

I HEAR AMERICA BARKING

A Comedy in Two Acts

Paul Calandrino

Paul Calandrino
pcalandrino@gmail.com

© 2008 Paul Calandrino

CAST

Z. Howard Brady	TV writer/producer, Lewis & Clark enthusiast, L.A. exile, 29
Lee Doogle	Occupation uncertain, Oregon native, the next mayor of Remington Bay ... he hopes, 37
Leah Doogle	His wife, unemployed (not even a homemaker), yearns for the big cities of Alaska, 38
Rainy Doogle	Brainiac, horrified by the circumstances of her own life, 17
Craig Doogle	Deformed (so they say), lives in a world of toxic make-believe, 11
Stage Hands, Emergency Workers, TV Anchor and Reporter	

SETTING

Remington Bay --
a tiny, grimy, depressed community on the Oregon coast.

TIME

In and about the present.
Brady narrates both acts in retrospect.

NOTES

Excerpts from the *Journals of Lewis and Clark* are literal.
All misspellings and odd phrasings are theirs. It might be fun to project the passages as they are read. (It might also be fun to project the passages from *Top Dog* as they are read.)

“Sacagawea” and “Sacajawea” are both used in the play.
The former is correct, the latter a common misspelling (and mispronunciation) that is used to various effect in the text.

Prelude

The sound of rain and a thunderclap or two. Lights rise on the living room of a vintage Craftsman home, furnished with Mission-style antiques. Windows, foyer and the front door are upstage. A stairway leads to the second floor. Far downstage is a “deck” overlooking Remington Bay, beyond the house. Other exits lead to the kitchen and hall.

It is October. Z. Howard Brady stands in a rain-soaked coat next to a teenage girl, Rainy, crouched and crying over a lifeless hump the size of a little boy or large dog beneath a tarp. Emergency lights strobe through the blinds. Brady reaches a hand toward Rainy’s hair, but thinks better of it. An Emergency Worker leads a panicked Lee and Leah Doogle into the room, both rain-drenched. Lee and Leah look in horror at the lifeless hump. Lee lunges at Brady but is restrained by the Emergency Worker. A brief struggle, then Lee gives up and slumps to the floor. Leah glares at Brady and then comforts the girl.

Brady adjusts the microphone of the headset he wears. He presses a button on the phone attached to his belt, turns to the house, and walks downstage. As he speaks, the other actors exit and Stage Hands enter to clear the set of furniture and the lifeless hump.

BRADY

Chloe? Chloe, if you’re there, pick up. Please? It’s me, Brady. I need to talk to someone. I need to talk to *you*. Things are getting ... complicated here. There’s been a death, and I’m responsible. And there’s something else, something worse ... and I thought if I could talk to you and you could give me ... an indication ... Chloe, pick up! (*More thunder.*) You hear that? The noise here drowns everything out -- the thunder, the rain, the chainsaws, the dogs -- it’s worse than L.A. I can’t hear myself think. I need to talk to you, Chloe. Just listen, okay? Will you listen? I’ll start from the beginning ...

Act One

1. The beginning ...

A Stage Hand enters, takes off Brady’s coat and tries to dry and comb his hair, but he fends her off and she exits. The room is now completely empty. Bright sunlight splashes through the partially closed blinds. It is the previous July. Brady takes a few steps upstage. He holds up his phone and snaps photos. A dog barks continuously outside.

BRADY

(Ebullient.) Jerry, you wouldn't believe this place. It's perfect! Hardwood floors and wainscoting. Stone fireplace. Sash windows. Clawfoot tub. Glass doorknobs! All for a song. And it's so quiet here, Jerry. Well, except the neighbor's dog seems to be going nuts right now.

Behind the blinds, an ominously tall silhouette appears. It moves from one end of the blinds to the other, pauses, and moves again. Brady doesn't see.

But this is the best part. You won't believe this! The house was built one hundred years to the month -- to the month! -- from when Lewis and Clark reached the Pacific Ocean. "O'cean in view! O! The joy!" If that's not serendipity, I don't know what -- *(Suddenly startled by the silhouette.)* Hold on. There's some ... thing outside.

The silhouette passes out of view in the direction of the front door. Brady opens it to a man with a boy on his shoulders. Lee and Craig Doogle wear T-shirts and shorts.

LEE

Oh, hi. Thought I saw someone in here. You buying the place?

BRADY

It's someone at the door.

LEE

Huh? Oh, you're on the phone. Sorry, sorry.

BRADY

No, it's okay. *(Into phone.)* Jerry? Yeah, I'll call you back.

Disconnects but leaves the headset on. Lee lifts Craig off his shoulders and sets him on the ground. The boy tries to bolt into the house, but Lee restrains him by the collar.

LEE

Sorry. We were just walking by and I saw the car out front and thought I'd investigate. We live next door. Keep an eye on the place.

BRADY

I understand. That's good. That's what neighbors should do. Keep an eye out for each other.

LEE

You a realtor?

BRADY

No. You're right, I'm the new owner. Escrow just --

Lee and Craig volley their lines at such speed that Brady can't get a word in edgewise.

LEE

I thought so! I thought the house had sold. It's been sitting here for, jeez, I don't know how long.

CRAIG

Because it's haunted.

LEE

Probably eighteen months or more. Tough to sell anything out here these days.

CRAIG

The previous owner killed his wife and two children and buried them in the basement.

LEE

Don't listen to him. The previous owner was a great guy. Worked for the fisheries. Wife and three daughters.

CRAIG

Dead. All of them. The house turns people crazy.

LEE

What an imagination. But the thing is, the previous owner, John, great guy, never got around to --

CRAIG

Never got around to killing his dog. The dog escaped.

LEE

Craig, shut up. I'm talking. *(Turns away, shouts at the barking dog.)* Pyro, shut up! Go home, Pyro.

He turns back but has lost his train of thought.

BRADY

Never got a round to ...?

LEE

Right, never got around to trimming those English laurels on our mutual property line. Actually, they're on your property. Those things are huge.

CRAIG

Transients live in them.

LEE

They block out all the light coming to our house.

CRAIG

You can hear them in their tree houses watching TV at night.

LEE

No you can't.

CRAIG

Not if they're wearing headphones.

LEE

There are no transients in the trees. Pyro, shut up!

A woman climbs the porch steps. Leah Doogle is a little overweight but voluptuous. She's dressed in tight-fitting shorts and a tank top that celebrates her bosom.

LEAH

(To Brady.) Are they bothering you?

BRADY

Not at all. I --

LEE

He's the new owner.

LEAH

Who else would he be? (To Brady.) Right?

LEE

We didn't even know the house was sold.

LEAH

You didn't know.

CRAIG

I knew.

LEE

You didn't know. *(To Leah.)* If you knew why didn't you tell me?

LEAH

Didn't ask. *(Extends a hand to Brady.)* Leah.

BRADY

(Shaking her hand.) Z. Howard Brady. Pleased to meet you.

Lee offers his hand to Brady, but Leah hangs on.

LEE

Lee. It's funny, people say. Lee and Leah. Doogle.

Brady takes his hand from Leah's and shakes Lee's.

BRADY

That *is* funny.

LEAH

It's cute.

CRAIG

It's not cute. People think you're brother and sister and Rainy and me are short on chromosomes.

The voice of a teenage girl comes from offstage.

RAINY

Dad! Pyro won't stop barking!

She bounds up the front steps and wedges between Lee and Leah in the doorway. She's a smaller version of Leah.

BRADY

Hello.

RAINY

Hey. *(To Lee.)* I'm trying to do my homework, but it's very difficult with Pyro barking that way. Can't you make him stop?

LEE

Talk to your mom.

RAINY

He's your dog.

LEE

Why is he my dog?

RAINY

You feed him.

LEE

(To Brady.) I hate the damn mutt, but I'm the only one who will feed it.

Now everyone talks directly at Brady.

LEAH

Can you imagine that? What kind of a person hates dogs?

LEE

I don't hate dogs. I hate that particular dog.

RAINY

So the question becomes does he like dogs or just tolerate them? Tolerance, forbearance, suggests an underlying repugnance or disapproval, don't you think?

BRADY

Well --

LEE

Our little brainiac. Begged to go to summer school. Most kids want to go to the mall, run around.

CRAIG

Not me. I have a deformity.

LEAH

He can't run.

LEE

No physical activity.

RAINY

At all.

CRAIG

It'll kill me.

LEAH

It won't kill him.

LEE

But we wouldn't want to risk it.

CRAIG

They'd wrap me in a tarp and bury me out back.

There is a sudden halt to all dialogue. The Doogles stare expectantly at Brady. Even the dog has stopped barking. Brady is about to speak when ...

LEE

You don't say much, do you?

LEAH

Z. Howard Brady. What's the Z stand for?

CRAIG

Zebedee? Zebulon?

RAINY

Zero?

BRADY

Z. Just Z. (*The Doogles stare.*) Would you like to come in?

Lee releases Craig, and the two kids run upstairs. Lee and Leah enter and explore in different directions. Brady walks downstage and speaks into the phone.

I don't know why I let them in, Chloe. They seemed innocuous enough.

LEAH

(*Exiting to kitchen.*) Oh, look at that range. I didn't realize he'd remodeled the kitchen.

BRADY

Apparently, the previous owner had never invited them in.

Lee joins Brady. The two men look out at Remington Bay.

LEE

Man, what a great view. Look at that. The hills, the city, the bay. We don't get that up at our place. Those English laurels block it all out. John built this deck himself. All the way around the house. (*Peers over an invisible "rail" to the drop below.*) Whoa, watch that first step. (*Stomps the stage with his heel.*) Sturdy. Cedar. Rail's not to code. Small child or a dog could slip right through. Where you moving from?

BRADY

Los Angeles.

LEE

Los Angeles? Really? Wow. Hey, mind if I check out the basement? Want to see the workshop area. I could always hear John's table saw going, but I never went down there.

Brady gestures and Lee crosses upstage and exits.

BRADY

I swear, Chloe, if these people had come to my door in L.A., I'd have called the cops.

2. Mission-style

The sound of chainsaws and Pyro barking offstage. Stage Hands bring on the furniture they just took off.

BRADY

The furniture arrived the next day. (*Walks upstage. To Hands.*) Would you put that sofa over here? And the entertainment center can go over here.

The Hands grudgingly comply. While they continue to pull on furniture, Leah, dressed in different shorts and tank top, appears at the open door.

LEAH

Knock-knock.

BRADY

Oh, hi. Leah, right?

LEAH

(*Pointing at the headset.*) You always wear that thing? Place looks nice.

BRADY

Come in.

LEAH

(Entering.) What they can't do with reproductions these days.

BRADY

Well, the only reproduction is the entertainment center. The others are genuine.

LEAH

(Impressed.) Really?

BRADY

(Pointing to the sofa, coffee table, lamp.) Stickley, Limbert, Roycroft.

LEAH

Holy shit.

BRADY

Those names mean something to you?

LEAH

We're not all rubes out here.

BRADY

I'm sorry, I didn't --

LEAH

I hope the tree trimming isn't setting you back too much. But if you can afford these ...

BRADY

Have a look.

*They cross downstage. The volume of the chainsaws rises.
They look stage left at the work being done.*

The crew said these are the biggest laurels they've ever seen.

LEAH

I'm surprised you're doing it.

BRADY

Why? They were blocking your light.

LEAH

Yeah, but now ...

BRADY
What.

LEAH
We'll be able to see right into your house.

BRADY
I'll be able to see into yours.

LEAH
I'll be sure to give you a good show.

They share a lighthearted yet charged laugh.

BRADY
You grow up here?

LEAH
Remington Bay? You've got to be kidding.

BRADY
Where then?

LEAH
Someplace other than here.

BRADY
How about Lee?

LEAH
No other place on the planet for him.

BRADY
Really?

LEAH
(*Pointing to town.*) See that white building downtown? The four-story one? His parents own it.

BRADY
Sure, the one with the gift shops and the espresso place?

LEAH
They own the businesses, too. Since prehistoric times.

BRADY

Seriously, where are you from?

LEAH

Don't get me started.

BRADY

Why? What happens when you get started?

LEAH

(Seductively.) I don't stop.

Another charged moment, then Lee, dressed in sport coat, tie, dress shirt, jeans and sneakers, comes to the front door.

LEE

Hello? Howard? *(Enters, crosses downstage.)* Howard? Leah?

BRADY

Out here, Lee.

Lee joins them on the deck. He immediately extends a hand to Brady. Brady shakes it but is unsure why.

LEE

Thanks, buddy. See, this is what I'm always telling Leah. We need to do things differently in Remington Bay. We need to adopt the attitudes of the outside world. If trees need to be trimmed, trim 'em. Just do it. Like Nike.

BRADY

No big deal.

LEE

No big deal?! I talked to Pete, the head chainsaw up there. He quoted you thirteen hundred.

BRADY

He told you that?

LEE

Sounds like a big deal to me.

BRADY

Well.

LEE

(Laughs.) “Well,” he says!

LEAH

What are *you* all dressed up for?

LEE

Rally at the mill.

LEAH

(Smirking.) Rally.

BRADY

What kind?

LEE

Political.

BRADY

No kidding.

LEAH

I’m surprised it wasn’t the first thing out of his mouth.

LEE

You’re looking at the next mayor of Remington Bay. And I could use your support, Howard. Are you registered to vote yet? You still have plenty of time, but don’t put it off.

BRADY

You can call me Brady.

LEE

If that’s how it’s done in the big city ... Brady. *(Leah rolls her eyes.)* Can I count on you?

BRADY

Let’s talk sometime. I’ll let you know.

LEE

God, I love this man. Smart. Weighs the issues. Proactive. My kind of guy. You bet we’ll talk. We’ll have coffee.

BRADY

(Pointing.) At your folks’ espresso place.

LEE

(Shoots Leah a glance. To Brady.) There's another place I like. *(Coldly to Leah.)* Um ... I hate to come between you two lovebirds, but Craig is asking about lunch.

LEAH

Tell him I'll coming.

Lee exits through the front door. The chainsaws go silent, but the dog continues to bark.

BRADY

Sounds like they're knocking off for lunch.

LEAH

What about you?

BRADY

I'm sorry?

LEAH

What's your story? What brings you to our thriving metropolis? *(Brady shrugs. She pokes a finger at his belly.)* I'll find out.

3. "Pore, polite & harmonious"

She exits. The Stage Hands are done and gone. Brady admires the living room then turns downstage. The lights dim. The barking stops. Crickets and the occasional bullfrog are heard.

BRADY

Jerry? Hey, it's Brady. I'm all moved in. Yep. Standing right now on my deck. Spectacular view. Moonlight on the bay. Quiet little town sleeping in the shadow of the pine and spruce and cedar covered hills. This is going to be good for me, Jerry, I can feel it. *(Pause.)* Have you ... run into Chloe by any chance? No? It seemed like I was always running into her on the lot. The last time was in the commissary. She wouldn't even talk to me. I guess I don't blame her. After *Brother's Keeper* was canceled, nobody would. Nobody but you, that is. You're the only one that didn't write me off. *(Listens.)* Yeah, I'll shut up. Hey, I met the neighbors. Good folks. Different. Stuck in this tiny town, but still dreaming big. Big hearted. Like Clark wrote ...

Pulls a worn copy of The Journals of Lewis and Clark from his back pocket and reads.

"Those people," -- he was writing about a little French settlement on the Missouri --
 "Those people appear Pore, polite & harmonious." Yeah, you too. Bye.

There is a blast in the distance -- a gunshot or backfire. It's too far away for Brady to worry about. Fade.

4. Honesty

Several days later. A knock at the door, persistent and loud. The doorbell rings intermittently. Soon, Brady, wearing the ever-present headset and a lightweight sweater, walks down the stairs.

BRADY

Coming! Hold on! I'm coming! (*He opens the door. Craig stands alone.*) Hi.

CRAIG

Hi.

BRADY

(*Waits, then ...*) What's your name again?

CRAIG

(*Slips past Brady into the room.*) Craig. I'm named after a city in Alaska.

BRADY

Oh? Which one?

CRAIG

Craig.

BRADY

Of course. (*Waits.*) Did you want something?

CRAIG

(*Thinks.*) Can I be honest with you? (*Brady nods.*) It's very hard for me to be honest. It's not that I lie. It's that because I can't play, I have to imagine so much. And sometimes what I imagine seems real to me.

BRADY

I'm working right now. Maybe we could talk later.

CRAIG

What do you do?

BRADY

Right now? I'm a freelancer. (*Craig stares blankly, blinks.*) Okay, just between you and me, I'm a writer, for TV. Writer-producer. But I quit that to work on a movie script. Well a treatment, which is like the outline of a script. Brilliant concept, if I do say so myself: an epic retelling of the Lewis and Clark adventure ... get this ... from the dog's point-of-view. (*Craig stares.*) Lewis's dog. That's ... why I came to Oregon.

CRAIG

(*Blinks a few more times.*) My mom is from Alaska.

BRADY

Yeah, so maybe we can talk later.

CRAIG

My mom sent me down here to ask you something.

BRADY

Ask me what?

CRAIG

If you would like to have dinner with us tonight.

BRADY

Well, I ... I guess so. Why not?

CRAIG

What time should we come?

BRADY

Here?

CRAIG

If you don't want us, it's okay. Mom said not to be pushy.

BRADY

Are you sure she said that?

CRAIG

(*Thinks.*) Yes.

BRADY

Maybe I should call.

CRAIG

If you think you need to.

BRADY

See, why would your mom invite all of you over to my place for dinner? That's not how it's usually done.

CRAIG

You ... you don't want to come to our house.

BRADY

Why wouldn't I?

CRAIG

Well, lots of reasons. But most recently?

BRADY

Yes?

CRAIG

Rats. There's ... lots of places for them to hide and ... they've taken over, kind of.

BRADY

What's the reading on the honesty meter right now? (*Craig thinks.*) If your mom really wants us to have dinner together, tell her I'd be glad to come to your place at, say, seven?

CRAIG

The honesty meter. That's good. Do you know what my deformity is?

BRADY

Let's talk about it tonight.

CRAIG

One leg is shorter than the other.

BRADY

I think that's true of most people, actually.

CRAIG

A lot shorter. The act of walking could cause irreparable damage.

BRADY

You seem to do okay.

CRAIG

I'll tell Mom you said that. She'll really appreciate it.

BRADY

Why? She wants you to think you're deformed?

CRAIG

(Suddenly in tears.) Why are you criticizing me!

Craig turns and runs out. Brady stares a moment and slowly closes the door. As he mounts the stairs, another knock. He returns and opens the door to Lee.

BRADY

Oh, Lee.

LEE

Hey, Brady.

BRADY

Sorry I upset little Craig there. I didn't mean to.

LEE

Upset him? Is that why he was laughing? Forget about it. Can I come in?

BRADY

Actually, I'm working.

Lee enters the living room.

LEE

Only take a second. See, I'm serious about winning this election. Leah could care less. Thinks this whole city is Mickey Mouse. Being mayor here is like being manager at McDonalds. Big dog in a small cage. But that's the kind of thinking that puts the dunk in Podunk. What we need in this town is fresh thinking. Ever hear of Snyder Brimley?

BRADY

Who?

LEE

Guy's a genius. Wrote *Top Dog: How To Be the Best at What You Do*.

BRADY

Motivational?

LEE

Not just motivation.

Brady presses a button on his phone and holds up a finger.

BRADY

Hello?

LEE

Huh?

BRADY

Hey, Jerry. Yeah, I was just about to send it.

LEE

I gotta get me one of those things.

BRADY

Yeah, it's on the way. Someone came to the door. You bet. You were saying?

LEE

Me? Oh, uh, Snyder Brimley. He says, "Think outside your cage." Isn't that great? Nobody here thinks outside their cage. But what does that really mean?

BRADY

Can we talk about this tonight? I have to send a fax.

LEE

Tonight?

BRADY

Leah invited me up for dinner.

LEE

Invited you *up*? (*Brady nods.*) What ... do you know about rodents?

BRADY

Rats? Really?

LEE

I've tried poison. I've tried traps.

BRADY

Are they in the basement?

LEE

(Thinks.) Yes.

BRADY

Are they *confined* to the basement?

LEE

See you tonight. We'll talk then. *(He crosses to the door and pauses. He winks at Brady.)*
Leah's pretty sweet on you.

BRADY

(Dubious.) Oh, well.*Lee exits, shutting the door behind him. Brady turns to go upstairs, but stops and stares at the door. A knock. He opens it. Craig again.*

CRAIG

I told Mom.

BRADY

That I'd be there at seven?

CRAIG

That you took me upstairs.

BRADY

Mm-hm.

CRAIG

To show me your underwear drawer.

BRADY

Did she call the cops?

CRAIG

Not yet.

BRADY

Don't get your hopes up.

Rainy climbs the front steps and does not pause before entering the house. Craig slinks away.

RAINY

Do you want to know what kind of moron my teacher is?

BRADY

Not really. I'm working.

RAINY

Today she claimed that every finite dimensional inner product space has an orthonormal basis.

BRADY

What kind of class are you taking?

RAINY

Linear algebra.

BRADY

Well, my linear algebra is a bit rusty, but ...

RAINY

It's non-zero! Every *non-zero* finite dimensional inner --

BRADY

Um. I'm busy.

RAINY

Thanks. Have a nice life. (*Turns to leave.*)

BRADY

See you tonight.

RAINY

Tonight?

BRADY

I'm coming over for dinner.

RAINY

Tell me you're joking.

BRADY

Maybe I wish I was.

RAINY

(Dashing out the door.) Jesus, freakin' ...

Brady thinks about closing the door, but steps outside first to see if anybody else is coming. He leaves the door open and crosses downstage.

BRADY

I shouldn't have gone that night, Chloe. I should have listened to that little voice screaming inside my skull that said, "Brady, if you go over there tonight, you'll regret it."

Leah appears at the front door. She crosses downstage and stands near Brady.

"These people ... want something from you." But I went. Why? *(Looks at Leah.)*

LEAH

(Seductively.) Do you want to show *me* your underwear drawer?

BRADY

(Into phone.) I just *had* to.

Fade to work lights.

5. "Peculial"

Brady, headset in place, stands in a narrative spot downstage. As he speaks, Leah paces slowly behind him in the shadows while Stage Hands convert the set to the Doogles' dining room, which is a disaster, the very model of neglect. Cluttered and unkempt as a salvage yard, it is inconceivable that human beings could thrive in such squalor. The set might include, but is not limited to: mismatched, creaky, fingerprint-stained furniture, stacks of newspapers and magazines, random piles of mail and laundry, wooden, ceramic, and plastic gewgaws, Christmas, Halloween and Thanksgiving decorations, open bags of dog food, and so on.

BRADY

Chloe, when Lewis and Clark came face-to-face with new tribes -- the Gros Ventres, the Mandans, the Minnetarees -- they didn't run. They simply claimed them as children of the Great Father, Jefferson. Nor did they try to change them. They honored the ancient ways: smoked tobacco, offered gifts, listened to the elders.

Lee carries a vintage handgun onstage. He pauses to let

Brady take a closer look before moving upstage and mounting the gun on the wall.

BRADY (cont'd)

Sure, there were close calls. The Omahas, the Arikaras, the Sioux were infamous terrorists. On the 25th of September, 1804, there was a standoff with the Teton Sioux.

Pulls the journals from his pocket and reads. As he does, Leah approaches the edge of his spot. She smiles flirtatiously at him until Lee clears his throat, then she strolls away.

“The 2d Chief was verry insolent both in words & justures -- *pretended Drunkenness & staggered up against me* -- declareing I should not go on, Stateing he had not received presents sufficent from us, his justures were of Such a personal nature I felt My self Compeled to Draw my Sword -- *and Made a Signal to the boat to prepare for action* -- at this Motion Capt. Lewis ordered all under arms in the boat ...” (*Brady exchanges looks with Lee and continues reading.*) “Most of the Warriars appeared to have ther Bows strung and took out their arrows from the quiver.”

He closes the book. The Hands disperse. Brady eyes Lee and the gun on the wall, then exits. Full lights. Pyro barks outside. Lee searches under the cabinets, between piles of junk, above the cabinets. Leah sets the table. Both are frantic.

LEAH

Rainy! Craig! I said right now!

LEE

Shit.

LEAH

What?

LEE

No, there's shit everywhere. Turds the size of prunes. All the bait is gone, but not one trap is sprung. How do they do it?

LEAH

Rainy!

RAINY

(Offstage.) I'm coming!

LEAH

No! Not "I'm coming." I need you down here now! Why am I setting the table? That's your job! I need to check my casserole!

RAINY

I said I'm coming.

Craig enters carrying a toy fire truck.

CRAIG

The wheels came off.

LEE

(Still searching.) We never had rats until John exterminated his. They all jumped ship and came over here.

Rainy enters and seems newly disgusted by the sight of the others.

RAINY

What do you want me to do?

LEAH

We're having guests. Did you forget?

RAINY

I didn't invite anybody.

CRAIG

My theory is that someone is wrecking my toys when I'm not around.

LEAH

Finish setting the table.

RAINY

Why can't Tiny Tim, here?

CRAIG

It was probably you guys. Just to make me feel bad.

LEAH

Do not make fun of him that way, miss.

LEE

(Stands, brushes his pants.) Let's just hope they don't stage an insurgency during dinner.

The doorbell rings. The Doogles freeze. Then Lee snaps his fingers. The others form a nervous greeting line. Lee goes to the door, breathes deeply, opens it. Brady steps in, headset in place, a bottle of wine and a wrapped cheese in his hands.

BRADY

Hey, Lee. Hope you guys like a good claret. Scent of clove, faint berry sweetness. ‘Bout seventy-eight percent Cab, seventeen percent Cab Franc, just a hint of Merlot and Malbec. And what’s life without Reggiano? *Non si fabbrica, si fa!*

Lee stares in awe at Brady. Nobody can respond, until ...

CRAIG

Dad looked for the rats but they’re hiding.

LEAH

Craig!

LEE

Come in, come in.

Brady steps farther in, stops, and stares in horror at the place.

LEAH

Welcome to our humble abode.

LEE

Excuse the mess. Leah’s been helping out down at the ... the school deal and hasn’t had a lot of time.

CRAIG

What school deal?

RAINY

(Pointing at the headset.) Don’t you think that’s a little rude?

LEE

(Taking the wine and cheese.) God, I love this guy. Nothing but the best. Always stay connected. This town could learn a lot from you.

LEAH

We’re having a family specialty, green bean casserole.

RAINY

There are three green beans in it. The rest is Velveeta and Saltines.

LEAH

There's ground beef, too. My great-grandmother's recipe.

The Doogles all stop talking and wait.

BRADY

What a ... homey place. (*They wait.*) Got the ... decorations. The antiques. Nice. (*Noticing the vintage handgun.*) Wow. Heh. You know what Chekhov said.

LEE

Guy from Star Trek?

Rainy rolls her eyes.

BRADY

Anton Chekhov the Russian writer.

LEE

Never heard of him.

BRADY

He said that if you hang a gun on the wall in the first act, you'd better fire it by the third act. Otherwise, don't put it there.

LEE

Oh. What act are we in?

BRADY

That's a good question. Real life isn't like the stage, is it? In life, the end of one drama is usually just the beginning of some other --

Lee has taken the gun from its mount, pointed it at the ceiling, and now fires it. A huge blast. Brady hunkers violently down, but Leah and the kids don't flinch. The dog barks wildly offstage.

LEE

Guess we don't have to worry about when the gun goes off now.

BRADY

Are you crazy?

LEE

(Laughs crazily.) Blanks!

The Doogles all laugh heartily. Brady straightens and brushes himself off.

BRADY

Heh. Good one.

Lee fires again. Brady hunkers again. The Doogles laugh again. Brady straightens.

LEAH

(Claps her hands at Rainy.) Chop, chop!

Leah and Rainy scurry, setting the table, exiting and entering. Craig sits with his truck. Lee returns the gun to its mount, grabs a book from a shelf and brings it to Brady.

LEE

Brady. Brady, this is the guy I was telling you about. Snyder Brimley. Books, CDs, DVDs, infomercials, *seminars*. Cost a fortune, but one of these days. Get this ... *(Opens the book and reads.)* “Don’t settle for being the ‘best that you can be’. **THAT’S NOT GOOD ENOUGH!** You have to be the best there **IS**. You have to be **better** than you can be. I know what you’re saying. You’re whining. You’re saying, ‘But, Brim, how can I be better than I can be?’ That, my friend, is why you’re reading this book. **PAY ATTENTION!**” *Top Dog*. You gotta read it. But you already know all this. You are the top dog at what you do, right? *(Nudges him with an elbow.)* Dog’s point-of-view. Brilliant!

BRADY

(A little flattered.) Well ...

LEE

There’s no well about it. You’re bona fide big dog.

LEAH

Bigger than any dog around here.

LEE

Brim’s got all these phrases about dogs: top dog, dead dog, dirty dog, dog-eat-dog.

BRADY

Allusions.

LEE

Illusions?

RAINY

Not *illusions*. *Allusions*, with an “A.” An implied or indirect reference.

LEE

Right! References. If Remington Bay is ever going to compete with the outside world, we have to get active. We can’t let the sleeping dog lay.

RAINY

Lie!

LEE

Who’s lying?

LEAH

Lee, we need another chair.

Lee hands Brady the book and exits. Leah stands close to Brady.

(*Sultry.*) Hope you brought your appetite.

BRADY

Uh, have you read this?

LEAH

Oh, please. Lee’s grasping at straws. Like everyone else here. I read in a magazine where the more a person stays in one place, the fewer synapses their brain develops. Sad, isn’t it? We know so many people who were born and raised here and never want to leave. They’ve never known anything else.

RAINY

(*Entering with the casserole.*) Oh, like you?

Lee enters with a chair. He sets it down and goes to Brady.

LEAH

I’m from Anchorage. I know what it’s like to live in a big city. The shopping, the museums, the parks ... the stimulation.

LEE

There’s a place for you in local government, Brady. My administration will be thinking outside its cage. We’ll need fresh ideas and perspectives.

LEAH

Have you ever been to Anchorage? You'd like it. Talk about wine. Restaurants. Writers live there.

LEE

The first thing we're going to do -- and you could give me input on this -- is get Remington Bay on the map. Establish a Film Board. Get Hollywood to camp out on our doorstep. We need fiber optics too. That's our future. Our destiny.

LEAH

But I'm not like Lee. I know Anchorage is not the only place in the world. I don't think that for a minute. Los Angeles. I've never been there. I've been to San Francisco. Loved it. With a boyfriend, before I met Lee. We went to the theatre there. I actually saw what's his name, the actor from the movie *Body Heat*? He was in a play. It was a *drama*.

CRAIG

(Standing suddenly.) Listen!

LEE

Craig, hold it down, we're trying to have a ...

CRAIG

Stop talking! Listen!

Everyone goes silent. Nothing.

LEE

Imagining things again ...

CRAIG

No!

They listen again. A faint scratching sound. Lee and Leah share a panicked look, then both go in search of the intruder. Rainy and Craig go to either side of Brady.

RAINY

The whole thing is disgusting. Or at least pathetic. Certainly narcissistic. When I'm old enough to get out of here, *legally*, I'm never coming back. What's the point? Why would you waste time and energy trying to fix up a place like this?

LEAH

(Her ear to a strip of baseboard.) It's coming from over here.

LEE

(Stretching to look behind a cupboard.) I think they're back here, too.

CRAIG

It could be the rats that are ruining my toys. That makes the most sense. In fact, the rats of the Oregon coast are known by scientists to be the biggest and smartest creatures of the rodent kingdom. Lewis and Clark both wrote about them. Sacajawea had to be the interpreter between the Corps of Discovery and the Rat Chief, who wanted a Burger King franchise in exchange for squatting rights. Don't forget to put that in your movie.

RAINY

Why on earth did you choose Remington Bay? Did you even research the economic conditions? The political climate? Did you know that Remington Bay is a Gay-free Zone? The electorate, of which I do not belong, thankfully, passed an ordinance two years ago. You left L.A. for this? Why? Your wife leave you? Your show get canceled? That's it, isn't it? You're running away like a dog with it's tail between it's --

LEAH

(Giving up her search.) Oh, forget it. Let's eat dinner before it gets cold.

CRAIG

Let's eat before the rats get it.

Doogles all take seats at the table, leaving the center seat for Brady, between Leah and Rainy.

LEAH

Lee usually gives thanks, but you can if you want.

LEE

You're the guest.

BRADY

Pray? *(He moves downstage.)* "The Mandans Speake a language peculial to themselves." Chloe, have you ever seen a movie that sucked you into an alternate reality so completely that when you left the theater, the real world seemed altered? That's the way it was. The place was freaky, like ... I don't know, David Lynch meets Norman Rockwell. The Doogles wanted *me* to pray. *(Takes his seat and joins hands with Leah and Rainy.)* I'd be honored. *(They bow heads.)* Great ... Parent in the sky ... we can't know you. We can only hope to hear your whisper in the infinitesimal hum of the void. We thank you for bringing us together at this table, and for this food, and for giving us the opportunity to eat it before the vermin do. Your bounty is truly boundless. Your specific nature increasingly immeasurable. Amen.

They release hands, Brady and Rainy last, Rainy seeming to really look at him for the first time.

LEE

The infinite whisper of the void? I don't know what that means, but you're my man, I tell ya. This guy right here! Dig in. (*The Doogles lunge for food and fill their plates.*) How's that treatise coming? About Lewis and Clark.

BRADY

It's a *treatment*.

RAINY

How does it end?

BRADY

With the expedition's arrival in Oregon. The site of their triumph.

RAINY

Lewis committed suicide, you know. Aren't you going to include that?

LEAH

Rainy, stop it. Do you have to be such a teenager?

RAINY

It's true!

BRADY

Lewis battled depression, yes. He was a solitary man. Reserved, thoughtful.

LEAH

Just like you. The strong silent type.

BRADY

But that's not what the film is about.

LEE

How many pages so far?

BRADY

It's going well. Really well.

RAINY

That means he's still noodling out the first sentence.

LEAH

Miss, do you want to go to your room?

RAINY

Yes.

LEAH

Well, you can't.

LEE

Can't wait to read it.

CRAIG

I'm writing a treatment, too.

BRADY

Oh? What about?

CRAIG

About a little lame kid who invents a shrinking machine. He shrinks himself so small that he can crawl inside the next door neighbor's head through his nose. But the snot almost kills him.

The Doogles laugh, then break into simultaneous adlibbed conversation. Brady sits back and watches Rainy. Fade to work lights.

6. Chekhov, Chekov

Later that night. Brady and Leah walk downstage. The other characters exit. Stage Hands clear the set and restore Brady's living room. A Hand brings a sweatshirt to Leah and a leather coat to Brady, which they put on. Moonlight rises on them. Pyro barks in the distance a few times, then no more. Brady reads from the journals, as if reading a love poem.

BRADY

"... last night late we wer awoke by the Sergeant of the Guard to See a Nothern light, which was light, not red, and appeared to Darken and Some times nearly obscured, and open, many times appeared in light Streeks, and at other times a great Space light & containing floating collomns which appeared to approach each other & retreat leaveing the lighter space at no time of the Same appearance ..."

LEAH

Wow. That's so ... strange.

BRADY

It's different.

LEAH

And beautiful? Would you say beautiful?

BRADY

(Wavering a little closer.) Yes. I would. Beautiful. *(Catching himself.)* Thanks for dinner. It was fun.

LEAH

Oh. Sorry about the mess and the ...

BRADY

Well, you're helping out with the school deal.

LEAH

There's no school deal. *(Off Brady's look.)* Then why don't I clean house? It's complicated. I guess I felt a long time ago that I wasn't going to ever get what I wanted. We'd always be stuck here in Doogleville. And if I couldn't get what I wanted, I sure as hell wasn't going to give Lee what he wanted.

BRADY

A housewife.

LEAH

It's too bad for the kids. It's not their fault.

BRADY

Do you think you'll ever go back to Anchorage?

LEAH

Lee would never go. But I might. *(Hesitates.)* Would you go back?

BRADY

I plan on it.

LEAH

Really?

BRADY

That's the goal.

LEAH

Then what are you doing here?

BRADY

"Sometimes it's necessary to go a long distance out of the way in order to come back a short distance correctly." Albee. Uh, *Edward Albee*, the playwright.

LEAH

Tell me what the Z stands for.

BRADY

(Thinks.) My parents were hippies. The original flower children. And later, Buddhists.

LEAH

(Considers this, then gets it.) No. *(Brady nods.)* You're not saying.

BRADY

Mm-hm. Zen. And I'd appreciate it if you didn't spread it around.

LEAH

(Leaning close.) Your secret is safe with me.

An intimate moment before Rainy blasts through Brady's front door and storms through the living room.

RAINY

Mom! Mom, where are you? *(Sees the two of them and glares.)* Your son needs you.

LEAH

Needs me for what?

RAINY

He's vomiting.

LEAH

Oh.

Leah gives Brady a look and pulls herself away. She goes upstage and exits. Rainy continues to glare at Brady.

RAINY

What are you doing?

BRADY

We were just reading from *The Journals of Lewis and Clark*.

RAINY

What I mean is do you think that seducing an emotionally crippled housewife is going to play in Peoria?

BRADY

I'm not trying to seduce your mom. And she's not --

RAINY

Do you think the man of the house up there is going to act all civilized about it, let you have her like some wounded character in a Hemingway novel? The man's a Neanderthal. He doesn't know the difference between the navigator of the Star Ship Enterprise and one of the greatest short story writers of all time. You'd better watch yourself.

BRADY

Have you ever noticed how people who've read Chekhov's stories forget he was a playwright, and those who know his plays forget he wrote fiction?

RAINY

Consider yourself warned.

BRADY

(Looking out over the town.) One thing I never imagined was how temperate it would be here. Californians think it rains here all the time.

Rainy thinks a moment.

RAINY

What did you ... *(Pause.)*

BRADY

Yes?

RAINY

What did you mean by "increasingly immeasurable"?

BRADY

My prayer? I'm not much of a believer.

RAINY

Duh.

BRADY

I meant that the more we know about the physical nature of things, the less we seem to know. Some people believe that the new thinking in physics lends credibility to theories of spirituality ... i.e. dark energy equals “the force” ... but what it means to me is that, as a species, we’re getting dumber by the second. The ratio of what we know to what there is to know expands exponentially with each new question we think to ask. (*Rainy is silent, curious.*) I’m sorry if that offends some people. I sympathize. I do. The human brain seems wired for belief.

RAINY

Even the Neanderthal brain.

Brady laughs. He moves closer to Rainy. They size each other up.

BRADY

I hope you do make it out. You don’t belong here.

Rainy steps away.

RAINY

Oh, Jesus. Now you’re coming on to *me*?

BRADY

I ... I’m not coming on to anyone.

RAINY

I can’t believe you. I’m seventeen years old. You know what? You’re here for the same reason as your beloved Lewis and Clark.

BRADY

Which is?

RAINY

The beavers!

BRADY

Oh, that’s crass. That is --

RAINY

Did you register as a sex offender? You’re supposed to, you know.

BRADY

No, what you say about the Corps of Discovery is not true. I know what everybody's been saying for the last fifty years. It was all about the fur trade. All about greed and --

RAINY

Did you hear what I said?

BRADY

Yes, and it's completely unfair. Lewis and Clark were not coarse capitalists. They --

RAINY

About you being a sex pervert?

BRADY

Whatever. I'm not playing that game. Lewis and Clark were explorers. Fearless adventurers. *(Rainy laughs loudly.)* What?

RAINY

You really are in love with them, aren't you. They were illiterate.

BRADY

They were not!

RAINY

Clark spelled Sioux, as in the Sioux Indians, twenty-six different ways, and never once the right way!

BRADY

In their time spelling wasn't so much of a --

RAINY

They came to claim real estate, dominate the native populations, and establish supremacy over the *fur* trade. Just like you.

BRADY

They were the Corps of Discovery! They came to --

RAINY

Boldly go where no man had gone before? You *are* a Trekkie.

Craig wanders through the front door and out to the deck.

BRADY

If you think those men risked their lives, marched through all manner of hell, for purely commercial reasons, you know absolutely nothing about courage, about curiosity ...

RAINY

They were illiterate!

BRADY

You are such a schoolgirl.

RAINY

Yeah, well you stay away from my mom.

BRADY

You'd better talk to *her*.

CRAIG

About what?

RAINY and BRADY

What are you doing here?

RAINY

How long have you been standing there?

CRAIG

Long enough.

RAINY

Go home.

CRAIG

Mom sent me to get you.

BRADY

I thought you were sick.

CRAIG

I think it was the rat feces in the casserole. I'm surprised *you* didn't barf.

RAINY

Let's go.

Rainy takes Craig's hand and pulls him upstage. They exit.

Brady tries to compose himself.

BRADY

(Into phone.) We're talking serious dementia, Chloe. A girl just doesn't say things like that. *(Thinks.)* After that night, I couldn't get her out of my head.

Lee enters the front door and crosses to the deck. He stands behind Brady at some distance.

LEE

Hey, Brady.

BRADY

(Coldly.) Lee.

LEE

Aw, what's wrong? I hope we didn't ... do anything to ... *(Brady says nothing. Lee comes closer.)* Oh, come on. I know we come on strong. But you have to understand, we've never seen anyone like you. *(Steps next to Brady.)* Don't worry about Leah. This isn't the first time she's flipped for somebody. She's not happy with me or with Remington Bay. Hell, *I'm* not happy with it. She's just fantasizing. I don't begrudge her that. Thing is, she'll never leave me, no matter what. We want you here. There's an election coming up. We need you ... to help us bust out and broaden our horizons. *(Pyro barks offstage.)* There's that rascal. Pyro! Came out to find him. What a pain in the ass, but God I love that mutt. Pyro, stay!

Lee thumps Brady's shoulder gently, then exits upstage. Brady listens until the dog is taken inside and the barking becomes muffled. Fade.

7. The cloud

October. There is a deluge and intermittent flashes of lightning. A Stage Hand helps Brady on with a heavy coat and scarf. The Hand exits. Brady reads from the journals.

BRADY

"... we are all wet as usual -- and our Situation is truly a disagreeable one; the great quantities of rain which has loosened the Stones on the hill Sides; and the Small stones fall down upon us, our canoes at one place at the mercy of the waves, our baggage in another; and our selves and party Scattered on floating logs ..."

Returns the book to his pocket.

BRADY (cont'd)

At twenty-nine, my career was in shambles. I was a has-been, washed up. So I came here, to Remington Bay, with the idea that if I could accomplish this one great thing, it would catapult me back to the top and I'd get you back. But after six months, the project was nowhere. I was spending more and more time with the Doogles. They were always at my door, and I let them in. We had dinner together three or four times a week. I couldn't figure out why I was letting this happen. And then today ... it all became clear.

He runs upstairs. A flash of lightning and thunder. Offstage Pyro barks wildly and children scream. A pounding at the door and the doorbell rings repeatedly. Brady is half way downstairs when the door flies open. Craig tumbles in and emits a blood-curdling scream.

BRADY

Craig, what is it! What happened!

Craig wails, coughs, and rubs his eyes. Brady inspects him for injury.

Did you hurt yourself? Where's your dad?

CRAIG

(Coughing and sucking air.) He said we had to come here!

Rainy enters. She too is coughing and crying.

RAINY

Call 911! *Call 911 now!*

He dials. She pulls the headset off his head and holds it to her ear.

BRADY

Tell me what happened!

RAINY

(Into phone.) We need help now!

CRAIG

Daddy cleaned the furnace!

RAINY

There's a noxious cloud in our house!

BRADY
What did he clean it with?

RAINY
551 Winchester Way!

CRAIG
Formula 409!

BRADY
That caused the cloud?

RAINY
Remington Bay! What do you think!

CRAIG
That and the rat urine.

RAINY
The fire is out but the house is filled with gas!

BRADY
Rat urine?

RAINY
Hurry, please! My father is still in there!

CRAIG
He tried to start the furnace but it wouldn't light. So he went in there to see what was wrong.

RAINY
Yes, I'll stay on the line. (*To Brady.*) They're dispatching a fire unit.

CRAIG
He found a rat's nest.

BRADY
And rat urine?

RAINY
And rat feces! Lots of it.

CRAIG

He cleaned it all up and then lit the furnace.

RAINY

There were flames. Dad's hair was on fire.

CRAIG

Then the cloud came.

RAINY

The cleaning chemicals reacted with the urine.

CRAIG

(Crying loudly.) It was like a million bees stinging my eyes and lungs!

BRADY

Where's your mom?

RAINY

She's at Safeway.

BRADY

But your dad's still in there?

RAINY

He's trying to get stuff out of the house.

CRAIG

In case it burns down.

Brady starts for the door but stops when the headset cord goes taut in Rainy's hands.

BRADY

We need to get your dad out of there!

CRAIG

We need to get Pyro!

Craig and Rainy start for the door.

BRADY

No! You two stay here. *(Removes the phone from his belt and hands it to Rainy.)* I'll get your dad.

CRAIG

And Pyro!

BRADY

And Pyro, too. (*Brady exits. Offstage.*) Lee! Pyro!

RAINY

I'm still here.

CRAIG

Huh?

RAINY

My dad's still in there. And the neighbor now. My brother's safe.

Craig goes to her and puts his arm around her waist, but she sloughs him off and moves downstage.

His eyes are swollen and red. Me? Am I okay? No, I am not. I've never been okay. Not since day one. Well, for starters, I'm embarrassed as hell. How would you like to be born into a family of morons? Oh, they are that bad. My father just ignited a toxic solution of ammonium chloride, urea, and uric acid. He nearly asphyxiated his children. My mother doesn't lift a finger around the house. And my little brother is a psycho. I'd have been better off kidnapped and sold into sex slavery. *It's not just the fumes talking!* I'm trapped and I hate it here. I hate it! I hate it!

Sirens are heard in the distance. Brady enters from downstage.

BRADY

(*At Pyro, barking just offstage.*) Stay, Pyro! Stay. Just calm down. It's okay.

Brady goes upstage to the living room.

CRAIG

Did you get Pyro?

BRADY

Yes, he's fine. He's all right. (*To Rainy.*) Are you okay? What's wrong?

RAINY

(*Crying.*) Do you really have to ask? Do you?

She shoves the phone into his hands. He takes her into his arms. She weeps. The sirens grow louder and stop. The fire engine blasts its horn and everyone jumps. The dog yelps and stops barking.

BRADY

It's okay. It's all right. I'm here. Your dad is okay.

CRAIG

Did he save our stuff?

BRADY

Yes. Everything is fine. He opened the windows. The cloud is gone.

RAINY

The cloud is not gone. The cloud is never gone.

Brady holds her, strokes her hair. She calms a little.

CRAIG

Did Pyro run away?

BRADY

No, he's outside. I tied him up.

CRAIG

He must of got loose because he's not barking anymore.

BRADY

No, I tied him up securely.

Rainy pulls away from Brady.

RAINY

You tied him up? Where?

BRADY

Outside.

RAINY

You tied him up on the deck?

BRADY

Yes, on the deck. He's right there on the ...

Horrible knowledge breaks over their faces. They all race downstage and look off left, over the invisible "rail."

BRADY (cont'd)

Oh, my god.

Craig screams and runs upstage and out the front door.

RAINY

PYRO!

Dim to work lights. Brady moves to his spotlight, attaches the phone to his belt and puts on the headset, while Rainy moves upstage. A Stage Hand brings on the lifeless hump and leaves it on the floor. Rainy kneels and weeps.

BRADY

I love her, Chloe. I didn't mean to fall in love. I came here for you. But seeing her there, crying, kneeling next to that poor mutt, was a revelation. Like Lewis and Clark reaching the Pacific. They'd crossed a continent, battled the elements, nearly drowned, nearly plummeted off cliffs, engaged in mortal combat, and finally they found this shore. "*Ocean in view! O! The Joy!*"

He moves upstage, stands over Rainy, reaches a hand toward her hair, but thinks better of it. An Emergency Worker leads a panicked Lee and Leah Doogle into the room, both rain-drenched. Lee and Leah look in horror at the lifeless hump. Lee lunges at Brady but is restrained by the Emergency Worker. A brief struggle, then Lee gives up and slumps to the floor. Leah glares at Brady and then comforts the girl. Fade.

Act Two

1. Seize the potential

Brady's living room. Two weeks later. Early morning. A knock at the door. The doorbell rings. Brady appears at the top of the steps, shoeless, buttoning his shirt, no headset. More knocking and ringing.

BRADY

Coming!

He moves downstairs and opens the door warily. It's Lee holding the morning paper. The men are awkward with each other.

Lee. What are you doing here? What a surprise.

LEE

Brady. Can I ... come in?

BRADY

Uh ... why don't I get dressed. We could go downtown for coffee.

LEE

This really can't wait.

Brady lets him in but leaves the door open.

BRADY

Lee, I --

LEE

Don't say anything. I mean, you don't have to apologize again. I know you're sorry. We're all sorry. It was an accident. If it's anybody's fault it's mine. The exterminator came. I don't know if you saw the truck?

BRADY

I did.

LEE

Anyway, I didn't come to rehash that. I came because ... I need you more than ever.

BRADY

Need me?

LEE

(Suddenly gleeful, holding up the paper.) Brady, you won't believe what's happened. You won't believe it.

BRADY

(Nervous.) Current affairs. That's nice, but I really should get to work.

LEE

It's about Phil Blaine, the incumbent. He died last night! In what the paper describes as a ... *(Reading.)* "... an intimacy-induced heart attack." So I called my old 4-H buddy Fred who runs the EMT service in town. Said when they arrived, old lady Blaine was dressed in black leather. Apparently, Phil liked it rough. So I called my old yearbook club buddy Sam down at *The World*. He confirmed it. Said they're keeping it hush-hush unless and until they determine if there was any malice aforethought. So I called Sheriff Lanz, who I used to rebuild cars with, and he said there doesn't seem to be any wrongdoing -- consenting adults and such -- but the police report will be a matter of public record. So I called up Sam again and he said that they'll probably run a story with all the details sometime next week -- you know, after a respectable amount of time has passed. But what does this all mean? Guess what it means.

BRADY

I'm guessing ...

LEE

It means that I'm a shoo-in! In all honesty, as a fellow Republican, I didn't stand a chance against Blaine.

BRADY

Two Republicans?

LEE

Nonpartisan election. City charter. Old news. But now I'm the only Republican. My only opponents are a Democrat -- the last time Remington Bay had a Democratic mayor was *never* -- a Green Party candidate, who might stand a chance if owls and trees could vote, and a homeless guy, who nobody knows how he got on the ballot in the first place. I'm the mayor, Brady! I am going to be the next mayor! Snyder Brimly says, "Seize the potential of every *opportunity* and LEVERAGE the possibilities to achieve **exponential results**." I'm seizing, Brady. I'm seizing!

BRADY

(Glancing upstairs.) That's great, Lee. Let's talk about it tonight. I'll buy you a beer.

LEE

I need you to campaign with me. Come to rallies. Talk about the future. Talk about bringing big-city ideas to Cobb County.

BRADY

I'm not really a Republican.

LEE

But you're an industry guy, right? You're pro business. And you're on my side, right? I mean, it's the least you could do after the ... late unpleasantness.

BRADY

I thought you said it wasn't my fault.

LEE

Well ... most people know better than to tie a dog up to a nonstandard deck railing.

BRADY

Okay, fine. I'll support you.

LEE

(Pumping Brady's hand.) That's great, really great. *(Goes to the door and turns.)* I'm glad we could work through tough times like this. No sense in holding a grudge, eh?

BRADY

None.

Lee exits, closing the door. Brady waits, then goes to the bottom of the stairs.

He's gone!

Rainy appears at the top of the stairs. The two rush to each other. They embrace and kiss.

RAINY

What did he want? Was he looking for me?

BRADY

No, but you'd better get to school.

RAINY

I hate school. I'll quit. I've got enough credits. I only go to get out of the house.

They kiss again.

BRADY

We can't do anything suspicious. You always go to school. You've got to go now.

RAINY

Oh, what? Afraid you can't beat a Class A misdemeanor charge? No judge in his right mind would convict. My *parents* would fight it. They love you. I turn eighteen the day after the election. So relax.

A knock at the door. Rainy starts upstairs, but Brady motions to the back door. She kisses him and exits downstage. Brady waits, then opens the door. Leah enters without a word and wraps her arms around Brady.

BRADY

Leah. I ... I'm ... are you all right?

LEAH

(Smelling his collar.) You wearing perfume now?

BRADY

Conditioner.

LEAH

I think Rainy uses the same one. *(Goes to the couch and sits.)* I don't blame you, you know. I blame Lee. I blame this goddamned town.

She starts to bawl and lies full-length, face down, on the couch. Soon she's having a full-blown tantrum.

BRADY

Leah. I'm sorry. It's okay. Please. I'm sorry.

LEAH

Why did this have to happen?

BRADY

These things happen.

LEAH

Why couldn't it happen to someone else?

BRADY

It does happen to someone else. All the time. Look, You'll get another dog. The kids will survive. You will.

LEAH

(Sitting up.) I'm not crying about Pyro. I've shed all the tears I'm going to over that mutt.

BRADY

Then, what are you upset about?

LEAH

Blaine. Didn't Lee tell you?

BRADY

He was a friend of yours?

LEAH

(Standing.) No. With Blaine out of the race, Lee's going to be the next mayor of Remington Bay. I can't stand it, Brady! I'll go completely out of my mind!

She flies face down on the couch again and wails.

BRADY

There's worse things that could happen.

LEAH

(Rising and charging him.) No, there's no worse thing! I'll be stuck here forever. I'll have to sit beside Lee in that goddamned pink Cadillac in the Blackberry Festival parade! Driving down main street behind that sorry excuse for a high school band wearing uniforms from the school's 1965 production of *The Music Man*! THERE'S NO WORSE THING! If only there were a book depository. There's not even a grassy knoll!

She drapes her arms around Brady. Craig comes to the door and stares at them.

BRADY

Shouldn't you be in school?

CRAIG

Dad told me to stay home today. He thinks that you and Mom are having an affair.

LEAH

(Goes to the couch and sits.) He hasn't been to school since Pyro.

CRAIG

What's the point?

BRADY

To learn?

LEAH

He wouldn't be able to concentrate. He cries all night. He calls out Pyro's name.

CRAIG

Pyro.

LEAH

He's heartbroken.

CRAIG

And crestfallen. Was that my sister coming out of your back door this morning?

BRADY

Yeah. Along with the Three Stooges and the Brady Bunch. Didn't you see them?

CRAIG

What was she doing here?

BRADY

Practicing her karate? You tell me.

CRAIG

Where's your phone? (*To Leah.*) If you want to know the truth about what's going on, just ask me. In the meantime, I'd like a waffle.

He exits.

LEAH

Don't tell anyone, but I'm definitely going back to Anchorage. Maybe.

BRADY

What about the kids?

LEAH

I'd take Craig.

BRADY

Don't you think you can work things out?

LEAH

Not if he becomes mayor. *(She goes to him and gives him another hard hug.)* You smell good.

She exits. Fade to work lights.

2. Brother's Keeper

Brady steps downstage into his narrative spot. A Hand brings on Brady's phone and he puts it on. The Hand exits.

BRADY

The Bitterroots, Chloe. The Great Divide. On Friday, August 23, 1805, Lewis and Clark crested the Lemhi Pass hoping to be greeted by a wide lazy river flowing straight to the Pacific Ocean. Instead, they beheld the Salmon, a river that was, as Clark wrote, "one continued rapid ... foaming & roeing thro rocks in every direction, So as to render the passage of any thing impossible."

Rainy enters and sits on the couch. Brady watches her a moment, then ...

Some say life is a river. Life is not just a river, Chloe. It's the Salmon. How do any of us navigate it? The fury, the sound of it ... the thrill!

He goes to the couch and sits, putting his phone on the coffee table. Rainy puts her legs over his. They kiss.

RAINY

Do you feel guilty?

BRADY

I guess I should. I mean, I do. But then, when I think of who you are, how intelligent and mature you are, it doesn't seem wrong.

RAINY

Maybe you're just immature.

BRADY

Do you want me to feel guilty?

RAINY

(Smiling.) Yes.

They kiss.

BRADY

How did this happen? I kill your dog, and then this?

RAINY

It was an accident. I know that, Z. When I saw the look on your face that night, how hurt you were -- I just felt so much sympathy. I don't usually feel sympathy.

BRADY

That's not true.

RAINY

Yes it is. In other ways, I have no sympathy for you.

BRADY

Like what?

RAINY

Like this TV show of yours that was canceled. You're better off. TV is idiotic, possibly evil, at least an opiate of the masses, and a distraction from anything real or vital.

BRADY

Why don't you tell me how you really feel.

RAINY

See?

BRADY

Not all of TV is a waste. There's value in mindless entertainment.

RAINY

What was your show called?

BRADY

My Brother's Keeper.

RAINY

What was it about?

BRADY

Great concept. Very funny. A guy gets turned into a chimp.

RAINY

Uh-huh. How?

BRADY

Science experiment gone bad.

RAINY

Oh, that's great. Very credible.

BRADY

Now wait. So his sister has to take him into her Upper East Side apartment and they get into all kinds of wacky situations.

RAINY

Kind of like a situation comedy.

BRADY

Right, but not just that. Being a chimp, the guy starts seeing things from a different perspective.

RAINY

The animal's point-of-view?

BRADY

Well, yeah, he's an animal, but he also learns what it's like to be a member of an underprivileged class, the subject of prejudice, in everything from his love life ...

RAINY

Oh, yuck.

BRADY

... which stalls, of course, to all levels of socio-economic interaction.

RAINY

Brilliant. And the sister?

BRADY

She comes at it from the other point-of-view, from the privileged class.

RAINY

So she has to learn to put her own petty concerns aside to care for someone less able.

BRADY

Exactly.

RAINY

What does she do for a living?

BRADY

TV personality.

RAINY

Naturally. Boyfriend?

BRADY

Yeah.

RAINY

How long did it run?

BRADY

Two shows.

RAINY

(Laughs.) Sorry, sorry. I don't mean to be so insensitive. But a guy who turns into a chimp? Come on.

BRADY

It was a good show. It wasn't canceled because it wasn't a good show.

RAINY

Why, then?

BRADY

It was political.

RAINY

The chimp was running for office? Like my dad.

BRADY

No, studio politics. There was this intern.

RAINY

Isn't there always. What was her name? Wait, let me guess. Zoe.

BRADY

Chloe. (*Rainy laughs.*) She was really smart and outgoing --

RAINY

And ambitious.

BRADY

Who isn't in L.A.?

RAINY

And had big knockers.

BRADY

Who doesn't in L.A.? We just hit it off. But what I didn't know was that the head of the studio was ... infatuated with her. When he found out about us, he pulled the plug on *Brother's Keeper* like within an hour. Replaced with a reality TV show: *America's Worst Comb-Overs*.

RAINY

Oh, I've seen that.

BRADY

Thanks.

RAINY

Kidding! But I have heard of it. They go across the country and show a day in the lives of these guys with horrendous hair, right?

BRADY

Right.

RAINY

That's so wrong.

BRADY

The studio head, that bastard, called my wife and then he put the word out to the other studios. Nobody would return my calls. Naomi divorced me. Even Chloe dumped me, said I was a loser, and that was that.

RAINY

And you thought this Lewis and Clark thing would get her back?

BRADY

Sounds stupid, I know. But yes. It's a great idea.

RAINY

Right. Let me ask you this. If nobody would return your calls, what made you think you could sell the project?

BRADY

My friend, Jerry. He's a producer. He saw the whole thing come down and he never gave up on me.

RAINY

And he thinks the "project" sounds good?

BRADY

Why do you say it like that?

RAINY

Say what like what?

BRADY

The "project."

RAINY

I didn't say it like that.

BRADY

You think it's a bad idea, don't you.

RAINY

I'm not qualified to say what Hollywood thinks is a good idea. Bad hair apparently is a good idea.

BRADY

Oh, come on. You're equating my project with *America's Worst Comb-Overs*?

RAINY

No, I'm not. You have an animal fixation, don't you? First a chimp and now a dog.

BRADY

That dog went everywhere with Captain Lewis. Everybody loves a dog. I'm thinking Disney here, possibly Pixar. Or live action. It would be spectacular any way you did it.

RAINY

'Kay.

BRADY

You don't think so?

RAINY

I don't really care.

BRADY

You don't ... *(He's stunned.)*

RAINY

You don't have to impress me. I'm not Chloe or your producer friend. I like you, Z. I have fun with you. We'll go places, right?

BRADY

You "like" me?

RAINY

Yeah.

BRADY

Hold on, I've just made a huge adjustment in my life and not just for "like." I love you, Rainy.

RAINY

Well, yeah, I guess I kind of do too. Love you, I guess. But I'm just seventeen, you know? What do I know? And this is all so ... fresh.

Lee bursts through the front door. Brady and Rainy jump, she emitting a small yelp. Lee laughs.

LEE

Sorry! Didn't mean to startle you. You guys are hanging out a lot. That's good. See, Brady, this is why you're so great for this community. You stimulate discourse, interaction, intercourse. *(Catching himself. Laughs.)* Wait, not intercourse. Forget I said that. Brady, Brady, I gotta tell you about the rally.

RAINY

(Going to the front door.) Look, I'll see ya, okay?

BRADY

Rain.

She exits.

LEE

Let her go. You can patch things up later. The rally, Brady, you won't believe it!

3. Bark for your future!

Lights fade on the set, while two spots rise downstage. Brady dons his headset and phone, and the men go to opposite spots.

BRADY

The age difference was a problem, Chloe. Not just for the legal reasons. *(Lee clears his throat.)* Meanwhile, Lee's campaign hit its stride. Now that he was the front runner, he pulled out all the stops. For the first time, he really believed he could win, and that made all the difference. The people of Remington Bay glommed onto him like ... like dog dirt to the sole of a shoe.

LEE and BRADY

This is how it's going to be.

BRADY

He told them. He took a page right out of Brimley. He said ...

LEE

(Stumping to the house.) Do you want to wallow in your own crapulence? Whine about the raw deal you got? Go down to the Shrimp Depot every night for dinner and pump your arteries full of cholesterol and gravy and grease, then mainline the boob tube news pundits till your blood pressure pushes the envelope? You're going to die. You are going to be dead in five years. If you sit on your fat asses, your hearts are going to explode. Blood vessels in your brains will leak.

Now, is one man going to change that for you? Is there a savior who will smite the spotted owl and the rare protected newt? No. But as your mayor, I will harness our collective will and energy and talent, and I will bring the future to Remington Bay. The fisheries are dead. The timber industry is dead. You think you're going to get rich operating the machinery that grinds old growth timbers into wood pulp, to be sold to the Japanese to make particle board, to be sold back to the custom home manufacturers to build houses that are way too expensive for you and me to even dream of buying?

LEE and BRADY

Get a life!

BRADY

Apparently, that was a favorite Brimley catch phrase.

BRADY and LEE

Get a life!

LEE

Remington Bay is a *third world country*, people! The sooner you face that fact, the sooner we can entice the Hyundais and the Intels and the Nikes of the world to build their factories *here*, instead of Bangladesh or Indonesia. We start from the ground up. We get those factory jobs. Pretty soon we're running factories. Pretty soon we're owning factories. We are top dogs, people. Think outside your cage! Get off your asses and bark! Bark for your futures! Bark!

BRADY

And guess what? They barked. They literally barked. (*Lee and Brady bark.*) Pretty soon, he didn't have to say anything. As soon as he rolled into the Wal-Mart parking lot or climbed the steps to the middle school stage, they barked.

LEE

Thank you! A bark for Lee Doogle is a bark for your future! Thank you!

He kisses his hands and opens them to the house, waves, gives two thumbs up, and exits.

BRADY

Then, three weeks before the election, something happened that changed the course of the campaign. A defining moment of adversity, like the ones the Corps of Discovery faced daily, that brought everyone together. Lee and Leah had driven up to Beaverton to spend the night with Leah's aunt. They took Craig with them. Rainy didn't go. Said she had to study. So they asked me ... *me* ... to keep an eye on her.

Fade to work lights.

4. Sweet Sacajawea!

Brady's living room, three weeks before the election. Rainy enters upstage wearing a heavy coat and carrying an overnight bag. A Stage Hand brings Brady a coat, which he puts on. The Hand exits. Rainy leaves her bag in the living room and goes downstage to Brady. He takes out the journals. Rainy looks on as he reads.

BRADY

“... to See a Nothern light, which was light, not red, and appeared to Darken and Some times nearly obscured,” --

RAINY

Huh? Aside from the misspellings, this doesn't even make grammatical sense.

BRADY

It's poetic.

RAINY

It's not poetic. It's tortured.

BRADY

It's like a found poem.

RAINY

Found where? In a dumpster? (*Brady gives an exasperated look.*) Go on.

BRADY

“... and open, many times appeared in light Streeks, and at other times a great Space light” --

RAINY

Alien craft? Were they Klingons? (*Brady shuts the book and stuffs it in his pocket. He sulks.*) I'm sorry. I'll shut up. I know you love this stuff.

BRADY

No, I don't. You're right. It's tortured.

RAINY

You don't really believe that. You don't have to say it.

He goes upstage into the living room. Rainy follows. They take off their coats.

I don't want to spoil tonight. I'll shut up.

BRADY

You don't have to.

They settle on the couch.

Do I remind you of her?

RAINY

Who?

BRADY

(*Sarcastic.*) Sacagawea. Who else? Chloe.

RAINY

Not at all.

BRADY

What's different about me?

RAINY

Your innocence.

BRADY

Oh, great. Just what a seventeen-year-old wants to hear.

RAINY

You're nothing like her, Rain. People in L.A. are cynical and fake and backbiting. And you're not that. Well, you can be a smart ass sometimes.

BRADY

That's something, at least.

RAINY

But you're lovely and sympathetic.

BRADY

What did she think about Lewis and Clark?

RAINY

I couldn't say.

BRADY

Z, am I your Sacagawea?

RAINY

Where did you learn to pronounce it correctly?

BRADY

RAINY

Please. It's spelled phonetically in the journals.

BRADY

(Kisses her.) "The indian woman who has been of great service to me as a pilot through this country..." *(A phone rings. They stare at each other.)* It's not me.

Rainy retrieves the Doogles' cordless phone from her bag.

RAINY

It's probably my parents, so be quiet. *(Into phone.)* Hello? Oh, hello. How are you ... feeling? Yes? It was a terrible shock to everyone. No, I didn't see the article. I'd be angry too. One's sex life is very personal ... I think, by definition. No, Dad's not here. You're kidding. You're not kidding? Yes, I'll give him the message. Goodbye.

She is silent, her face stricken.

BRADY

What is it? Who was that?

RAINY

I have to call Dad.

BRADY

Do you *have* to call him?

RAINY

Didn't I just say *I have to call him*? Yes! I have to call him.

BRADY

Okay, call him.

RAINY

I can't.

BRADY

Who was that?

RAINY

Mrs. Blaine, the incumbent's widow. She's entering the race.

BRADY

The disciplinarian?

Rainy sits on the couch and dials the phone. Brady puts on his headset and phone and crosses downstage.

BRADY (cont'd)

There are some strange old laws on the books in Remington Bay. It's illegal to polish your spittoon on public streets. You can't eat ice cream on Sunday. And a mayor who dies in office is succeeded by his or her spouse, which put the Blaine widow on the ballot. Lee didn't take the news well. He wanted to drive home that night, but Rainy talked him out of it. She said we would all rally around him, be his posse. You gotta love a town where a geriatric dominatrix has a legitimate shot at becoming mayor.

He goes upstage. Rainy is finished with her phone call. She leads him up the stairs by the hand. Fade to work lights.

5. Risk of flight

Evening. A week before the election. Stage Hands carry on a number of folding chairs and two card tables strewn with open phone books. They hang red, white, and blue bunting and an outsized poster of a smiling Lee, framed by the words "Elect Doogle -- Top Dog for Democracy." Brady and the Doogles enter. Brady and Rainy sit at the card tables. Lee paces beside them. Craig sits on the couch. Brady wears his headset while the others hold cordless phones. A phone-less Leah serves beverages and snacks.

LEE

What kind of crazy law is that? A city councilman or the police chief or a minister should be named interim mayor, not a surviving spouse!

BRADY

Hello, may I speak to Mr. Jack McCracken? Mr. McCracken, I'm calling on behalf of the Elect Lee Doogle for Mayor Committee.

LEE

I don't care when the law was put on the books. It stinks. Can't I challenge it?

BRADY

Yes, he is the son of Kyle and Erma Doogle.

RAINY

Yes, I'm still here. I hope your pot roast isn't ruined. Mm-hm. Yes, liquid is very important.

BRADY

Well, I'll have to disagree with you there. I believe Lee Doogle *could* govern his way out of a paper bag.

LEE

Okay, but if I don't challenge it and, God forbid, she wins, then I won't have a hydrant to piss on.

A car passes offstage and its passengers bark. Lee waves out the door.

Thank you for your support!

RAINY

Seasonings are very important, too. Just like the upcoming election.

CRAIG

My dad's running for mayor. He wants you to vote for him. He'll beat me if he loses.

LEAH

(Hearing Craig.) Are you really talking to someone?

CRAIG

No, I'm just practicing.

LEAH

You'd better be just practicing.

Leah moves away from Craig.

CRAIG

No, don't call Child Protective Services. He hasn't beat me yet. Just vote for him. Please!

BRADY

With all due respect, that was, what, twenty years ago? If Lee had it to do over again, I'm sure he would *not* have stood up your daughter on prom night.

LEE

(Overhearing Brady.) McCracken? Mortal enemies. Hang up.

BRADY

Vote Doogle. *(Hangs up.)* You come with a lot of baggage.

RAINY

Yes, he's very pro vegetable. He supports your right to water your garden day and night.

LEE

Okay, fine. Can I file a complaint with the Elections Office? I just want to get it on record that I believe the law to be unconstitutional.

RAINY

Your neighbors have no right to complain about your compost. Compost is a guaranteed civil liberty.

A car squeals to a stop outside and honks. Several supporters bark offstage.

LEE

Gotta go. My constituency calls. (*Out the door.*) Do I hear America barking?

He exits. Craig follows him.

LEAH

(*Exiting to the kitchen.*) You're about to hear America barfing.

RAINY

Thank you, Mrs. Hendricks, it's been a pleasure ... Oh? Yes, my dad is very pro Pomeranian. Your Pomeranians have a first amendment right to yap at all hours of the day and night. Thank you. Vote Doogle. Bye!

Brady and Rainy steal a quick kiss.

BRADY

This is an uphill battle.

RAINY

He could win. Listen to them out there.

BRADY

I dunno. "Top Dog for Democracy" doesn't have the bite of, say, --

RAINY

"Submit to Better Government"?

BRADY

Yeah, or even --

RAINY

“I’ll Whip this Town into Shape”?

BRADY

How’s he going to win?

RAINY

He’s got to win. He’s lived in the shadow of his parents’ success his whole life. It would be the ultimate humiliation to lose a gift election to a perverted sexagenarian.

BRADY

It’s not all that perverse.

RAINY

I don’t want to hear that.

BRADY

I mean, it’s so common anymore.

Lee and Craig enter.

LEE

Sodom and Gomorrah? Is that what you said? That’s perfect. I’ll use that. This town has lost its moral footing. It’s another Sodom and Gomorrah.

Leah enters with a plate of cookies.

LEAH

Oh, grow up, Lee. Nobody cares about that.

CRAIG

About what?

RAINY

Bondage.

CRAIG

Like James Bond?

RAINY

Yeah, like that.

LEE

They should care. And they will, if I bring it to their attention.

LEAH

Half the people in this town don't read the paper. If they even know there's an election, they don't know who's running. They'll see Blaine on the ballot and vote for him. Vote for *it*, because "Blaine" is a word they've seen before. They're stuck, Lee. Stuck in a very deep rut.

LEE

That's right. I've got to shake them out of their rut.

LEAH

Oh, Jesus.

She picks up empty glasses and exits to the kitchen.

LEE

Some of the guys are organizing a rally downtown. Rainy and Craig, you come along.

RAINY

I've got to canvas.

BRADY

Just seven days left. We've got to stick to the phones.

LEE

Executive decision. Brady you stay. You're better on the phone.

RAINY

Thanks!

LEE

More authority, sorry to say, honey. This'll be a photo op downtown. Need the family with me. I'd ask your mom, but she doesn't seem to want me to win.

RAINY

That's not true. She doesn't care who wins.

LEE

Same difference. I'll get the car.

He exits with Craig.

RAINY

This whole thing is driving me nuts.

BRADY

Just seven more days.

RAINY

No, *eight* days.

BRADY

And then you're legal. Is there a risk of flight?

They're standing very close now.

RAINY

No.

BRADY

You'll move in?

RAINY

Do you want me to?

A car horn beeps offstage. Leah enters. Rainy and Brady spread apart.

LEAH

What's he honking for?

RAINY

We're going downtown. Rally.

She exits. Leah goes to Brady.

LEAH

Why are you doing this?

BRADY

He's my neighbor. He really cares about this town. He's for progress.

LEAH

I'm your neighbor. You should help me.

BRADY

How?

*Leah folds him in her arms and kisses him. Brady resists.
After the kiss, he breaks away from her.*

Um ... we ... shouldn't do that.

LEAH

I thought you were for progress.

BRADY

You call that progress?

LEAH

We're taking the next step.

BRADY

The next step? I wasn't aware of any previous steps.

LEAH

A woman doesn't get the signs wrong.

BRADY

Leah, I like you. You're ... yes, you're attractive. But ... but, you're married, and ... I'm not ready.

LEAH

Why not?

BRADY

See, there was this girl. She was unlike any other girl I've known. She was smart and funny and ironic. And I'm not over her yet.

LEAH

But she's in Los Angeles.

BRADY

(Nodding.) She's ... not here, that's right.

LEAH

And I am.

She tries to kiss him again. He moves away.

BRADY

What about Lee?

LEAH

He's got a city to run.

BRADY

Not yet.

LEAH

Even if he doesn't, he's got a future to build. His fantasyland filled with film boards, fiber optics and factories.

BRADY

That's a lot of Fs.

LEAH

I can think of another f-word.

BRADY

Fffff-amily counseling. Have you thought of marriage and family counseling?

LEAH

We talked to our minister.

BRADY

Just once?

LEAH

That's all I needed. He told me to clean the house, cook more meals, buy a dress.

BRADY

But a real counselor ...

LEAH

(Moving closer to him.) Would tell me to clean the house, cook more meals, and buy a dress. I don't need a dress.

Lifts off her shirt and gives him a brassiere-clad bear hug.

I need you.

Rainy bounds to the open front door.

RAINY

Mom, Dad wants the video cam --

Seeing them, she turns away and freezes. Leah hangs on.

BRADY

Rainy!

RAINY

(Bounding away.) Never mind!

BRADY

Shit!

Leah releases him and puts her shirt back on.

LEAH

(Wryly.) She's scarred for life now.

BRADY

I'd go after her, but ...

LEAH

She'll be back.

BRADY

How would it look?

LEAH

Better you than me. Tell her I attacked you.

BRADY

(Running out the door.) Rainy!

Leah takes a cookie from the plate, eats it, exits. Blackout.

6. The silent treatment

Lee stands far downstage left with Craig under a downtown streetlight. Lee speaks intermittently through a megaphone at passing cars filled with barking supporters.

LEE

That's right, folks. Bark for your fair share!

BRADY

(Running onstage. Breathless.) Lee! Lee, where's Rainy?

LEE

Huh? *(Into megaphone.)* Thank you! Thank you! Bite government back! Bite 'em in their hind region!

BRADY

Where's Rainy? Didn't she come down here with you?

LEE

Should be around somewhere.

BRADY

I thought there was a rally.

LEE

Soon. *(Into megaphone.)* That's right, folks. Think outside your cage!

CRAIG

She ran away.

BRADY

What? How do you know?

CRAIG

I mean she ran away from here.

BRADY

Where'd she go?

LEE

(Into megaphone.) A vote for Blaire is a vote for Sodom and Gomorrah! You don't want that, do you, folks?

CRAIG

(Pointing.) That-a-way.

BRADY

What's over there?

CRAIG

Streets, buildings, a pier ... icy dark water.

BRADY

(Running off.) Rainy!

Lights fade stage left and rise stage right. An empty dock in the yellow haze of a sodium lamp. For the first time in the play, there is relative silence. No dogs, chainsaws, or barking humans. Just the gentle lapping of water. Brady runs on.

BRADY

(Breathless.) Rainy! Rain!

Silence. He bends down to catch his breath. Rainy appears at the edge of the light.

RAINY

What do you want?

BRADY

(Stepping closer.) Rain.

RAINY

I'll run.

BRADY

I'll follow.

RAINY

You'll have a heart attack before you catch me.

BRADY

Don't run.

RAINY

You're a scumbag!

BRADY

It's not what you think.

RAINY

Did you just say that? How original.

BRADY

Okay. What you thought you saw and what actually happened are two different things.

RAINY

Wasn't my mother clinging to you wearing only her bra?

BRADY

Um ... yes, but --

RAINY

Well, that's what I thought I saw.

BRADY

She threw herself at me. I didn't provoke her.

RAINY

You didn't resist.

BRADY

(Stepping toward her.) I did too!

RAINY

Don't. *(Waits.)* Listen.

He listens.

BRADY

What?

RAINY

The quiet.

They listen a while.

BRADY

It's creepy. I thought you might ... *(She waits.)* Might do something ... extreme.

RAINY

Jump in? Why shouldn't I?

BRADY

Because I love you.

RAINY

No you don't. And that wouldn't be enough, anyway. *(Pause.)* I come here sometimes to escape ... the noise. It *is* creepy.

BRADY
You won't ...?

RAINY
No, but thanks for asking. Will you?

BRADY
What?

RAINY
You seem like the type.

BRADY
What are we talking about?

RAINY
The Meriwether Lewis type. You know ...

She pantomimes putting a gun to her head and pulling the trigger.

BRADY
That's ridiculous. Me? *(Pause.)* Come home. Will you?

RAINY
Back to the dog pound? Not yet.

BRADY
I'll stay with you.

RAINY
No, you're dismissed.

BRADY
That was your mom's doing back there. Not mine.

RAINY
I'll think about it. *(Listens to the silence.)* Go, please.

Brady wavers, turns downstage. Crossfade to Brady's spot.

BRADY

Chloe? Are you there? (*Redials.*) Your machine hung up on me. If you're there, pick up. (*No response.*) The Meriwether Lewis type? Did she really mean that, or was she just trying to rattle me? I know she was hurt. The rest of the night, I kept thinking about the silence, the solitude. How did Captain Lewis do it? You know he traveled most of the way west on foot, wandering off into the woods alone with his dog for days at a time. Who knows, that may have contributed to his ... instability, in the end. There's something about human noise, Chloe, that surrounds and protects us. We need that ... barbaric yawp to remind us who we are. Don't we? Hello? Hello?

7. Election day

Lights rise on Brady's living room. It is election night. Rainy sits in a chair. Brady removes his headset and phone and sets them on a card table, then sits on the couch. Drive-by barking throughout.

BRADY

You still don't believe me, do you. (*Rainy is silent.*) She attacked me.

RAINY

And you were powerless to defend yourself.

BRADY

She's a pretty tough cookie. You seen the biceps on her?

RAINY

Don't joke.

BRADY

You're joking.

RAINY

No, I'm being snide and cynical.

BRADY

I love you.

RAINY

You make me sick.

Brady goes to her and kneels.

BRADY

Forgive me.

RAINY

No. I'm only seventeen. I get to hold a grudge.

BRADY

But you'll be eighteen tomorrow. In just a little over four hours. Then you have to be an adult about this and forgive me.

The door opens and Craig enters dressed in pajamas and carrying a blanket, pillow, a box of Cracker Jacks, and a transformer toy. Brady gets off his knees.

CRAIG

Can you believe Mom made me carry all this? She wants me to become permanently disabled, I guess. Dibs on the couch.

RAINY

Why don't you go upstairs? We'll be watching the results.

CRAIG

I want to watch the results.

RAINY

Then spread out on the floor, okay?

CRAIG

Worse than a dog. They treat me worse than a stray mutt with scabies. It's like the time we went fishing and I fell out of the boat. They didn't notice and I had to live with wolves for three months. Naked, shivering, fleas and ticks. That's how much they care.

He spreads his blanket on the floor and plays with his toy. Leah enters the front door carrying a tray of pop bottles and food.

LEAH

I could use your help, miss.

BRADY

I'll get that.

He takes the tray and sets it on a card table. Leah retrieves several grocery bags from the porch.

CRAIG
Brady's your new son-in-law.

RAINY
What?!

BRADY
Ha! Why would you ...

CRAIG
He was on his knees proposing to her.

Leah pulls bags of chips and pretzels from the bags.

RAINY
He was not proposing to me.

LEAH
Why were you on your knees?

BRADY
I wasn't.

RAINY
He lost something.

LEAH
Wha'd you lose?

BRADY
Nothing.

LEAH
You're all such bad liars, I can't tell what you're lying about. *(Looks at her watch.)* Polls are closed.

She takes a tub of potato salad into the kitchen.

CRAIG
You really were proposing?

BRADY
Let me propose this. Mind your own business.

CRAIG
When's the wedding?

RAINY

After your funeral.

CRAIG

Will you take my ashes on the honeymoon?

RAINY

And hurl them over Niagara Falls? Sure, no problem.

*Lee enters through the front door holding the megaphone.
There's a car of barking constituents outside.*

LEE

(Into megaphone.) Thank you! Thank you for your support! Bark for your rights, my friends. Defeat the status quo, the domination of the ruling classes.

Leah enters from the kitchen with a bowl of potato salad.

A vote for Lee Doogle is a --

LEAH

The polls are closed, Lee, give it a rest!

LEE

... a vote for ... for. Thank you! *(Closes the door.)* Any results yet?

LEAH

They've got to count the ballots.

LEE

It's a mail-in ballot. They know the instant the polls close.

BRADY

(Goes to the TV and turns it on.) We've got it. Don't panic. How was it out there?

LEE

Great. Just great. The last hour I stood at the corner of Main and Broadway. Lotta support. Barkers in every car. Where were you guys?

RAINY

Canvassing.

LEE

Where?

BRADY
Rosewood.

RAINY
North Remington.

We split up. Divide and conquer.

BRADY

How was it?

LEE

Excellent. Lots of votes.

BRADY

Majority for sure.

RAINY

The barking majority. I like that.

LEE

They're talking about the election on TV.

CRAIG

Brady turns up the volume. The TV screen can be in view of the audience or not. The Anchor and Reporter take themselves very seriously.

ANCHOR

Leslie, what's the scene look like there?

REPORTER

Well, Pat, the polls closed just minutes ago and the streets are deserted. Admittedly, for the last hour, hour and a half, things were pretty dead around here.

ANCHOR

Hmm. Democracy at work.

REPORTER

You bet. A few minutes ago I asked a passing pedestrian and his wife if they had voted and they said they weren't even aware there was an election. *(A car of barkers passes near the Reporter.)* There's been a lot of that.

ANCHOR

Is it just me, or did I hear the Doppler effect as those barkers passed?

REPORTER

I think you're right, Pat. I think that was the Doppler effect.

LEE

The news, people. Quit blathering and get to what's important!

ANCHOR

Any statistics yet from the interviews that I know you and our team on the ground have been conducting throughout the day?

LEE

What team? KRMB employs six people, two of whom are part-time janitors.

REPORTER

Yes, Pat, there are statistics. Based on exit polls conducted at a number of drop boxes, the race seems to be in a statistical dead-heat, with the two Republican candidates in the lead with forty-two percent of the vote each.

ANCHOR

Would you call that a statistical dead-heat, Leslie, or just a plain old dead-heat?

REPORTER

Plain old, I guess you'd say, Pat. Plain old. Yes, that's right.

ANCHOR

Would you say it's too close to call?

REPORTER

Too close to call, I'd say. Until actual vote tallies start to come in.

LEE

Turn it off! (*Brady turns off the TV.*) This is what burns my ass about this town. We act like a bunch of morons!

RAINY

(*Imitating the Anchor.*) Act like morons, Lee, or just plain *are* morons?

LEE

(*To Brady.*) I'd be dumbfounded by her total disrespect for the people of this community if she weren't just a teenager doing what teenagers do.

CRAIG

That's not all that teenagers do.

RAINY

Shut up, half-pint.

LEAH

Young lady, don't you talk to your brother that way.

LEE

(To Brady.) Can you believe this? The most important night of the year for me and this family and this whole community, and they're sniping at each other just like always.

CRAIG

Nobody's listening to me! I saw them kissing! They were making out!

BRADY

What an imagination on this kid.

RAINY

You couldn't have seen us, you little twerp.

LEAH

Because you weren't kissing, right?

BRADY

Of course, right!

RAINY

Because we weren't kissing anyplace where you could see us!

BRADY

(Moving to the TV.) Let's see about those results.

LEAH

Don't you move!

LEE

Did you just say what I think you said? Are you admitting that you've ... kissed?

BRADY

You weren't saying that, were you?

RAINY

Oh, please. Z, just tell them the truth.

LEAH

Z? You call him Z?

RAINY

We're in love, Mom. We're moving in together.

CRAIG

Woohoo!

LEE

What are you talking about?

RAINY

I'm moving out tomorrow.

BRADY

It just happened. We didn't plan it.

LEAH

(Diving for a phone.) I'm calling the cops.

LEE

Don't call the cops! Not tonight! *(Lee struggles with Leah and takes the phone from her.)*
We can't have anything like this! Not now, for chrissakes! What if there's a runoff?

LEAH

(In Brady's face.) Tell me you didn't sleep with her! Tell me! You two-timer! You tease!

LEE

Two-timing? Are you two-timing?

LEAH

Give me the phone, Lee. That's statutory rape. He's going away ... *tonight!*

Rainy grabs the phone from Lee and hands it to Leah.

RAINY

It's not statutory rape. It's contributing to the sexual delinquency of a minor.

CRAIG

That sounds a lot better.

RAINY

It's a misdemeanor, and if Z spends one night in prison over it, that's all he'll spend. Especially when I tell the judge I'm eighteen and live next door to my parents.

LEAH

I'm calling 911.

LEE

(Taking the phone.) You're not calling 911. Brady, I thought you were my friend.

BRADY

I am, Lee.

RAINY

It's not about Brady! It's not about you! It's about me, Dad! *Me!* Do you even remember it's my birthday tomorrow? Do you have any idea why I go to school anymore when I don't have to? Do you even know what my interests are?

CRAIG

I think he does now.

RAINY

(To Leah.) And you. You don't have the slightest idea who I am. All you do is root around in your pigsty all day feeling sorry for yourself and your lost youth. I'd think you'd be happy for me. I'm not wasting my youth. I found someone who loves me, who listens to me, who wants me to succeed. I'm moving in here ... tonight! ... and there's nothing you can do about it. But we won't be here forever. I'll be getting my college acceptance letters soon, and when I decide where I'm going, we're out of here.

BRADY

We are? We never talked about --

RAINY

You can work from anywhere, right?

BRADY

Well, yes. But --

RAINY

(To all.) We're not staying locked in this asylum a minute longer than we have to.

LEE

Back to this two-timing comment. Did you do it with Leah, too? I thought she was just sweet on you. I didn't think you'd --

LEAH

Oh, Lee, shut up! (*To Rainy.*) Are you done?

RAINY

For now.

CRAIG

Hey, wait. Aren't you going to rag on me? Why I don't rate?

RAINY

Craig, you're hopeless. You're headed for some serious mental illness. Unless you get drugs, you'll end up on the streets or in an institution. And neither of these guys has health insurance. You're a nuisance, but harmless ... to date.

CRAIG

Thank you. I feel better now.

LEAH

I blame you, Lee.

LEE

Me?! What did I do?!

LEAH

Don't take that question mark, exclamation point tone with me! You know full well what you did. "Think outside your cage." "Snyder Brimley is going to fix everything." You're so goddamned nearsighted, you can't even see how small your cage is. Remington Bay is microscopic, Lee. It's the size of a ... a ...

RAINY

A quantum singularity?

LEAH

Yeah! Whatever that is.

LEE

I see the big picture, Leah.

LEAH

Shut up and listen to me! For once, keep your big trap shut and focus on *me*! You misled me, Lee. When we met in Anchorage --

BRADY

You guys didn't meet here?

LEAH

No, he left here just long enough to land a wife. False pretenses. Said he'd traveled around.

LEE

I had.

LEAH

Two months in Portland. Six months in Seattle. He'd only been living in Anchorage a week when we met. But he made it sound like he was some world adventurer.

LEE

Didn't we have fun?

LEAH

Me working at the Nordstrom makeup counter. You delivering propane. Going out and drinking every night until you asked me to move back here. Said we weren't getting anywhere. Said your parents would set us up. Said we'd save up some money and move on to bigger and better things. Well, we didn't! You lied to me, Lee! You got me pregnant and locked me up in your own little cage with you! Do you realize how cramped it is in here? I'm suffocated, Lee. I'm dead! (*Charging Brady.*) And you, you bastard! You're just as bad as him!

LEE

Okay, you've said your piece --

LEAH

I haven't begun to say my --

LEE

Now you're going to listen to *me*! I am sick and tired of all this bellyaching! I never lied to you. I told you what I believed was the truth. I had every intention of saving that money. I wanted to move on to bigger and better things. But one thing always leads to another. Doesn't it? And most of the time you don't have any control over what that next thing is. I didn't hear you say no to leaving Anchorage and moving here. I didn't notice you pushing me out of bed when I wanted to make love to you. I didn't victimize you. *You* victimized you!

LEE (cont'd)

Brady, help me out here. You see what I'm trying to accomplish. Okay, I should be pissed off at you right now. You killed my dog, you slept with my under-aged daughter. But she's almost eighteen and the dog, well, so what. The bigger picture is that my vision doesn't just stop at the Remington Bay city limits. I see into the next county, the next state. Most people look at the crap that surrounds them and say, "Why me?" I look into the future and say, "Let's turn this crap into gold!" You can all whine about how you're not getting your way. But tomorrow, when I'm declared the new mayor of this town, I'll pave a new way for everyone.

CRAIG

Does anyone care what I think?

RAINY, LEE, LEAH

No!

CRAIG

I didn't think so. But if I could just have my three minutes of complaining, that's all I'll say for the next eight years. Let *me* have a turn. (*Runs to Rainy and grabs her legs. Crying.*) Rainy, don't go. Please, don't go!

RAINY

Get off me, you leech.

CRAIG

If you go, I'll be the only child they have to heap their emotional abuse on. Don't do this to me! If you have any human decency at all, you won't do it. You won't, you won't, you won't ...

Brady grabs Craig away from Rainy.

BRADY

Get a hold of yourself, man. Buck up, right now! Now, all of you, listen to me.

LEAH

You don't get to talk! You're a criminal!

BRADY

I do get to talk! Everybody in this country gets to talk! That's what I've learned in Remington Bay. That's what you've all taught me. So just sit down and shut up! It's finally time for *me*, Z. Howard Brady, to talk! (*All who are standing sit.*) If learning how to be happy again is a crime, then lock me up. If falling in love is a crime, throw the book at me.

LEAH

Falling in love with a seventeen-year-old! She doesn't know anything yet. She doesn't know --

RAINY

What a quantum singularity is?

LEAH

You be quiet, young lady!

BRADY

NO, YOU BE QUIET! IT'S MY TURN TO TALK! (*They hush.*) I love you, Leah. Lee, I love you. Now, don't get the wrong idea, either of you. Craig, I even love you. You think I've wronged you and I'm sorry for that. I didn't mean to do wrong. But I've been born again in Remington Bay. Not in *that* way, but I feel I've made the passage, tugged my life upstream, and landed someplace real, made of salt and rust and rain and cedar ... and the brawny, proud music of human clatter. I have nothing but gratitude for you all. And this place. (*To Rainy.*) Rain, I never want to leave Remington Bay.

RAINY

(*Bolting to her feet.*) What?! The only thing I *want* is to leave!

BRADY

There's nothing else out there as good as this.

CRAIG

What parallel universe did you just fly in from?

RAINY

Everything out there is better than this!

BRADY

Or I should say that Remington Bay is no worse than anyplace else. And it's a lot smaller.

LEE

Okay, I'll buy that. We can put that on the welcome signs on 101. "Remington Bay: No Worse than Anyplace Else."

LEAH

There's no place as *bad* as this.

BRADY

Think about it, Leah. Everyplace else is big and vicious, like a pit bull. Remington Bay is small and vicious, like a Chihuahua. You get one kick at a pit bull before he uses your head as a squeeze toy, but you can kick a Chihuahua clear across the street. (*Kneels before Rainy.*) Rainy. Rain, we'll go other places. But believe me, you'll want to come back here. In time, you will. And I'll come with you.

RAINY

(*Stews, then ...*) But we don't have to come back if I don't want to?

BRADY

(*Holds out a hand.*) Of course. But you'll see.

Rainy thinks, then takes his hand. He stands.

RAINY

Mom, Dad, I'll drop by in the morning for my things. I trust you won't make a scene.

LEE

No scenes! We don't want scenes.

LEAH

(*Standing.*) Did I read the signs wrong? There was nothing between us?

BRADY

Lee, Rain, don't take this wrong. Yes, Leah, there were sparks. But this other thing happened.

RAINY

I'm sorry, Mom.

LEAH

(*Resigned.*) Get out of here.

BRADY

Good luck, Lee. Guess we'll know more in the morning.

LEE

(*Standing.*) We may know nothing in the morning.

Brady and Rainy go upstairs holding hands and exit.

LEAH

(*To Craig.*) Get up, punky. You've got school in the morning.

CRAIG

Aren't we watching the results?

LEE

The results will take care of themselves.

CRAIG

(Disappointed.) Ohhhhhh.

Craig stands and takes his mother's hand.

LEE

Would you have left me?

LEAH

It's still not out of the question.

CRAIG

Could you guys have this conversation when I'm not around?

Leah and Craig exit upstage. Lee follows them out and shuts the door. Blackout.

8. Results

Brady's living room. The next morning. The door opens. Lee enters carrying a newspaper. He looks up the stairs, listens.

LEE

(Whispering loudly.) Brady! Brady, you awake?

No response. He goes to the card tables, eats a few chips. He sees Brady's phone and headset and tries them on. He strikes a few professional poses, then is startled when the phone rings, which only he can hear. He pushes a button on the phone.

Hello? No, Brady's still asleep I think. Who's this? Oh, hi, Jerry. Brady's mentioned you. I'm the next door neighbor, Lee. He has? That's nice to know. I just came over to give him some news and happened to hear the phone ring. The news that I've been elected the mayor of Remington Bay. Thank you, yes. Thank you. It was a hard fought race. We have a nonpartisan election system here and I was running against another Republican. Oh, yes, very conservative ... not that *I* am. I'm more pro-development, pro-progress. Like Snyder Brimley says, "Think outside your ..." You've heard of Brimley? Get out!

LEE (cont'd)

No kidding! I love him too! That's great. I used his principles as the basis for my platform. Hey, you know, Remington Bay has got a lot going for it. It would be a great place to do a TV show. Yeah! I'm surprised Brady never thought of it.

Fade.

Coda

Two years later. Brady stands in his narrative spot. Lee, Leah, Rainy, and Craig, all wearing headsets, stand widely apart downstage in darkness. A Hand enters with the antique pistol from Act One and holds it out to Brady. He takes it tucks it into the waist of his pants.

BRADY

A lot can happen in two years, Chloe. The world can change. A band of some forty men and two captains can set out, dragging boats up the Missouri River, and two years later, the shape of the planet, it's destiny, has changed. Look at what's happened to us in two years. Rainy was accepted at NYU. We moved to New York. Leah left Lee and took Craig to Anchorage. Rainy dumped me and went off to see the world. And I moved back here. Not to mention you and Jerry and your little bundle of joy.

He takes the pistol from his waist, studies it, then lifts it into the air and fires.

Chloe? Is that you? You finally picked up. Yes, that was a gunshot. Yes, I have a gun.

Lights down on Brady, up on Lee.

LEE

Jerry? Lee. You want the good news or the bad news first? Okay, the bad news is that Widow Blaine still refuses to participate in the project. Won't let a crew into her house. I know, she'd be great for the show. But that doesn't mean we can't dog her. She's gotta come out of the house sometime, right? We'll get her going into the Bi-Mart. The good news? We're in, baby! City council approved the entire package. We'll cover the show's accommodations for the duration of filming. You guys won't spend a dime. It just makes economic sense. The exposure will bring tourists in by the thousands! (*Grows thoughtful.*) Well, thank you for saying so. It was pretty rough going there for a while. Really rough. But until a person hits the wall at ninety miles an hour, he never really knows what he's capable of. This project has been great for me. I feel like I busted the old cage to smithereens. And if there is a new cage, it's as big as the wide world!

Lee exits. Lights up on Leah.

LEAH

Hey, Mom, how's it going? How's Dad? Good. Had some flurries today, but nothing stuck. Won't be long, though. Craig's great. Loves his new computer. You guys shouldn't have. Yeah, he's on it constantly, writing his little stories. No, haven't heard from Rainy. Don't want to. Oh, you have? She's in Europe? What's she doing there? Getting knocked up, I suppose. By all means, change the subject. Nordstrom is fine. Teri and Shawna, are still there. You remember them? Yeah, we bowl together now. Yes, it *is* fun. Oh, you're being sarcastic.

Mom, now don't start. No, I haven't met anybody. We're not divorced yet. No, I haven't even filed the papers. We talk a few times a week. He calls on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays to talk to Craig. Yes, he's asked me to come back. I'm lonely here, yes. I wouldn't be if you guys hadn't moved. (*Pause.*) Mom? Do you have Rain's cell phone number? Can I have it?

Leah exits. Lights up on Rainy.

RAINY

Bon jour, maman! Comment ça va? Yep, I'm here in the sunny south of France. Oh, I love it! The people are so friendly. That's just a myth, Mom. Even the waiters are friendly. The Mediterranean is delicious -- so warm and caressing. You would not believe the food and wine. And I saw a Portuguese bullfight! Yes, here in France. Oh, you'd hate it, it's brutal. *I* hated it. But I loved it, too. They didn't kill the bull. The picador was a woman. Yes! In a beautiful, regal costume, and the way she rode, the horse was like an extension of her body. After she was done, eight men called *forcados* stepped into the ring. One of them stood in front of the others and taunted the bull. *Bull! Bull! Bull!* he called ... yeah, in English. But the bull just looked at him. The man stepped closer. *Bull! Bull! Bull!* he yelled. And the bull charged. Then -- you won't believe this -- he jumped on the bull's head, right between the horns, and hung on for dear life while the other men grabbed the bull's tail and horns and flanks and held on until the bull stopped moving. Then they let him go and he trotted away, glad to return to his pen. Sometimes I feel like that bull, stabbed and tormented, licking my wounds. Or sometimes I feel like a *forcado*, the biggest fool you've ever seen. But what I really want to feel like?, is the picador. Skilled and graceful, in perfect control. Oh, Mom, the more I see of the world, the more I want to see.

Rainy exits. The sound of distant chainsaws rises.

BRADY

It's an antique. Belongs to my neighbor. I just shot it because ... the gun always has to go off. I'm happy here, Chloe. I'm involved. The mayor appointed me to the Film Council. Every day, there's barking on the streets. And do you hear the chainsaws? That's the sound of progress and economic prosperity under the new administration. They're clearcutting the hills above Remington Bay. It's almost done. Now there's a big bald mountain above the town. It's a beautiful sound, Chloe. And a beautiful sight.

BRADY (cont'd)

(Studying the gun.) You know, Meriwether Lewis killed himself. That's what most historians believe. He was probably bipolar, or at least clinically depressed. As governor of the Louisiana Territory he was very unhappy. Politics didn't suit him. He was hooked on laudanum, drank a lot, was worried to death about the publication of the journals. He'd had the greatest adventure of his life, had experienced pure freedom, and knew that he'd never have that again. He shot himself, twice, at three in the morning ... once in the head and once in the heart. And yet by daylight he was still alive. "I'm no coward," he said to those by his side. "I'm no coward. But I am so strong. So hard to die."

(Tucks the pistol into his waist.) I'm no Meriwether Lewis, Chloe. I'm happy. I like my cage. I really do. There's nothing wrong with a cage ... as long as it makes you happy.

He exits. Craig is left in the dark.

CRAIG

Hey, what about me!

He steps into Brady's spot. A yippy little dog barks offstage.

Steven Spielberg, please. Craig Doogle. He *should* be expecting my call, I sent him my script six weeks ago. I'm a very busy man, too. It's called *The Doogles of Oregon*. I'll hold. *(Shouting.)* Yippy, stop! Quiet, Yippy! *(Into phone.)* What do you mean, you don't have any record ... Oh, wait. It might be under a different title. It changed a lot while I was writing it. Look for a script called *Chekov*, *Chekhov*, spelled without an H and with an H. Without an H, it's the navigator of the Starship Enterprise, you know from Star Trek, and with an H it's the Russian writer. Yeah, check for that.

Yippy, shush! No? How about *Sweet Sacajawea!* with an exclamation point. You know, because one of the main characters, Brody, is a Lewis and Clark fanatic and he falls in love with the girl next door.

Would you shut up, Yippy! C'mon, it's got to be there. How about *I Hear America Barking?* That's a twist on a Walt Whitman title ... You found it? The reader read it, yes? Did Steven? Why not! It is not unrealistic. It's nothing but realistic. The whole thing happened to me. It's a true story. Yes! What does my age have to do with anything? How old do I sound? Fifteen? Not quite. Is that good? Well, yes, I'm very young. I may be the youngest screenwriter ever. Yes, yes, I'll hold.

Yippy, would you shut the -- Hello? Yes, this is Craig Doogle. Steven! How are you? It's great to hear your voice.

Blackout.

End of Play