

LINCOLN' S LAGOON

A Play in Two-Acts

By

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CHARACTERS

- JOAN CAMPBELL Very bitter and cynical schoolteacher who murders people she doesn't like. Mid-40's.
- SHERIFF SMILEY The symbol of law and order for the town. He is no longer qualified for his job. 50.
- DIANE ANDERSON Young go-getter journalist from Michigan who dreams of working for The New York Times. Sent to Lincolnville to cover the murder. Mid-20's.
- JACK KELLY Local bag-boy turned deputy. Good natured, but not very bright. More innocent than dumb. He's engaged to Jill Murray. Early-20's.
- JILL MURRAY Engaged to Jack and carrying his baby. Believes in all things virtuous and true. Wants to set Ricky free. Early-20's.
- RICKY BARDING Local boy who wants to get out of Lincolnville. He is arrested for the murder of Principal Brown.
- PA CHEANEY Elderly retired school janitor who conjures up conspiracy theories. He wants to adopt Lil' Jimmy. 77.
- MA CHEANEY Very religious lady who feels that the town has gone to hell because not enough people go to church. 75.
- LIL' JIMMY Blind Kentucky orphan who lives in the park. He is a world-class dancer and wants to be part of a family. He is dressed like a 1920's shoe shine boy. 9-13.
- MARÍA VALENZUELA The new Spanish teacher at the school. She recently moved to the US from Caracas, Venezuela. Mid-30's.

SETTING

The play opens in Lincolnville Park in the late summer. Other locations include a school classroom and an interrogation room at the local police station.

TIME

ACT I-August 27 & 28, 1997.

ACT II-The following week.

SCENES

ACT I

SCENE 1	Lincolnville Park	Late Night
SCENE 2	Lincolnville Park	Early Morning
SCENE 3	Lincolnville Park	Afternoon
SCENE 4	Maria's classroom	Afternoon
SCENE 5	Interrogation Room	Late Afternoon

ACT II

SCENE 1	Lincolnville Park	Afternoon
SCENE 2	Interrogation Room	Afternoon
SCENE 3	Lincolnville Park	Late Afternoon
SCENE 4	Lincolnville Park	Early Evening
SCENE 5	Interrogation Room	Evening

Act I
SCENE 1

(The scene opens late at night in Lincolnville Park during the early fall. The stage consists of two park benches, a tree, a lamppost, a pond, and a garbage can.)

(LIL' JIMMY, a blind Kentucky orphan, enters and crosses to the pond to wash up, then crosses to the tree where he falls asleep.)

(JOAN CAMPBELL and MARÍA VALENZUELA enter dressed in all black carrying the body of MR. JOE BROWN.)

MARÍA

Ah, él está tan pesado.

JOAN

Christ. Let's put him on this bench.

(They set the body on a bench.)

MARÍA

Oh Joan, this is so exciting. When I was a little girl in Caracas I never thought I would ever do something so...so...
(Trying to express her feelings in English. Unable to, she simply lets out an enthusiastic 'Oh!'.)

Oh!

JOAN

Ha!

MARÍA

(Pause.)

Ha!

(Pause. JACK and JILL can be heard in the distance.)

MARÍA

¿Qué era eso?

JOAN

We had better be going. Don't want to get caught red handed if you know what I mean.

MARÍA

(As they are leaving.)

Red handed? I do not follow.

(JOAN and MARÍA exit.)

(JACK and JILL, two lovers who are out taking a late night walk enter. The two are oblivious to the body.)

JACK

...so then after old Willie went on home I was all alone in the bar, and I got to doin' some thinkin'...

JILL

About what Jack?

JACK

Well, about life Jill. You and me.

JILL

I've been doing some thinking too.

JACK

And, well, there's somethin' I've been meanin' to ask you...

JILL

What is it Jack?

JACK

Well, we've been datin' for almost three years now, and around here that's a pretty long time for one guy such as myself and one gal such as yourself to be datin'. You know how the sayin' goes, 'Three years a datin' then fifty years of regrettin''.

(Chuckles.)

And...well...

JILL

Yes?

JACK

And seein' as how we've been datin' so long, and seein' as how your test came back positive and everythin',

(Gets down on one knee.)

I thought that I should do the honorable thing-

JILL

Oh Jack, you don't have to-

JACK

Don't you go interruptin' me now that I done started askin' you.

Jill, I was wonderin', if you weren't too busy or anything, and if you are that's perfectly all right too, but if you ain't, then I was wonderin' if you wouldn't mind bein' my wife?

JILL

Have you been drinking again?

JACK

What?

JILL

You know you can't handle your liquor.

JACK

I can too, as well as any other man.

JILL

You don't have to do this just because I'm pregnant.

JACK

That ain't why I'm doin' it Jill.

JILL

Then why are you doin' it?

JACK

You know why.

JILL

Because you're too drunk to think straight.

JACK

Now I done told you I ain't been drinkin' tonight. You can smell my breath if you don't believe me.

JILL

Something sure stinks.

JACK

I'm askin' you because...I love you...Apple Sherbet.

JILL

I'm going to give you one more chance, are you sure about this?

JACK

Sure as I was the day I got my first taste of love three

years ago.

JILL

(She gives him a big hug and kiss.)

Oh Jack. I love you too.

JACK

(Pause.)

Does that mean yes?

JILL

Of course it means yes ya big goof.

JACK

Well, I'll be. You said yes.

JILL

What did you think I was gonna say stupid?

JACK

I don't know. I was actually thinkin' about how when I was in little league I always hated facin' left handed pitchers. They sure was tough to hit.

(They embrace. Pause. Both JACK and JILL look at the body.)

JILL

Jack?

JACK

Yup?

JILL

Do you see that man on the bench over there?

JACK

Sure do.

JILL

Does he look familiar to you?

JACK

I don't reckon he does, but then again I ain't got the best memory ever since I slipped down Granny's staircase. She done warned me about her trick step, but I went right ahead and fell anyway.

JILL

That's Mr. Brown, Jack.

JACK

Who's that?

JILL

The man on the bench.

JACK

How come Mr. Brown's on the bench?

JILL

I don't know.

JACK

How come you know this homeless man's name? Are you havin' an affair with him Jill?

JILL

He's not homeless-

JACK

Don't you go defendin' him-

JILL

I wasn't defending him-

JACK

Sure seems like you was to me.

(To Mr. Brown.)

I don't take too kindly to no homeless man having an affair with my wife to be.

(He slaps him.)

I challenge you to a duel.

(Mr. Brown obviously doesn't respond.)

Look Jill, your boyfriend afraid.

JILL

That's Mr. Brown, Jack. Remember? Mr. Brown? The missing school principal? It's been all over the newspapers. Don't you pay attention to anything that's going on?

JACK

He ain't missin' Jill, he's right there on that bench. You said so yourself that it was him.

JILL

Jesus Jack, how many principals do you know that sleep on park benches?

JACK

Well Mr. Joe Brown for starters. Then I reckon there's Old Mr. Henry from Cedar Creek Elementary, then you got-

JILL

Listen to me Jack; Mr. Brown goes missing a few days ago and then out of the blue his body turns up late one night in the park. Doesn't that seem a bit odd to you?

JACK

But we're in the park late at night too-

JILL

But we aren't dead!

JACK

Dead?

JILL

Yes Jack, dead.

JACK

Are you sure?

JILL

I'm not positive, but he sure looks like he's dead to me. If that stench isn't enough to convince you, then go on over there and see for yourself.

JACK

I reckon I will.

(Crosses to the body and quickly taps it.)

You right Jill, he's dead as the Whig party.

(Pause.)

You know, I reckon I ain't never seen no dead person before. Both Ma and Steve had closed casket funerals.

JILL

Well, you've seen one now.

JACK

I guess I've seen em' in the movies, but that don't really count, ain't like the real thing.

JILL

(Pause.)

What should we do?

JACK

I reckon that I should find you a ring, and then we should probably rent the church, unless you were thinkin' of havin'

it in your backyard-

JILL

About Mr. Brown!

JACK

Well, I ain't never heard of invitin' no dead man to no weddin' before, but seein' as how he did witness the proposal, I guess I ain't got no qualms with him acomin'. He ain't gonna be eatin' nothin'.

(Chuckles. Pause. He tries to explain his joke to Jill who isn't laughing.)

See, cause he dead Jill, so he won't eat nothin'...seein' as how he's dead.

JILL

We need to call the police.

JACK

Now I don't see how this is any of their business.

JILL

Gosh darn it Jack, I'm not talking about the wedding; I'm talking about Mr. Brown.

JACK

The police can't do nothin' about him neither Jill, he's already dead.

JILL

That's why we need to call them.

JACK

Okay, let's just say that we were, in your little fantasyland, going to call the police. It wouldn't do no good callin' at this time of night anyhow.

JILL

Why not?

JACK

Cause Old Red is on duty, and everybody knows that Old Red don't take too kindly to nobody committin' crimes on his shift. Why Sheriff Smiley don't live but a block from here. If you must tell the police, then I reckon we should just go on over to the Sheriff's house and tell him ourselves.

JILL

I don't think it's a good idea to just leave the body here. What if the murderer is still in the park?

JACK

The park closes at dusk Jill, ain't nobody allowed to stay. Your innocence sure is cute though.

JILL

(Becoming more and more frantic as she speaks.)

I know that, but what if he came after the park closed to dump the body in the pond, but we came before he could finish the job and now he's hiding out waiting for us to leave? What if he knows that we know that the body is here? What if he tries to kill us? What if he's still here - in the park!?!

JACK

Well then, I suppose he would be breakin' park regulations. And that's a lagoon not a pond.

(Pause.)

Oh, don't you go and start your worryin' Peach Cobbler with Pecans and Almonds, I'll protect you.

JILL

One of us should stay here with the body to make sure nothing happens to it.

JACK

Well, seein' as how I'm the man...I think that it should be you.

JILL

What?

JACK

Aw, you know if I stay here somethin' bad is gonna happen. I ain't responsible enough to take care of a goldfish, let alone no dead body. I probably lose it or somethin'.

JILL

That might be the dumbest thing I have ever heard.

JACK

It's settled then. If he do show up, the killer that is, you just yell real loud. If that don't scare him away, gouge at his eyes - like this.

(JACK awkwardly gouges at JILL's eyes.)

I saw that on 20/20.

JILL

Hurry back.

JACK

I will.

JILL

I love you.

JACK

(As he exits.)

Ditto.

JILL

(Pause. Jill drifts over to the pond.)

I don't want this baby to not know who its father is, at the same time, I don't know if I want it to be learning life lessons from the local bag-boy either.

(A soft whistling is heard off-stage.)

What was that? What was that? Oh, Christ, Jack, Jack is that you? Please be you Jack.

(Whistling becomes louder.)

Oh my God, that's Ricky's whistle.

(Looks at the body. Sits on the bench next to it.)

Ricky did it! Oh my God Ricky's a killer. I dated a killer! Oh I should have known with that temper somebody would push him over the edge sooner or later. Oh my God, there he is, think 20/20.

(RICKY BARDING enters and goes to the pond. He doesn't notice Jill at first.)

JILL

(To herself.)

Oh my God, oh my God, oh my God.

RICKY

Jill Murray, what are you doin' here?

JILL

Nothing. What are you doing here Ricky?

RICKY

Walkin'. What are you doin' here?

JILL

Sitting.

RICKY

(Long pause.)

Are you going to introduce me to your friend there?

JILL

Who? This? Oh, I don't know who this is, some homeless guy or something.

I think he's still alive though. Definitely still breathing. He certainly hasn't been murdered if that's what you're asking.

You know how them homeless are always sleeping on benches.

RICKY

How come you aren't sitting on another bench then, one without any homeless men?

JILL

I didn't see anything Ricky, I swear. Don't kill me too.

RICKY

What in the devil are you talking about?

JILL

I know you killed Mr. Brown.

RICKY

You think I killed Principal Brown? Are you out of your mind? What makes you think I would do something like that?

JILL

Why did you have to do it Ricky? I remember when we were in the seventh grade he suspended you for fighting with Jack and you swore that you were going to get him back.

(Picks up MR. BROWN's head so RICKY can see his face.)

You didn't have to kill him Ricky.

RICKY

I didn't kill anybody Jill, come on now, you know I wouldn't hurt nobody.

JILL

Then why are you in the park? And why is Mr. Brown dead?

RICKY

I'm just out on a walk, doing some thinking. I overheard my parents fightin' again and I don't like to be around when my Daddy loses his temper. You know that, so I thought I would come to the park because there ain't no better place to take a walk than the park.

JILL

(JILL lunges at RICKY trying to gouge at

his eyes.)
20/20!

RICKY
What are you doing?

JILL
Nothing, I'm just...sorry to hear that Ricky.

RICKY
It's okay. I never really liked the old man anyway. Always telling me what to do. And it ain't Christian nor proper to be goin' behind your wife's back with another woman. Especially after all she done for him. God, he makes me so mad sometimes-

JILL
Settle down now Ricky, nobody is gonna tell on you-

RICKY
Would you cut that out?
(Pause.)
You never did say why you were in the park. How do I know that you didn't kill Mr. Brown?

JILL
I came here with Jack, and I'm not the one with that horrible Barding temper.

RICKY
What's that supposed to mean?

JILL
It means that you have a tendency to be rash and overreact about things. Guess it runs in the family.

RICKY
Oh, and you're one to talk little miss I take everything personally and completely out of context.

JILL
How dare you speak to me that way?

RICKY
(Mockingly.)
How dare you speak to me that way.

JILL
You are so immature Ricky, why don't you grow up already?

RICKY

Why don't you grow up?

JILL

Why don't you just leave, killer? I thought we could have a civil conversation, but obviously you aren't capable of handling that. So if you would please excuse me, I'd like to wait for Jack by myself.

(Sits next to MR. BROWN, screams, and then stands back up.)

RICKY

You're still seeing that fool? Really Jill, you could do so much better than Jack. He's a moron.

JILL

Actually we just got engaged, so it looks like I'm gonna marry that moron.

RICKY

Well I'll be damned. The prettiest girl in town gonna marry the dumbest boy in town, ain't it just like in the movies?

JILL

Don't you go being all hard on Jack. He's a good man and he treats me right; unlike some people I know.

RICKY

I do have to say Jill, I always thought that we would end up together.

JILL

Well I guess some things just aren't meant to be Ricky.

RICKY

And why not?

JILL

Because I love Jack...and because I'm carrying his baby.

RICKY

Oh Jesus, Mary and Joseph! Tell me you're just kidding?

(Pause.)

Well, I'll be!

(Pause.)

You know Jill, you don't have to marry Jack just because you're pregnant.

JILL

What's that supposed to mean?

RICKY

It just means that I don't wanna see you ruin your life because of one mistake.

JILL

Jack and I are in love and we are getting married because we love each other - not because I'm pregnant.

RICKY

Well, looks like there ain't nothing left in this here town for me after all.

JILL

What's that supposed to mean? You gonna make a run for Mexico before the Sheriff gets his hands on you?

RICKY

Real funny Jill, but I've been doin' a whole lotta thinking about how I want to broaden my horizons. I can't just sit around and waste my life anymore Jill, I've got to make somethin' of myself, and I can't do that here in Lincolnvillle. I don't want to end up as the old lonely man who spends his whole day baggin' groceries and taking walks in the park. I need to live my life and do the things that I've always dreamed of. They may not come true, but everybody's gotta have a dream. I want to see the world. I wanna live in a skyscraper. I wanna talk to somebody who doesn't have a southern accent. I just want to experience life outside of Lincolnvillle, Kentucky.

JILL

Sure sounds like you've finally got things figured out Ricky.

RICKY

I know it does, and as soon as I get enough money saved up I'm as good as gone. You can count on that Jill.

JILL

You're sure about this?

RICKY

Sure as I am that I love you.

JILL

Then why haven't you left yet? You sure like to talk like you're some sort of adventurous hero, but you're still-

RICKY

I was waiting for you. I thought you might like to come with me.

JILL

Hold on now a minute Ricky.

(RICKY grabs JILL around the waist and pulls her toward him to kiss her when JACK enters wearing a badge and carrying a pair of handcuffs.)

JACK

What the hell is goin' on here?

JILL

Jack! What are you doing here? Where is Sheriff Smiley?

JACK

He said that he didn't want nobody disturbing him, so he made me a deputy. Said that I should take care of the situation.

RICKY

Boy Jack, I never thought you would amount to anything, but look at you now, a cop. You must be very proud.

JACK

Well how do you do Ricky Bardin'? I see that you and Jill have already exchanged pleasantries.

JILL

We weren't doin' nothin' Jack-

RICKY

Well Jack, to be honest with you, I'm actually a little upset. Jill here just told me that you two are gonna be getting married, and seein' as how you're a moron-

JACK

That's right Ricky. You done had your chance and you messed it up. It's not my fault that I'm sensitive to her needs and you weren't.

RICKY

I really can't stand you Jack; you know that right?

JACK

Well, now, I don't know too much if that's what you're implyin'. But I sure do know how to knock a man cold who is insultin' me.

RICKY

I've heard that you were good at knocking things up.

JACK

You betcha I am.

RICKY

Well, I sure would like to see you try with me.

JILL

(Pulling JACK and RICKY apart.)

Jack, can the Sheriff just go and make you a deputy like that? Don't you need any sort of training? You needed two months of training before Mr. Saunders would let you bag groceries.

JACK

Well now that's because baggin' groceries is an art form, and therefore, requires proper trainin'. The Sheriff just gave me this here badge, these here handcuffs and told me to arrest anyone in the park. I reckon that's trainin' enough. And seein' as how you two are in the park...

JILL

Jack, no. You know that we don't have anything to do with this.

JACK

Now I can't be too sure of anythin' Jill. I know that you probably innocent, but Sheriff Smiley gave me specific orders.

(JACK begins to handcuff JILL, but only gets one on before RICKY interrupts.)

RICKY

Come on Jack, I think you might have taken him a little bit too seriously.

JACK

Oh no I didn't Ricky. And I'd appreciate it if you'd keep your paws off of my wife to be. Now that's the last time I'm gonna tell you, and if I see you with her again I'm gonna tear your head off.

JILL

Jack this is ridiculous, take these off of me right now.

JACK

No can do sweetheart.

RICKY

Come on-

JACK

I'm gonna have to ask you to put your hands where I can see 'em Ricky.

RICKY

Jack-

JACK

Don't make me tack on no resistin' arrest to your murder charges. I don't want no funny business, so just put your hands where I can see 'em.

(To Jill.)

I must say Jill, I'm a little disappointed that you dated this here boy. I just don't get what you saw in him.

RICKY

Intelligence.

JACK

Shut up and turn around.

(JACK tries to handcuff RICKY but doesn't have another pair, so he handcuffs JILL and RICKY together.)

Now, you two gonna start talkin'?

JILL

Jack, we didn't do anything?

JACK

I don't know Jill. Seems awfully suspicious that Mr. Brown's body shows up in the park the very same night that Ricky does. All the signs are pointin' to him. We all know about that Bardin' temper, and Old Red told me just the other day how he overheard Ricky talkin' about how bad he needed to get out of Lincolnville. Well, I guess now we know why, don't we Ricky?

RICKY

You're an idiot Jack.

JACK

An idiot I may be, but at least I ain't no murderer.

RICKY

I'm not either.

JACK

That's for the courts to decide Ricky, but I'd say that your

life expectancy just got a whole lot shorter.

JILL

You don't have any evidence to prove anything.

JACK

It sure looks like there's a dead body lyin' on that there bench. If that ain't no evidence then I don't know what is.

RICKY

Exactly Jack, you don't know what real evidence is because you're not a real cop.

JACK

We prefer to be called officers of the law, thank you very much, not cops. It's very degrading to our profession.

JILL

Jack!

JACK

Settle down now Jill-

JILL

Jack you moron! Let us go! We didn't kill anybody!

JACK

Then tell me who did Jill, tell me who did.

JILL

I don't know, but it sure wasn't Ricky and me.

RICKY

I was just out taking a walk-

JACK

And killin' Mr. Brown. Don't forget about the part when you killed Mr. Brown.

RICKY

I didn't kill anybody Jack, for the last time we're innocent.

JACK

Oh, I have seen hundreds of guilty men use the 'I'm innocent' trick in court and it ain't work for none of them Ricky, so if I was you I'd find a new trick.

JILL

Jack, darling, look at me: Do I look like a murderer to you?

JACK

Well now, I don't know, seein' as how I ain't never seen no murderer until tonight.

RICKY

Come on Jack, enough is enough just let us go already.

JACK

All-right you two, that's enough of the talkin', it's time to do some walkin'.

RICKY

You're going to regret this Jack.

JILL

More than you can possibly imagine.

JACK

Get movin' you two.

(JACK escorts JILL and RICKY off. He re-enters and pushes the body off the bench. He then drags it off-stage while uttering his last few lines to it.)

I can't believe the two of them bein' together like that, and right in front of me. That boy sure is gonna get his, yes indeed he is...

(Lights fade out.)

Act I
SCENE 2

(The lights intensify as it is now the next morning. LIL' JIMMY wakes up and heads down to the pond to freshen up. PA enters and begins frantically checking the garbage can for taps, bugs, etc. He checks all of the benches, people, trees, etc. throughout the show.)

LIL' JIMMY

Hep.

PA

Gotta check this here can for bugs Lil' Jimmy.

LIL' JIMMY

Hep?

PA

Government bugs; you never know who's listenin'. You don't never stay on no phone for more than twenty seconds Lil' Jimmy, you hear, that way they ain't got enough time to trace you. Ma will gab on the phone for hours on end, I tell her not to, but she go right on ahead and talk her head off; all the while, they listenin'. I know they think they're gonna get me, but nobody outfoxes Pa Cheaney. Ain't that right Lil' Jimmy?

LIL' JIMMY

Hep.

PA

I can't believe it either Lil' Jimmy. When I was your age I never thought nothin' like this was ever gonna happen in Lincolnville, why this town was a safe place to live.

LIL' JIMMY

Hep.

PA

Don't you go sayin' that Lil' Jimmy, it weren't your fault.

LIL' JIMMY

Hep.

PA

Now that ain't true Lil' Jimmy. I done told you that before.
(Pause.)

Aww, don't you go and give me that look Lil' Jimmy. You know that I love you, but Ma won't let me adopt ya'.

LIL' JIMMY

Hep.

PA

Well, I don't know how I'll convince Ma, but don't you go worrin'. We'll be a family someday, I promise. Now what do ya' say we do some dancin' to get this killin' off our minds?

LIL' JIMMY

Hep.

(PA and LIL' JIMMY do the 'Cheer Up Pa Jig.')

(MA enters.)

MA

I thought I'd find you down here dancin' with Lil' Jimmy. Come on Pa, we best get goin' on to the Lincoln Tent if we gonna get there before it rains. The one-hundred and seventy-second anniversary of Mister Lincoln's passin' through this here town is right around the corner and I still gotta heap a work to do.

PA

You clean?

MA

What?

PA

Don't...say...nothin'.

(PA checks MA for bugs. To Lil' Jimmy.)

You gotta check the back of the neck. That's where they like to put 'em.

MA

Would you get your hands off me and cut that crazy talk.

PA

Fine, if you want the government followin' you around, knowin' everythin' you do, be my guest.

MA

It sure is a shame what happened to Mr. Brown, he sure was a mighty fine man for this here community. But that don't give you no excuse to be wastin' your time with that orphan.

I know, but I was just- PA

MA
And to think Pa, that it happened right here in our little own town of Lincolnville. Why, I have lived here for seventy years and not so much as a piece of bread got stolen, now we got us a murderer on our hands. Oh, it's a shame if I ever done saw one.

PA
Sure is, and it's a shame that Lil' Jimmy here don't have a family-

MA
I can't believe that somebody we know is a murderer.

PA
Now, we don't know him too well, Ma.

MA
You sure said a mouthful Pa.

PA
Hep.

MA
I just don't see why anyone would want to kill Mr. Brown. Such a kind and honest man. Do you remember when he first came into town from Michigan?

PA
Don't I though?

MA
It was so excitin', like the second comin' of Honest Abe. He really done turned that there school around. Why I remember when it was common for a child to graduate without bein' able to read. Can you imagine that Pa? A child graduatin' from school without bein' able to read 'n write? Not like that under Mr. Brown, no sir-ee. He done took control of that school and made them kids learn. Ever since Mr. Brown got here there ain't no more good old fashion blind Kentucky orphans runnin' around like Lil' Jimmy here.

PA
Yup, he sure is a good orphan. Sure is a shame he don't got a family.

MA
We ain't gonna adopt him Pa, I done told you that before.

PA
Aw, I don't see why not?

MA
God ain't let us have no children of our own for a reason. We ain't gonna go against the will of God, especially for some blind Kentucky orphan. Now I don't want to tell you again, we ain't never gonna adopt that boy Pa and that's final.

(Pause.)
Would you call that boy over here? He's about to fall into the pond.

PA
You mean the lagoon?
(MA shoots him a 'Call it whatever you want but he's about to fall into it' look. Desperate.)
Hep, Lil' Jimmy, Hep!

LIL' JIMMY
Hep.

PA
He sure gotta nose for mischief.

MA
That's because he don't go to church. The Lord just punishin' him until he see the erra of his way.

PA
The boy blind Ma, how he gonna see anythin'?

MA
I wasn't talkin' about seein' like you and me see Pa. I'm talkin' about seein'.

PA
I see what you sayin' now Ma, but I didn't see it when you was sayin' it.

MA
I see.

PA
I guess you right Ma, a little bit a religion might do the

boy some good.

MA

It gonna help that boy tremendously.

PA

It's settled then, Lil' Jimmy gonna start comin' to church with us every Sunday.

(To Lil' Jimmy.)

You hear that Lil' Jimmy, you gonna be goin' to church on Sunday's...

(Solemnly.)

...so that means no more dance class.

LIL' JIMMY

(Disappointed.)

Hep.

PA

And since he's finally goin' to church Ma, what do you say we...adopt him?

MA

No. The Lincoln Tent's all the children I need.

(Pause.)

Aw Pa, what happened to this here community?

PA

Progress. And the government.

MA

You right there Pa. There weren't none of that prawgress when we was young and we didn't kill nobody I can tell you that much.

PA

Not a one.

MA

If it weren't for them movies and that in-ter-net, that boy wouldn't a killed nobody.

PA

Nobody.

MA

Sure is gettin' hard to raise a child right. Seem like no matter what you do they gonna find a way to do what they want.

PA
Mmhmm there Ma. I bet we could raise Lil' Jimmy-

MA
That poor Mrs. Bardin'. Now, she done raised that Ricky right, I know that, this whole town done know that. She took that boy to church every Sunday.

PA
Every week.

MA
I can't believe that he turned out to be a murder. Can you believe that Pa?

PA
Can't say that I do.

MA
It sure is a shame.

PA
Sure is.

(PA and MA sit on one bench, and LIL' JIMMY tries to sit on the opposite bench but misses and falls to the ground. Pause.)

MA
It sure is quiet here this morning.

PA
That's cause it's gonna rain. Everything always gets real quiet when it's gonna rain. The calm before the storm. Ain't that right Lil' Jimmy?

LIL' JIMMY
(Softly from the ground.)
Hep.

MA
I think Lil' Jimmy might be hurt Pa.

PA
He all right, ain't like them fancy boys today, ain't that right Lil' Jimmy?

LIL' JIMMY
Hep.

PA

It's good for the boy to take a little bit a pain every once in awhile. Teach 'em how the real world is.

MA

Speakin' of the real world, I heard that Jack, you know that Jack Kelly is a cop now-

PA

Officer of the law, Ma.

MA

Well, I heard that he's the one who done found Ricky here last night with Jill Murray, who is carrying Jack's baby by the way. All we got is murderers and whores runnin' around this town.

PA

You don't say?

LIL' JIMMY

Hep?

MA

Oh, she is. I overheard Mrs. Henderson talking to Mrs. Saunders down at the salon the other day, and she said that she overheard Old Red talkin' with the Sheriff at the grocery - the Sheriff is the one who hired Jack by the way - and Old Red said that he heard it from Jill herself. Oh, that poor child gonna be a bastard now that its momma runnin' around with that criminal.

PA

Not necessarily.

MA

Don't you start on your theories Pa, of course he is.

PA

Old Red told me that Jack and Jill was engaged to be married.

MA

You don't say?

PA

Hep.

LIL' JIMMY

(Confused.)

Hep?

PA
I wasn't talkin' to you Lil' Jimmy, you just mind your own business and stay out of the lagoon.

MA
(Over 'lagoon'.)
Pond.

LIL' JIMMY
Hep.

MA
Well I'll be, at least that child won't be no bastard.

PA
Sure won't.

MA
Well, anyway, they say that Jack found Mr. Brown's mutilated body right there on that bench.

PA
Old Red said it was this bench.

MA
Old Red ain't nothin' but a silly old fool. I heard it was this bench right here by the pond.

PA
Ain't no bench down by the pond, you're thinking of the lagoon.

MA
That ain't no lagoon Pa, it's a pond.

PA
I'd say that it was a lagoon. Lincoln's Lagoon.

MA
I know what the pond's name is, but that don't mean it's no lagoon. Your name Pa and you ain't got no children, so don't you be tellin' me it's a lagoon when God intended it to be a pond.

PA
All right then Ma, don't you go losin' your temper. They're listening.

MA
I'm not losin' my temper and ain't nobody listenin'. Nobody cares what you think.

PA
Me and Lil' Jimmy don't think Ricky done it.

MA
They arrested him for doin' it, so he obviously done it. Sheriff Smiley ain't never arrested no innocent man. If it weren't for him and Jesus Christ holdin' this town together I don't know what we'd do.

PA
We think it's a conspiracy. Really just an elaborate government cover up. Old Red thinks so too.

MA
Why do you have to go and listen to that fool for Pa? You know he crazy, everybody in town think so.

PA
I'm just sayin' maybe Ricky didn't do it.

MA
Why do you gotta go and cause trouble? It's bad enough that you think the FBI is followin' you, now don't you go startin' on this. Everybody know that Ricky killed that poor man and don't you go thinkin' otherwise.

PA
Old Red said that he saw Joan Campbell in the park last night. Said that he thinks she might have done it.

MA
She has been the assistant curator of the Lincoln Tent and my dear friend for over ten years - how dare you say somethin' like that. Especially after everything she just went through with her husband passin' on.

PA
Now I ain't sayin-

MA
Oh, she wouldn't do nothin' to nobody. How dare you go and taint her reputation like that Pa. You should be ashamed of yourself.

PA
Said she committed the perfect murder.

MA

Well now how do you figure that?

PA

Old Red said that nobody would suspect a woman over forty of doin' nothin', let alone murder, read that in People Magazine...and USA Today.

MA

And USA Today?

PA

U-S-A To-day! Accordin' to Old Red, who read the articles, a woman over forty is overlooked cause they too old to be pretty. Said that men ain't got no use for 'em no more. I said that you was still good cause you fixed me supper. He laughed. Says that poor Ricky just a victim of circumstance.

MA

I think you just a victim of a little brain. Come on now Pa, we best be goin' if we gonna get to the Lincoln Tent before it rains.

PA

You right there Ma.

MA

(As she exits.)

Now I don't want to hear another word about your theory. And don't you go spreadin' rumors all around town about my friends, you just keep your mouth shut and stay away from that orphan.

PA

(To Lil' Jimmy.)

Just a victim of circumstance.

MA

(From off-stage.)

I heard that.

(Lights fade out.)

Act I
SCENE 3

(LIL' JIMMY is alone on stage at the park later that day brushing his teeth at the pond.)

(DIANE ANDERSON enters. She surveys the area, sees LIL' JIMMY and sits on the far bench.)

DIANE

I can't believe this. This is so belittling. I shouldn't be out in the sticks looking into some sort of inbred crime ring.

LIL' JIMMY

(Noticing the foreign voice.)

Hep?...Hep?...Hep?

DIANE

The nerve of him to send me down here and to put Paul in charge of the airline strike? Paul for Christ's sake. Incompetence thy name is Paul.

(Notices LIL' JIMMY. Pause.)

I need a new job working for a real paper. The New York Times could use somebody like me-

(LIL' JIMMY walks into DIANE and falls over.)

You have got to be kidding me. Are you lost little boy?

LIL' JIMMY

Hep.

DIANE

Um, where's your mother?

LIL' JIMMY

I ain't got no momma.

DIANE

Okay, where's your father?

LIL' JIMMY

He done left before I was born. I ain't got no family. Pa Cheaney look after me now. I real grateful to him.

DIANE

Well then, where is Mr. Cheaney?

LIL' JIMMY

I don't know. Old Ma Cheaney don't care for Pa to be hangin' around me so he gotta leave me behind sometimes.

DIANE

Well, I'm sure he'll turn up eventually.

LIL' JIMMY

I sure hope so. Hep?...Hep? My name Lil' Jimmy. It's a pleasure to meet you.

DIANE

Diane Anderson. The pleasure is all mine.

PA

(From off-stage.)

Hep? Lil' Jimmy, Hep!

LIL' JIMMY

That's him. Hep, hep, hep.

(PA enters and checks the garbage can.)

PA

There you are Lil' Jimmy. You done scared the life out of me.

(Noticing DIANE.)

I'm sorry to have bothered you Miss.

(To Lil' Jimmy in a very fake tone.)

You can't keep wanderin' off like that boy.

(In his normal voice.)

Is she a fed?

LIL' JIMMY

Hep.

PA

You sure?

LIL' JIMMY

Hep.

PA

Did you check her neck?

LIL' JIMMY

Hep.

DIANE

It's all right sir. Little Jimmy here was just telling me about how you look after him. You're a very kind man.

PA

Aw, I just saw him one day layin' there in a big ol' pile of leaves. When he looked up at me, now he's blind so he couldn't see nothin', probably just tryin' to keep the sunlight out of his eyes, but when he looked up at me with them puppy dog eyes I just fell to pieces. I just had to take him home.

(Covers LIL' JIMMY's ears.)

Ma won't let me adopt him though, so I try to steal time with him whenever I can.

LIL' JIMMY

(While Pa is speaking.)

Hep?

PA

Ma and me couldn't have no children of our own, so I figure that Lil' Jimmy here the closest thing I got to ever havin' a son.

(Uncovers his ears. To Lil' Jimmy.)

Ain't that right Lil' Jimmy?

LIL' JIMMY

Hep.

DIANE

That's very sweet.

PA

I reckon you not from around here.

DIANE

No, I'm from up north.

PA

(To Lil' Jimmy.)

Up north, huh?

DIANE

I have the great honor of working for Joseph Brown Jr.'s New Buffalo Argus, in the great metropolis of New Buffalo, Michigan.

PA

Seen the Lincoln Tent yet?

DIANE

Lincoln Tent?

PA

Legend has it that Mister Abraham Lincoln passed through this very town some one hundred and seventy two years ago to get some much needed rest during his journey to Indiana...then Illinois...then of course, the presidency. Supposedly camped out for a single night right here in Lincolnville. Nobody knows for certain the exact whereabouts of his stay, but I can assure you that it was within the three mile radius of the Lincolnville city limits. Fifty years ago Ma's grandpappy erected the Lincoln Tent downtown - the largest free standin' honorary tent east of the Mississippi. Way I figure it, if it hadn't been for Lincolnville, Mister Lincoln might not have made it to Indiana, then Illinois, and then of course the presidency and saved this great land of ours.

DIANE

That's fascinating.

PA

Well, now, let me see. I bet you down here covering the murder of old Mr. Brown.

DIANE

(Sarcastically.)

How did you know that?

PA

I figure since they got the same name and everythin'-

DIANE

I was kidding sir.

PA

Call me Pa, that's what everybody around here calls me.

DIANE

Diane Anderson.

PA

Well it is a pleasure to meet you Miss Anderson.

(Extends his hand for a handshake.)

DIANE

(Pauses before reluctantly shaking PA's hand.)

Likewise. Do you mind if I ask you a few questions about the murder?

PA

Well now I know that it sounds pretty fishy how Ricky was in

the park the same night that the body was found dead, but the part that they didn't tell nobody was that he was out on a walk cause of some domestic problems at home.

DIANE

What sort of domestic problems...at home?

PA

Well now I don't know so much about that. You'll have to ask the misses. The way I figure it, he just out on a walk in the park cause they ain't no better place to take a walk than the park. Ain't that right Lil' Jimmy?

LIL' JIMMY

Hep.

PA

(LIL' JIMMY tries to re-enact the situation as PA tells DIANE the story.)

So he out on this walk, probably just down at the lagoon tryin' to straighten up he affairs when he accidentally stumbles upon Mr. Brown's body, which is bein' guarded by Miss Jill Murray. However, at the same exact time newly hired Deputy Jack Kelly comes onto the scene to find his fiancée Jill Murray, and ex-boyfriend Ricky Barding, together. You gettin' all this in your little book?

DIANE

Yes, go on.

PA

Well it is safe to say that he hotter than a Kentucky summer, so he arrests the both of 'em for the murder of Joe Brown. I reckon that Ricky Barding ain't got nothin' to do with this here murder. Just got caught in the wrong place at the wrong time.

LIL' JIMMY

Hep.

DIANE

I don't know. Seems like just one too many coincidences to me.

PA

Exactly.

(Pause.)

That boy wouldn't have been hangin' around the park if he killed Mr. Brown.

DIANE

Okay, fine. Let's just say for arguments sake that Ricky didn't kill Mr. Brown, who did?

PA
Well, that's where Lil' Jimmy and I gonna need your help.

DIANE
Help?

LIL' JIMMY
Hep.

PA
See, we think that one of them school teachers, Joan Campbell, done the killin', but ain't nobody suspectin' her because she's a middle-aged woman.

DIANE
Umm-

PA
She figure that nobody gonna pay her any attention, so why not kill off a few enemies in the mean time?

(Pantomimes shooting LIL' JIMMY. LIL' JIMMY collapses holding his stomach.)

DIANE
I don't know. She's middle aged so she's guilty? That's kind of a flimsy argument.

LIL' JIMMY
(As he's getting up.)
Hep.

PA
Good point Lil' Jimmy. Not to mention the fact that she done have a motive. Mr. Brown cut Mrs. Joan Campbell's salary right before he disappeared. Seems to me that might have been the straw that broke the camels back; metaphorically speaking of course with the straw bein' the pay cut and the camel bein' Mrs. Joan Campbell.

DIANE
Do you really think that she would kill him over a pay cut? Couldn't she have just gone to the board of education?

PA
Mr. Brown is the board of education. But this goes a whole lot deeper than the board of education Miss Anderson. I can't say just how deep here, but believe you me, it's deep.

DIANE

How come you want to convict her then? If you don't mind my asking, I mean you seem so sympathetic to her cause.

PA

I sure do wish that she could get away with it. I really do. I used to be the janitor down at that school. For fifty-five years I worked there. Saw ten principals come and go and let me tell you that Mr. Brown was a cruel man. Don't you let them other townspeople tell you no different. Didn't fight in the Second World War myself, got no cartilage in my left hand from a boyhood accident I'd rather not discuss in present company if you get my drift...

(Points to the taps he thinks are concealed in the park.)

...but I've still seen a fascist that's for sure. On the other hand, I can't let no young boy's life rot away in no prison cell for a crime he didn't commit. That wouldn't be right neither. Ain't that right Lil' Jimmy?

LIL' JIMMY

Hep.

DIANE

Okay, let's just say that Joan Campbell killed Mr. Brown-

PA

That's what me and Lil' Jimmy are sayin'.

DIANE

How do I fit into all of this?

PA

Well, not too many people gonna believe an old man, or a blind Kentucky orphan, but they might believe a journalist. Now we ain't askin' you to do nothin' that you don't want to, all we askin' is that you do a little bit a researchin' into our theory before you write your little article there.

DIANE

I don't know Mr. Cheaney. I'm just supposed to right a puff-piece about what a great guy he was. Get a few quotes from the locals.

PA

Have it your way Miss Anderson, but I don't think Mr. Brown Jr. gonna take too kindly if you let his father's murderer go free. Now if you excuse Lil' Jimmy and me, we gotta get ourselves home. Ma let in a repairman from "the electric

company" the other day and we got to search the house for taps.

DIANE

It was a pleasure meeting you Mr. Cheaney, and you too Little Jimmy.

LIL' JIMMY

Hep.

(PA and LIL' JIMMY exit.)

DIANE

Great. Not only do they send me down to Kentucky to do a pointless story, but now I've got some crazy old man who walks around with a blind orphan telling me his conspiracy theories. And you know what, the worst thing about it is that he's probably right.

(DIANE exits as the lights fade out.)

Act I
SCENE 4

(It is later that day at the local school. MARÍA is in her Spanish classroom, which consists of a desk and a chalkboard. She is alone sitting at her desk reading from some notes and checking her dictionary practicing her English.)

MARÍA

If the class begins to get out of control tell them, 'Please stop your verbal onslaught children. You are hurting my feelings.' Or 'Sometimes when you take advantage of me, it makes me feel as though you do not respect me or my native land.' Some key American slang terms to remember.

(JOAN enters unnoticed.)

'Keep it real.' 'Tight.' 'That is fresh.' If a child tells you that they require medical assistance tell them, 'No, you cannot'-

(JOAN laughs.)

Oh, Joan, I'm glad you could stop in. I have been dying to tell you about the film I saw last night. It is the finest American film I have ever seen. Es magnifico. How would you say in American slang?

JOAN

It was pretty good.

MARÍA

Oh yes. Me mucho gusto es la película de Thelma and Louise. It is about two women who commit crimes and are running from the law as a testament to their womanhood. Just like you and me Joan, they were rebelling against an unjust society.

(Pause.)

It truly got to me at the end when they drove off the cliff. Something very similar happened to mi tía in Caracas.

(Pause.)

Has visto esta película? Because if you haven't I still have it for three more nights. You Americans live in such excess and luxury that you need to keep movies for five days when it only takes one to watch. When I was a little girl in Caracas we would never get to watch movies unless they were showing one down at the local grocery. But here, I could watch the same movie for an entire week if I wanted to.

(Pause. Very timidly.)

Perhaps we could watch it together Joan, so we too could bond like Thelma and Louise.

JOAN

That sounds great Maria, but I've got a lot to take care of this week, maybe some other time. Listen, I've only got a minute but I thought I'd let you in on the good news. I heard on the radio this morning that they arrested Ricky Barding and some other girl for the murder.

MARÍA

I do not know who this Ricky Barding or Other Girl are.

JOAN

His name doesn't matter. What matters-

MARÍA

Perhaps you could show me a picture of Ricky and Other.

JOAN

I'll bring in an old yearbook. I had him in class when he went to school here. One of those annoying smart-alecky kids that drive teachers toward alcoholism. Anyway what matters, Maria, is that they're pinning it on somebody else - not what his name is or what he looks like. That's twice now. I'm getting good at this.

MARÍA

I know, but a picture would help me to know who these people are. In Caracas I knew everyone, but here I only know a handful of people.

JOAN

Really? God, this Barding kid is perfect! We couldn't have asked for a better sucker. Nobody will doubt that he did it, especially with that Barding temper. And to top it off that asshole Sheriff's too pompous to admit he's wrong!

MARÍA

Pom-pous? I am not following you.

JOAN

The Sheriff isn't so much concerned with catching the right person; he's more concerned with catching a person. Now that he's done that we are in the clear. We really lucked out on this one Maria.

MARÍA

In Caracas we would not depend on luck to get us out of our problems, we would depend on our brothers and sisters.

JOAN

Oh yeah?

MARÍA

Sí, my father told me that there was no greater friend than a family member. El mejor amigo es el hermano. It is true too. One time when I was a little girl in Caracas I was trapped underneath a large boulder. Oh, I screamed and yelled, but nobody could hear me. I thought that my life was over and that I would never again see my mother or father. I began to pray that somehow, someday I would be saved. Luckily, mi hermano was out on a walk and pulled me back from the brink of death.

JOAN

That's quaint Maria. Listen, just keep things about Brown quiet and we are home free.

MARÍA

I will. And we are also the home of the brave.

JOAN

What?

MARÍA

America. It is the land of the free and the home of the brave. Have you no patriotism for the country I love?

JOAN

What-

MARÍA

I am just trying to review for my citizenship test.

JOAN

Oh, right.

MARÍA

I am very worried.

JOAN

Why? You know more than ninety percent of the population. And let's face it, I'm a pretty good tutor. I've never had a student fail their test before.

MARÍA

Of all the students you have had, not one of them has ever failed?

JOAN

Not one.

MARÍA

Oh, I am very thankful to you Joan for your help.

JOAN

You give a little you get a little Maria. Besides, the test isn't for another couple of years, so you've got plenty of time to study.

MARÍA

I know, but I want to be fully prepared when the time comes to prove my loyalty to America in the form of a multiple choice standardized test.

JOAN

You'll be fine.

MARÍA

Promise?

JOAN

I promise Maria.

MARÍA

Do you promise to keep another secret?

JOAN

Why not.

MARÍA

Promise you will not laugh at me.

JOAN

I promise I won't laugh at you.

MARÍA

(Pause.)

I have a crush on Mr. Collins, but you cannot tell another soul.

(Pause.)

Did you see what he was wearing today?

JOAN

No. I don't get down to the gym too often.

MARÍA

He had on his bomber jacket. He must have been flying this morning. All alone in that big plane thinking about gym class and muscles-

JOAN

I get the picture.

MARÍA

See how much a picture helps you to understand. That is why

I asked for a picture of Ricky and Other.

(There is a knock at the door.)

Come in.

(DIANE Enters.)

In Caracas it is customary to just walk right into a room without knocking,

(To Joan and Diane.)

but you Americans insist on your privacy. That is probably why you need to keep movies for five days.

DIANE

Hello. I was told I could find a Mrs. Joan Campbell here?

JOAN

I'm Ms. Campbell. And who might you be?

DIANE

My name is Diane Anderson. I'm a reporter from The New Buffalo Argus.

MARÍA

Reporters in Caracas often times-

JOAN

Can I help you with something?

DIANE

I was wondering if I could ask you a few questions about Principal Brown? I was told that you might have some relevant information concerning his murder.

JOAN

Now isn't the best time for me. I've got a class in a few minutes.

DIANE

It will only take a moment.

JOAN

Maybe some other time. I'll talk to you later Maria. Hasta luego.

MARÍA

Hasta luego.

DIANE

Could we maybe set up an appointment for another time?

JOAN

Sorry I can't right now.

DIANE

Can I call you at home?

JOAN

Look, this is a very busy time of year for me Miss with the Lincoln Tent's one hundred and seventy-second anniversary right around the corner. I really don't have the time to waste. I don't know anything about his disappearance. He was my boss and I'm upset about what happened to him; that's all I know. Now I'm sorry, but I have to be going.

(JOAN exits. Awkward pause.)

DIANE

What about you?

MARÍA

I too have a class soon.

DIANE

What's your name?

MARÍA

Maria Valenzuela. I teach Spanish here.

DIANE

How long have you been a teacher here?

MARÍA

This is my first year. I taught in Caracas for many years, but only a few days in America. Is not that funny?

DIANE

Do you know anything about the disappearance of Mr. Brown?

MARÍA

(Suspiciously.)

No, no conozco.

DIANE

Do you know Mrs. Campbell well?

MARÍA

Oh yes, she is my best friend in America. When others would give me strange looks, she gave me friendship. We are kind of like Thelma and Louise.

DIANE

Really?

MARÍA

Oh yes, very much so. She is Thelma and I am Louise. My Mother's name was Louise. She is also my teacher of America for my citizenship test. She did not even charge me. Only asked for a favor. One favor is a small price to pay for a lifetime of freedom.

DIANE

I suppose it is. How well did you know Mr. Brown?

MARÍA

Not very. He died right after I met him. When I was a little girl in Caracas, my mother told me that if a person dies within thirty-six hours of a first meeting, they are said to have a damned soul. Mi tía was damned.

DIANE

Interesting. I hope you don't mind me asking, but I was wondering how much money Mr. Brown was paying you?

MARÍA

He offered me twice as much money as I was making in Caracas.

DIANE

I see. Did Mrs. Campbell ever have any problems with Mr. Brown?

MARÍA

No.

DIANE

Did she mention anything about a recent pay cut?

MARÍA

Not that I can remember.

DIANE

Has she ever said anything to you that might explain her evasive behavior just now when I asked her about Mr. Brown's disappearance?

MARÍA

No. Joan keeps to herself most of the time. I do most of the talking in our relationship. In Caracas it is customary for friends to speak over one another while they are talking. It can get out of control some of the time trying to listen and talk at the same time - es muy loco!

(Pause.)

I am sorry Miss, but I too must be e-va-sive, for I too have

a class coming.

(Sadly.)

I need to prepare for their verbal onslaught. They attack me with slang that I do not yet know. I have already cried three times. I have this dictionary and booklet that Joan made me, but they do not have all the answers. Joan has been tutoring me in American slang and telling me to watch American films but I am not catching on very quickly. Lo siento.

DIANE

Thank you for your time Miss Valenzuela.

MARÍA

El gusto es mío.

(DIANE exits. Pause.)

MARÍA

(Reading from her booklet. Through tears.)

What is up? How is it hanging? Keep it on the down low...

(Blackout.)

Act I
SCENE 5

(It is later that day in the county prison. RICKY and JILL are in the interrogation room, which consists of a table, an old typewriter, and a few chairs. RICKY is still in handcuffs, but JILL has been freed.)

RICKY

Sounds like the rain finally stopped. I always used to love how quiet it would get right before it rained. When I was a little boy, I would go out on the porch with my Mom-

JILL

We've got more important things than the rain to worry about Ricky.

RICKY

I was just making a comment-

JILL

You know, none of this would have happened if Jack and I would have just stayed in and watched a movie. But no, we couldn't because the cable is so bad out here. We got five movie channels and not one of them is showing a movie that's worth staying in for. Can you believe that? Five movies, and out of all five of 'em not one is worth staying in for? I tell you one thing Ricky, when I get out of here I'm gonna write that cable company a letter and give them a piece of my mind.

RICKY

You do that Jill.

JILL

Oh, I will, and they are gonna be sorry.

RICKY

I'm sure they will be.

JILL

(Pause.)

I can't believe you got me into this mess.

RICKY

Me? Don't you try to pin this on me. We both know that moron fiancé of yours got us into this. God, you're such a conniving bitch.

JILL

How dare you speak to me that way! You should be down on your knees apologizing for getting me into this mess. If you weren't such a pervert than he wouldn't have arrested us, but no, you couldn't control yourself for five minutes so you had to jump on top of me.

RICKY

Well obviously I'm not the first.

JILL

What did you say?

RICKY

Nothing.

JILL

Bastard.

RICKY

What?

JILL

Nothing.

RICKY

(Pause.)

Do you really love Jack?

JILL

What? Of course I do.

RICKY

I know you think that, but deep down, do you really love him?

JILL

Yes Ricky, I really do love Jack. There's a lot more to him than his dopey outside. Inside of that dope is a sweet, kind, caring, sensitive man who is capable of loving me as much as I love him.

RICKY

I didn't ask you if he was sweet Jill, I want to know if you really love him. I want to know if you feel a connection to him that nobody can touch. I want to know-

JILL

-if I still love you.

RICKY

Maybe that is a secondary motive-

JILL

I love Jack, Ricky.

RICKY

Why did you dump me Jill?

JILL

I told you then and I'll tell you again that I ain't gonna put up with no cheater. Now, I don't want to talk about this-

RICKY

What if I told you that I didn't cheat on you?

JILL

Then I would tell you that you were still a liar. I know about you and Katie, the whole damn town knows what the two of you did. Jesus Ricky, when are you gonna grow up and start taking responsibility for yourself?

RICKY

What if the whole damn town was wrong?

JILL

I don't want to play your what if game Ricky, cause it doesn't matter now what if. What matters now is what did happen, and you can't change that no matter how hard you try.

RICKY

I didn't sleep with her.

JILL

Then why were you over there all night?

RICKY

I told you that I was over there because she needed someone to listen to her.

JILL

Well maybe I needed someone too Ricky, maybe I needed someone to listen to me. And you know what, Jack has always been there for me when I've needed him. I've shared all of my deepest secrets and wildest dreams with him. I've told him things about myself that I didn't even know until the words were coming out of my mouth. He has always been there

for me Ricky - you never were - that is why I love Jack and that is why I am going to marry him.

RICKY

He did just arrest you.

JILL

That's just cause he a dope.

RICKY

Maybe I was just being a dope too. Don't I get a second chance?

(SHERIFF SMILEY and JACK enter before she can answer.)

SHERIFF

Quit your yammerin' you two. We ain't here to share no recipes.

(To Jack.)

All right now boy, you just sit back and let old Sheriff Smiley take care everythin'.

JACK

Okay Sheriff.

SHERIFF

You brought them fingerprints with you, right boy?

JACK

I sure did Sheriff.

SHERIFF

Well alright.

JACK

Um, Sheriff?

SHERIFF

What is it boy?

JACK

Um, I think there's somethin' I should tell you before we get started.

SHERIFF

What boy? You ain't got the runs do you?

JACK

No. Um, you know how the other night you told me to arrest anybody in the park?

SHERIFF

I sure did and you did a mighty fine job of it.

JACK

Well, I kinda have the feelin' that Jill don't got nothin' to do with this here murder.

SHERIFF

Well now, I thought you said that you caught the two of 'em together.

JACK

I did, but, well, she was kinda with me the whole night up until I arrested her and I know for a fact that she ain't kill him.

SHERIFF

Well, all right then boy. If you sure-

JACK

Oh, I'm as sure as a tool from Sears.

SHERIFF

Craftsman?

JACK

I did say Sears didn't I?

JILL

(To Ricky.)

What do you think they're talking about over there?

RICKY

Probably pie or somethin' stupid like that.

JILL

Why would they be talking about pie?

RICKY

To build up the suspense. They want to keep us waiting as long as they can. They think that'll cause us to confess.

JILL

But we didn't do anything.

RICKY

Exactly, so we ain't got nothing to confess.

JILL

So why are they making us wait?

RICKY

Cause they think we've got something to confess.

JILL

But we don't.

RICKY

I know that, but they think we do.

JACK

(To Sheriff.)

Why we makin' 'em wait so long Sheriff? Shouldn't we go over there and beat him or somethin'?

SHERIFF

I like your moxie boy.

JACK

(Blushing.)

Thanks.

SHERIFF

I mean it, you got sass, and that's gonna take you a long way in this here world. But we playin' a game here boy. We can't just go over there and talk to 'em. We gotta let 'em sweat it out a bit. Make 'em wonder what we talkin' about over here. Make 'em start getting' scared. People have a tendency to open up once they scared.

JACK

What is gonna happen to 'em Sheriff?

SHERIFF

Well boy, if what you say about Jill there true, then she gonna go on home, but that other boy, well he gonna bake.

JACK

Oh, speakin' of bakin', my Granny done baked you a pecan pie seein' as how you gave me this here job.

JILL

(To Ricky.)

Do you really think they're gonna convict us?

RICKY

I don't see how they can. I mean they can't hold us forever without any evidence.

JILL

They've got Mr. Brown's body though.

RICKY

That ain't no evidence against us.

JILL

That's not how they see it. They think you killed Mr. Brown, and since they got his dead body that's proof enough that you did it.

RICKY

That's ludicrous Jill. They can't do that-

JILL

Ricky?

RICKY

What is it Jill?

JILL

I'm sorry that Jack was so mean to you last night.

RICKY

It's all right. I know he don't know any better.

JILL

All I'm sayin' is that I wish things hadn't turned out quite the way they did.

SHERIFF

(To Jack.)

I hope you don't mind me sayin' boy, but if I was you, I never would have let that Bardin' boy near my fiancée. Just look at him leerin' at her like that.

JACK

What are you tryin' to say Sheriff?

SHERIFF

I ain't sayin' anythin', but what I am sayin' is he do have a history of going behind peoples backs.

JACK

But Jill wouldn't do nothin' like that Sheriff.

SHERIFF

Women are fickle things boy, one minute they your best friend and the next they stabbin' you in the back.

JACK

Are you tryin' to say that Ricky and Jill...Jill and Ricky?

SHERIFF

I ain't sayin' that they got caught up in the seethin' passion and drippin' sensuality of a hot summer night and tried to rekindle they flame; all I am sayin' is that if I was you I would just make sure that Ricky boy stayed away from her.

JACK

I knew he was up to no good bein' in the park like that. We gonna get him Sheriff, we gonna get him good.

RICKY

(To Jill.)

I'm sorry that I got you into this mess.

JILL

It's not your fault Ricky.

RICKY

Jill, I just want you to know that I'm sorry about what I did to you. Not about last night, well, I mean I'm sorry about that too, but you know what I mean.

JILL

I know.

SHERIFF

(To Jack.)

...and that is how Capitalism came to be the dominant economic system in this world.

JACK

That's somethin' else Sheriff. You know, it's stories like that, that make me think there really is hope for a small town kid like myself to actually go out there and make a difference in this here crazy world of ours.

SHERIFF

Well, now's your chance boy, let's do some convictin'.

(The SHERIFF and JACK walk over to opposite sides of the table.)

Well now, before we get started, Jack here say that you ain't got nothin' to do with this here murder Jill. What you got to say about that?

JILL

I don't - We, we don't have anything to do with it sir.

RICKY

Honest, this is just a huge-

SHERIFF

Jack? Oh Jack?

JACK

Yes Sheriff?

SHERIFF

Jack, did you hear me say anything to Mr. Manson over there?

JACK

Ricky's last name is Barding, Sheriff.

SHERIFF

I didn't think so. So why then, are you talkin' boy?

RICKY

Because I'm trying to tell-

SHERIFF

Shut your mouth boy! You sure don't pick up on things too quick. Ain't that right Jack?

JACK

Sure is Sheriff. He slower than textbook readin'.

SHERIFF

Now, don't you go interruptin' me no more. You don't say nothin' until I tell you to speak, is that understood boy?

RICKY

Yes sir.

SHERIFF

Good, I'm glad we got that settled. Now, as I was saying before I was so rudely interrupted by our slayer here-

JACK

I bet he interrupted Mr. Brown too, before he done killed him that is.

SHERIFF

I bet he did Jack, but let me finish here first.

JACK

Sorry Sheriff.

SHERIFF

Now Jill, we've been doin' some, investigatin', and it has come to our attention that you ain't got nothin' to do with this here murder, and seein' as how we here on a quest to find the truth, we gonna let you go.

JACK

You can go to my house if you want to, Granny won't mind none.

JILL

But what about Ricky? He didn't do anything either.

SHERIFF

I know that he been brainwashin' you to think that way sweetie, but he a very sick and vicious man. Now I'm gonna have to ask you to go on home before he turns you into a killer too.

JILL

But Sheriff-

SHERIFF

I don't want to hear it darlin'. Justice has spoken and he has decreed that you must go on and get.

JILL

I'm stayin' here with Ricky. I'm not gonna let you falsely convict him Sheriff.

SHERIFF

Well now if you gonna-

RICKY

Go on Jill. Don't you worry about me, I'll be just fine.

JILL

I'm not letting them get away with this.

SHERIFF

Now if you don't go Miss Murray, Jack here gonna have to place you under arrest you for impedin' justice.

JACK

Go on Jill, I don't want to have to arrest you again.

RICKY

Don't worry Jill, I'll be fine.

JACK

You shut up Ricky. If it weren't for you I wouldn't be in this mess with Jill.

SHERIFF

Easy now Jack. Don't worry, Ricky is gonna get his.

(To Jill.)

Now Miss Murray this is your last chance before I place you under arrest.

JILL

I'm sorry Ricky. I'll make sure they find the real killer.

(JACK escorts JILL out.)

SHERIFF

(Long pause.)

Well now, I don't think her search should take too long, seein' as how the real killer is sittin' right here in this very room. Ain't that right Jack?

(JACK re-enters.)

JACK

Sure is Sheriff.

SHERIFF

He's a sharp kid ain't he Ricky?

RICKY

Sharp as an arrow.

SHERIFF

Jack?

JACK

Yeah Sheriff?

SHERIFF

Could I have them fingerprints please?

JACK

(Reaches into his pocket, pulls them out, and hands them to the SHERIFF.)

Here you go Sheriff. I labeled 'em and laminated 'em too so that the ink wouldn't smear none.

SHERIFF

Well, I'll be. That's some good thinkin' Jack.

JACK

Thanks Sheriff.

SHERIFF

(Slides the prints over to RICKY.)

I was lookin' at them there prints this morning, and I noticed somethin' peculiar. You notice anything peculiar about them two sets of prints, boy?

RICKY

Well...with all due respect, sir, they don't match.

SHERIFF

Exactly.

RICKY

So this proves that I'm innocent. Can I go?

SHERIFF

Oh no you don't boy, I wasn't born yesterday. I know that these here both your fingerprints.

JACK

He must of changed 'em after he killed Mr. Brown.

RICKY

You can't change fingerprints-

JACK

Changed 'em like a fox.

SHERIFF

Well, obviously you can boy. Now, I don't care how you done it, but I know you did. I know you thought that this here was gonna save your ass, but down here we don't fall for none of them big city shenanigans.

JACK

That's right Ricky, we know you done it.

RICKY

What are you talking about big city shenanigans? I'm from Lincolnville.

SHERIFF

Are you insinuatn' that I don't know where you from? Are you tryin' to say that I am some sort of moron, boy?

RICKY

No, Sheriff, what I'm trying to say is-

SHERIFF

I don't want to hear no more your excuses boy.

JACK

We getting' sick of it Ricky. We want to hear the truth.

SHERIFF

Look at me, look at me boy, cause I'm gonna tell you somethin' now that you got to pay real close attention to. We got the fingerprints to prove you was at the crime scene; we got the body of that poor man you murdered; we got Jack here, an officer of the law, as an eyewitness to your atrocities. The list goes on and on boy, and it sure startin' to look like you the killer, so when you gonna make things a whole lot easier on yourself and start fessin' up?

RICKY

Sheriff, with all due respect, I don't have anything to fess up about.

SHERIFF

I know you don't think so boy, but just cause we know you killed Mr. Brown don't mean you ain't got no fessin' up to do.

JACK

That's right Ricky.

SHERIFF

You got to fess up to you'self and to the Lord Jesus Christ before things gonna get any better for you. Why not kill two birds with one stone and just fess up now?

JACK

That's a good one Sheriff...the killin'...the two birds...with just the one stone - it was real funny Sheriff.

RICKY

I'm not sayin' another word until I get a lawyer.

JACK

He sure is a tough one.

SHERIFF

He ain't so tough.

JACK

Yeah, I remember when we was in school, he tripped in Mr. Collins gym class, and cried. You right Sheriff, he a baby.

RICKY

Shut up Jack.

JACK

No. You shut up Ricky, and keep your hands off my girl!

SHERIFF

The both of you shut up.

(To Ricky.)

Now if that the way you gonna be, then I guess Jack here is gonna have to take you down to solitary confinement.

JACK

Good idea Sheriff.

SHERIFF

Let you get to thinkin' about bein' fried. Then maybe you fess up.

JACK

Umm, Sheriff, where's solitary confinement?

SHERIFF

Just put him in the cell by heself.

JACK

Got it. Come on Ricky.

SHERIFF

We got you boy. There ain't no use in runnin'. Once Sheriff Smiley get his hands on a killer, he ain't never let go 'til that man sizzlin'.

(The SHERIFF manically chuckles as JACK escorts RICKY out. Lights fade out.)

End of Act I

Act II

SCENE 1

(It is approximately one week later in the park. LIL' JIMMY is onstage asleep by the tree. JOAN is seated on a bench waiting for MARÍA.)

JOAN

For Christ's sake! Four o'clock already? When is she going to realize this isn't Caracas and start showing up on time?

(MARÍA enters carrying a video of 'Thelma and Louise'.)

Well it is about time Maria.

MARÍA

I thought you said three-thirty. ¿Es el Lunes, no?

JOAN

Es el Lunes, but it's nearly four o'clock.

MARÍA

It is okay. You only wait for two, three minutes tops. When I was a little girl in Caracas it was very common for people to say that they would be somewhere at three thirty and then show up at five, six o'clock.

JOAN

Really.

MARÍA

Really, that is just how things work in Caracas.

JOAN

You might have mentioned something about that before.

MARÍA

I did? I don't remember, but then again I say so many things to so many people.

JOAN

You haven't said anything about Mr. Brown have you?

MARÍA

What, Mr. Brown?

JOAN

Tell me that you haven't said anything to anybody about Mr. Brown. Dígame!

MARÍA

Who is Mr. Brown?

JOAN

You're kidding right?

MARÍA

I do not kid around with you.

JOAN

Mr. Brown? Our old boss? The one I killed? Remember?

MARÍA

Oh, Mister Brown, the language barrier is still sometimes difficult for me to overcome. I thought you were referring to the latest cleaning product that is on the market. I still do not fully understand how your capitalist system came to be the dominant economic force in the world.

JOAN

Did you say anything about it or not?

MARÍA

No, no digo. ¿Porque?

JOAN

I just think that some people might be suspecting that Ricky didn't kill him and I don't want to add fuel to the fire because you've been going around blabbering your mouth. If I get caught I am blaming you Maria.

MARÍA

No?

JOAN

Yes.

MARÍA

¿Sí?

JOAN

Sí. Look whatever you do, don't say a word. Just lie low and let it pass over. We went over this last week Maria, what's your problem?

MARÍA

I don't know Joan. I am beginning to feel, oh how do you say in English?

JOAN

Annoyed?

MARÍA

No, not annoyed. I feel bad, you know, in English you call it feeling...

JOAN

Peeved? Frustrated? Irritated?

MARÍA

Guilty. That is it. I am starting to feel a little guilty about what is happening to Ricky. I never stopped to think that somebody else was going to get the blame for what you did. When I think of that poor boy spending the rest of his life in prison, it brings a tear to my eye. One time, when I was a little girl in Caracas, a man was sentenced to death for a crime that he did not commit. His family was so upset and his little daughter began to cry. My father told me that day never to stone an innocent man again.

JOAN

Need I remind you Maria, that the citizenship test is quite difficult, so now might not be the best time for you to back out.

MARÍA

I am not backing out. When I was a little girl in Caracas my father told me that there was no greater shame in life than to let down a friend in need. And if there were a greater shame than that, it was to go back on your word.

JOAN

Look, the trial starts tomorrow, I figure if we keep our mouths shut and wait for that reporter to leave town everything will fall into place. So if she asks you any questions-

MARÍA

I already talked to her and told her that American slang made me cry.

JOAN

Perfect, then if she talks to you again just tell her that you are still upset.

MARÍA

I will do that Joan, but you must do something for me too.

JOAN

What?

MARÍA

You must get me a date with that beautiful Mr. Collins.

JOAN

The gym teacher?

MARÍA

He is more than a gym teacher Joan; he is an athletic god! All of those sports and sweaty muscles, and whistles and sweat pants. Oh, and when he talks about flying his planes and using his big heavy tools to fix them when they are broken, oh my, we do not have men like Mr. Collins in Caracas.

JOAN

I'll see what I can do, but remember, we're a team and teams stick together.

MARÍA

When I was a little girl in Caracas I remember the day our Venezuelan fútbol team was playing against Brasil. The whole nation came together as one to cheer on our beloved team, but when one of our players scored a goal into our own net, costing us the game and our national pride we were devastated. So, we joined together as one team, the entire nation, to kill him. Don't you worry Joan; I know how to play on a team.

JOAN

Good, I'm glad to hear it.

MARÍA

(Pause.)

Joan?

JOAN

What?

MARÍA

Do you really think that you are going to get away with this?

JOAN

We Maria, remember the team.

MARÍA

I know, but you are the one who actually did it. I was just a watchman.

JOAN

Yes. I do think that I am going to get away with it if we keep our mouths shut.

MARÍA

Don't you feel bad about what you did to Mr. Brown?

JOAN

I'm the victim here Maria.

MARÍA

What about Ricky? He's so young.

JOAN

Somebody has to do the time.

MARÍA

Shouldn't that somebody be the person who actually-

JOAN

Would you stop with the third degree? Do you want a date with Mr. Collins or not?

MARÍA

Third degree? I am not following you.

JOAN

Just stop with the questions.

MARÍA

I am sorry. In Caracas it is customary to ask questions.

JOAN

This isn't Caracas Maria; it's Kentucky.

MARÍA

Lo siento.

JOAN

Look, I'm sorry I blew up at you. I'm just under a lot of stress right now and I need you to keep your mouth shut until this whole thing blows over, okay?

MARÍA

Okay. I shall stay silent and dream of playing pickle ball with a shirtless Mr. Collins. I must leave now to return my movie. Adios.

(MARÍA exits.)

JOAN

Christ, I should have killed this whole damn town while I was at it!

(Lights fade out.)

Act II
SCENE 2

(JACK and RICKY are in the interrogation room sharing a tense and awkward pause. RICKY is seated at the table. JACK is slowly pacing behind him. Several beats. DIANE, JILL, and the SHERIFF enter.)

DIANE

Thank you so much for finally taking the time to see me Sheriff, I realize that you are a very busy man.

SHERIFF

Sure thing little lady. Have a seat.

DIANE

I'll stand thank you.

JACK

Can I sit down Sheriff?

JACK

Do what you like boy, you don't have to keep askin' me permission for everythin' you do.

JACK

Sorry Sheriff. I'll stand then...unless you want me to sit? Hi Jill. You could sit down if you like.

JILL

I'll stand.

JACK

Aw, you ain't still mad at me for arrestin' you?

JILL

Yes. Could we start the interview please?

SHERIFF

Now, I reckon we already done released our official statement sweetie, so I don't know what you expectin' to find out.

DIANE

I had some questions that weren't exactly covered in the official statement, Sheriff.

SHERIFF

Well all right then Yankee, shoot.

DIANE

I was hoping that we could interview Ricky first. Alone.

SHERIFF

Well, if you ain't afraid of gettin' killed then be my guest.

DIANE

Thank you Sheriff.

(The SHERIFF and JACK don't move.)

Um, Sheriff, I'll be asking you and Jack some questions later, but I was hoping to speak to Ricky now, alone.

SHERIFF

All right then Yankee you got five minutes.

(To Ricky.)

We'll be right outside so don't try no funny business killer. Come on Jack. Did I ever explain to you the ten natural laws of successful time and life management?

JACK

No Sheriff.

SHERIFF

Rule number 1, you always...

(JACK and the SHERIFF exit.)

RICKY

Who's this?

JILL

She's a reporter from Michigan who thinks that you're innocent.

DIANE

Not exactly. My name is Diane Anderson. I work for Joseph Brown Jr.'s, The New Buffalo Argus. I'm just trying to get all the facts in place.

RICKY

I hope you don't mind me sayin', I mean you seem like a nice gal and all, but ain't it a bit odd for you to be doing a story on this?

DIANE

I don't make the story decisions Mr. Barding, not yet anyway.

RICKY

Well, what do want from me?

DIANE

I want to hear your side of the story.

JILL

I told you she was on our side.

DIANE

Go on.

RICKY

Well, it's pretty simple really. My parents were fighting like usual, so I figure I'll go to the park to do some thinking, cause that's where I do my best thinking. Next thing I know I'm under arrest and this whole town here thinks I'm a murderer. That's the long and the short of it,
(Seductively.)

Diane.

DIANE

Okay, thank you. But do you mind if I ask you some more specific questions?

RICKY

Not if you do.

DIANE

How would you describe your relationship with Ms. Murray?

RICKY

Well, we used to date but we broke up because she thought I was cheatin' on her.

DIANE

Was Jack aware of your past relationship with Jill at the time of the arrest? When he saw you together in the park.

RICKY/JILL

He didn't see us together.

RICKY

(Pause.)

He knows all right. He thinks that we've been runnin' all around town behind his back. He told me that he'd rip my head off if he ever saw us together again. In case you didn't notice, Jack's a little bit on the stupid side of the scale.

DIANE

Did Jack seem upset when he arrested you?

JILL

Are you trying to say that Jack arrested Ricky out of jealousy?

DIANE

I'm not trying to say anything.

RICKY

I wouldn't state it as fact, but I guess that could have been the case.

DIANE

When you were brought to the station and questioned they gave you two sets of fingerprints to look at, is that correct?

RICKY

One set they took when they arrested me, and another from the crime scene.

DIANE

I've seen those prints and they obviously don't match-

RICKY

I know that, but they said that I must have changed my fingerprints somehow between the time I killed Mr. Brown and when they arrested me.

DIANE

What kind of town is this?

RICKY

It's the kind of town where you feel trapped, and no matter what you do, or how hard you try, you can't get out because Lincolnville is ingrained into you - it's who you are. Make sure you write that in your little story there.

DIANE

Maybe when you get out of prison you could take a vacation.

RICKY

Maybe you could come with me.

(SHERIFF and JACK enter.)

SHERIFF

I reckon that's just about enough time Yankee. Jack if you could escort Miss Murray out.

JACK

Sure thing Sheriff. Right this way honey.

JILL

Don't you go callin' me honey.

DIANE

Just one more minute Sheriff. I still have a few more questions.

(JACK and JILL exit.)

SHERIFF

They engaged to be married you know. Ain't they just the sweetest thing you ever did see?

DIANE

Sure. Ricky's story and the official report have some major discrepancies that I'd like to address Sheriff.

(JACK enters.)

SHERIFF

Well now, I can't discuss that in front of our killer here. Jack, take Ricky back to he cell.

JACK

Sure thing Sheriff.

(To Ricky.)

Right this way honey.

RICKY

Don't call me honey.

(JACK and RICKY exit.)

DIANE

Sheriff, it seems to me that-

SHERIFF

Let me tell you somethin' Yankee; around here my word is law. I've got an obligation to these here people to keep this town in order, and when God forbid somebody gets murdered it is my job to find out who done it, so that these people can get on with their lives. Now I don't need some uppity little girl comin' down here tellin' me how to do my job. I don't care who you think you are sweetie; I could care less if you were The Great Pacificator Henry Clay himself, but nobody comes into my town and starts accusin' me of not doin' my job. Now I'd hate to see you gettin' yourself into somethin' over your head. So if I was you I might think about takin' a picture of the Lincoln Tent and headin' on back to where I came from before things got ugly.

(JACK enters.)

SHERIFF

Ain't that right Jack?

JACK

Sure is Sheriff.

SHERIFF

I just thought you'd like to know that before we got started here.

DIANE

Thanks Sheriff, I really appreciate you looking out for me, but I've got a job to do, and I'm going to do it whether you like

it or not. You can threaten me all you like, but I'm not going away.

SHERIFF

You do what you like darlin', but don't expect there not to be any repercussions for your actions.

DIANE

If you don't mind Sheriff, I'd like to start the interview.

SHERIFF

Go on little lady, be my guest.

DIANE

Can you tell me why Ricky Barding was in the park the night of August 27th?

SHERIFF

I reckon he was there dumpin' the body of Mr. Joe Brown into the pond.

JACK

That's a lagoon Sheriff, Lincoln's Lagoon.

SHERIFF

Are you tryin' to tell me that I don't know the difference between a pond and a lagoon boy?

JACK

No sir, I'm just sayin' that I thought it was-

SHERIFF

I know what you sayin' boy. A lagoon, by definition, is a small freshwater lake near a larger lake or river. A pond, however, is simply a small area of still water. Now seein' as how they ain't no lakes or rivers within fifty miles of Lincolnville, I'd say that that there lagoon of yours is indeed, by definition, a pond.

JACK

You're right Sheriff. I just thought cause of the name - I shoulda listened to you though. You always right.

SHERIFF

I know. So, in answerin' your question darlin', he was dumpin' the body into the pond, just like the official report says.

DIANE

How do you respond to allegations that he was at the park because of domestic problems, and not to dump Mr. Brown's body into the pond?

SHERIFF

Well I'd have to say that there sure is a mighty fine story, but I don't care too much for stories Yankee, just the facts.

JACK

Just the facts Ma'am.
(Chuckles.)
That's from Dragnet-

DIANE

Do you have any proof that Ricky was at the park dumping the body and not just out on a walk as he claims he was? It seems to me that you are making an awful lot of assumptions in this case Sheriff, and have yet to provide any concrete evidence against Mr. Barding.

SHERIFF

We got us two pieces of rock solid evidence honey. One; Mr. Joe Brown's dead body, which was recovered just a few yards from the pond where Ricky was tryin' to dump it, and two; a pair of fingerprints from the crime scene and from Ricky that link him to the murder.

DIANE

I have seen those fingerprints Sheriff and it is obvious that they do not match.

SHERIFF

Well now, I don't reckon that you're a forensics expert, now are you Miss Anderson?

DIANE

No sir, but-

SHERIFF

Well then I reckon you ain't got no reason to be tellin' me, one of the leading forensic experts in this fine state, whether or not those could be Ricky's fingerprints. It is very easy to change a few simple contours and grooves Miss Anderson, so that it may appear that the same set of fingerprints are different.

DIANE

How then do you respond to allegations that a local schoolteacher, a Mrs. Joan Campbell, committed the murder?

JACK

Who?

SHERIFF

I respond by sayin' that she is a fine upstandin' member of this here community who keep to herself and don't cause no trouble for nobody.

JACK

I'm a little bit offended that you would even think that nice old lady would do somethin' like that.

DIANE

There is more than sufficient evidence to take her prints and test them against the one's from the crime scene. She also has a motive whereas you have yet to provide Ricky's motive. All you have provided, Sheriff, is a pile of circumstantial evidence and Mr. Kelly's word - a person who obviously has a highly vested and biased interest in the case, and is therefore, far from qualified to be the sole witness.

SHERIFF

Well now, killin' was Ricky's motive for killin' Mr. Brown, Yankee. And I've got several eyewitnesses who put Ricky at the scene of the crime, not no schoolteacher. I done warned you before about goin' around accusin' people in this here town Miss Anderson. People don't take too kindly to they reputations bein' dragged through the mud. When you gonna let it sink in, honey?

DIANE

I'm just trying to find out the truth Sheriff.

SHERIFF

And the truth is that this here is an open and shut case, so why don't you get down off of your soapbox and let it shut.

JACK

She think she some sort a big shot, huh Sheriff?

SHERIFF

I reckon she do Jack.

DIANE

Jack, can I ask you a few questions?

JACK

I don't know, can you big shot?

(Chuckles.)

Some reporter, don't even know proper word usage. And I heard from Old Red that she think she too good to visit the Lincoln Tent.

SHERIFF

Shut up now boy and answer the questions.

JACK

Right.

DIANE

Could you describe your relationship with Jill Murray?

JACK

Oh, I love her Miss Anderson, more than I love a freshly paved road. Could you tell her I said that? We're kind of havin' a little tiff seein' as how I arrested her and everythin'.

DIANE

I'll be sure to tell her, but could you be more specific about your relationship?

JACK

Well, we been datin' for I'd say about three years now.

DIANE

That's a long time to be dating.

SHERIFF

He a good boy.

JACK

As a matter of fact, I asked Jill to marry me the very night I done arrested her and Ricky for killin' Mr. Brown. I wasn't so sure she was gonna say yes, seein' as how I ain't the brightest, most successful, smartest, wittiest, considerate fella around; but she did and I thank God every night that I have her.

DIANE

How then did you feel when you saw Ricky and Jill together, knowing full well they had a relationship in the past?

JACK

Well I was madder than hell.

DIANE

So is it fair to say that your judgment might have been impaired when you arrested Ricky?

JACK

Impaired?

DIANE

Was there something else on your mind that could have been distracting you?

JACK

Well, Ricky and Jill bein' together wasn't exactly what I had hoped to see when I got back from the Sheriff's, if that's what you gettin' at?

DIANE

So, do you think that maybe you arrested Ricky because he was with Jill, and not because he killed Mr. Brown?

JACK

Well now, I don't think-

SHERIFF

I think that this here interview is over Yankee.

DIANE

Come on Jack, you know that Ricky didn't do this-

SHERIFF

I said that it was over. Now if you will excuse us, we have got some work to tend to. Come on Jack.

DIANE

Just one more minute...

SHERIFF

It's over Yankee.

JACK

Sorry Miss, Sheriff says I got to go.

(SHERIFF and JACK exit leaving DIANE alone on stage. Pause. Blackout.)

Act II

SCENE 3

(MA and PA enter the park. LIL' JIMMY is asleep by the tree. PA checks for bugs.)

MA

I swear that them there preacher just gettin' better and better every week. This here community needs somebody like him telling them about truth and honesty. Remindin' them of their heritage. Why if more of this here town went to church we wouldn't be havin' none of these young girls walkin' around pregnant before they married and none of these murderers-

PA

I reckon it wasn't too bad Ma, but I don't think Lil' Jimmy understood too much of it, seein' as how it was his first time in a house of God.

MA

He'll pick it up in time Pa. I'm just glad he didn't burst into flames when he walked through the church door.

PA

Well, speak of the devil and he shall appear. Look at him asleep in the park. Ain't he just darlin'? Sure is a shame he ain't got no family.

MA

Cut that talk Pa, everybody knows an orphan ain't worth the diseases he got. And don't you forget about the trial tomorrow neither. The whole town gonna be there and I expect to see you sittin' beside me and not down here dancin' with Lil' Jimmy.

PA

Aw Ma, you know I don't care for no court. And I'm not goin' down there to watch them crucify that boy.

MA

How dare you compare that murderer to our Lord and savior Jesus Christ!

PA

Now Ma, I wasn't comparin' nobody to nobody.

MA

Don't you go lyin' your way out of this one. I done heard what you said.

PA

Now, Ma-

MA
Don't you 'now Ma' me, Pa.

PA
You done know what I meant.

MA
I know what you meant and I don't want to hear it. I'm goin' to the Tent and don't you bring that boy with you.
(MA starts to exit.)
Comparin' that killer to our Lord. What is he thinkin'?

PA
Now wait just a minute Ma.
(MA exits.)
(PA goes and sits on the bench next to LIL' JIMMY who is now awake.)
Women sure are a complex mystery to me Lil' Jimmy. One minute they wantin' one thing, the next minute it's somethin' entirely different. You just stay away from 'em as long as you can and I reckon you'll be all right.

LIL' JIMMY
Hep.

PA
Aw, Lil' Jimmy, it sure is a shame that boy gonna fry. I wish that there was somethin' we could do.

LIL' JIMMY
Hep.
(LIL' JIMMY starts doing the 'Cheer up Pa jig.')

PA
You sure are a mighty fine dancer Lil' Jimmy, but I'm afraid that your dancin' ain't gonna help solve this one. It's too bad Miss Anderson ain't around, I bet she could help us out.

LIL' JIMMY
Hep.

(DIANE and JILL enter.)

PA
Well I'll be.

JILL
...you saw the way the Sheriff has Jack wrapped around his finger. How can they live with themselves knowin' full well that Ricky's innocent?

DIANE

I don't know, but unless we find some evidence I'm not sure what else we can do.

PA

Miss Anderson, Miss Murray, how do you fine ladies do this afternoon?

LIL' JIMMY

(Bowing to say hello.)

Hep.

PA

Seen the Tent yet?

DIANE

Not yet. I just had an interview with Ricky and the Sheriff and it doesn't look like the Sheriff is going to budge.

JILL

He just won't listen to reason.

PA

Well, now, he's got a reputation to uphold, and around here a reputation darn near the most important thing any man got. These here people don't care who done the crime as long as somebody behind bars. That's all they want, and that's all the Sheriff worried about given 'em.

DIANE

There has got to be something we are overlooking. Something that the Sheriff can't ignore.

JILL

Anything that could give us just a glimmer of hope.

PA

Somethin' to set this town right again.

LIL' JIMMY

Hep.

PA

What was that Lil' Jimmy?

LIL' JIMMY

Hep.

PA

You overheard somethin' about the murder?

LIL' JIMMY

Hep.

PA
You think that it might save Ricky's life?

LIL' JIMMY
Hep.

PA
Somethin' about Caracas?

LIL' JIMMY
Hep.

PA
But you not sure-

DIANE
What is it Little Jimmy?

LIL' JIMMY
Well, I was sleepin' here like I do every afternoon-

PA
You can talk Lil' Jimmy? Oh my sweet Jesus, it's a miracle! One day in church and bam! Oh the prayin', oh Lil' Jimmy, the prayin' finally workin'. I guess Ma isn't as crazy as I thought. I known Lil' Jimmy for nigh on five years and I ain't never heard him say nothin' other than hep.

JILL
What did you hear Lil' Jimmy?

LIL' JIMMY
Well I was sleepin' in them there pile of leaves when these two ladies come up and sit on that there bench.

PA
He don't got the best rhythm or diction-

DIANE
Who were they?

LIL' JIMMY
Some lady talkin' funny talk named Maria, and some other lady named Joan.

DIANE
Joan Campbell?

PA
And sometimes he don't know the proper word to use-

LIL' JIMMY
I reckon that might could be her last name.

PA

Probably because his vocabulary so limited, seein' as how this is the first time he's talkin' and all-

JILL

This is what we've been looking for.

DIANE

Don't jump the gun. Let's listen to what Little Jimmy's got to say first. Go on Little Jimmy.

LIL' JIMMY

They was talkin' about how they done need to lay low for a while until the trial over. Then I started thinkin' about how nice it would be to have a warm bed to sleep in and a family of my own. Then I got to thinkin' about how nice it would be to finally have a last name. Then when I stopped thinkin' about that, they was talkin' about some place called Caracas.

PA

Caracas?

LIL' JIMMY

Hep.

DIANE

That's the capital of Venezuela.

PA

That's just what they want you to think.

JILL

What else did they say?

LIL' JIMMY

Somethin' about coverin' up they murder and lettin' things blow over. They talked about bein' a team and stickin' together too.

JILL

We've got 'em.

PA

His voice is so divine, when you get past the coughing and what not-

LIL' JIMMY

They also said somethin' about you Miss Diane.

DIANE

What Little Jimmy?

LIL' JIMMY

They said how they was gonna lie to you if you done ask them about the murder. Now I remember that in church the man said that lyin' was bad, so I figure that they must be up to somethin' bad, somethin' real bad.

PA

I sure am glad Ma made you go to church Lil' Jimmy. Although I sure did love to watch you dance. Best dancer within three counties, and that's without bein' able to see. Ain't that right Lil' Jimmy?

LIL' JIMMY

Hep. The one who talk the funny talk also say how she want to play gym class and fix planes with the sweaty teacher.

DIANE

What?

LIL' JIMMY

She said that she like to watch him play and be sweaty.

PA

I reckon that Lil' Jimmy and me ain't had the birds 'n' the bees talk yet. He just a little confused.

LIL' JIMMY

I got stung by a bee once-

PA

I tell you what she meant real soon Lil' Jimmy.

LIL' JIMMY

Hep.

JILL

Well, what do we do now?

PA

We take Lil' Jimmy here down to the police station to tell he story, and then we get him on the radio.

DIANE

No. They aren't going to believe an orphan boy's story. We've got to get Joan to confess.

PA

Now, Lil' Jimmy done said that she ain't gonna confess nothin', so I don't reckon that plan gonna work neither.

JILL

Well, then, what should we do?

PA

I reckon that you gonna have to do some talkin'.

JILL

What?

DIANE

Exactly.

JILL

Exactly what?

DIANE

You need to talk to Jack.

JILL

I'm not talkin' to that fool.

PA

Why not?

JILL

Because he doesn't even care about what he did to me.

DIANE

Sure he does. Why just this afternoon Jack told me to tell you that he loved you more than a freshly paved road, or something along those lines.

JILL

More than a freshly paved road? He said that?

DIANE

He sure did. Right after you left the station.

JILL

He sure does love it when they pave roads. He'll be out there all day watching 'em...but that doesn't give him the right to act the way he's been acting lately.

PA

Do it for Ricky then.

JILL

He doesn't deserve to be in jail, but he isn't any better than Jack.

LIL' JIMMY

Could you, maybe, do it for me then?

JILL

For you?

LIL' JIMMY

Well, ain't too many people around here think that a blind Kentucky orphan worth nothin'. But if you tell 'em what I done heard, well, maybe that'll help free Ricky, and that'd be just greater than anythin' Miss Jill. But maybe, just maybe, it'll help me too. Ya' see Miss Jill, if I done help solve this here case then maybe Ma will see that I more than just a blind Kentucky orphan, and well, maybe, just maybe, she'll let Pa finally adopt me, and I could have a home with a warm bed and I wouldn't have to go around eatin' leaves no more, and I could be Jimmy Cheaney and, well, maybe, just maybe, I could have a family like everyone else.

PA

Aw, Lil' Jimmy, we gonna be family someday.

JILL

Okay, I'll do it Lil' Jimmy. But what am I supposed to say to him?

DIANE

Give him a little ultimatum. Something like you aren't going to marry him unless you can trust him again. Then just tell him what Little Jimmy overheard, and the rest should fall into place...one way or the other.

JILL

I don't know if it'll work though.

PA

It's our last chance before that boy go to trial, and I got the feelin' that if that boy go to trial he ain't got no chance of comin' out innocent.

JILL

Okay, I'll do it. But what about Campbell? Who's gonna take care of her?

DIANE

Little Jimmy and I will. You just get Jack down here at six o'clock and we will take care of the rest. Ain't that right Lil' Jimmy?

LIL' JIMMY

Hep.

(Lights fade out.)

Act II

SCENE 4

(It is later that day in the park.
MA is sitting on the bench with
JOAN. LIL' JIMMY is asleep.)

MA

I want to apologize for the current state of the Lincoln Tent,
Joan. I've been too busy tryin' to keep Pa from blabberin' his
mouth to pay it proper attention.

JOAN

It's all right, I understand completely.

MA

He's just so stubborn and stuck in his ways. Always thinks he's
right no matter what.

JOAN

Trust me, I know the feeling.

MA

Why just the other day he was trying to convince me that
Indiana was an island. Can you believe that? And when I showed
him a map he told me, 'That's just what they want you to
think.' He gets his mind set on somethin' and won't let it go.
Just a big old stubborn fool who walks around with a blind
orphan. Like I'm gonna adopt a filthy blind orphan. I'm too old
for that sort of thing.

JOAN

My husband was the same way, except for the orphan thing. He
always made me feel so inferior to him.

MA

Well I'm sorry that he passed on so suddenly, and at such a
young age.

JOAN

It was hard at first, but I've managed to move on.

MA

I couldn't imagine a life without Pa.

JOAN

Because your entire life is waiting on him hand and foot?

MA

Well, no-

(DIANE enters.)

DIANE

Hello Mrs. Campbell. I'm sorry to interrupt Mrs. Cheaney. If you could excuse us please, Mrs. Campbell and I have a private meeting. It should only take a minute.

MA

Oh, well I'd hate to interrupt your private meeting precious. I've got to fix the front flap of the Tent anyway.

(To Diane.)

Maybe you'll find the time to finally visit.

(To Joan.)

I'll call you later Joan, and again, I apologize for my husband.

JOAN

It's all right.

(MA exits.)

DIANE

Thank you for finally finding the time to speak with me Mrs. Campbell. I realize that you are a very busy woman.

JOAN

No problem...I'm sorry I didn't catch your name the last time we met?

DIANE

Diane Anderson.

JOAN

Diane. I'm glad to do it.

DIANE

Do you mind if I just jump right in and start with the questions? I'm kind of in a hurry.

JOAN

Not at all.

DIANE

What was your relationship with Principal Brown like?

JOAN

There was a sort of unspoken mutual respect between us. I would say it was like most teacher-principal relationships.

DIANE

What do you mean by unspoken?

JOAN

I mean that I didn't tell him everyday that I respected him, and he didn't tell me either, but we both knew how the other

one felt.

DIANE

I see. Did you ever have Ricky Barding in one of your classes?

JOAN

Yes, history class. I'm a history teacher.

DIANE

I realize it was a long time ago, but did he seem odd to you? Any pent up aggression? Anything that could have signaled what was to come?

JOAN

Oh I never forget a student Miss. Well now let me see...he was a very quiet boy. Always kept to himself. That always seemed odd to me, but I never thought that he would end up a murderer if that's what you're getting at.

DIANE

I'm just trying to figure out his motive.

JOAN

If you don't mind me saying, I couldn't help but notice that you are spending an awfully long time writing this story. I mean there's not that much to it, and why not just write an obituary? It just makes so much more sense.

DIANE

I don't make the story decisions Mrs. Campbell, not yet anyway. Mr. Brown's son won't accept anything less than perfection.

JOAN

It's refreshing to hear that from a reporter. Nowadays all you ever hear are opinions.

DIANE

Thank you. Um, one last question...

(LIL' JIMMY staggers into the bench and falls over creating a diversion for DIANE to pour some ink onto her pad of paper.)

DIANE

What the - Oh great, you stupid orphan, watch where you're going. Damn orphan broke my pen. What kind of town has orphans running around?

(She tries to wipe her hands.)

JOAN

(Takes the pad from DIANE.)

Let me take that. Those orphans are just getting out of control lately.

DIANE

Listen, I appreciate you taking the time to see me, I think I've got everything I need. It's a pretty open and shut case. I apologize, but I've got to go clean up. Again, I really appreciate it.

JOAN

No problem, and use a little bit of club soda, that'll get that ink there off your hands in a flash.

DIANE

Thanks, I will.

(DIANE and JOAN exit leaving LIL' JIMMY alone. Beat. DIANE re-enters.)

DIANE

Good work Lil' Jimmy, we got her fingerprints right here.

LIL' JIMMY

Hep.

DIANE

Jill should be here any minute-

LIL' JIMMY

-I think I hear her size seven's now.

(JILL enters.)

JILL

Did it work?

DIANE

Like a charm. We've got a set of her fingerprints right here on this page.

JILL

Great!

DIANE

Is Jack coming?

JILL

He should be here any minute. He's actually very punctual for a moron.

DIANE

I'll leave this with you then. Good luck with Jack. Come on Little Jimmy, let's go get the Sheriff.

LIL' JIMMY

Hep.

(DIANE and LIL' JIMMY exit.)

(JACK enters.)

JILL
Six o'clock, right on time like usual.

JACK
Hi Jill, you sure look pretty tonight.

JILL
Thanks for meeting me Jack.

JACK
Aww, I'd do anythin' if you'd just take me back Jill.

JILL
This is gonna be easier than I thought.

JACK
What's gonna be easier than you thought? You gonna dump me and marry Ricky ain't you? I knew you was still in love with him, otherwise you wouldn't be defendin' him all the time. The Sheriff told me that you two was in love and that I shouldn't trust you. I shoulda listened to him.

(He starts to exit.)

Rule number six, don't trust no woman with your heart.

JILL
I don't love Ricky. Jack wait!

JACK
What for?

JILL
You know what for.

JACK
I don't know nothin' anymore.

JILL
Because I love you ya big goof, and I want our baby to have a loving home.

JACK
I love you too Jill.

(Pause.)

Does this mean we still gonna get married?

JILL
Well now there is something that you have to do for me first.

JACK

What is it? I ain't gonna change my last name if that's what you thinkin'.

JILL

No. I need you to listen to me and believe what I'm about to tell you. If you can't trust me then our marriage isn't going to work.

JACK

Okay.

JILL

I swear to God that this is the truth Jack so you have got to believe me.

JACK

Okay. I'll believe you.

JILL

Promise me.

JACK

I promise, now would you just tell me what it is?

JILL

Ricky is innocent.

JACK

Again with the Ricky stuff?

JILL

Listen to me Jack. Ricky didn't kill Mr. Brown. It was Joan Campbell, the schoolteacher. Remember, we had her for history in eighth grade?

JACK

She sure was a pretty lady, why I had the biggest crush on her - but that was then and this is now and she ain't no murderer. The Sheriff said that she was a fine upstandin' member of this here community.

JILL

The Sheriff is an idiot Jack. He's just manipulating you. Lil' Jimmy overheard Joan and another teacher talking about how they killed Mr. Brown. She confessed it Jack.

JACK

Lil' Jimmy just an orphan. Everybody in this here town know that ain't no orphan worth the leaves he sleeps on.

JILL

Lil' Jimmy's a good kid, and he's telling the truth. Ricky didn't do anything. You've got to go to the Sheriff and make him set Ricky free.

JACK

Well, now, even if I did believe you Jill, I can't make the Sheriff do nothin' that he don't want to.

JILL

I thought that you and the Sheriff wanted to find out the truth. Wasn't that your quest?

JACK

Of course we do, but I don't think the Sheriff gonna trust the word of no orphan boy.

JILL

Well now he doesn't have to believe Lil' Jimmy because we've got a set of Joan Campbell's fingerprints right here on this note pad. You give this to the Sheriff. If they don't match the ones from the crime scene then I'll marry you and let the whole Ricky thing drop forever. Won't say another word about it for the rest of my life.

JACK

Will you still marry me if they do match?

JILL

Of course I will.

JACK

Well, all right then.

(Pause.)

JACK

Jill, I know that I should have said this a long time ago, well, I'm sorry for arrestin' you and Ricky that night in the park.

JILL

It's okay Jack. I know that you were just trying to do your job.

JACK

And I know that you wouldn't never run around with nobody, I guess I just got caught up in everything with the Sheriff and Ricky and orphans, and, well, I'm sorry Jill.

(Pause. They kiss.)

Wanna go to my van?

(The SHERIFF, DIANE and LIL' JIMMY enter in a hurry.)

SHERIFF

Well now, if the van is a rockin', don't come a knockin'.

DIANE

I'm sorry Sheriff, but this orphan boy here told me that he saw Jack drowning-

SHERIFF

Now, why you gonna go and listen to a blind orphan for? Everybody knows that they ain't worth the phlegm in they lungs.

DIANE

I'm sorry for dragging you down here Sheriff, but I figured better safe than sorry.

SHERIFF

Well now, I appreciate you takin' a concern about this here town, but I got to be goin'-

JACK

Sheriff!

SHERIFF

What is it boy?

JACK

I got somethin' I need to talk to you about.

SHERIFF

I don't feel like talkin' about the Crimean War no more boy. Maybe tomorrow.

JACK

No, this ain't about that Sheriff. Although I still think the Treaty of Paris was unfair to the Russians and ultimately led to rising tensions in European affairs, which, need I remind you Sheriff, resulted in two world wars, a subsequent cold war, and numerous conflicts throughout Southeast Asia; all of which have led to the current problems Europe is facing in trying to consolidate a unified European Union

(JILL coughs encouraging JACK to tell the SHERIFF about the fingerprints.)

- it's about Mr. Brown's murder.

SHERIFF

Ricky done it boy, so let it go.

JACK

Well, it seems as though some new evidence has surfaced.

SHERIFF

What is it boy?

JACK

Well, Jill here done give me this here pad of paper that's got Joan Campbell's fingerprints on it. They want to see if they match the ones from the crime scene.

SHERIFF

You expect me to take some random note pad with some inky fingerprints on it and see if they the killer's when the killer is already behind bars. Are you crazy boy?

JACK

Well...kinda...no...I guess not.

DIANE

It can't hurt to look at them Sheriff. If they don't match then you didn't lose anything, but if they do turn out to be the killer's then this whole town is going to think you're a hero; a real man of the people who will stop at nothing to find out the truth.

SHERIFF

Well now, I like the way that sounds Yankee. It sure is a good thing you laminated them prints boy. Let's have a looksy, but if they ain't the killer's then I don't want to hear no more of this here talk.

DIANE

Whatever you say.

SHERIFF

(Pulls out the other set of fingerprints.)

Well, I'll be. They sure do look similar.

DIANE

That means Ricky is innocent.

SHERIFF

Not necessarily.

JILL

But the fingerprints match.

SHERIFF

But you ain't proven that they Mrs. Campbell's. You just give me a note pad with some blurry prints on it.

DIANE

I think that it is at least enough to call in Mrs. Campbell for questioning. You could take her fingerprints for real then and see if they match.

SHERIFF

Yankee, I don't like you, I probably never will, but you persistent, and I like that, so I'll call this Mrs. Campbell in for questioning, but if nothin' turns up, well then, your friend Ricky gonna be in a whole heap of a lot more trouble.

DIANE

Just check the prints Sheriff.

SHERIFF

All right Yankee. Jack, go on down to Mrs. Campbell's residence and bring her down to the station for some questionin'.

JACK

Sure thing Sheriff.

(JACK exits.)

SHERIFF

I tell you what, why don't the rest of you come on down to the station with me and see for yourself that Ricky done be the killer. Then maybe y'all stop badgerin' me about this.

JILL

Okay.

DIANE

(To Lil' Jimmy.)

Go get Ma and Pa and meet us at the station.

LIL' JIMMY

Hep.

(The SHERIFF, DIANE, and JILL exit one way and LIL' JIMMY staggers off the other way. Lights fade out.)

Act II

SCENE 5

(JACK, JILL, JOAN, PA, MA, DIANE,
and LIL' JIMMY are all waiting in
the interrogation room for the
SHERIFF to come back with the
results of the fingerprint match
up.)

MA

I don't know why you done dragged this nice woman down here Pa,
you had better apologize to her.

PA

Well now, I think we just gonna have to hold up on that there
apology until the Sheriff gets back with them results. Ain't
that right Lil' Jimmy?

LIL' JIMMY

Hep.

DIANE

You should be very proud of everything Lil' Jimmy has done to
help solve this case Mrs. Cheaney.

LIL' JIMMY

It wasn't anythin' special.

MA

What did you say Lil' Jimmy?

PA

The boy can talk, ain't it somethin' else?

MA

But I ain't never heard him say nothin' other than hep. Oh my
God, it's a miracle! I knew we should have taken him to church
sooner.

JOAN

I hate to interrupt this Kodak moment, but could you all please
keep it down until the Sheriff comes in.

(Tense pause.)

JILL

I bet they match.

JACK

It sure lookin' that way.

MA

I hope none of you are forgettin' that Ricky Barding is the one who killed Mr. Brown. We all know what kind of temper that boy has got himself.

PA

That ain't the case Ma, now I done told you that before.

MA

I can't believe the nerve of y'all to bring this woman down here tonight. We should be thankin' her for what she done for our community, not accusin' her of no murder. Y'all should be ashamed of yourselves.

JOAN

Thank you Mrs. Cheaney.

PA

Now, we ain't sayin' that she guilty Ma, we just want to see if them prints match up.

MA

Don't you start talkin' that way to me Pa-

DIANE

Everybody just settle down.

MA

Don't you start tellin' me to settle down Yankee-

PA

Her name is Diane, Ma, not Yankee.

MA

How come you know her name?

PA

She done told me.

JACK

Did you know that we was only one vote away from speakin' German in this country?

DIANE

I'm not trying to tell anybody what to do; I'm just saying that maybe we should-

MA

You stay away from my husband you little hussy.

PA

Now Ma, that ain't no way to be talkin'.

MA

Don't you be tellin' me how to talk. Who do you think you are?
We already got one girl runnin' around this town pregnant, Lord
knows we don't need another.

(DIANE and JACK speak together.)

DIANE

How dare you?

JACK

She's talkin' about you honey.

(The SHERIFF enters. There is silence.)

SHERIFF

Well, we got them results from the match up.

DIANE

And?

SHERIFF

And...

DIANE

What is it Sheriff?

JILL

Did they match?

MA

They ain't match. I hope y'all proud for makin' fools out of
yourselves.

PA

Now Ma, you ain't heard what the Sheriff's got to say.

JACK

The Sheriff's the one who told me that.

JILL

What?

JACK

About the German thing.

JILL

What German thing?

JACK

About how we almost spoke-

JOAN

Would you all just please shut up and let the man talk?

PA

Well now, I don't think there's any cause for yellin'.

MA

Don't you go tellin' people what to do Pa.

PA

I'm just sayin' that yellin' ain't gonna help the situation none.

DIANE

What's the word Sheriff?

(Pause.)

SHERIFF

Well, now I've had a chance to look over them prints...and...well...I reckon we owe Ricky an apology.

DIANE

I knew it!

PA

See what I done told you was true Ma, ain't that right Lil' Jimmy?

LIL' JIMMY

Hep.

JILL

Thank you for believing me Jack.

JACK

Thanks for forgivin' me Jill.

SHERIFF

Ain't they just gonna make the cutest family you ever done seen?

PA

They sure is Sheriff.

MA

Well now hold on just a minute. Are you trying to tell me Sheriff, that Ricky ain't the one who done killed that principal?

SHERIFF

That seems to be the case Mrs. Cheaney. Jack, you go on and let Ricky out he cell.

JACK

Yes sir Sheriff.

(JACK exits.)

SHERIFF

Mrs. Campbell, I'm gonna have to place you under arrest for the murder of Mr. Joe Brown-

JOAN

Not so fast Sheriff Smiley. I didn't want it to have to come to this, but you've left me with no other choice.

(She pulls out a gun, grabs LIL' JIMMY and points it at his head.)

Nobody move or the orphan gets it.

PA

Let him go Mrs. Campbell, he just a blind Kentucky orphan, he ain't never hurt nobody.

JOAN

Shut up Pa. The boy won't get hurt if you all just shut up and do what I say.

SHERIFF

(Puts his hand over his gun.)

Put that gun away Mrs. Campbell...

JOAN

Don't even think about it Sheriff. Maria!

(MARÍA enters dressed like she is in the movie 'Thelma and Louise.' She has a gun to JACK & RICKY who are handcuffed together.)

MARÍA

Get moving you two. ¡Vamos!

JILL

Oh my God, Jack! Ricky! Let them go! 20/20!

JOAN

I wouldn't do that if I were you Jill, seeing as how Maria is very sensitive and the slightest sudden movement could cause her to accidentally pull the trigger and kill your precious Ricky or that moron cop.

PA

Officer of the law Mrs. Campbell, moron officer of the law.

MA

Shut up Pa, this ain't the time for it.

(To Joan.)

Joan, what in the devil are you doin'?

JOAN

Fulfilling every woman's fantasy.

JACK

I'm sorry Sheriff, I was on my way to get Ricky like you said when she popped out from behind the desk and hit me in the back of the head. Next thing I know I'm handcuffed. That kind of stuff wasn't covered in trainin'.

RICKY

Real good work Jack.

JACK

Shut up Ricky, if you ain't killed Mr. Brown none of this would have happened in the first place.

JOAN

You really are a moron Jack. Ricky didn't do anything but take the fall.

JACK

So you're sayin' that by fallin' over, Ricky didn't kill Mr. Brown?

SHERIFF

Shut up Jack, I've got the situation under control.

JOAN

How about you place that gun on the table Sheriff, just so you don't get the urge to do anything clever. I know it's not in your nature, but everybody has surprises up their sleeve.

(The SHERIFF puts his gun on the table.)

Now, everybody will be just fine if you let us go on our way. Did you get the car Maria?

MARÍA

Yes I did, Thelma.

JOAN

What?

MARÍA

Thelma and Louise. You are Thelma. I am Louise. My mother's name was Louise.

JOAN

Christ Maria, sometimes you really irritate me.

MARÍA

I was just trying to bond with you like Thelma did with Louise.

SHERIFF

Joan, you ain't gonna get away with this, so just put the gun down and give yourself up before things get ugly.

JOAN

You just don't get it do you Sheriff? Michael thought he could push me around, but he was wrong. Brown thought he could push me around, but he was wrong too. You think you can push me around Sheriff? Well guess what, you're wrong. I beat you, I beat this stupid little town: twice! I killed Michael and Brown right under your nose without so much as a hint of suspicion from you. Ha, and that's not even the best part! Want to take a guess Sheriff?

SHERIFF

Not particularly.

JACK

Can I guess? I bet it's because-

JOAN

The best part is that there's nothing you or anybody can do about it, by this time tomorrow Maria and I will be living the good life in Caracas.

MARÍA

She always used to make fun of Caracas and now it will be her home. Is not that, how do you say in English?

JOAN

Shut up Maria.

LIL' JIMMY

Ironic.

PA

Very good Lil' Jimmy.

LIL' JIMMY

Hep.

SHERIFF

You ain't gonna get away with this Joan, even if you do get out of Lincolnville.

PA

(Signaling the 'Cheer up Pa Jig.' Softly while JOAN is speaking.)

Hep. Hep. Hep.

LIL' JIMMY

Hep.

JOAN

Wrong again Sheriff, this just isn't your day. I've taken care of that too; Mr. Collins is waiting for us in his private plane and he's going to fly us out, so it looks like you lose.

(To Pa.)

Pipe down old man.

(To All.)

Now, it was a pleasure doing business with all of you, but I'm afraid we must be going. We're taking the orphan, the moron and the killer with us. Don't worry, they'll be safe and sound so long as we get out of here safe and sound. You can get them in the morning, but for now they're coming with us.

(To Lil' Jimmy.)

Would you quit squirming?

PA

HEP!

(LIL' JIMMY starts doing 'The Cheer Up Pa Jig', kicking JOAN in the shin and knocking the gun out of her hand. Hysteria ensues.)

(In the mayhem MARÍA accidentally shoots her gun, striking LIL' JIMMY in the stomach causing him to keel over.)

MARÍA

(Slowly dropping her gun to the floor.)

¿Qué he hecho? ¿Qué he hecho!

PA

Oh my God, Lil' Jimmy's been shot!

LIL' JIMMY

Hep.

SHERIFF

You're under arrest Campbell, don't you move or I'll blow your head off. Bring Maria over here.

JILL

Are you okay Lil' Jimmy?

LIL' JIMMY

It's just a flesh wound. I'll be fine.

PA

(Goes to LIL' JIMMY and holds him in his arms.)

He don't look so good. And there's a whole lotta blood.

MARÍA

I did nothing Sheriff; I do not understand your language. I thought we were selling cleaning supplies.

JACK

It's true Sheriff, that's what she told me before she hit me in the head.

MARÍA

I did not even touch the trigger, it just went off. I swear.

SHERIFF

I don't care what you thought you was doin', but now you doin' time.

JACK

Good one Sheriff. About the doin' time thing you just said.

SHERIFF

(Hands JACK a key.)

Shut up and un-cuff yourself, and take these two down to they new homes.

JACK

Umm...I'm not quite followin'...they new homes?

SHERIFF

Take them to they cells, so we can tend to Lil' Jimmy.

MARÍA

(To Lil' Jimmy.)

¿Qué he hecho? Lo siento Lil' Jimmy, Lo siento.

JACK

Oh, I get it. They new homes...in prison. That's a good one Sheriff.

(Chuckles. To MARÍA and Joan.)

Come on you two. You gonna love the Sheriff he full a zingers like that. This one time I was...

(JACK escorts JOAN and MARÍA out.)

PA

Somebody call a doctor. Hurry! He's dyin'.

DIANE

(Goes to her purse and pulls out a cell phone.)

Got it.

LIL' JIMMY

Hep.

PA

No Lil' Jimmy.

LIL' JIMMY

Hep.

MA

What's he sayin'?

PA

He keeps sayin' its just a flesh wound.

LIL' JIMMY

Hep. I'll be fine. Don't you worry about me.

SHERIFF

Are you sure Lil' Jimmy?

LIL' JIMMY

As long as justice was done I'll be just fine.

SHERIFF

A doctor will be here real soon to help you Lil' Jimmy, so you just hold on. Ricky, on behalf of the whole town of Lincolnville, and this great state of Kentucky, I'd like to apologize to you, and if there is anythin' I can do to help you out you just go right on ahead and say it.

RICKY

Uncuff me.

(The SHERIFF uncuffs RICKY.)

Thank you Sheriff. I'd like to thank all of you for believing in me. Miss Anderson, Jill, Pa, it means a lot. This whole experience has taught me a thing or two, and I've got somethin' I'd like to ask you Miss Anderson.

(JACK enters.)

DIANE

What is it?

RICKY

Well, I know that the both of us are pretty fed up with small town life, and well, if you weren't too busy or anything and if you are that's perfectly all right too, but if you ain't, I was wonderin' if you wouldn't mind going to New York with me?

DIANE

What?

RICKY

I'm packing up and moving to New York Diane, and I want you to come with me.

DIANE

I hardly know you.

RICKY

It's a long ride. Come on, it's a big city and it'd be nice if I knew somebody there.

DIANE

I don't know.

LIL' JIMMY

(Meekly from PA's arms. Filled with coughing fits.)

I've had a hard life Miss Diane, harder than most I'd say. I ain't got no family, no home, no eyesight; and sleepin' on leaves every night gives a man some perspective-

PA

Don't you go talkin' that way Lil' Jimmy, you gonna be just fine.

MA

Let the boy talk Pa.

LIL' JIMMY

-and in my short time I've seen hundreds of people come and go from Lincoln's Lagoon. Most of 'em don't even notice me sittin' there, not too many people ever have. Some of 'em just give a glance and then walk on by. But some of 'em, well, some of 'em they just stand there staring at the water for hours on end, don't say a word to nobody, but I know why they there. I guess they think that lagoon got some sort of magic power and gonna solve all they problems or somethin'.

(Pause.)

Some of 'em old, and they come down there to think about they lives, and what they'd do different if they only had the time to do it again; tryin' to find a reason for all they pain. Others of 'em young, like you Miss Diane, and they come down there talkin' about they hopes and dreams, only to come back a few years later to find them dreams buried under a pile of shoulda's and lost opportunities. Oh, I've seen 'em all in my time. I've seen 'em all.

(Pause.)

I want to ask a favor of you Miss Diane.

DIANE

Of course Little Jimmy, anything.

LIL' JIMMY

Miss Diane, if I've learned anythin' from bein' a blind Kentucky orphan, it's that everybody has a dream, but only a few people ever really go out there and chase they dreams. If you ever want to write for The New York Times

Miss Diane, then you go with Ricky tonight; otherwise you're gonna end up staring at a lagoon somewhere wonderin' what happened to your life. I want you to do it for me, and all the other orphans out there who never got a fair shot, at life. Will ya do it Miss Diane?

DIANE

You're a very smart young man, Jimmy.

RICKY

Does that mean yes?

DIANE

On one condition.

RICKY

Anything.

DIANE

We swing by the Lincoln Tent on the way.

MA

Well it's about time.

RICKY

Of course, but before we go, Lil' Jimmy, I'd like to shake your hand.

LIL' JIMMY

Hep.

RICKY

Over here. You've made all the orphans of the world proud tonight. You've shown us all that with a little bit of hard work and determination, even a blind Kentucky orphan can make a difference in this here crazy world of ours. You're the reason I'm free tonight, and an inspiration to us all.

LIL' JIMMY

Hep.

JACK

Three cheers for Lil' Jimmy!

ALL

Hip-hip, hooray! Hip-hip, hooray! Hip-hip, hooray!

SHERIFF

(He takes off his badge and gives it to
LIL' JIMMY.)

Lil' Jimmy, as a reward for your courage under fire, and a spirit that won't never die, I'd like to make you an honorary deputy of the Lincolnville police force.

LIL' JIMMY

Hep.

JACK

Lil' Jimmy, when you get better I could put in a good word for you with Mr. Saunders down at the grocery, and you could have my old job.

LIL' JIMMY

Hep.

JILL

Jack and I decided to name our child Jimmy, after you and all the other orphans out there.

MA

Oh, well, now we all proud of Lil' Jimmy here, but, well seein' as how...Mister Lincoln once said...well what I'm tryin' to say is, that he ain't gonna be no orphan no more, not after tonight.

PA

You mean it Ma?

MA

If he can help solve a murder mystery then he good enough to be part of our family.

PA

You hear that Lil' Jimmy? You finally got a home!

DIANE

And you finally have a son.

PA

(Pause. He looks deep into LIL' JIMMY's eyes.)

Could I have a moment alone with Lil' Jimmy?

(Everyone except PA and LIL' JIMMY exits.

Pause.)

Everything is going to be just fine Lil' Jimmy. Don't you go worryin'-

LIL' JIMMY

Hep.

PA

No Lil' Jimmy. I told you not to-

LIL' JIMMY

Hep.

(Long pause.)

I love you...dad.

(Pause. PA embraces LIL' JIMMY.)

I love you too...son.

PA

(LIL' JIMMY dies in PA's arms. Pause.)
NOOOOOOOOOOOO!

(Blackout.)

The End