

THE HUNTER

BY

Murray Mednick

Illustrations by

Domenick Capobianco

The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc.
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Also by Murray Mednick
THE HAWK (with Tony Barsha)

For Kathleen

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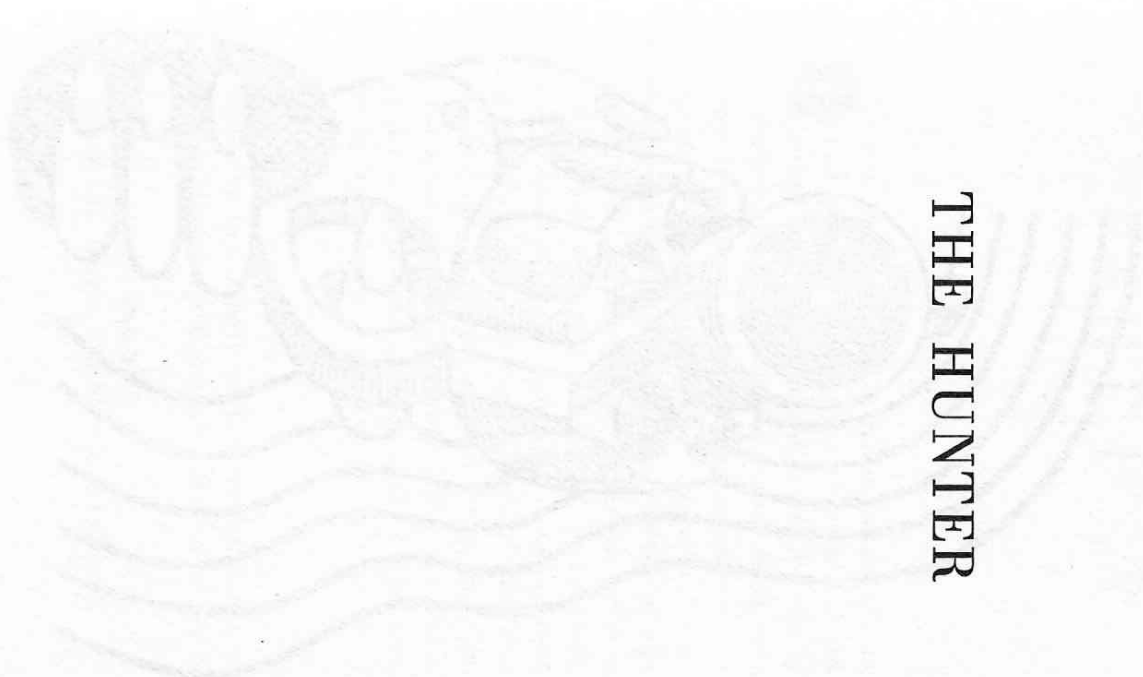
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THE HUNTER was first produced at Theatre Genesis, St. Mark's Church in the Bowery, on Friday, October 4, 1968, with the following cast:

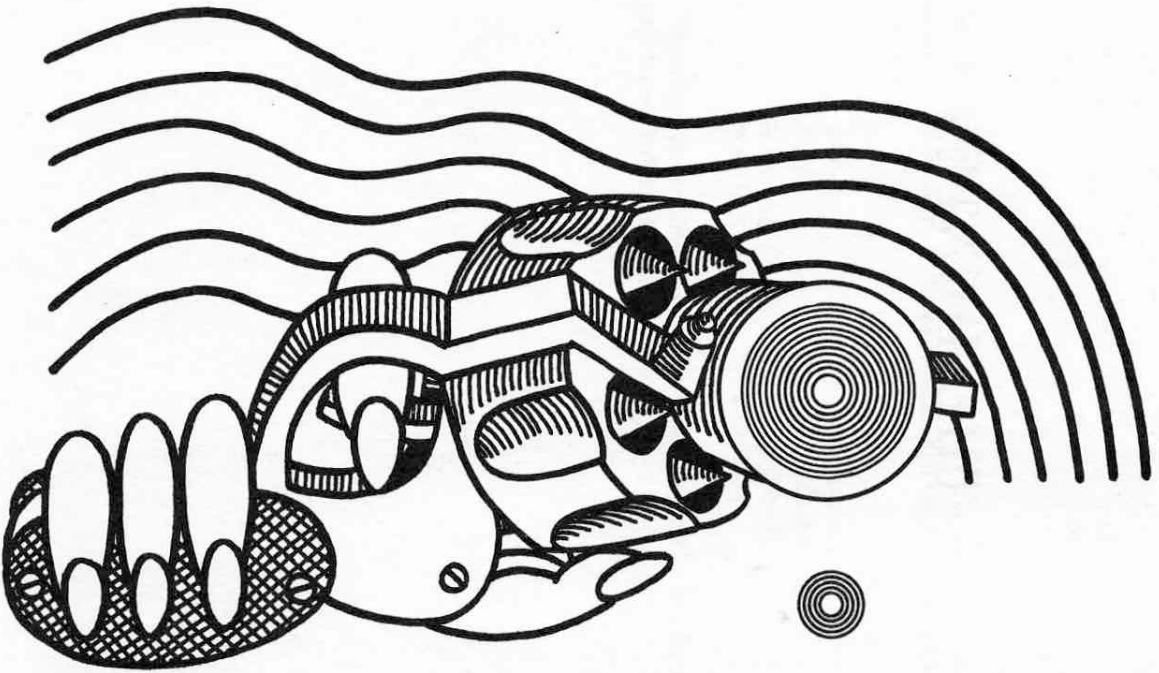
LEE	Walter Hadler
HARRY	Kevin O'Connor
HUNTER	Besson Carroll
MARIANNE	Billie Dixon

The production was directed by Ralph Cook, designed by Domenick Capobianco, lighting by Johnny Dodd.

THE HUNTER



PART I



[Night. Crickets. Dogs barking. The barking is loud at first, then fades to background. The stage is about chest high and raked. Scrims and screens are arranged beyond the edge of the stage rear proper giving the illusion of space in an open field. A tree stands upstage center. A gravestone upstage right. Two army coats on the incline left and right. A large rock downstage right. HARRY and LEE are lying down on the coats facing away from the audience. A can of sterno burns between them. They are young men around the same age. HARRY is bearded, with short hair. LEE is clean-shaven, with long hair. They wear motorcycle boots and Civil War uniforms mixed up—one wears a Union jacket with Confederate pants, the other a Confederate jacket with Union pants. HARRY is stage right, LEE stage left. A long wait, then LEE sits up and plays a few bars on his recorder. A pause.]

LEE

I don't know what to do, Harry, go back there and fight, or leave this place altogether and give it up. Make a run for it.

HARRY

Don't be crazy, Lee. We got to hole up here awhile.

LEE

I think about her all the time. I can't do anything else. I just sit around and think about screwing her. From every angle. All kinds of love play. Dramatic scenes. Accidental encounters. Looks. Secret exchanges. It's disgusting.

HARRY

Obsession is low-level awareness, Lee. Don't forget that.

LEE

I see her face. She has a tantalizing look in her eyes. She's watching for my response, my excruciating discomfort. Her head turns. She is searching for me in her mind. Her mind is a maze of fears, imaginings, and lust. My eyes meet hers. She's startled. Am I real? Still there? Who is he? What does he want?

HARRY

That's silly, Lee.

LEE

The thing is, I don't know what's hurting me more—the guilt about him or the purely tactical fuck-up of losing her.

HARRY

You can't lose what you don't have, Lee.

LEE

What? I get the two confused. My soul is wrecked. It's divided into three or four pieces—grinding against one another.

2

HARRY

That's how you arrive at your personality.

LEE

What?

HARRY

Why don't you find yourself some nice fresh young thing from a junior college somewhere and slack up for a while?

LEE

I don't have eyes for anyone else, Harry. I can't imagine having eyes for anyone else.

HARRY

Well, you can't leave, right? And you can't go after it, right? And you can't stay here, right? So you might as well cool it, Lee.

LEE

You know, I jerk off five or six times a day now. Just between you and me. I wouldn't be telling you any of this if I didn't trust you.

HARRY

Thanks.

LEE

Why can't I leave, Harry?

HARRY

In the first place, it would be misconstrued as cowardice.

3

Desertion under fire. Secondly, you'd lose your position in the Company. By leaving. Wouldn't do you no good. You'd have even less of a shot than when you started. In the third place, you're better off in the country.

LEE

Yeah, it's nice here.

HARRY

Yes, it is.

LEE

Maybe we should build a big fire and roast some marshmallows.

HARRY

I thought we came out here to get away from everybody.

LEE

So?

HARRY

So what do you want to build a big fire for?

LEE

Well, I'm cold, Harry.

HARRY

You're always cold.

LEE

And I'm jealous.

4

HARRY

Of what?

LEE

Of everybody. She's with them now.

HARRY

Can't you forget about it for one night?

LEE

Or alone with somebody else. Which is worse. She's got eyes. She's horny. She's wanton.

HARRY

They don't use that word much any more, it seems to me.

LEE

Which word?

HARRY

Wanton.

LEE

That's what it is, all right. I have nightmares, Harry, where she's balling three or four guys at once. All my best friends. Maybe that's where she's at.

HARRY

Wanton.

LEE

Do you have to agree with me, Harry?

5

HARRY
Wanton. It's a nice word. Means she has indiscriminate hot rocks. You said it, I didn't.

LEE
It's not exactly indiscriminate.

HARRY
Right. She likes them good-looking, with a touch of bread in the pocket. Possibilities.

LEE
Why do you say that?

HARRY
It's obvious. I don't think she's very together with herself. I know the type.

LEE [*getting up*]
I can't stand it any more.

HARRY
Where are you going?

LEE
First you tell me I can't stay here and then you tell me I can't leave. What the hell are you trying to say?

HARRY
I'm not trying to say anything, Lee. All I meant was, you can't leave the general area, because of your obligations to

6

the rest of us. That's number one. Number two is, you came out to this specific place to straighten out your head and now you can't sit still long enough to do it.

LEE [*sitting*]
I guess I'm in love with her, man. I can't help it. I don't like the idea myself. It's awful. That's why I came out here. I get so crazy for her I want to swallow her whole. I know her so well now—her flesh, her eyes, her mouth. I want to eat that mouth. I want to stuff it full of cock.

HARRY
For god's sake, she's just using you, man. She needs to be dug. She needs a back door. Excitement.

LEE
Forget it, Harry.

HARRY
And she's just a child, man. A lovely child.

LEE
Fuck it.

HARRY
I'll pass.

LEE
Look, we have these moments, you know. She and I. The two of us. And they're very happy, man. Happy. And I dream about her constantly. When I can sleep.

7

HARRY
She's scared, man. She's a scared little girl. You imagine she'll leave her little nest and go off with you somewhere? That's a delusion, Lee.

LEE

She comes on to me, Harry! Remember? She comes on to me. She loves me. Don't say that! Don't say that I'm deluded. Don't say that!

[A loud gun shot is heard, close by.]

HARRY

Those fucking hunters. I wish they'd stay out of our territory. . . . Forget it, Lee. I'm sorry. I don't mean you're sick or anything. . . . You've lost perspective, I think, that's all.

LEE

Yeah, maybe you're right. Maybe you're right. I've got to get some perspective. [He lies down.]

HARRY

Sure, man. Then it won't bother you so much. You'll see. Believe me. You're all strung out right now. Give your head a rest. In the morning it will all seem different to you. [a long pause]

LEE

I can't sleep, Harry.

HARRY

Jesus Christ.

8

LEE
I can't help it. I keep thinking . . . [noise of footsteps approaching through the woods] What's that?

HARRY

Someone's coming. [pause] Who's there?

[The HUNTER enters in the upstage right corner and stands there a moment. He is a tall man with a severe countenance. His red hat and red jacket glow in the dark. He is carrying an automatic shotgun and a dead hawk. There is an unlit pipe in his mouth.]

HUNTER [coming forward]

Oh, excuse me. I don't like to disturb you. I seem to have gotten lost, and I saw your light. Perhaps you could tell me where the nearest road is.

LEE

Yeah, sure. You go down that hill and you come to a stone wall. . . . What's that you got in your hand?

HARRY

Did you just shoot that thing?

LEE

What is it?

HUNTER

It's a hawk.

HARRY

You just shot that thing?

9

HUNTER
Well, yes. Certainly.

LEE
What did you do that for?

HUNTER
A hawk is an animal....

HARRY
Wait a minute. You just shot that hawk? In the dark?

HUNTER
Not exactly. I had a light, of course. A flashlight. The batteries went dead, or something. And, you see, this is an automatic shotgun. Twelve gauge.

HARRY
I don't get it.

HUNTER
Well, the idea is to fire quickly, when the animal is off its guard. The light is less important, actually, and I don't use it. Especially now that they've come up with an automatic shotgun. During the American Civil War—

HARRY
You go hunting at night?

LEE
How can you see what you're shooting?

10

HUNTER
Just a moment. [*He reclines.*] I am very keensighted. And I like the feel of the night when I hunt. The hawk, naturally, has better eyesight than I, but there is no match at all in the animal kingdom, and, I dare say, in the human, for the twelve-gauge automatic shotgun.

HARRY
I only heard one shot.

HUNTER
The one was sufficient.

LEE
It don't sound fair to me. It sounds like the odds are a thousand to one in your favor.

HARRY
What are you going to do with that thing, now that you've killed it, anyway?

HUNTER
Stuff it. Mount it.

LEE
Stuff it?

HUNTER
Yes. Stuff it and mount it.

HARRY
You're not much of a sportsman, are ya'?

11

I disagree.

HUNTER

You ever been in love?

LEE

Oh, for Christ's sake, Lee!

HARRY

Strange you should ask. I have been in love for over a hundred years, young man.

HUNTER

With what? Are you married or something?

LEE

Oh, yes. Lovely girl. Small. Red eyes, green feet. [*He giggles.*]

HUNTER

Then how come you go out at night shooting hawks?

LEE

He's in love.

HARRY

I enjoy it. I like to leave my house, young man, at dusk, and go off into the woods, alone.

HUNTER

With your automatic shotgun.

HARRY

12

HUNTER
I listen and I learn. Nature does not coddle the weak. There were seven thousand casualties suffered by the Army of the Potomac on that first day in the Wilderness before Spotsylvania Court House. [*A struck silence.*]

LEE

What did you say?

HARRY

He said it's a rough world out there, buddy.

HUNTER

Have you ever hunted?

HARRY

Naturally.

LEE

Shit, I didn't think there was anything left out there to kill.

HUNTER [*to HARRY*]

Then you know how it feels to stalk an animal.

LEE

You must be some kind of freak.

HARRY

I have the feeling you are stalking me at the moment.

LEE

Yeah, what are you after?

13

HUNTER
The Iron Brigade was drawn up one day in a line of massed battalions, a cold drizzle coming down, and as Grant came along the line regiment after regiment gave him a cheer.

LEE
And get that dead bird out of here, will ya'?

HUNTER [*clicking the safety off his gun*]
Just a moment. The Wisconsin boys were pleased. Now, let's see, where was I? It's dusk. You go into the woods and you listen. You pay attention. You leave your home, your wife, the children, a warm fire, your daily cares . . .

LEE
And you go out and you kill something.

HARRY
Be careful where you point that thing.

HUNTER
All around you things are moving. They are aware of your presence. Your own awareness deepens. You are alive. You sense the force, the power of life. You sense the quickening of fear in all the other creatures and in yourself. Fear. Your own death is lurking in the woods. You walk quietly, and you learn.

HARRY
Don't forget the automatic shotgun.

14

HUNTER
You learn what's inside you. Somewhere in the forest is a hawk. He is waiting for his victim. Then you come along.

HARRY
The Lone Ranger.

LEE
Too much—you use silver bullets in that thing?

HUNTER
You do not fire bullets in a shotgun.

LEE
No?

HARRY
That's right, Lee.

HUNTER
You fire shot. They are tiny pellets which spray the target area with great force.

LEE
Oh, I see.

HARRY
That's right.

LEE [*to HARRY*]
You're an expert.

15

HARRY
You don't have to be an expert to know that. Everybody knows that.

HUNTER
Then you come along, and the hawk is your victim.

LEE
The hawk is your victim.

HUNTER
Yes. You've got to get them as they rise, before they gain altitude and get out of range.

LEE
I see.

HUNTER [*leveling his gun*]
They're hard to get. Hawks.

HARRY
Yeah.

LEE
Yeah, they are.

HUNTER
But that's my pleasure. The idea is to fire as they rise, preferably with the victim in their talons, which slows them up and widens the target.

16

HARRY
Well, good hunting.

LEE
Enjoy yourself.

HUNTER [*to LEE*]
Did you call me a freak?

LEE
Me? Never. I never called you a freak.

HUNTER
I have excellent hearing.

HARRY
He never called you a freak.

LEE
I may disagree with you on certain questions, but I wouldn't call you a freak. What reason would I have to call you a freak?

HARRY
I can vouch for that. I was here all along. I'm his witness.

HUNTER
You know, I couldn't help but overhear a part of your earlier conversation.

LEE
Which part?

17

The part about stealing.

HUNTER

Stealing?

HARRY

HUNTER [*moving a little farther away, the gun pointed at the others*]

Yes. It's a strange thing, what a man will go through over a woman. When he really wants her. Especially if there are difficulties in the way. When she belongs to someone else, for example. It becomes obsessive. [*He pauses, lights his pipe.*]
HARRY and LEE *exchange significant looks.* [Obsession, you're right of course, is low-level awareness. [HARRY tries to walk away. The HUNTER motions him back to the cot.]
One becomes an animal, a vicious, traitorous animal, who sneaks in back alleys and turns on his friends.

LEE

That's not true.

HUNTER

Oh, yes. It's true. He can't help himself. It's a passion. He would tear out his eyes, if he really had to look at himself. Ah, desire, desire . . . torment and grief. It takes an enlightened man to refrain from desire, an enlightened man.

LEE

What about love?

HARRY

Shit, Lee.

18

HUNTER
Love? Love is like hate. It's blind. It's a blind horse, the property of a maniac. But it's nothing special. Birds have been known to fall in love with men, and vice versa.

HARRY

I'm inclined to agree. If things were arranged a little differently, you'd probably fall in love every other day.

HUNTER

Quite true.

LEE

I don't believe it.

HUNTER

What is your name, young man?

HARRY

Harry.

HUNTER

That's quite true, Harry.

LEE

I don't think so.

HARRY

Listen, I would feel much more comfortable and relaxed if you would put down your automatic shotgun, mister. And then the three of us could have a nice, easy, pleasant discussion.

19

HUNTER [*retreating a step*]
Yes, this is very pleasant. I'm glad I stopped by.

LEE
Hey, what is your stick, mister? Wha'd you come around here for?

HARRY
Cool it, Lee.

LEE
Fuck off, Harry. You cool it. [*to HUNTER*] And why are you pointing that gun at us?

HUNTER
Nervous?

HARRY
He's just scared, Lee.

LEE
Yeah, I'm nervous. I didn't call you a freak. And what business you got coming around here accusing me of stealing?

HUNTER [*taking two more steps to the rear*]
May I sit down again?

HARRY
Help yourself.

HUNTER [*sitting*]
Did I accuse you of stealing?

20

HARRY
He's sensitive about it.

LEE
Just tell him where the road is, Harry.

HARRY
It's his ego.

LEE
The freak.

HARRY
Lee? I have a feeling the gun is loaded, Lee. [*to HUNTER*]
It's loaded, ain't it?

HUNTER
Yes, of course.

HARRY
He could make us into chopmeat, Lee.

HUNTER [*chuckling*]
Love, love, love.

LEE
What's so funny?

HUNTER
You're a puppy. Your tongue is hanging out. You pant.

LEE
Tell him where the road is, Harry.

21

HARRY
Yeah. Listen, Lee. It's your ego hurting. She's making it with someone else. Right this minute. You can't take it.

HUNTER
Insanity, my boy, is just around the bend. He's waiting for you with a bag full of Clark Bars. Go to it.

LEE [*to HARRY*]
Whose side are you on?

HARRY
I'm trying to straighten you. My life is at stake.

LEE
What? Why did you say that?

HARRY
What? Why did I say what?

LEE
The part about her making it with someone else. Who? Tell me.

HARRY
I don't know, Lee.

LEE
Come on, Harry.

HARRY
I don't know.

22

LEE [*getting up*]
What do you mean my ego is hurting?

HARRY
I never said that.

HUNTER
Sit down. [*LEE sits.*] He never said that.

LEE
What?

HUNTER
You ought to know better, young man.

HARRY
I never said that, Lee.

LEE
Okay, okay. [*to HUNTER*] I'll tell you where the road is, okay?

HUNTER
Just a moment.
[*A silence, then a bloodcurdling yell.*]

LEE
What's that?

HARRY
It's a werewolf.

23

HUNTER [*breaking*]
It's the rebel yell, Harry. It's the Army of Northern Virginia on the move against our right flank! "The air was filled with a medley of sounds, shouts, cheers, commands, oaths, the sharp reports of rifles, the hissing shot, dull heavy thuds of clubbed muskets, the swish of swords and sabers, groans and prayers . . ."

LEE
Look, you go straight down this hill and you come to a field. Then you go across the field and you come to a stone wall. You just follow that stone wall right down to the road. It's easy. Okay? See ya' . . .

HUNTER
". . . Many of our men could not afford the time necessary to load their guns . . . but they clubbed their muskets and fought . . ."

HARRY
I don't think he wants to go, Lee.

HUNTER
". . . when too sorely pressed, they would drop their guns and clinch the enemy in single combat, until Federal and Confederate would roll upon the ground in the death struggle."

HARRY
I think he wants to stay.

HUNTER [*to LEE*]
You! Put your tongue back into your mouth. Keep away from what doesn't belong to you.

24

LEE
I'm sick of him, Harry.

HARRY [*breaking the tension*]
I was in love once upon a time. When I was thirteen. Her name was Carole. That's right, Carole.

LEE
Tell us about it. [*to HUNTER*] You don't mind?

HUNTER
Not at all. Please continue.

HARRY
Thank you. It ain't no big thing . . .

LEE
Don't be modest, Harry.

HARRY
Carole. She was very sweet. Not that pretty, but sweet.

HUNTER
Try not to be vulgar, Harry.

LEE
Yeah, Harry.

HARRY
Vulgar? She did have this real nice ass, though. And she was rather lascivious, in a quiet way. For a thirteen-year-old. We used to neck in the movies on Friday nights and meet in the woods on Saturday. Friday night was like a preparation for Saturday afternoon. We'd get hot and bothered and

25

grope each other in the balcony. The next afternoon we'd finish it off in the grass. We were both virgins. Never forget the first time I got it in, boy. She'd got me to the point of rage, that girl. After months of necking and petting in the movies, I finally got her underwear off. It was a warm Saturday afternoon, in the grass behind the softball field . . . around home plate. . . . I had to fight for my nookie. It was exciting. Never forget it. Wonderful. I licked her throat with my tongue, got her legs up over my head, a good grip on that nice ass, and I forced my way in. I was determined. The further in I got, the harder I got. She squirmed, but she loved it. Just as I slid home, I came. . . .

HUNTER

That'll be enough, Harry.

LEE

Heh, heh.

HARRY

But each time afterwards, I came a little later. A couple months of it and we were really balling.

HUNTER [*rises, cocks his gun*]

I said that's enough.

LEE

Heh, heh.

HARRY

I sure had to fight for my nookie, though. Every Saturday afternoon, if it didn't rain. She put up a struggle. That's how she liked it.

26

HUNTER
Maybe you didn't hear me, Harry. I said that'll be enough.
[*A silence.*]

HARRY

What are ya' gonna do, shoot me?

HUNTER

I've a good mind to, young man.

LEE

Oh, for god's sake, mister, sit down. He's lying anyway.

HARRY

I'm not lying, Lee.

LEE

Yes, you are.

HUNTER

Makes no difference to me.

HARRY

I'm not.

LEE

Shit, the most you ever did was neck in the movies. Maybe a little tit now and then. I'll bet you didn't get laid for another ten years.

HARRY

Not true, Lee.

27

LEE
Yes, it is. Admit it, Harry. 'Fess up.

HARRY
It was the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth,
so help me—

HUNTER [*aiming*]
I'm going!

HARRY and LEE
Goodbye!

HUNTER [*takes three steps to rear, prepares to fire*]
Goodbye!

HARRY and LEE [*jumping up*]
ATTENTION! [*They all come to attention.*] PRESENT
ARMS! [*The HUNTER presents arms.*] LIEUTENANT!
YES SIR! ARE YOU READY! YES SIR! PREPARE TO
CHARGE! YES SIR! CHARGE! YES SIR! [*They tackle*
the HUNTER, one to each leg. The gun falls. A struggle.
They topple him backwards and pin him against the tree.]

HUNTER
Wadsworth tried hard to swing his division around to face
the flanking fire, but it could not be done!

HARRY
Okay, Lee. We got him.

LEE
Okay, we got him. Now what?

HUNTER [*yelling*]
Turn me loose!

HARRY [*slapping him*]
Shut up, you! Let's nail him up, Lee! Wha'daya' say?

LEE
Yeah, yeah, Harry! Let's nail him up!

HARRY
Groovy, groovy! You get the nails and a couple of rocks—
I'll hold him!

HUNTER
No! No! No!
[*LEE runs off.*]

LEE
Yea!

HARRY
Hurry up, Lee! [*He giggles.*]

HUNTER
No! No! No!

HARRY [*slapping him*]
Shut up!
[*LEE runs back in, elated.*]

LEE
I got 'em, Harry!

HARRY
Too much! Let's nail him!

LEE
Yea! Yea!

[The lights dim down rapidly. HARRY and LEE giggle.]

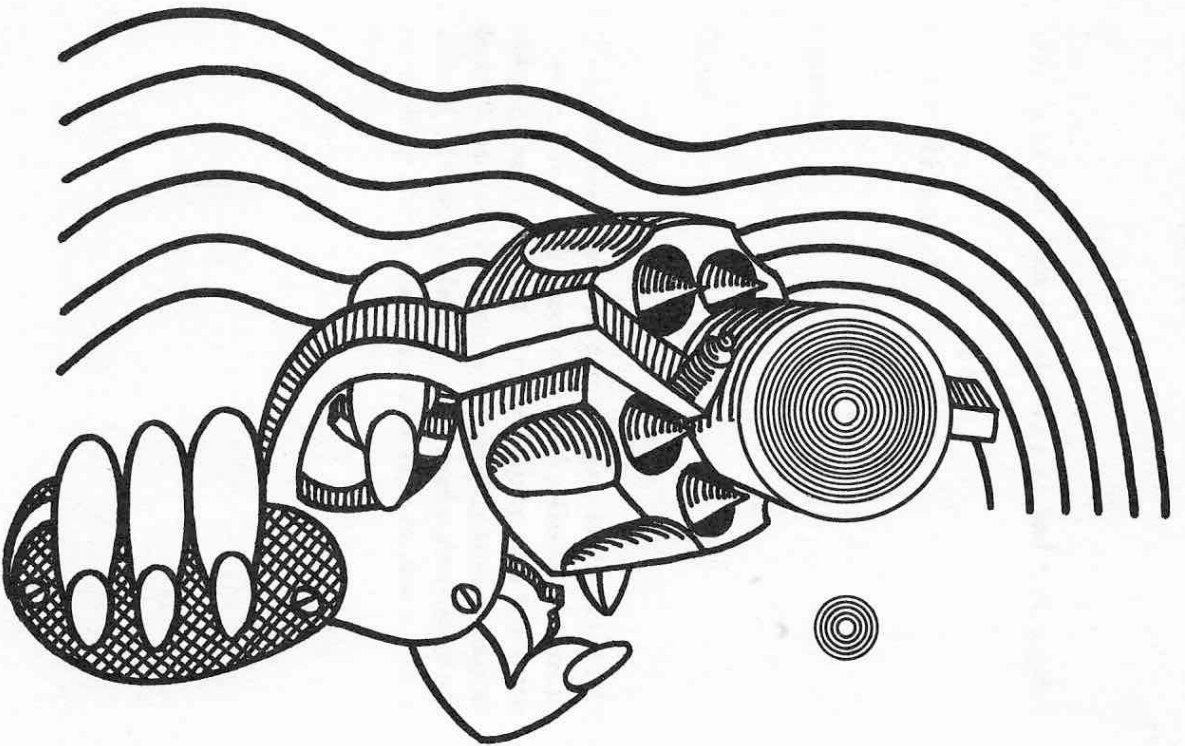
LEE
Okay, hold him now!

HARRY
I got him!

LEE
Okay!

[Total darkness now. The first nail goes in, the HUNTER screams. Then a half dozen more, each followed by a scream and giggling. The sound of rocks banging nails into a tree builds in pace and momentum; the giggling turns to laughter and war whoops. The banging stops; back lighting stage rear turns a deep blue; a final lengthy moan, then silence. End of Part I.]

PART II



[Dawn. HARRY and LEE are as before, but reversed—facing the audience. The HUNTER is nailed to the tree and still alive. No blood. The gravestone, reading “I keep thinking it’s Thursday,” is now on the other side of the stage and it too faces the audience. Lighting moves from dawn to midday. HARRY and LEE appear unrested. A long silence, another few bars on the recorder, and a pause. MARIANNE enters in a white miniskirted cowboy outfit and high white boots. She is wearing a revolver on her hip and carrying a watermelon. She places the watermelon on the rock extreme stage right, walks the length of the stage to extreme left and proceeds to fire five shots into the watermelon, opening it lengthwise, then recrosses and begins to eat the watermelon meat with great zest.]

HUNTER [after a wait]
May I have some, miss?

MARIANNE
Sure. [She brings him a piece and feeds him.] What you doin’ nailed up to that tree, old man?

HUNTER
The Iron Brigade went forward and was routed. [*motions with his head toward HARRY and LEE*] It's nothing, miss.

MARIANNE
You just tell me where I can get a hammer, old man, and I'll pull them nails out for ya'.

HUNTER
That's all right. You go on home, now.

MARIANNE
Shucks, don't be scared of those boys, Pop—I'm a deadly shot.

HARRY [*producing the automatic shotgun*]
I wouldn't fool around if I was you, miss. Stay away from that old man.

MARIANNE [*arm raised*]
Hot damn! That's one of them alley-sweepers—the Ugly One they call it!

HARRY
Superior weaponry, my dear. Good for riot control, crowd control, serving the peace, and blowing up your asshole.

MARIANNE [*moving closer*]
Well, hold your fire. I come in peace.

HARRY
Yeah, you just unbuckle that Colt .38 police special you got on and throw it over to my friend here, name of Lee.

34

MARIANNE [*doing so*]
How ya' doin', Lee?

LEE
All right.

HARRY
Okay, now you kindly raise up them hands again. Reach for the sky. [*She does.*] Fine [*looking her over*] Just fine.

LEE
Thanks for the gun, miss. Always did want one of these revolvers to wear on me.

MARIANNE
Name's Marianne. Don't mention it, Lee.

HARRY
Don't worry, he will.

LEE
Sure is a beautiful gun.

MARIANNE
The best.

HARRY
My name's Harry.

MARIANNE
Hello, Harry.

35

Sit down.
HARRY

[*She sits between them, cross-legged.*]

MARIANNE
Can I drop my hands?
[*A pause.*]

HARRY
Yeah.
[*She does.*]

HUNTER
The woods were on fire, and the flames were driven by the wind across the dried growth in the field where the wounded men lay. . . . [*He moans.*]

HARRY
Shut up, idiot!

MARIANNE
He don't seem to be hurtin' much, does he?

HARRY
No, he don't.

MARIANNE
What about your friend Lee, here? What's he thinkin' about?

HARRY
I don't know. The stars maybe. He's in love.

MARIANNE
No shit?

HARRY
Hey, Lee! [*snaps his fingers*] Why don't you go and give him a rap or two in the mouth, Lee?

LEE
Okay. [*He goes to the HUNTER, slaps him briskly twice, returns.*]

MARIANNE
Wow. . . . Was that the same you was playing the pretty music?

LEE
Yeah.

MARIANNE
I liked it. Sure was nice to hear.

LEE
Thank you, miss. Shit, Harry—she's something.

HARRY
Don't get nervous.

LEE
She's fresh, she's bright, and she's hip, too. I don't know what to do.

MARIANNE
He's cute. He makes me think about settling down.

HARRY
Do you think that'd be wise?

HUNTER
OOOOOH. OOOOOH. Certainly not, miss.

LEE
Yeah, miss—I'm a very bad cat.

HARRY
The worst.

MARIANNE
Maybe so.

HARRY
No "maybes"; you see before you rape, pillage, murder.
[*She laughs.*]

LEE
Well, I been thinking about retiring, Harry. I feel tired.

HARRY
Me too, Lee. I feel real tired myself.

LEE
Maybe you should take a little nap, Harry.

MARIANNE
Yeah.

38

HARRY
Well, I would, Lee, if people weren't crying or screaming or shooting guns off in my ears, I would, Lee. Not to mention the playing of flutes.

[*The HUNTER howls, causing a commotion among the "dogs." LEE goes to silence him, returns.*]

MARIANNE
Listen to them goddamn dogs!

LEE [*to MARIANNE, tentatively*]
I used to, you know, when I was a kid.

MARIANNE
Used to what?

LEE
Listen to the dogs.

MARIANNE [*to LEE*]
I wonder what they're trying to say to each other? It can't be that important. They do complain a lot, don't they?

LEE
I wondered about that my own self, miss. About what they was trying to communicate to each other.

HARRY
Grief.

39

MARIANNE
I don't care what it is. I wish they'd stop. Makes me irritated.

LEE
I forgot all about dogs.

HUNTER
OOOOOOH. . . . And the New Yorkers looked on in freaky horror as the flames reached these helpless men and ignited the cartridges at their waists. . . . OOOOOOH.

MARIANNE
If that one whining bitch doesn't stop, I'm going to put a bullet through her head.

LEE [*sitting up*]
Which one?

MARIANNE
That mangy brown one with the tits hanging down and the ribs showing and her nose in the garbage. She's the one making all the racket.

HARRY
If you want to shoot things and people and animals up so badly, why don't you join the Ladies' Volunteer Heavy Artillery?

MARIANNE
Killin' ain't what's on my mind, Harry.

40

HARRY
Well, if it ain't killin', I sure don't know what else it could be.

MARIANNE
It's love.
[*The HUNTER moans.*]

HARRY
Love? I should've known. Love.

LEE
Love?

MARIANNE
Love. And commitment. The kind one human being gives to another human being. Strong stuff. [*to HARRY*] Too strong for you, I suspect.

LEE
You ever been in love, miss? I mean, really in love? You know, when you can't think about anything else and you feel tremendous desire and you always want to see her, but you're afraid you're pushing too hard and she belongs to someone else besides and you're not sure if she's a witch or not?

HARRY
And your aerial is bent and your brain wave is warped—

MARIANNE
No.

41

HARRY
And one of 'em ain't enough to begin with. You got to have at least two.

LEE
I don't know if I agree with you or not.

MARIANNE
Yeah, but that ain't love, man. I'm talking about commitment. Commitment. I been through all that. I even killed a person for love. Then he left me. It was too strong for him.

HARRY
Sure, I can see that—death is too strong for anybody.

MARIANNE
Don't be a smart-ass.

LEE
What happened then?

MARIANNE [*to LEE*]
I like you.

LEE
I like you, too.

HARRY
Brilliant.

HUNTER
Meade's officers noted that the men were not running; were

42

not frightened, nor had they thrown away their weapons: "They had fought all they meant to fight for the present and there was an end to it."

HARRY
Quiet, you.

LEE
Don't you feel guilty?

MARIANNE
No.

HARRY
She's past that.

MARIANNE
Correct. Like I told you, killing ain't on my mind no more.

HARRY
I'm glad. Let me get this straight—you killed somebody, so he left you?

MARIANNE
Well . . . sure.

HARRY
Beautiful! I don't get it.

MARIANNE
Well . . . I did it for this guy, to prove to him that I loved him. So then the cat splits and runs away.

43

HARRY
Oh.

LEE
WHAT HAVE I DONE?

MARIANNE
What's wrong with him?

HARRY
He's a bit deranged now and then. He feels very bad about something.

HUNTER
OOOOOOH. Very bad. Very bad.

LEE
SHUT UP!
[A silence.]

MARIANNE
That's no way to treat yourself, man.

HARRY [to MARIANNE]
Why don't you tell us your story.

MARIANNE [to LEE]
You know, you're taking a negative attitude. Whatever it is you've done, I'm sure you couldn't help it. You seem like a very good person to me.

HARRY
Perseverance brings good fortune.

44

LEE
Forget it, Harry.

MARIANNE [soothing]
You shouldn't dwell on bad memories.

LEE
What did you do, Miss—

MARIANNE
Marianne.

LEE
Marianne. What did you do, Miss Marianne, did you kill the person you loved?

MARIANNE
No... I... Why? Are you thinking about it?

LEE
It has occurred to me.

HARRY
That's ridiculous.

LEE
IT'S NOT RIDICULOUS.

MARIANNE [soothing]
No, I didn't. It was someone else. Because he wanted this person dead, and I took care of it for him. That's all.
[A silence.]

45

HUNTER
You shouldn't have done it, miss.

LEE
You be quiet.
[*The HUNTER moans.*]

HARRY [*to MARIANNE*]
Where did you come from?

MARIANNE [*as if isolated*]
I had a dream. . . . There was this field, stretching as far as you could see, a gray field, full of white crosses, infinite rows of white crosses going off into the distance, and somewhere in the middle of it were these two soldiers lying head to head on army cots with a cross between them and they are talking about the war. And way far away down the rows of crosses is this speck, and it's coming closer, and pretty soon I could see it was a person, a girl, and she's wearing a white nurse's uniform, a World War I nurse's outfit with a cap and a little red cross and all, and she's carrying a bouquet of red crepe-paper poppies that you buy on Veterans' Day. . . . She comes up with two soldiers and she asks them if they want to buy a flower. . . .

HARRY
What?

LEE
I don't know what I'm going to do, Harry.

HARRY
Do what you always do, Lee.

46

LEE
No, I mean—I think I should go back down there and make a stand. For the last time, Harry.

HARRY
You'd be overrun, Lee. You'd get all torn up.

LEE
I got to, man. I can't leave it like this.

MARIANNE
Dwelling on the hurt ego does not further.

HARRY
Those are exactly my sentiments, miss.

LEE
You're full of shit, Harry. Before you hooked up with me, you didn't know a damn thing about anything.

MARIANNE
Tell him, Lee.

HARRY [*to MARIANNE*]
You keep out of this.

LEE
I said, "Please don't break me in half, because I'm being broken in half." And she put her arms around me and kissed me in my ear and gave me poison sumac in my ear. And I'm still going along in two pieces. . . .

47

HARRY
Are you pissed at me or something?

LEE
No, man. Why should I be pissed at you?

HARRY
I don't know. It's a feeling I get.

LEE [*deliberately*]
No, man. [*turning to MARIANNE*] Like, I'm going in two directions, but they converge in a gray field full of white crosses....

HUNTER
Disorganized men fell in behind the barricade and peered into the blank woodland from which they had just emerged....

MARIANNE
What?

LEE
And in between there's the ache... which is actually holding me together... it's funny... because it's throwing off a blue flame but I can't get warm.

HARRY
If you'd let yourself get warm, you'd get warm. There's plenty of heat around.

LEE
It's me! See! The blue flame is me right here in the middle of

48

nowhere, sayin'—"Play me a song, Lee!" And—"This way, Lee! This way, Lee!" And—"Build a fire, man! Build a fire!" But I can't get warm! I can't get warm!
[*The HUNTER moans.*]

MARIANNE
Christ. Why don't you let him down off that mother tree?

HARRY
No.

LEE
No.

MARIANNE
Why?

LEE [*after a pause*]
Because. He's up there for good now.

HUNTER [*sarcastic*]
It's all right, miss.

HARRY
Yeah—he likes it up there. Don't you, Pop?

HUNTER
I'm starting to get a bit weak, Harry.

LEE
Well, you better be quiet then. [*He takes the recorder out of his hip pocket and plays a bit.* HARRY smiles cynically at MARIANNE.]

49

MARIANNE
That's sweet. You two guys friends?

LEE
The best.

HARRY
Buddies.

HUNTER
The men in the trenches stood to their knees in bloodstained water, and the ground outside the trenches turned into a stiff gumbo in which bodies of dead and wounded men were trodden out of sight! [*He moans.*]

LEE
Stop that! You're not even bleeding.

MARIANNE [*going to the HUNTER*]
I believe he's in a lot of pain, though.
[HARRY raises the shotgun.]

HARRY
No, you don't, miss.

MARIANNE [*returning*]
Okay. [*Pause. To HARRY*] I'll bet you're a Pisces, with Leo rising.

HARRY
How nice.

50

LEE
What about me?

MARIANNE
Virgo. Scorpio rising . . . with a touch of Libra.

LEE
Yeah? What's that mean?

MARIANNE
It's lethal.

LEE
Lethal.

MARIANNE
Lethal.

LEE
You hear that, Harry? I'm lethal.

HARRY
I knew it all along. Ever since I laid eyes on you. I said to myself: "Now right there in front of me is a lethal person."

LEE
Watch out for me.

HARRY
I do.

51

MARIANNE [*to LEE*]
You're not bad. You have saving graces. I think you're a
very good evil person.

LEE
Thanks a million.

HUNTER [*interrupting*]
That may be true, young lady. But I have observed his behavior, which belies his intelligent faculties. I can only say, by way of a warning, that he does not practice the ancient virtue of harmonious integration—he gets carried away by his emotions and loses control. Watch out.

MARIANNE
Hmm. . . . Thanks for the advice. I have been around some, you know. I'm a pretty good judge of character.

LEE
It's your turn, Harry.
[HARRY backs to the HUNTER, gun in hand pointed at the others, slaps the HUNTER twice and returns.]

MARIANNE
Too much.

HARRY [*evenly*]
I'd like to hear your story now, if you don't mind.

MARIANNE
Sure, man.
[*A wait.*]

52

LEE
Take your time.

HARRY
Take your time.

MARIANNE
I'm in no hurry.

LEE
You killed somebody, remember?

MARIANNE
I remember. It's no big thing.

LEE
Who'd you kill?

HARRY
Yeah, who'd you kill?

MARIANNE
His grandmother.

HARRY
Oh.

MARIANNE
She was giving everybody a hard time. She was an old bitch, half dead already anyway. About ninety years old. She went all the way back to Reconstruction. Somebody had to be feeding her and emptying her bed pan all the time. She

53

smelled of death. She needed to be dead. She had this money in the bank reserved for my boy friend, but she wouldn't let him have it while she was alive. She made him grovel and caused everybody a lot of grief. He wanted to get rid of her. So did I. I hated her. He didn't have the guts to do it himself. I shopped around for weeks looking for the right poison. But poison was nowhere in that town. So I hit on her heart. I just crushed up a couple dozen bennies and I put them in her vegetable soup and she croaked.

HUNTER

You'll rot in hell, Miss Marianne.

LEE

I thought I told you to keep still, you jive-assed square-headed fool.

HARRY

Give it to him, Lee. You tell him.

LEE

Fuck off, Harry.

HARRY

Yeah, I'm impressed myself, Miss Marianne. I think I'll give you a second chance. That all right with you, Lee? [LEE nods.] However, means we'll have to execute him. [He points to the HUNTER.]

LEE

Yeah, that's right—he knows too much.

54

MARIANNE
Well, I don't even think he's real, boys. If he was real, he'd bleed.

HUNTER

What? What? Don't you know what's real? I'm real! It's all real! It's all the same. We're all the same real!

LEE

I guess he does have some feelings.

HARRY

No, he don't.

MARIANNE

I think he's mostly dead. He's senile.

LEE

Maybe you're right.

HUNTER

No! Look!—I'm the same real as that rock over there and this tree! It's all the same real!

LEE

No, it ain't. Rocks and trees don't have no feelings.

HARRY

You're a little too cool, Dad. I don't believe you.

MARIANNE

And don't you bleed.

55

HUNTER

The Federals had gained a square mile of useless territory at the price of nearly seven thousand casualties. The Rebels' losses were even higher, but this was cold comfort. Such was the fight at Bloody Angle, where the Army of the Potomac and the Army of Northern Virginia attempted to annihilate each other for no particular reason other than the pure ferocity of battle!

MARIANNE

I sure would like to get off.

LEE

Get off?

MARIANNE

Yeah, you know—get off.

LEE

Yeah, I'd like to get off.

HARRY

Me too—I'd like to get off—but we don't have anything to get off on, do we, Lee?

LEE [*looking through his pockets and wallet*]

No, Harry—I guess we don't.

MARIANNE

Well, too bad anyway.

56

HARRY

Sorry about that.

LEE

I'll get you off.

MARIANNE

How?

[*The HUNTER moans.*]

LEE [*to the HUNTER*]

Shut up, you! [*to MARIANNE*] I'll make love to you, okay? It'll get you off. I'd like to ball you. What do you say, Marianne?

MARIANNE

Okay.

LEE

Groovy.

HARRY

Hey, man—how about me?

LEE

You?

MARIANNE

Oh no, brother—I don't go in for that sort of thing.

LEE

I don't either, Harry. I don't share my women. Sorry.

57

HARRY
I got the superior weaponry, Lee.

LEE [*drawing the pistol*]
Maybe you do, Harry, but you'll be just as dead as me. [*A long, tense pause, broken by a howl from the HUNTER.*]
HARRY *lowers the shotgun.*]

LEE
Tell him a story or something, Harry, to keep his mind off it all. Something about the Civil War. We'll see you later.

MARIANNE
Bye, bye.
[*They go off behind the gravestone and start to screw.*]

HARRY [*to himself*]
I'm next, you son of a bitch.

HUNTER
I don't think I can take any more, Harry.
[*HARRY approaches him with the shotgun and puts it to his head.*]

HARRY
You can't?
HUNTER
No, I can't.

HARRY
How would you like a little story?

58

HUNTER [*shaky*]
A story?

HARRY
Yeah.

HUNTER
What about?

HARRY
Death, dreams, and orgasms.

HUNTER [*giggling hysterically*]
The fighting did not stop for a second, not for a second, Harry, and the unendurable moment of climax hung taut in the air and became fixed, a permanent part of some insane new order of things!

HARRY
Quiet! [*screwing sounds coming from behind the gravestone*] Now listen up! You hear me?

HUNTER [*meekly*]
I hear you, Harry.

[*The following speech builds to a tremendous ferocity, as do the screwing sounds from the rear, as does the HUNTER's moaning and groaning. The three movements are orchestrated so that all reach a climax at the same moment, when the HUNTER dies of an orgasm.*]

HARRY
Okay, Hunter—pick up on Miss Orgasm here—dig her?—

59

she's an open thing—a pulsing, streaming wet, wanting-to-get-fucked open thing—yeah—we'll call her Miss Jingle—right—and here comes Dreams. Sly little dreams, down and dirty Dreams hanging in the hallway after Miss Jingle—we'll call him Mr. Jive—and Death? Where Old Death? That snuck! Where is he? Ha! He's right there hiding under the bed, folks, waiting his turn is Old Death!—we'll call him Mr. Jangle—okay—now we got Jingle, Jangle and Jive—that's Orgasms, Death and Dreams—you got it?—okay. Now, Miss Jingle, she smells Mr. Jive lounging on the door-knob and she gives a long low whistle—whooooee!—and Mr. Jive slips on in lightly through the door, dick first—Mr. Jangle takes a peek from under the bed there and crawls back—cowardly, pinko Death—okay—Miss Jingle bends down and puts her hands on the floor—moaning, blubbering, begging, asking for it Orgasm Thing swaying this way and that with her ass to windward—she wants it NOW!—okay—Mr. Jive is a small cat being led around by a stiff dick—he moves up behind Miss O. nice and slow, turns Uncle Dick loose and ready to go—whooooee!—don't forget old Mr. Jangle right there pulling his joint under the bed—okay—there's Miss Jingle thrashing about and banging her head against the floor, she can't stand it no more and she howls, and you could hear that howl on South Street in the afternoon and it scares Old Death out of his Body—he is now voices, he's one, two or forty-nine voices—and Mr. Jive goes right in up to Miss Jingle's belly button and Mr. Jive and Miss Jingle start to SCREW, man, till Mr. Jive has got Miss Jingle up off the ground riding that hard sweet dick, she ain't touching the turf, Jim, she's flying, she's grooving, she's impaled, brother, on Mr. Jive's cucumber!—Uh, oh!—here

come Old Mr. Jangle Death crawling over to Mr. Jive's rear, in the FLESH—Old Jangle is in the FLESH! He's all kinds a FLESH! And he wants IN, mother-fucker! He wants IN! He wants to GET INTO THE ACT—okay—he grabs Mr. Jive, who ain't missing a stroke, and he pulls down Mr. Jive's pants, and he whips out his raw-duck-silver-jet-aircraft-many-voices-super-fleshy pecker and he plunges it up Mr. Jive's Dreamy asshole! And the three of 'em are ONE!—right NOW!—Yea!

[*Fade to deep blue as in Part I, then a blackout.*
End of Part II.]

PART III

[Moonlight. Everything is as it was in Part I, but the HUNTER is now dead, and the tree is gone. The HUNTER lies in repose, attached to a board, across downstage center. The corpse is disfigured and slightly blue. HARRY and LEE sit facing each other on the cots. HARRY has the automatic shotgun trained on LEE, who reciprocates with the .38 revolver. MARIANNE sits beside LEE. No one speaks for a full minute or so.]

LEE

Listen, Harry. We got to bury the body.

HARRY

I am well aware of that fact, Lee.

[A silence.]

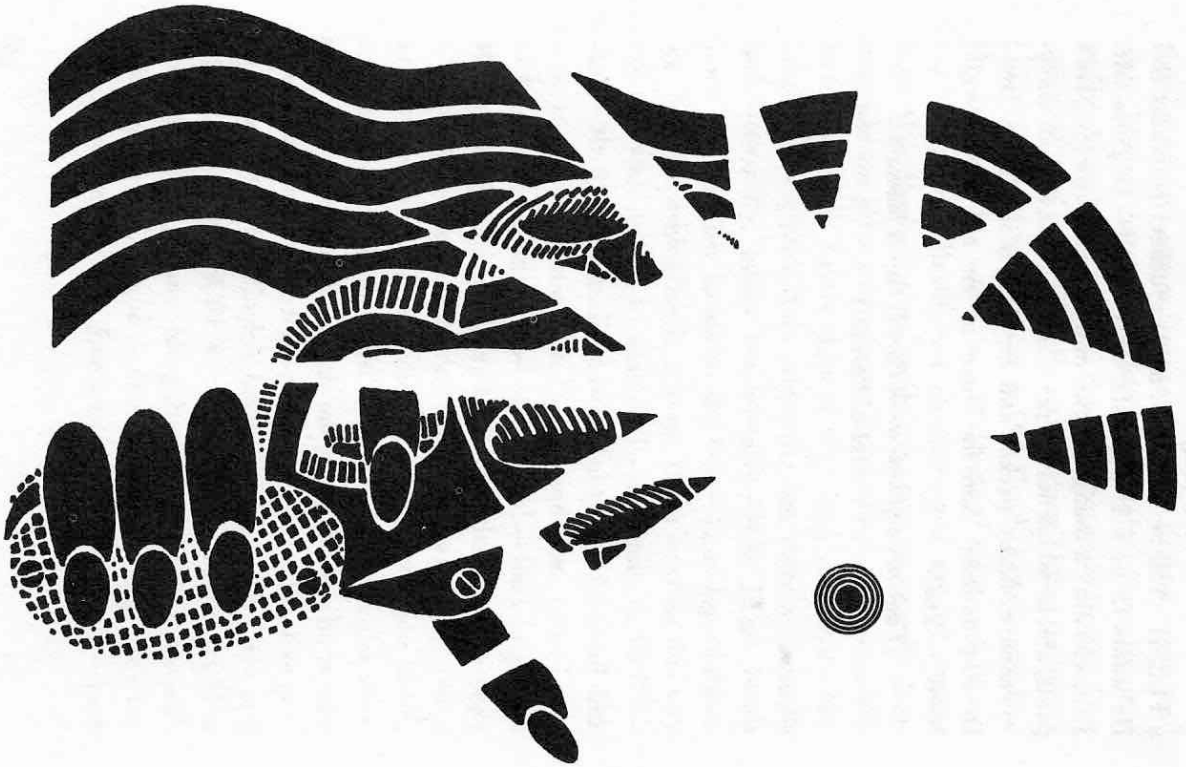
LEE

Well, what do you recommend, Harry?

HARRY

Bury him, Lee.

[A silence.]



LEE
Okay—if you put down the shotgun, I'll bury him.

HARRY
You put away the pistol first, Lee.

LEE
We'll do it together. Simultaneous.
[A silence.]

HARRY
No.

LEE
Why not?

HARRY
Because. I'm not taking any chances on you making a run for it, Lee.

[A silence.]

LEE
I wouldn't do that, Harry.

HARRY
Yes, you would.

MARIANNE
We promise, Harry.
[A silence.]

HARRY
No.
[A silence.]

LEE
Come on, Harry. Look—we just won't take our eyes off one another, and we'll slowly put down the guns. But we'll keep our eyes on each other the whole time, so there'll be no tricks.

MARIANNE
We should bury him soon, Harry.
[A silence.]

HARRY
Okay, we put our guns down. Then what?

LEE
Then we'll bury him, man.
[A silence.]

HARRY
I don't see where there's any place to bury him nowhere, Lee.
[A silence.]

LEE
How do you know that unless you look around a little bit, Harry? How do you know there's no place to bury the man, Harry, unless you take a real careful look around here, huh? Besides, we can't sit here like this forever.

HARRY
Take a look around, Lee. You see if there's a place where we can bury him. But she stays here.
[A silence.]

LEE
What for?

HARRY
As hostage, Lee, so you don't cut out and leave me here with him by himself.

[A silence.]

LEE
Why don't you go look, Harry?
[A silence. Then LEE gets up.]

HARRY
Going somewhere?

LEE
I'm going to look around, man, seeing as how you won't.
[LEE, keeping his gun on HARRY, who does likewise, begins backing upstage—he looks—backs to downstage left—looks—crosses to upstage right—looks—then downstage right—looks—returns to cot, sits.]

HARRY
See what I mean, Lee?
[They all observe the corpse for a while.]

LEE
Shit.
[A silence.]

HARRY
You killed him, Lee.

LEE
What did you say?

66

HARRY
I said you killed him, Lee.

MARIANNE
Now wait a minute! He did not! He did not kill him!

HARRY
Not alone, he didn't.

LEE
You killed him, Harry.
[A silence.]

MARIANNE
Well, I didn't kill him! Did I? Did I?

HARRY
I ain't sayin'. [A long silence. LEE reaches for the recorder, plays a little with one hand, stops.] That's really something, Lee. Play us some more one-handed.

LEE
You know, Marianne, about dogs . . . it's a strange thing about dogs . . . We had a dog once, back home, my brother and me . . . in this small town up in the mountains . . . My old man brought him home, wrapped in a blanket . . . He was nothin' but a meek, whimpering little puppy then . . .

HARRY
Must have been a meaningful experience for ya', Lee.

MARIANNE
Go on, Lee.

67

LEE
He'd been starving to death... My father liked dogs... and me and him and my brother took care of him... We called him Prince... My brother's name was William...

MARIANNE
William.

LEE
Yeah, William. This dog'd been starving to death, and he was terrified—I mean TERRIFIED. I remember how he trembled, Marianne, he must have trembled and whimpered for three days or more before he finally calmed down and started enjoying himself...

HARRY
And then you lived happily ever after, two boys and a dog...

LEE
No, man, but it was real nice for a while... The best thing was running around with him in the woods... you know, dogs get happy in the woods... and if you go into the woods with a dog, you get closer to the woods somehow. The dog takes you with him... like he's showing you something he's proud of, and that makes him happy...

MARIANNE
Very lovely.

HARRY
You communed with nature.

68

LEE
Something like that... yeah, and everything else sucks.

HARRY
What happened to love, Lee? I thought you were in love?

LEE
The trouble, Marianne... the trouble was that my old man and my brother, William, they liked to play rough, you know, they liked to fuck with his head a lot... pet him and then cuff him one... and fight with him, and tease him until he got his hackles up and frothed at the mouth... and then they'd laugh at him and pet him again... They didn't mean any harm... they just liked to play rough... but the dog started to get confused. I tried to explain to them not to play that way with the dog... He didn't know what was happening or how to behave... because I was gentle with him an' all an' I wanted to stay friends... [*a silence*] Anyhow, it went on like that, with William an' my old man teasing him and fighting and hitting him all the time, and after a while the dog became kind of crazy, and tense, and then he got mean, real mean, and that was his way... and since he knew William an' my old man liked it, or thought they did, an' it was his home, that's how he was on the outside, with other people and the other dogs... He got to be a loner, you know, a snarling, vicious type of dog... asking for trouble, starting fights... And he wasn't too big, so he stayed close to home, you know, he'd draw blood and run home... and there was no playing with him any more...

MARIANNE
What happened to him, Lee?

69

LEE

Well, it's a strange thing. . . . I guess he went too far one time. . . . I guess the other dogs around had had it with him . . . because they all got together, this one time—it was in the winter—maybe twenty, thirty dogs, and they chased him out of town, and then they killed him. . . . My old man got there just as they was tearing him to pieces. . . . It's a strange thing . . . as my father told it, the dogs were making no fuss about it, no noise, nothing . . . just taking care of business. He and William buried him in the yard.
[A silence.]

HARRY

I remember Christmas, Marianne. You want to hear about Christmas?

MARIANNE

We didn't have Christmas. I grew up in the desert.

HARRY

Well, I didn't have Christmas, either, Marianne, that's why I remember it. We were outcasts. We didn't observe.

LEE

Christmas.

HARRY

Yeah, Christmas. It was a nice time of year, actually, Christmas was. For the Christians. I was very fond of Christmas, though, because everybody declared a truce, a ten-day cease-fire. Things got to be a little less dangerous around Christmas.

70

time. The natives stopped eating one another up for a while and gave each other presents.

MARIANNE

It's a good season for business.

HARRY

Yeah, right. . . . I had this friend of mine then, whose name was Jimmy. Jimmy Slater. And the Slater family always made a big thing out of Christmas. They had like a small farm and a gas station set up and they did all right. Jimmy was the fourth of five sons. We hung out together, and I used to spend a lot of time over at the Slater house, and I especially liked to visit during Christmas.

LEE

They fed you pretty good then, right, Harry?

HARRY

Let me tell you, it was a genuine pleasure to walk into that house, Lee, out of the snow and the cold, and feel that nice family warmth, and the good cheer, and see the tree all lit up and glowing in the corner smelling fresh right out of the forest and see all those brand-new things all over the place.

LEE

A Flexible Flyer!

MARIANNE

New mittens!

LEE

A BB gun!

71

A baseball glove!

M A R I A N N E

All kinds of good things!

H A R R Y

Must have made your mouth water, Harry.

L E E

H A R R Y

And a warm fire in the living room. And old man Slater, who was stone deaf and had a huge pot belly and smoked cigars, cleaning his weapons and talking about automobiles with the boys; and Mrs. Slater cooking up turkeys and yams and mashed potatoes and roast beef and baking fresh bread in the kitchen, and . . .

L E E

Sure was something. . . .

H A R R Y

Sure was. . . . And then one Sunday Christmas Day I went over there alone while they was all in church and I sneaked into the house. . . . I thought I'd take something, you know, something they wouldn't miss, like a ten-dollar bill, or a hunting knife, something like that, and I'd have me a little Christmas, too. [*a silence*] So I'm in the house, creeping about, walking on my toes, feeling stunned, you know, that I was really doing what I was doing, looking to steal from the Slaters, friends of mine, when somebody walks in the front door. I figure I'll stand up straight and act natural if I get caught, but my legs don't listen. They panic and run for the kitchen, and I know

72

whoever it is come in the door has seen me running down the hall and into the kitchen. So I don't know what to do, I've blown it—I can't act natural now 'cause they seen me running and if I run out the back door, they'd think I took something, which I hadn't. So I just kind of closed my eyes and sank to my knees by the kitchen table, praying that whoever it was wouldn't come all the way down the hall into the kitchen, which they do, and I open my eyes, and it's Mrs. Slater. And she's looking directly at me, down on my hands and knees there, and we just look at each other like that for a while. Then she turns away and she walks back out of the house. . . . She never said anything to me after that, either . . . no one did, but things weren't the same. . . .

[*A silence.*]

L E E

He's starting to smell pretty bad, Harry.

H A R R Y

That's true, Lee.

[*A pause.*]

M A R I A N N E

I liked the desert. I liked to go out into the desert and shoot rabbits. The desert is flat and it's got lots of sand. I'll tell you about shooting rabbits, the point of it. I mean, I like guns and everything but I don't like to shoot stuff. I feel sorry about the hunter being dead.

H A R R Y

What about the rabbits?

73

MARIANNE

The thing about the desert was there's a lot of free space and you have the feeling that it's just you and the universe and it has a metallic quality which the gun sort of affirms. I don't know. People always had guns even when there weren't any guns. I mean, rocks are guns.

LEE

Tell us about the rabbits.

MARIANNE

Even though the desert seems flat, it's not flat at all, it's just that you can see so far. It rolls and it's uneven and the sand is soft and you sink into it, so that if you're a little uneven yourself, it doesn't show. But only you can see. And that's the point.

HARRY

The rabbits, the rabbits.

MARIANNE

You're cruising along, say, in a jeep. The best time is right before the sun comes up. And you're hanging out the window and it smells so good. The sage. You feel good, you feel very together with it like you could go on doing it for hours. You almost hope you won't even see a rabbit, but you do. And it freezes, and somehow you just fall into the part. You jump out of the jeep. You want him to stay frozen so you can get off a good shot and get it over with. I used a .22 pistol and that's hard. Then it starts running. It runs so fast in that zig-zag pattern it's learned, and you start running after it. Imagine trying to outsmart a rabbit. I was pretty good. One time I shot a running cottontail at more than ten yards with a .22 pistol.

74

It was a beautiful shot. Mostly, a .22 won't stop a rabbit unless you get it in a real vital organ. When you get it, you sort of walk up to it and mostly it's still alive. It's just laying there with this one big eye and you look at it right in the eye. That's important—that you look at it right in the eye. Like you say to it: "It was me that killed you. It was me." Then you put the gun right against its head and finish it off. Without that part, it wouldn't be anything. That's all. Then you go shoot another one.

HARRY and LEE

Yeah.

MARIANNE

You feel a little sick, but no more sick than after you do anything else, any old other human thing.

[A silence.]

LEE [moving away]

I don't like the smell of it.

[The others move back, too.]

MARIANNE

Me neither.

HARRY [strident]

You got to take some kind of responsibility, Lee, and you know it—you killed him and now you want to blame it on me, and you've done a lot of other bad shit to boot.

LEE

What?

75

Come on, man—

HARRY

What, Harry?

LEE

Listen, I'm gonna open up with this thing—

HARRY

I'll get you before I go down, Harry.

LEE

[HARRY and LEE get down behind their cots. MARIANNE stands up.]

HARRY

I'm not going back by myself, Lee. I don't care what happens. We all go down.

LEE [enraged]

It wasn't HER fault, you creepy bastard! She couldn't help it! It was HIM! He asked for everything he got!

MARIANNE

What?

HARRY

Ha! Tell it like it is, Lee!

LEE

I'm through with all that stuff. I'm through with it! Fuck everybody!

76

Ha! I thought you were in love, Lee.

HARRY

Kill him, Lee.

MARIANNE

What?

LEE

Kill him, Lee. It's our only chance. Please.

MARIANNE

What?

LEE

Kill him.

MARIANNE

Go ahead, Lee.

HARRY

[A silence.]

MARIANNE

Lee! Please!

HARRY [laughing]

Pull the trigger, Lee.

MARIANNE

Kill him, Lee! Kill him!

[LEE holds the pistol with both hands. He is trembling violently. MARIANNE begins backing away toward the wings, left.]

77

MARIANNE

Lee . . . ! Lee! Please . . . I love you, Lee . . . [She looks at the corpse.] Oh! . . . He's dead . . . ! Lee? . . . Shoot! Lee? Shoot! . . . [HARRY laughs.] Shoot! Shoot him, Lee! Shoot! . . . Oh! . . . Lee? [Her voice becomes smaller and smaller.] Shoot, baby . . . Go on, go on . . . baby . . . shoot . . . Lee? . . . [She turns and runs off. A pause.]

LEE

Marianne? Marianne?

HARRY

She's gone, Lee.

LEE

Marianne? Come back!

HARRY

Too late, Lee.

LEE

It's your fault, Harry. You better kill me.

HARRY

I thought you said it was his fault?

LEE

It was. It was him all along . . . what?

HARRY

Shit.

[They both turn and look at the corpse for a long time, then suddenly spring to their feet.]

HARRY and LEE

ATTENTION! [They come to attention.] PRESENT—ARMS! [They present arms.] READY!—AIM! [They aim.] PREPARE TO FIRE!—FIRE! [They fire at the corpse.] FIRING SQUAD—REST! [They drop their arms.] BURIAL DETAIL, READY!—FORWARD MARCH! ONE, TWO! ONE, TWO! DETAIL—HALT! [They look at the corpse.] ALL RIGHT, MEN, EASY NOW, EASY DOES IT! [They maneuver corpse to the edge of the stage.] OKAY, GET A GRIP ON IT NOW! THAT'S IT, THAT'S IT, MEN—ALL RIGHT, NOW! [They lower the corpse onto the floor of the pit and lean him against the stage, facing the audience.] HE'S STILL GOT HIS HEAD UP THERE, SIR! YES, SIR! WELL, GET IT OUT OF THE WAY THEN, LIEUTENANT! YES, SIR, I WILL, SIR! RIGHT AWAY, SIR! [They kick the corpse so that it falls with a thump head first into the audience.] IT'S DONE, SIR! YES, SIR! [A pause. They look at each other a moment, then dive for their weapons, ending up behind the cois with a bead on each other, as before; a silence.]

LEE

You're nothin' but a jealous cat, Harry, a jealous cat.

HARRY

Jealous?

LEE

Tha's right—jealous.

HARRY

What do you mean, jealous?

LEE
Jealous, Harry. Because I got something. I got something inside me. And you got nothing.

HARRY
Yeah, man—I don't go around mooning and bleeding and hanging my nerves out in the air so people can lick 'em for ya' all the time.

LEE
You wish you was hurting, Harry, so you'd know you was alive. You're not sure. You're getting it off of me. You're like a dog, Harry, sniffin' hydrants an' inspectin' assholes—only you can't take a good solid crap for yourself.

HARRY
You think I'm trying to take something away from you, right?

LEE
Yeah—everything I got.

HARRY
Your suffering—right?

LEE
You like to watch me suffer, don't you?

HARRY
You like to watch me liking you to suffer.

LEE
Okay, man.

80

HARRY
Okay, what?

LEE
Forget it.

HARRY
No.

LEE
All right, don't forget it. [pause] Shit, I wish she'd come back. I don't know why, exactly. I feel lonely. Suffer? [looking at the ~~mirror~~] Look at that white bitch... with her names and her smiles and her tricky ways....

HARRY
She's got nothing at stake, Lee. She plays with us. She's not alive and she's not dead, either. She shines, is all.

LEE
Yeah. She just shines. She's a reflection, wouldn't you say, Harry? I mean the light ain't real. I mean it's reflected light, to begin with.

HARRY
Yeah. It comes from the sun, Lee. And the stars, a little. The light bouncing back and forth and around in the universe.

LEE
She's full and bright and magical. And she's got a hold on us and she's a bitch.

81

HARRY
She comes and she goes, Lee. And nobody knows.

LEE
Wanton.

HARRY

Wanton.

[*A dog howls.*]

LEE

Make your move, Harry.

HARRY

I'm going to have to do it, Lee.

LEE

Go ahead. I'm ready.

HARRY

I don't want to, but I have to, Lee.

LEE

It's rough on everybody.

HARRY

It'll make some ugly holes on ya', Lee.

LEE

I'll just make one nice clean one right through you, Harry.

HARRY

I can't miss at this range, Lee.

82

LEE
Well, it'd be pretty hard for me to miss you, too, Harry.

HARRY
You don't want to miss, Lee.

LEE

I won't.

HARRY

Because then I'll be alive and you'll be a mess. A dead mess.

LEE

I won't miss.

HARRY

You might, Lee.

LEE

Try it.

HARRY

I'm going to.

LEE

Be a pleasure, Harry.

HARRY

Sure will. [*a silence*] Any last requests, Lee?

LEE

None at all, Harry.

83

HARRY
Anything you want to say?

LEE

Nope.

HARRY

Got some thoughts you want to share, Lee, for the last time?
[*White crosses begin to move in the field. There are few at first and moving slowly. Gradually they increase in number and move faster.*]

LEE

Maybe I do, Harry.

HARRY

Go on, Lee. Say it.

LEE

I see this Black Army all in white uniforms with golden epaulettes and golden buttons coming up along the stone wall, a whole division maybe, thousands, along the wall and down the road, and they're coming here with shovels and machine guns and carbines—they're going to clean out this entire cemetery—but they don't make any noise and they don't smile and they don't stop, they keep on walking single file there off into the field and the ones in front disappear and the ones behind just keep on coming—it's a Black Army all in white and they don't make a sound and they cover this entire field—

84

HARRY
And they keep on moving and the ones in front are disappearing—

LEE

And the ones in back just keep on coming—

HARRY

And there are endless rows of silent Blacks in white uniforms—

LEE

Moving—moving—

HARRY

Filling up the entire field and moving and carrying shovels and light machine guns and carbines and they're wearing white uniforms with golden epaulettes and golden buttons and the ones in front are disappearing and the ones behind just keep on coming—

HARRY and LEE

It's a Black Army all in white and they don't make a sound and they cover this entire field—[*MARIANE reappears in the distance in the field of white crosses and approaches slowly. She is wearing a World War I nurse's uniform with a red cross and carrying a bouquet of red crepe-paper poppies.*]
HARRY and LEE turn to watch her coming but continue their litany.]—And they keep on moving and the ones in front are disappearing and the ones in back just keep on coming filling

85

up this entire field and moving and carrying shovels and light machine guns and carbines and they're wearing white uniforms with golden buttons and golden epaulettes and the ones in front are disappearing and the ones behind just keep on coming—

ALL TOGETHER

I see a Black Army all in white with golden buttons and golden epaulettes and they don't make a sound and they cover this entire field and they keep on moving and the ones in front are disappearing and the ones in back just keep on coming filling up this entire field and moving and carrying shovels and light machine guns and carbines and they're wearing white uniforms with golden buttons and golden epaulettes and the ones in front are disappearing and the ones behind just keep on coming—

[*They all stop.*]