

Well, it's a thing with me, Mr. Dinwiddie, how the DDT is killing off all the birds and the fish, and what are we going to do about it. And it isn't just the fish and the birds I'm worried at, you know—(*Pointing at each in turn*) you've got DDT in your body, you've got DDT in your body, you've got DDT in YOUR body, and I've got DDT in MY body. (*STELLA appears, right, growling.*)

OLD WOMAN

Oh! Bucky!

JOHN

DDT in the body.

THOMAS

Don't be frightened, she won't hurt you.

OLD WOMAN

Oh! Bucky, isn't she the one?

OLD MAN

It's all right, Mother, it's all right.

MARTHA

(*Exasperated*) Oh, Thomas!

THOMAS

Let me play you a song before you go, folks. (*He gets his guitar.*)

OLD MAN

A song?

THOMAS

Yes, I'd like to play you a song. (*Shooing the dog*) Go on! Go on, Stella, beat it! (*She goes off. THOMAS sits down.*) Do you mind?

OLD MAN

(*Trapped*) Oh, no, we'd love to hear a song, wouldn't we, Mother?

OLD WOMAN

Yes, I'd like to hear Mr. Dinwiddie play us a song.

THOMAS

You want to hear a song, John?

JOHN

Sure, Tom.

THOMAS

It's a song a friend of mine wrote. (*He tunes the guitar, then sings especially for the OLD PEOPLE, which slightly discomfits them.*)

He who controls the hearts
and the minds of the dogs
controls the war.

Brothers your tongues is loose
your tails is waggin'
your eyes is frantic,
Brothers.

I'm afraid of this,
I'm afraid of that,

Should I get laid,
enter the forbidden
Garden,
Make friends with a mournful
cat?

But I been goin'
around this block
five times, and I still
don't know WHUT to do.

He's a mechanical man,
and his eyes are cold
and his head's a gigantic
Computer.

His time is comin',
his day is near,
you can rip off his power
Brothers.

But I been goin'
around this block
five times, and I still
don't know what to do.

(*Silence, forced smiles, a creepy wave of tension.*)

THOMAS

Yes! (*MARTHA giggles self-consciously. The CHILDREN can be heard stirring above.*)

OLD MAN

Very nice. Thank you, Mr. Dinwiddie. We're honored to have heard you sing for us. (*Moving off, left*) We'll be getting on back home now.

THOMAS

All right. Come again soon, you hear?

OLD WOMAN

Good night, Mr. Dinwiddie. Thank you. Good night, Mrs. Dinwiddie. (*They ignore JOHN.*)

MARTHA

Good night! And thanks again for the clothes, Mrs. Jones.

OLD WOMAN

'Bye, 'bye! (*They go off, left.*)

10.

MARTHA

Bye! (*A pause. The CHILDREN can be heard clearly now.*)
Oh, Thomas, it's the children!

THOMAS

(*Jumping to it*) Damn! All right, I'll go. (*He goes inside.*)

MARTHA

Fuck. (*A silence.*)

JOHN

They can feel it. They can feel what's happening. Kids are all the time stoned.

MARTHA

What? They can feel what? (*He doesn't answer.*)

JOHN

(*After a pause*) Neuroses are a horrible waste of energy and cause a lot of static in the air.

MARTHA

What? (*He doesn't answer. THOMAS can be heard upstairs quieting the children.*) How long are you going to be hanging around here, John? (*No answer.*) Jesus, it's all I need now, another one. (*A silence. Then JOHN rises, slowly, goes over to MARTHA and slaps her full force across the face. A moment, then she screams with a mighty fury, causing the children to whine, the dogs to bark, and THOMAS to come running downstairs. JOHN sits down again, as before.*)

MARTHA

AAAAAHHHHHHH! THOMAS! THOMAS! COME DOWN HERE! HE HIT ME! HE HIT ME, THOMAS! (*As THOMAS appears, she physically attacks JOHN, who doesn't respond.*) GET OUT! YOU SON-OF-A-BITCH! YOU LOUSY COCKSUCKING BASTARD! GET OUT OF HERE! I'LL KILL YOU! I'LL KILL YOU! OOOHH! THOMAS! HELP ME! GET OUT! (*JOHN still doesn't respond. THOMAS tries to pull MARTHA off him. She is crying with rage.*)

THOMAS

All right, Martha, all right. What happened? Martha, stop! Martha! What happened?

MARTHA

HE HIT ME, THOMAS. HE HIT ME. I WANT HIM OUT OF HERE. I'LL KILL HIM, THOMAS!

THOMAS

No, you don't. You don't want to kill nobody, Martha.

MARTHA

YES, I DO. I WANT TO KILL HIM. I WANT TO KILL YOU. I WANT TO KILL THOSE FUCKING KIDS. I WANT TO KILL. DO YOU UNDERSTAND ME, THOMAS!

THOMAS

All right then, go on ahead.

MARTHA

OOOOHHH. YOU FOOL, YOU GODDAMN FOOL. I WANT EVERYONE TO GET AWAY FROM HERE. DO YOU UNDERSTAND? EVERYONE. GET OUT. JUST GET THE HELL OUT OF MY WAY. (*She goes inside, slamming the door.*) OR THERE'S GOING TO BE TROUBLE. (*A moment, then the noise of dishes crashing, pots and pans flying, windows breaking, etc.*) I CAN'T STAND IT ONE MORE DAY! DO YOU HEAR ME, THOMAS? NOT ONE MORE DAY. I'VE HAD IT. I'M SICK OF IT. I'M SICK OF YOU. I'M SICK OF PEOPLE COMING AROUND HERE. I'M SICK, SICK, SICK! JUST GET OUT AND STAY OUT. AND DON'T EVER COME BACK! (*A silence. She's gone upstairs. A sigh from THOMAS, another one from JOHN.*)

JOHN

Yeah. (*He takes out the gun, looks at it.*)

THOMAS

What the hell did you hit her for? (*No response. A pause as the CHILDREN appear at the door. JOHN puts away the gun.*) Oh, now you children know you're not supposed to be down here this time of night. (*Crying and sobbing*) Okay, all right, come with me and I'll put you back to bed. (*He goes inside.*) Come on now, kids, let's go on back to bed. (*A silence. JOHN stands up.*)

JOHN

He's down on the ground and he's squirming and squealing for his life. And I look into his face and I could see that there was something in him, something scared, scared to die. It was buried deeply there in his eyes, something living that didn't want to die, deep down under the flesh and the bullshit of his brain, struggling to meet me, struggling to come out and meet me and save himself. But all I could see was a glimmer as he writhed on the ground, not taking his eyes off me, squealing, and I thought, "What an impression this will make on him, a bullet in his flesh, a hot piece of metal in his shoulder." So I put one into his shoulder and he howled with disbelief and pain. "Oh, I'm shot! I'm shot!" He'd never been shot before. This was his first time. The pain made him cry. Oh, and the shot was so clean, BANG! So clean, such a relief. I felt purified. I fired again, at his heart. Still, something glimmered in him, in his eyes, scared to die, struggling to come out and stop me and save himself. I fired once again, into his head. He gave a little jump, and I saw it withdraw in his eyes, and go out, whatever it was, withdraw and go out, and his body stiffened; there was nothing there, and he was dead. (THOMAS has come out in time to hear the last few sentences.)

MARTHA

(Yelling from upstairs) THOMAS, I WANT HIM OUT OF HERE!

THOMAS

(Softly) You better go, John.

JOHN

I'm gone. (He exits slowly, left, as a car is heard coming toward the house, its headlights flashing across the stage.)

THOMAS

(To himself) Well, well, will you look what's coming now. (The sound of the engine approaching builds, but the stagelights dim rapidly out. We hear LUKE blowing his mantra on the harmonica as the car noise suddenly ceases.)

END OF ACT TWO