

Act Three

11.

The lights on the small playing area in front of the stage proper come slowly up on LUKE, and we hear JOHN'S VOICE whispering nearby.

JOHN

Luke! Luke, is that you, Luke?

LUKE

What? Who is it?

JOHN

(Entering) It's me, John.

LUKE

John?

JOHN

Yeah, I can't see anything. Where are you? *(A silence.)*

Luke? *(A silence.)*

LUKE

(As they see each other) What's happening, John?

JOHN

I got a gun.

LUKE

You got a gun?

JOHN

Yeah.

LUKE

Jesus.

JOHN
I've done it, Luke. I've crossed over. You understand?

LUKE
What?

JOHN
I killed a cop. (*A silence.*)

LUKE
What are you gonna do now?

JOHN
I'm gonna blow my brains out.

LUKE
Jesus.

JOHN
You want to see it?

LUKE
What?

JOHN
The gun.

LUKE
Yeah. (*JOHN shows him the gun. They both handle and examine it reverently.*)

JOHN
Nice, huh?

LUKE
Yeah. (*A pause as he opens the barrel.*) Two bullets.

JOHN
Right.

LUKE
I'm goin' with ya.

JOHN
One for me and one for you.

LUKE
I don't know, man. Maybe I should eat something first. I'm feeling a little weak. I been fasting.

JOHN
How long?

LUKE
I don't know. A few days.

JOHN
You see anything? (*A pause.*)

LUKE
When I close my eyes, I see colors. When I open them, I see dark shapes moving. (*A pause.*)

JOHN
You hear it?

LUKE
What?

JOHN
It's the wind. (*Shakes his tambourine lightly.*)

LUKE
Yeah.

(*Chanting*)

I am ashamed before the earth;
I am ashamed before the heavens;
I am ashamed before the dawn;
I am ashamed before the evening twilight;
I am ashamed before the infinite sky;
I am ashamed before that standing within me
which speaks with me.
Some of these things are always looking at me.
I am never out of sight.
Therefore I must tell the truth.

(*A silence.*)

JOHN
I hit her, Luke. I belted her one.

LUKE
You did?

JOHN
Yeah.

LUKE
How'd it feel?

JOHN
Good. It felt good.

LUKE

You're not afraid to die?

JOHN

(*Chanting*) Eternal are the heavens and the earth; old people are bad off . . .

(*Straight*) I'm trying not to be. It's not easy. Time is all it takes . . .

(*Chanting*) Death is a twin brother I carry inside me . . .

(*Straight*) He is having an argument with Life, but I am no longer watching to see who wins. (*A pause.*)

LUKE

I see. Does one of them have to win?

JOHN

I don't know. The important thing is that I'm not watching. I have no axe to grind, either way. I have a chance now, for no more Life, or no more Death.

LUKE

No more Life, or no more Death.

JOHN

Yes.

LUKE

Wow. Sounds all mixed up to me.

(*Chants*)

Is it real—is it real—
Let's see if it's real—
This life we are living—
Is it real—

How can we tell
If it's real—
This life we are living—

Is it real, is it real—

(*JOHN joins in, pounding the stage, etc., and together they improvise on the chant, building it to a frenzy and freaking each other out until LUKE collapses on the floor. A pause.*)

JOHN

Do you see anything?

LUKE

Yeah, my dead mother.

JOHN

When did she die?

LUKE

She didn't, as far as I know. She's alive and well up in Binghamton, New York. (*A pause.*) I just happen to see her lying dead up a tree.

JOHN

Up a tree?

LUKE

Yeah, you know, like the Indians did. She still has her glasses on. (*A pause.*)

JOHN

Yeah?

LUKE

She seems all right. It's just that her eyes aren't moving. (*A weird silence.*)

JOHN

Are you ready to go out?

LUKE

Yeah, I guess so. (*A silence.*)

JOHN

(*As he prepares to fire at LUKE*) You are a spirit. I am making you a spirit. From this place where I stand, I am making you a spirit.

LUKE

Wait a minute, I want to play my thing first.

JOHN

Okay. (*LUKE starts to play his tune on the harmonica, stops.*)

LUKE

Fuck it. Do it, John. Come closer. I don't want you to miss. (*JOHN moves closer.*) May the great spirit lie over you and embrace you. . . . (*JOHN fires; LUKE falls. JOHN picks up the tambourine and, shaking it, gives a mighty Indian war whoop. The lights go out, then JOHN fires into his own head, falls over. . . . A long pause in the dark, broken by MARTHA*)

shouting from inside to THOMAS standing on the porch, when the stagelights come full on.)

12.

MARTHA

Thomas!

THOMAS

What?

MARTHA

I'm not coming down. I don't want to see ANYONE.

THOMAS

All right, Martha. (To ELLIOT and DOLORES, entering right) How ya doin'? (DOLORES is obviously distraught but embarrassed about it; ELLIOT laughs it off.)

ELLIOT

Here we are again. We're back to take another look at you.

THOMAS

Come on ahead, look all you want to. I'm here for anyone to see. And it's free, besides.

ELLIOT

(Looking him up and down) You're pretty together. You might make it.

THOMAS

(Laughing) I'm glad to hear it.

ELLIOT

Yeah, you got a few good years left. You're still warm.

DOLORES

Where's Martha? Is she asleep?

THOMAS

(To ELLIOT) Good. I hope you let me live while I still got some juice left. (To DOLORES) Yeah, she's upstairs.

ELLIOT

Hey, no, Jim! That ain't right, no, no. We ain't gonna bother our own. We're just gonna break a few arms in the right places, Jim. Yeah, we ain't gonna bother with you. Don't worry about it.

THOMAS

I ain't worried. (To DOLORES) What's wrong?

DOLORES

Oh, nothing. I'm just having weird premonitions, that's all.

THOMAS

You are?

DOLORES

You know, nothing serious. My mind is acting funny lately. Maybe it's the moon.

THOMAS

Might be.

DOLORES

Was that Luke I just saw?

THOMAS

No, that was John, a friend of his.

DOLORES

He walks just like Luke.

ELLIOT

Hey, you really think that some dufus racketeer is gonna give up a piece of his cake to you in the name of morality?

THOMAS

No, I don't.

ELLIOT

Then how come you're acting so dumb, Jim? You got to go in there and break his arm!

DOLORES

Oh, stop calling him Jim. His name is Thomas.

ELLIOT

Dolores, you're starting to make me nervous. (She makes a face. He goes on excitedly to THOMAS.) You're up against a bunch of racketeers, man, that's what you're up against! You got to go in there and break his arm! Yeah! Then he might listen to you. See, he starts to thinking, "Gee, those boys come in here and broke my arm! If I don't give them what they want, they might come in here and break my other arm!" Yeah, and you got to do it! He doesn't come across, then you got to go back and break his other arm for him, yeah! And maybe both of his legs, too! That's right!

DOLORES

(*Laconic*) We got the point, Elliot. (THOMAS *laughs*.)

ELLIOT

(*Throwing up his hands*) Okay, I'm done. I'm through. I've said it. You won't hear from me again. That's all. I told you what's happening. I'm done, done, done. (*He starts pacing up and down, inspired, full of energy.*)

DOLORES

(*Concerned*) Are the kids all asleep?

THOMAS

Well, they were up just a little while ago, actually. I put them back to bed. (*A pause.*)

DOLORES

Funny, I had the feeling . . . (*A pause.*)

THOMAS

What?

DOLORES

I don't know. I can never understand which comes first, the anxiety or what causes it.

THOMAS

Prob'ly a little of each.

DOLORES

Yes, but what does it mean?

ELLIOT

What does what mean?

DOLORES

(*Ignoring him*) I had the distinct feeling of danger.

THOMAS

You did?

DOLORES

Yes, I had the feeling of imminent danger. You know, it came into my mind and I'd like to find out where it came from.

THOMAS

Well, I wouldn't worry myself about it. Everything is all right and everyone is safe.

DOLORES

That's just it. Am I worrying myself? Or did the worry come to me?

ELLIOT

Damn!

THOMAS

Well . . . (*A shot rings out, then a yell and the rattle of a tambourine, then another shot.*)

DOLORES

What was that?

ELLIOT

Those were shots. Those were gunshots.

THOMAS

Shots, huh?

ELLIOT

Sure they were shots. Gunshots, man. And not too far from here.

THOMAS

(*Struck*) Two shots.

DOLORES

(*Responding to the look on THOMAS's face*) What do you mean?

THOMAS

O, nothing, nothing. I was just wondering, is all. Something in my head. I was just wondering about there being two shots instead of one. You'd think one'd be enough. And how could you get it up so if the first shot don't work you can fire a second? Just something in my head.

ELLIOT

Those shots weren't in your head.

THOMAS

I know. It's nothing.

DOLORES

(*Nervously*) You see what I mean?

ELLIOT

No, what do you mean?

DOLORES

I would like to know which is which, damn it. There's something going on here and I'm frightened, Elliot!

ELLIOT

Don't worry about it.

THOMAS

(*Mostly to himself*) I got to check it out soon when I have time.

ELLIOT

Yeah. (*A heavy silence.*) Look, we're gonna take the kid and be gone.

THOMAS

Oh, yeah, all right, if that's what you want to do. It's all right with me.

DOLORES

I'm in a state.

THOMAS

Yeah, sure. I understand. Take her if you want to, but she's perfectly okay here. I mean, it's no problem.

DOLORES

No, the problem is me. I'm the problem.

THOMAS

(*Sadly*) Well, you want me to go and get her, or you want to come with me?

DOLORES

I'll go with you.

THOMAS

Let's go then. (*THOMAS and DOLORES go inside. MARTHA can be heard sobbing. ELLIOT paces around nervously, looks at the picture, paces around, looks at the picture, mumbles to himself.*)

ELLIOT

Funny thing to do . . . put your picture on the door . . . I believe those shots came from the barn. . . . Shit, nobody's going to change, you don't give them a goddamn good reason to change . . . like the fear of death . . . the fear of death is what makes you move! Take Kenya—the British wouldn't do shit in Kenya until the Mau Mau put the fear of death in 'em—that's right—the Mau Mau got to dissecting Englishmen and Englishwomen, the English dogs, English cats, English faggots, English nuns—and a whole new country was born! . . . Shit, niggers here was afraid to pee on the half hour for fear their joints might be chopped off by some

goddamn honkie! The fear of death! And then we got hip and bought us some matches—burn, baby, burn!—'cause we could afford matches, Jim, until we got enough together to buy ourselves a gun, Jim, or rip off one, because "It is necessary to pick up the gun in order to get rid of the gun." Jim! . . . (*He cracks up laughing. THOMAS comes back out, followed by DOLORES, the child in her arms wrapped in a blanket.*)

DOLORES

I'm sorry to be such a ninny.

THOMAS

You're not a ninny. (*DOLORES goes off right and gets into her car. ELLIOT lingers on.*)

ELLIOT

Hey, how come you got your picture up on the door like that?

THOMAS

Well, sometimes when I'm high or when the light is right, I walk up to the house from a distance and I can see that face in the door, and it's sort of a vague picture, and it don't look that much like me, but when I see it from a distance it looks a lot like my father's face, so I thought I'd leave it there in the door for a while, as some kind of statement. . . . It's a strange thing for people, when they see that picture, when they're on their way into my house. . . . (*A pause.*)

ELLIOT

Uh, huh.

THOMAS

My daddy was a coal miner. I used to go down to the embankment above the railroad tracks next to the mountain where they took out the coal and watch him coming out of the mountain with a trainload of coal. My daddy was a motorman; he drove the train out of the mountain, and I'd sit up there on the embankment and wave down to him, and he'd wave back up at me.

DOLORES

(*Off*) We should go, Elliot. If she wakes up she's going to be very cranky and I'm not in the mood.

ELLIOT

Oh, no, no. Oh, no, we don't want that, no. I thank you, Mr. Dinwiddie, and we'll be gone, but first I want to leave you with a thought.

THOMAS

What's that, Elliot?

ELLIOT

One hundred and thirteen millionaires control the whole shebang, Jim! One hundred and thirteen millionaires! It's a joke! (*He laughs, goes off, right. Car door slams, engine turns over. More laughter.*) It's a joke! (*Drives off.* THOMAS walks about aimlessly a bit, then STELLA appears from somewhere, whining.)

13.

THOMAS

(*Gentle, consoling*) Come here, Stella. That's the girl. Come here, baby. Everything's all right, now, Stella, all right. (*Petting her*) Good girl, good girl. (*He walks away from the dog back onto the porch, humming to himself; picks up his guitar, sits, tinkers with it, and sings the following song.*)

You got to do what the Lady asks,
 You got to do what the Lady says.
 You got to do what the Lady asks,
 Won't you please come and warm my bed.

Don't leave me alone at midnight,
 You bad and restless man,
 Anyone might come and rob me,
 Or frighten me insane.

I'm not afraid of an evil man,
 This pretty lady said,
 But I am afraid of sleeping alone
 In a cold and empty bed.

You got to do what the Lady asks,
 You got to do what the Lady says.
 You got to do what the Lady asks,
 Won't you please come and warm my bed.

I know I'm not your mother,
 But remember what your mama said,
 You got to do what your Lady asks,
 Even if it means you're dead!

(*Chorus*)

Here I am on my early death bed—
 DYIN'

with a smile on my face,
 Prayin' to the Lord
 to give me a little grace.

Knowing I did my duty,
 Knowing I did my best,
 Knowing I did it well.

I did just what the Lady asked.

(*Chorus*)

(*He is interrupted in the last chorus by MARTHA, who has re-appeared through the screen door, in tears.*)

MARTHA

Oh, Thomas.

THOMAS

What is it, babe?

MARTHA

I've had a terrible dream.

THOMAS

(*Gentle, consoling*) It's all right now, Martha. Everything's all right now.

MARTHA

Oh, Thomas! Are you sure?

THOMAS

Yes, of course I'm sure.

MARTHA

Oh, it was really a strange dream, Thomas.

THOMAS

What was it? Tell me the dream, Martha.

MARTHA

It was about you.

THOMAS

Me?

MARTHA

Yes. I saw your face, and it was aging, you know, you were dying. And as I watched you, you started to turn into a fish, a big white fish, and I couldn't stop it. Then there you were on the kitchen sink, flopping about, you know, on the sink, and then this other couple came in, and they looked like Eskimoes. They were very quiet. They had sewing tools with them. They were going to sew. Somehow they let me know that they'd come to do our work for us, they'd come to take care of our work while we . . . I don't know what, while we did . . . something else. I had to kill the fish and cut its head off and skin it. . . . No! Suddenly, I became this big white bear on the kitchen floor. The insides and the whole bottom of the bear got sucked away! (*We hear the sound of a motorcycle approaching. The sound gets louder and louder.*) And I was this bear rug on the floor and you were a fish dying on the kitchen sink, and the Eskimoes just sat there with ancient expressionless faces and sewed. (*She breaks down again.*)

THOMAS

It's over now, Martha. It was only a dream.

MARTHA

Oh, Thomas, it was horrible!

THOMAS

Forget it now, Martha. How 'bout if I play you a song? (*Reaches for his guitar.*)

MARTHA

No.

THOMAS

All right. (*Puts it back.*) What's that? Sounds like someone coming up the road.

MARTHA

Oh, no. (*The motorcycle builds to a great roar for a moment, then putters out.*)

THOMAS

It's Peter.

MARTHA

(*Happily*) Peter!

14.**PETER**

(*Entering through the audience down center*) I have just come from the big city and I got nothing good to say about it.

THOMAS

I figured as much.

MARTHA

(*Charming*) How have you been, Peter?

PETER

Fine.

THOMAS

Where are you headed?

PETER

I'm not sure. Is John around?

THOMAS

John split.

MARTHA

(*Blushing*) We had a fight.

PETER

You and Thomas, or you and John?

MARTHA

Both. (*She giggles.*)

THOMAS

John was pretty spacy.

MARTHA

He sure was, man.

THOMAS

And Martha's been feeling run-down lately.

PETER

You sick?

MARTHA

No, I just feel tired. You know, the kids and all . . .

THOMAS

She needs a vacation.

MARTHA

I need a change. (*A pause.*)

THOMAS

What's happening with you, Peter?

PETER

Nothin'. I been shooting dope instead of people.

THOMAS

Shit, you don't want to kill nobody.

PETER

Yes, I do.

THOMAS

(*Knowingly*) No, you don't want to kill nobody.

PETER

Yes, I do.

THOMAS

Maybe you think you do.

PETER

Maybe.

THOMAS

I've thought about it. I've thought about goin' down there to Washington, D.C. and taking as many of those people as I could out with me.

MARTHA

Oh, Thomas, that's a fantasy.

THOMAS

I ain't doing it, am I?

PETER

Anyway, I'm tired of trying to kill myself.

THOMAS

Good.

MARTHA

(*To PETER*) Have you been sick?

PETER

In a manner of speaking.

MARTHA

What's wrong with you?

PETER

(*Thinking*) I'm all backed up for the lack of a good fuck.

THOMAS

Well, I think it's just that city life is what does it.

PETER

True, true.

MARTHA

A good screw never hurt nobody.

PETER

That depends. (*A tantalizing chuckle all around.*)

MARTHA

Why don't you go out and get yourself a girl friend?

PETER

It's only recently the urge came back to me, Martha.

MARTHA

Don't tease, Peter.

PETER

I'm not—the sperm leave their sleep as the dope leaves the bloodstream. (*MARTHA laughs.*) I'm not sure no more I know how to work the damn thing.

THOMAS

All you need is a little exercise and fresh air.

MARTHA

And some decent food.

THOMAS

Rice and beans and hot corn bread.

MARTHA

(*Rumpling PETER's hair*) Get out of your head for a change.

THOMAS

Tell you what—you smoke some of that good grass I got in and drop some acid with us now and then, and I'll bet you my oil bill you move outa here with a clear head and a stiff dick.

MARTHA

Oh, Thomas.

PETER

We got to see what happens and play it by ear, okay?

THOMAS

All right . . . but if you set your mind to park here a while, you're welcome.

MARTHA

Oh, stay, Peter!

PETER

(Ironically reciting) Love sprouts anywhere, / Fixed by its own desperation . . . uh . . . the sweet/Bodies of the rich, / And the poor in rags, all/ on the same rack of Desire. *(A silence.)*

THOMAS

Wow, that's real deep. I like it, Peter. That's deep.

PETER

(Getting a chill) Brrr . . . I guess it's the winter coming on. . . .

MARTHA

It's a lovely poem, Peter.

PETER

Thank you. I stole it from Luke.

MARTHA

Oh, God!

PETER

Speaking of Luke, where the hell is he?

MARTHA

I don't know and I don't care.

THOMAS

Oh, he's around here someplace.

PETER

Have you seen him?

THOMAS

Not for a couple of hours. Hey, Martha, maybe Peter is hungry.

MARTHA

Are you hungry, Peter?

PETER

No, I'm not hungry.

THOMAS

How about an apple? An apple is the best food there is.

PETER

Okay, I'll have an apple.

MARTHA

(Sprightly) I'll get you one. *(She flirtatiously rumples his hair again en route.)* You have a poetic soul, Peter.

PETER

(Self-consciously) Thank you, Martha. *(She goes inside. THOMAS picks on the guitar.)* You trying to crawl into that thing, Thomas?

THOMAS

No, I'm trying to hear it. My ears have been all clogged up lately.

PETER

Uh, huh. *(MARTHA comes back with the apple.)*

THOMAS

I'm trying to get my ears cleaned out so I can hear it again.

PETER

(Eating the apple) Mighty good apple.

THOMAS

Yeah, we pick 'em ourselves, right up the road there. . . . *(He picks on his guitar.)* They're good apples. *(THOMAS continues to pick. "Poor Boy . . . them low down women, mama, have done me wrong. . . ." as MARTHA starts shaking a tambourine. PETER stops eating the apple and puts it aside. THOMAS observes him a moment, then stops his picking.)*

THOMAS

You're not running from something, are ya, Peter?

PETER

No, Tom . . . I just don't have much of an appetite.

THOMAS

Many's the day I want to take off myself and drift away to someplace.

MARTHA

No one's stopping you.

THOMAS

(*Ignoring her*) Not so much anymore . . . now I just try to make every moment fresh and new.

PETER

(*Half to himself*) I'm so horny I could fuck a snake.

THOMAS

It's amazing what a little relaxation will do for ya.

MARTHA

(*Sexily*) Just forget about everything for a while. Especially tonight . . . I mean, this is your first night away from it all and you ought to enjoy it.

PETER

(*To THOMAS*) I don't understand you, man. You act so righteous and together—like you got everything all figured out.

THOMAS

I live the way I want to.

PETER

I mean, what makes you so morally superior?

THOMAS

Nothin'. I just know what's happening when it's happening, that's all. People ain't so hard to read.

PETER

Why don't you do something about what's happening? Don't you ever feel guilty? (*A pause.*)

THOMAS

I used to feel guilty about the spades. You know, how they been treated. And I was brought up next to it. Those people had to live under that treatment their **WHOLE** lives. A man was born into it and died out of it.

MARTHA

God, it's so horrible.

THOMAS

But I don't know what to do about the past. It's gone, now. And it don't do no good to feel guilty. . . . So I just try to stay awake and be alive. . . . Every day, every day.

PETER

I'll tell you what I think—your ego is so out of sight that

you think you're God. You know, the Christian version—incarnate, but above it all.

THOMAS

What was that? I didn't get that.

PETER

Yeah. Let me tell you about me, Thomas. You want to hear about me?

THOMAS

'Course I do, Peter. I like you.

PETER

I've become the "Perfect American."

MARTHA

Oh, Peter, come on.

THOMAS

What's that?

PETER

A junkie. See, I got to have my Thing. I don't have my Thing, I can't feed the monkey—he starts to cry. There ain't no sound like the monkey crying—*waaaaah*—like that—the monkey cry. You got to keep him quiet, keep him still. Every day you got to go out and get your thing and feed him—zap—intravenous—right to the heart—otherwise, the monkey, he start to stink, he start to die. His eyes get red and twitchy and he start to scratch at ya so you can't do all your little things—all the other deathly little things—'cause you're all hung up with the big one, the monkey, the Monkey Death. But you got to **BUY** your thing, you got to have the **MONEY**—you don't get your thing for nothin'. An' how you gonna feed the monkey? An' he smells so bad, and he's crying and scratching and you got to get out there in the world and get that thing and bring it home and feed him. An' you got to look out for the Man—because the **WORLD**, the world, the world is full of all those other guys trying to get the **MONEY** to **BUY** their thing to feed their monkeys. So it's rough, it's rough out there. You might get ripped off, taken off, or offed altogether, see, and your monkey, your monkey is the biggest and toughest of all the monkeys and he's against the **LAW**. Now, the **MAN**, the man, he wants you to have a monkey, right on, because

that's the name of the game, getting the MONEY to BUY your THING to feed the MONKEY—right on—but you got to do it his way, see, the MAN, the MAN, he knows you need your thing, and he knows your THING is in the WORLD. So the MAN, he's got you both ways, right, coming and going from the MONKEY, fighting and stealing and killing the other guy for the money to feed the MONKEY and all the time you got to be scared of the MAN, because the MAN has got the POWER to put you out of business—right on—he might starve your monkey, who is against the law, and take away your THING, and that's how you get to be a double slave, see, which is the "Perfect American," scared of the MAN, scared of the Monkey Cry, and a slave both ways—you dig what I mean? (*A pause.*)

THOMAS

I don't know. I think I do. I don't know. . . .

MARTHA

Monkey business.

THOMAS

It's not everybody has a monkey, seems to me.

PETER

No, maybe not everybody. You're right, Thomas. I got another idea. How 'bout this one—it's called the "Ultimate Consumer," or "The Man Who Ate Himself." It goes like this: see, this guy, he goes out looking for the "End Food." . . .

MARTHA

Oh, Peter!

PETER

Okay. . . . What I'm trying to tell ya is, something's got to be done to change the set.

THOMAS

That's the truth.

PETER

Life may not be possible on this set much longer.

THOMAS

Well. . . .

PETER

Human life, then.

MARTHA

(*Shaking the tambourine*) Who cares? This is getting too serious. Let's play a song, Tom, a fast one. (*THOMAS, tuning the guitar, observes PETER playing with his hair and one of his legs shaking. It bothers him.*)

THOMAS

All right, Martha. Peter, what you doin' playin' with your hair like that?

PETER

(*Stopping*) It's a nervous habit. (*A pause.*)

THOMAS

Are you nervous?

PETER

A little.

MARTHA

(*Seductively*) Why? Don't be nervous.

PETER

I'm not nervous.

MARTHA

Good. (*They smile at each other. A silence.*)

PETER

(*Hardening, to THOMAS*) Must be a lot of hard work, keeping yourself up like that all the time.

THOMAS

No, it ain't work. Takes a little effort is all. (*He resumes picking.*)

PETER

(*To MARTHA*) My body is undergoing a metabolic readjustment. It's uncontrollable, almost like becoming an animal again.

MARTHA

Oh.

THOMAS

What was it before that?

PETER

I don't know. Some kind of junk-sucking robot. (*PETER gets the trembles.*)

MARTHA

(*Horrified*) Oh, Peter! Come inside right now!

PETER

(*Following*) Yeah, I need to get warmed up.

THOMAS

Should I build us a fire?

PETER

No, Tom, it's cool, it's cool. . . . Thanks. . . .

THOMAS

All right. (PETER and MARTHA disappear inside. THOMAS goes on picking a moment.)

I'm going home—sit down
and sit down and tell my ma—
I'm going home and sit down
and tell my ma.

That's no way for me to get along.

(*The theatre is suddenly filled with the first few bars of the Rolling Stones' version of "Poor Boy." THOMAS plays along as if oblivious. The music builds rapidly to a crescendo and then cuts out. THOMAS stops playing as well and, very pleased with his "music," smiles at the audience. THOMAS drops it at that, puts down the guitar, steps off the porch, looks at the stars, sings the above chorus again. He pauses, listens to the night. Then he begins walking in a circle as if he were a horse. After a few circles of this he stops and sniffs the air; his eyes grow wide, to himself he has become a deer; he is trying desperately for alertness, wakefulness. He does this until the sound of LUKE on the harmonica—eerie and highly amplified—stops him cold; he becomes himself again.*)

15.

THOMAS

Luke. He's still around. (*He listens. Silence. He listens intently another moment. More silence. He goes up on the porch and comes back down again with a mirror. The mirror has a jagged crack down the middle. THOMAS comes*

extreme downstage center with the mirror, turns his back to the audience, and begins to concentrate on himself in the mirror. As his concentration grows, his face contorts, his eyes get bigger, an insane glitter in his eye. Once completely into his image, he begins speaking to himself in a loud monotone.

(As THOMAS begins to speak, the large screen in the second story of the house comes alive with the scene between PETER and MARTHA below. The monologue and montage are thus concurrent, with THOMAS under the added pressure and tension of having to compete with the scene taking place behind / above him for the attention of the audience. But the two movements should be timed and intercut so as to ensure that all the essential qualities and points are gotten across, the audience straining between them as they build to a climax, THOMAS nearly exploding with repressed frustration and anger.)

THOMAS

One time I was very high and I could really see Him in there. I was really into it. And Luke was around with his camera. I said, "Luke, you wanna take those pictures? I'm ready now." And he took pictures of me in the mirror. In the pictures I looked insane. I knew it was true, but I was also acting. I mean, a certain part of me could say, "Look, that cat is insane." I remember right in the middle of it I got bugged with this white T-shirt I had on under this one and it really looked corny. I went upstairs and took it off and put on a clean shirt and then I combed my hair and I shaved. Then I came back downstairs again and I got right back into it. (*He snaps his fingers.*) Like that.

(*A pause while he renews his concentration.*) I guess it was vanity made me act like that. I like to look nice and clean for Martha when there's people around and we're all stoned. I had so much energy. I was concentrating all my energy

into the mirror and I could see Him in there. (*Pause.*) I saw Him inside this cavernous image of myself looking out through the eyes trying very cautiously to come out. And I watched Him in the mirror for a long time, and He knew that I was there; He was so cautious. I tried real hard not to frighten or disturb Him. I tried to be still, and I watched Him as He very cautiously started to come out and look around. . . .

(*Sad, frustrated*)

It takes all your strength to be able to do it. It would take a lifetime of concentration and effort. If I had the time . . . to contemplate . . . I could make myself disappear, eventually. I'd disappear whenever I wanted to and come back when I felt like it. (*Sighing*) Ah, well.

(*He takes the mirror from his face and turns toward the audience.*) Luke let all those pictures he took of me, excepting that one on the door there, get stolen away from him in the city. They were good photographs.

(*He returns the mirror to its place on the porch, singing the chorus, "I'm going home . . ." as he does so, and comes back downstage.*) When a song is right it comes to you complete. It's perfect, and you just reach up for it and take it like it was an apple on a tree. The apple has been there all along and it will last forever. (*Pause.*)

People can't hear it anymore. They don't know how to listen. I'm trying to get back to where people were real and could hear music. People aren't as alert as animals. We've lost it. We're in our heads. (*Pause.*) We don't know how to be in the world anymore. (*Pause.*) Damn! (*He takes a chew of tobacco, chews, spits.*) Damn!

(This is what happens between PETER and MARTHA inside the house—dialogue to be intercut with THOMAS'S monologue above. The scene takes place in the living room, but the images themselves may be more or less abstract, and the montage constructed so that the sound can be live and miked. PETER sits in the rocking chair; MARTHA is lighting candles and incense.)

MARTHA

You know, I wish I were out in the world more, doing something. It gets pretty boring out here.

PETER

It's the same everywhere. They got their cars and their houses and their highways and their television. But there's no warmth, no justice. And they're running out of space. No matter where you go, it's the same. (*He starts rocking in his chair.*) I'm glad to be here . . .

MARTHA

Oh, Peter . . .

PETER

What? (*She smiles, blushes, turns away. He continues to rock.*)

MARTHA

You're such a devil.

PETER

A devil? (*A silence. She begins to carve on a candle with her fingernails. He gets up and slowly goes to her and stands close behind her, almost touching. She takes a deep breath.*)

PETER

What are you doing?

MARTHA

Nothing . . . (*He presses against her.*) Oh . . . (*Showing a book*) Did you ever read this?

PETER

No . . . what is it?

MARTHA

It's a book on mucus . . . it's a special diet . . . and about how you should fast . . . so you get rid of all the mucus in your body . . . you feel better . . . (*He moves.*) Oh . . . and all the other junk we eat . . . and drugs . . .

PETER

(*Idiotic*) There's no mucus on the moon, in the sky . . .

MARTHA

(*Giggling*) I know . . . Oh . . . (*His arms tighten around her; he grabs her breasts and bites into her neck; she sort of swoons; he turns her around. They embrace and kiss lust-*

fully, doing the old grind; he starts taking off her clothes as she sways and moans. When she is stripped he lifts her up and lays her down on the floor. As he takes off his clothes he kind of growls; she waits impatiently on the floor.)

MARTHA

Oh . . . Peter . . . do you think we should . . . Oh . . . (Naked, he kneels down to her. He slowly enters her; they begin to ball; he deliberately holds her still and takes his time; she moans with every stroke, each one louder than the one before; the rhythm of their fucking builds to a climax, when the tape suddenly runs out and the screen goes blank. THOMAS, outside, chewing, looking at the stars.)

16.

MARTHA

(From within, coming) OOOOHHH! (The sound of her orgasm is a lot like a scream. THOMAS starts whistling loudly to himself and throwing imaginary rocks at imaginary trees.)

THOMAS

(Frantic) There's enough on this earth for everybody. I shouldn't have to go downtown and beg and act humble to them goddamn welfare bureaucrats—you take away the system and all them bureaucrats are out of a job! And I don't—I go down there and I tell them what's owed to me as a human being and I look 'em right in the eye. Work! What's that? For what? I won't play no music no more for money. Music and money just don't mix. Ah, it don't make sense. When you think about what a man is and how much time he has . . . I like to be high and stay high and get higher and higher . . . the more stoned a man is, the closer he is to God . . . I want to tell you something—that Elliot is right—there's just a few of them up there, and they sit down around a big shiny table with polished ashtrays, and they decide what kind of slaves we're gonna be. Damn! (Spits, sings.)

"You got to do what the Lady asks . . ." (Rushes on to the porch, grabs his guitar and continues to sing loudly, and in great pain. PETER appears at the door and comes outside,

brushing back his hair, and joins THOMAS. The two smile companionably at each other and look up at the stars together, smiling broadly as if restraining themselves from irrational laughter.)

PETER

Yup.

THOMAS

Yup. (A pause.)

PETER

Sure looks bright and cold . . . and clean up there.

THOMAS

(With a snicker) I know what you mean.

PETER

(Laughing uneasily) What?

THOMAS

You know, there's no life up there.

PETER

(Uncertain) Yeah. (A pause.)

MARTHA

(Calling from inside, sweetly) Thomas!

THOMAS

People are filthy. You'd know it too if you had to do the laundry, fix the plumbing and take out the garbage all the time.

PETER

Yeah, I guess so.

MARTHA

(Impatient now) THOMAS!

THOMAS

Coming, babel! (To PETER) See ya later.

PETER

Okay. (THOMAS goes inside. PETER stands around a moment, not sure what to do with himself. He looks up at the sky.) Yeah, the stars . . . a silent, icy galaxy . . . the Milky Way . . . moving . . . expressing time . . . (A mighty moan from MARTHA inside. PETER puts his hands over his ears. Suddenly the ferocious growling of a mad dog. PETER is attacked by STELLA. A terrific battle. PETER kills her with the hunting knife. He looks around, stunned, delirious. Drops

the knife. Looks at the blood on his hands, turns, looks at the house, turns back downstage, looks up at the sky. Breathing heavily, he begins moving downstage center.)

PETER

Yes . . . yes . . . the fish in the rocket . . . he breaks the sound barrier! . . . he knows the speed of light! . . . he is afraid of the dark! . . . in the endless night he runs for his life through the galaxy! . . . What does he need? . . . He needs warmth! . . . he needs love! . . . he needs to be free! . . . he will KILL to be free! . . . Of what? . . . of his own shit! . . . Where? . . . in the cold blackness, the silence . . . space . . . only his breathing, his breathing . . . you can hear his breathing! . . . listen . . . his rocket gills . . . energy, power, light! . . . What are you going to do? . . . Who are you? . . . (A pause.) . . . My name is Peter . . . I am half horse, half man . . . I carry a bow and an arrow . . . my arrows pierce the illusions of Time and Light . . . I mount the Milky Way . . . I fuck her into consciousness and warmth . . . my come is like an explosion of meteors . . . Her egg is the moon . . . I send it a new man, a beginning . . . What? . . . A fish in a rocket! . . . BOOM! . . . a supernova! . . . Fire! . . . She is burning out in a convulsion of fire! . . . the sun is turning black! . . . inch by inch, atom by atom, the sun is turning black! . . . What do you see? . . . I see a fisherman, casting, casting for souls with his aching skin . . .

MARTHA

(From inside) PETER! PETER! COME INSIDE. THOMAS IS GOING TO PLAY US A SONG.

PETER

(Himself again) What? (A momentary blackout. The lights come on again almost immediately. PETER is gone. The stage is bare. We hear THOMAS and MARTHA inside the house as they begin to sing the old spiritual—)

THOMAS

WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT JESUS?

MARTHA

HE'S ALL RIGHT. (They go on like that, accompanied by the rattle of a tambourine, chorus and refrain, building it to an angry frenzy. Blackout.)

THE END