What in the World?

By

Nick Domich

THE CHARACTERS

MILLIE: African-American woman (homeless) in her early forties

CORNELIUS: African-American man in his mid-sixties

WAYNE: White man (homeless) in his mid-twenties

OFFICER THREADBARE: White policeman in his early forties

OFFICER WHITE: African-American policeman in his late twenties

NURSE: African-American woman in her mid-fifties

ABDUL: Middle Eastern owner of neighborhood market in his mid-fifities

MARIA: Latina (homeless) in her mid-thirties

JOSE: Latino (homeless) in his mid-thirties

CHI CHI: Maria and Jose’s dog

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

 *An alley in midtown Sacramento. It is sundown, mid-December. A dumpster with garbage*

 *strewn around it, a few cardboard boxes that may or may not be occupied, and a*

 *shopping cart populate the stage. Millie enters.*

MILLIE

 What in the world?

(*Looks at jacket. Examines it.*)

I remember picking this out…of that pile. It was in one of the nicer dumpsters. You can’t find any decent clothing these days. I used to have my pick of the prettiest discarded clothes. Due to all the homeless people around here there’s more competition for the things people would rather throw away than give away. Food can be scarce sometimes. I have a map of the most accessible fruit trees in the neighborhood. I traded a pair of false teeth for it. They weren’t my teeth but it makes me worried every time I eat a piece of fruit now. The sweetest fruit tastes better than candy. And I’m gonna pay for it. An apple a day makes the doctor go away? An apple a day my ass. An apple a day makes the dentist rich. I grew up down the street from a dentist. He drove a Porsche. Gave out caramel apples on Halloween. Now it all makes sense.

(*strokes her chin*)

I haven’t eaten steak in a long time. I used to love steak. My daddy would pan-fry rib-eye steaks in garlic and olive oil and when he presented me with my little cut of the rib-eye it

was like a coronation. It felt like a crown was being placed upon my head.

(*Places an invisible crown on her head and looks down with anticipation as if she is about to eat a special meal.*)

When I cut into it the blood would run out and around the plate. The practice was to take a piece of steak, dip it into its own blood and then eat it. Kind of sounds gross now but we were Catholic so eating the body and drinking the blood was fair game. I don’t think Jesus meant it literally but don’t tell my daddy that. I always wanted to cook a steak for my daughter and make her feel like a princess and have her love me like I loved my daddy. But I lost my little girl. She was taken from me. I never even got to hold her. It happened in one of those dumpsters behind the fancy department store. The rain was coming down and the sound of it hitting the dumpster’s roof was like hundreds of knocks at my bedroom door. Tap tap tapping. “Please open the door, sweetheart. I just wanna talk.” I wasn’t opening shit. I couldn’t move anyways. My baby was coming and I was praying to the little ‘g’. He used to be the big ‘G’ but ever since they took my baby away he’s stopped listening to my prayers. I prayed every day for I don’t know how many years to help me find my little girl but he’s not listening or he’s mad at me for some transgression or other. What other? Why bother? My faith has been shaken. I’ve been shaken…am shaking with fear. I’m like those women and horses in Picasso’s *Guernica*. Just screaming screaming screaming…someone make it stop! But there’s no stopping it. *Guernica*’s screams may be silent, frozen in paint on an expansive canvas. Big enough to

cover this wall.

2.

(*She makes a wide, sweeping gesture in the air with her right hand, from left to right.*)

 But my screams would cover this whole alley…and the nearby streets and neighborhood.

 Plenty of people know Millie but you spend some time around here and you’ll see.

 Everyone knows Millie’s scream. You don’t forget shit like that. That silent scream.

Those women! Those poor horses! I saw an actor being interviewed on late night television years ago and he was asked about the final scene in this movie where he played a pawnbroker. He escaped the Holocaust. Escaped…you’re supposed to say survived. But to me, saying you survived something says that you’re okay. You made it to the other side…unlike so any others. But this guy didn’t look like he survived. That holocaust shit left an indelible mark on him. He was seriously fucked up. I can only imagine. I’m not saying I’m not fucked up. I’m homeless and bipolar. I’ll leave that for someone else to figure out. I’m done trying to figure it out for myself. But in the movie this boy who works for the pawnbroker gets shot right in front of him. He literally takes the fatal bullet meant for this sad old man and the old man cradles the boy in his arms, rears his head back and lets out a silent scream. I can still hear it. It’s like a dog whistle. I don’t know what that says about me…but it makes the hairs on the back of my neck stand at attention. Silence gets to me…gets at me. That’s why I talk to myself so much. When it goes all silent the silence starts talking back. No thanks. I don’t need that type of company.

 *Wayne pops out of his cardboard shelter like a*

 *jack in the box.*

WAYNE

 Will I do?

 *Millie is startled and jumps back out of fright.*

MILLIE

Jesus, Wayne. You almost gave me a heart attack. I may have to rethink that part about the silence.

 SCENE TWO

 *A convalescent home. Cornelius is sitting up in bed. The other patients are sleeping. He*

 *is talking to himself.*

CORNELIUS

If laughter is the best medicine than what am I still doing in this hospital bed? This place is such a joke. I nearly piss myself laughing every time the doctor asks me another stupid question. Does he use that “talking to a child” voice with all of his patients or am I the

3.

lucky one? Cancer’s bad enough without having to listen another worst-case scenario. His version of a pep talk is to tell every kid in the locker room that the other team is bigger, stronger, faster, and smarter than they are and the second half is going to be worse than the first.

(*nurse enters room and approaches Cornelius’s bed*)

If the second half of this cancer treatment is any worse than the first half I may as well get up out of this bed, open up a window and get out on the ledge. But since we’re only on the second floor I’d probably just break a leg and end up worse off than I already am. Fuck that.

NURSE

Don’t be so dramatic. The pigeons are the only ones allowed on the ledge. They have wings. They can fly. They don’t fall and go boom. You wanna go boom?

CORNELIUS

I want wings. Fly the fuck out of here.

NURSE

When you get those wings let me know. I’ll call the zookeeper. He’s a friend of mine.

CORNELIUS

You’d have me locked up?

NURSE

They let the birds fly at the zoo.

CORNELIUS

From one end of the cage to the other.

NURSE

Beats walking these hallways. If you find some wings grab me a pair.

CORNELIUS

You ever been on a plane?

NURSE

I visit my sister in Florida every year. Too far to walk. You?

CORNELIUS

I’ve never been on a plane.

NURSE

How come?

CORNELIUS

4.

I’m afraid to fly.

 *They both laugh.*

NURSE

If you’ve got wings and can’t fly you might as well be in a cage.

CORNELIUS

Tell that to the ostrich.

NURSE

The one with his head in a hole in the ground? That’s its own cage.

CORNELIUS

That’s only in the cartoons. Ostriches lie flat on the ground or run away when threatened. If you corner them they will defend themselves by kicking.

NURSE

A regular Kung Fu Panda

CORNELIUS

Just a panda right now. When you take this needle out of my arm I’ll show you some kung fu.

NURSE

I can hardly wait.

 *They both laugh.*

SCENE THREE

*Street scene. On the sidewalk. Evening. Maria is trying to get her dog to go to the bathroom.*

MILLIE

Hey girl.

MARIA

Hi Millie. How are you doing?

MILLIE

Another day without another dollar.

5.

MARIA

I hear ya.

MILLIE

You still staying in the WalMart parking lot at night?

MARIA

Of course. Why leave paradise?

*Millie bends down to pet Maria’s dog Chi Chi.*

 MILLIE

Hi Chi Chi. You’re such a shy boy.

MARIA

He’s scared of his own shadow.

MILLIE

Such a cute little guy.

(*she speaks to Chi Chi*)

That big mean shadow better leave you alone. I feel like I have a big mean shadow looming over me sometimes.

MARIA

Maybe you need a dog to chase it away.

MILLIE

Or just stay out of the light.

MARIA

You’re a night owl, girl. That shouldn’t be too hard.

MILLIE

It’s more peaceful at night. And less crowded. How’s the crowd at WalMart?

MARIA

They’re a nice group of people. Not quite a family. Jose and I live in our car but we feel lucky. Except for Chi Chi. He hates living in the car. When we visit my mom he gets so excited. He thinks we’re staying for good. He looks so sad when we have to go. I look pretty sad when we leave, too, no matter how much I try to hide it.

MILLIE

Can’t hide anything from our mamas.

6.

MARIA

That’s for sure.

*Wayne comes walking up the sidewalk towards them. He looks both confused and excited.*

 WAYNE

 Did you see that?

 MILLIE AND MARIA

 See what?

 WAYNE

 That bright light. It looked like a ghost flew across the sky.

 MILLIE

We definitely didn’t see that.

WAYNE

Maybe you weren’t looking up at the sky.

MILLIE

If there was a bright light it may have caused me to look up at the sky.

WAYNE

I know what I saw.

MILLIE

I don’t doubt you, honey, but we didn’t see anything.

WAYNE

When you ladies get to talking…

MILLIE

Hold on a second. We may be friends and occasional alley mates but there’s no cigar band on my ring finger so watch how you talk to me.

WAYNE

I didn’t mean nothing by it.

MILLIE

Watch how you talk to me.

WAYNE

7.

Yes, ma’am. Sorry, Millie.

MILLIE

Apology accepted. What did you see, Wayne?

WAYNE

It wasn’t a flying saucer. It was ghostlike, like a shadow, moving across the sky. It looked like one of those photographs that don’t fully develop.

MILLIE

We’re sorry we missed it. It sounds like quite the event.

(*speaking to Maria*)

I told you I had a shadow looming over me.

 *Maria crosses herself.*

SCENE FOUR

*Officers Threadbare and White sit in their patrol car. There are French fries and soda cups from a fast food restaurant on the dashboard.*

OFFICER THREADBARE

You got any more ketchup packets or are you hogging them all?

OFFICER WHITE

If you hadn’t used half of them on your burger then there would be plenty to go around. But I got you covered.

*Officer White hands over some ketchup packets to Officer Threadbare.*

 OFFICER THREADBARE

 Now we’re talking.

 OFFICER WHITE

 Now we’re eating. Please don’t do both at the same time.

 OFFICER THREADBARE

 It’s called multitasking.

*They both reach for a French fry at the same time and their hands touch which*

 *causes them to quickly extricate their big*

8.

 *meaty paws from the communal bag of fries*

*and sit in uncomfortable silence for a*

*moment.*

 OFFICER WHITE

Mowing the lawn while drinking a cold one is my idea of multitasking. What you are doing is called disgusting.

 *Officer White makes a face.*

OFFICER THREADBARE

What does your wife have to say about your lawnmowing routine?

OFFICER WHITE

She calls it drinking and driving but I’m the one with the badge.

OFFICER THREADBARE

But you’re in her jurisdiction.

OFFICER WHITE

That’s why I switch the can to the other side of the mower when I turn around.

 *Officer Threadbare looks incredulous.*

 OFFICER THREADBARE

Just because she can’t see it doesn’t mean she doesn’t know it’s there.

OFFICER WHITE

Out of sight. Out of mind.

 *Officer Threadbare smiles to himself.*

OFFICER THREADBARE

We’re so cute when we tell ourselves those little white lies. We almost believe them.

OFFICER WHITE

Sometimes we have to lie to ourselves just to make it through the day.

OFFICER THREADBARE

What do you have to lie about? We’re out here making a difference.

 *They both laugh.*

OFFICER THREADBARE

When we get done with these fries we’re going to check on our little friends in the

9.

alleys.

OFFICER WHITE

Policing the neighborhood.

OFFICER THREADBARE

Protecting and serving all of God’s children.

OFFICER WHITE

Why do you give them such a hard time?

*Officer Threadbare eyes Officer White suspiciously.*

OFFICER THREADBARE

All in a day’s work. They call it aggressive policing for a reason.

OFFICER WHITE

An us versus them mentality serves no one.

OFFICER THREADBARE

I am not one of them. So, what do you expect?

OFFICER WHITE

I used to be.

 *Officer Threadbare is genuinely surprised.*

OFFICER THREADBARE

What?

OFFICER WHITE

In high school. My senior year. For about six months. Scared the shit outta me. My mom, my little sister and me. We got evicted and had nowhere to go. From friends’ couches to the shelters to the streets. It was terrifying. As soon as I graduated I joined the army. They were the only ones willing to take me. With only two mouths to feed instead of three I thought it would be easier on my mom. But when I left for bootcamp it felt more like I was abandoning them. The look in her eyes when the bus pulled away…those weren’t just any tears. They rained down on me then and they’ve been raining down on me ever since.

OFFICER THREADBARE

What happened to your mom and sister?

 OFFICER WHITE

10.

They moved back to Texas, where my grandparents live, where my mom’s from. She landed a good job and turned things around but she never forgave me. She never mentions it but she doesn’t have the same amount of love in her eyes when she looks at me. She still loves me but it’s just different.

OFFICER THREADBARE

I’m glad things turned out all right.

OFFICER WHITE

Yeah. All right.

 (*he sighs audibly*)

You ever have anything like that happen to you?

OFFICER THREADBARE

You know I’m from Kansas, right?

OFFICER WHITE

Yeah.

OFFICER THREADBARE

Tornado country.

OFFICER WHITE

Auntie Em!

OFFICER THREADBARE

That heel-clicking shit don’t work. We were all huddled together in the basement during one tornado and I look over at my sister and she’s in full Dorothy mode, clicking away. No ruby red slippers but there she was…clicking. Good luck with that. What are you gonna do?

OFFICER WHITE

Did your house blow down?

OFFICER THREADBARE

No, we and the three little pigs survived despite the big, bad wolf huffing and puffing at our front door. You’ve seen the footage after a tornado hits? Total devastation. We had our roof blow off once and another time all the windows were blown out. But others lost their homes.

OFFICER WHITE

Like the homeless.

OFFICER THREADBARE

Not like the homeless. They were our friends and neighbors.

11.

OFFICER WHITE

The homeless were somebody’s friends and neighbors. Still are. A lot of veterans out there on the streets.

OFFICER THREADBARE

You’re gonna make me cry.

OFFICER WHITE

It’s tough out there, man.

OFFICER THREADBARE

Indeed.

OFFICER WHITE

What’s the worst thing that’s ever happened to you out on patrol?

OFFICER THREADBARE

Luckily, no one has shot at me.

OFFICER WHITE

Amen to that.

*Officer White bows his head and slowly shakes it back and forth.*

OFFICER THREADBARE

I was working alone one night. Raining like crazy. I get a call that there’s someone causing a commotion behind one of the department stores. I pull up but no one’s there.

Then this guy comes out from behind a dumpster and tells me that there’s someone in the dumpster and they’re in trouble. I figure it’s just one of the homeless trying to keep out of the rain. The rain is making so much noise I can’t hear her until I get close and then all of a sudden…boom!

(*Officer Threadbare turns and looks over at Officer White.*)

 She let out a scream that would have curdled all the milk in the dairy section of the

 supermarket.

 (*he now stares straight ahead*)

I unholstered my service revolver and climbed up on in there. Jesus Christ. There was so much blood. No one being raped or strangled or stabbed.

OFFICER WHITE

Good to hear.

OFFICER THREADBARE

There was nothing good about that scene. The woman had given birth to a stillborn baby.

Baby dead. Blood everywhere. Woman screaming. There were some type of linens in the

12.

dumpster but I didn’t want to wrap the baby in that shit. That had been lying in a dumpster. So I took off my uniform shirt and wrapped her in that. I found out later that it was a little girl. I wouldn’t want my kid, dead or alive, wrapped up in garbage.

OFFICER WHITE

What about the woman?

OFFICER THREADBARE

Screaming her head off. Covered in blood. The rain coming down.

 (*His voice takes on an excited tone. He is becoming more animated.*)

I called an ambulance. Held the baby. Tried to console the woman. Tried to stop the blood. There was so much blood. I was thinking she was going to die right there with her daughter. I have never felt so powerless. The ambulance finally showed up. They wanted me to hand them the baby but I couldn’t let go. It was a weird feeling. She felt like mine. It all felt wrong, giving her to someone other than her mother. But I couldn’t do that. The paramedic finally talked me into turning her over. It was like talking a jumper down from a ledge. I was in a daze.

OFFICER WHITE

That’s a bad night out on patrol.

OFFICER THREADBARE

The worst night of my life. I thought about when my daughter was born. Just holding her. She was so small and fragile. Like most first-time dads I thought I was going to break her. The nurse told me I was doing fine. She wasn’t going to break. But the stillborn baby was broken. Broken in my arms. Everything seemed broken that night. Even the nighttime sky was broken, letting all that rain spill out. And me standing there looking back and forth between the ambulance, my car and the dumpster. I was completely lost.

OFFICER WHITE

Do you want any more ketchup?

*Officer Threadbare turns his head and looks at Officer White.*

OFFICER THREADBARE

What do you think?

SCENE FIVE

*Inside the neighborhood market. Owned and operated by Abdul, an immigrant from*

*Yemen. Wayne enters the store.*

13.

ABDUL

Good afternoon, sir.

WAYNE

Good afternoon.

ABDUL

How can I help you?

WAYNE

I don’t know.

ABDUL

You don’t know? Surely you know or you wouldn’t be here.

WAYNE

I mean I don’t know what I want yet. I’m hungry.

ABDUL

That I can take care of. This is a market after all.

WAYNE

Yeah.

ABDUL

Do you want something hot? We have fried chicken and some barbeque. Beef, no pork. I don’t know how much barbeque is left…ah, just a little. But we have plenty of chicken.

WAYNE

They both sound good. How much is it?

ABDUL

How about a barbeque rib, a leg and a thigh for three dollars? Does that sound fair?

WAYNE

It sounds all right. Where are you from?

*Wayne pays for the food and starts to eat in the store then thinks better of it.*

 ABDUL

Go ahead. Eat. You are hungry. Never keep a hungry man waiting. My mother used to say that. We all ate well as children. I am from here. I live here above the store.

WAYNE

14.

What country are you from?

ABDUL

I am from Yemen. Do you know Yemen?

WAYNE

I used to be in the Air Force but they never sent me to Yemen.

ABDUL

They don’t send anyone to Yemen anymore. Yemen is a forgotten country.

WAYNE

Why is that?

ABDUL

Poor people are easy to forget. All you have to do is look away. People look away from Yemen.

WAYNE

People look away from me, too.

ABDUL

I’m looking right at you, sir.

WAYNE

Thank you.

ABDUL

You are most welcome.

WAYNE

What is your name?

ABDUL

I am Abdul. And you, sir.

WAYNE

Wayne.

ABDUL

Good to meet you, Wayne.

*Abdul extends his hand. Wayne begins to extend his hand but realizes it is covered in*

*barbeque sauce and begins to shyly pull it*

15.

*back. Abdul will have none of it. His hand remains outstretched. They shake hands. Abdul wipes his hands on a towel. Wayne wipes his hands on his pants.*

 WAYNE

Good to meet you, too, sir. What does Abdul mean?

ABDUL

What does it mean? It means Abdul. What does Wayne mean?

WAYNE

I don’t know.

 *Abdul laughs.*

ABDUL

I am only kidding. Abdul means “Servant of God”.

WAYNE

That’s a good name.

ABDUL

Thank you, Wayne. I like it, too.

WAYNE

I wish I had a name like that. A name that meant something.

ABDUL

Your name does mean something.

WAYNE

What?

ABDUL

It means craftsman. It comes from Old English. Jesus was a carpenter, a craftsman. Wayne is a good name. John Wayne.

WAYNE

That’s who my mother named me after.

ABDUL

John Wayne or Jesus?

 WAYNE

16.

John Wayne. Nobody names their children after Jesus.

ABDUL

Spanish speakers do. It is an honorable name.

WAYNE

I guess so.

ABDUL

You guess so? What would Jesus say to that?

WAYNE

I don’t know.

ABDUL

I think he’d be okay with it.

WAYNE

Yeah, probably.

ABDUL

There is no probably.

WAYNE

Yeah, okay. Thank you for the food. I have to get going.

ABDUL

You are always welcome here.

WAYNE

Thank you.

ABDUL

At your service.

SCENE SIX

*Cornelius is out for a walk with the help of a cane. He recognizes Millie as she sits on a bus stop bench.*

CORNELIUS

Hey, gorgeous.

17.

MILLIE

Huh? Is that you Cornelius?

CORNELIUS

It ain’t a ghost. At least not yet.

MILLIE

Shush, you.

*Millie gets up to hug Cornelius. They embrace then sit down on the bench together.*

 CORNELIUS

 Girl, aren’t we living the life? Plenty of sunshine headed our way.

 MILLIE

 But no bluebirds.

 CORNELIUS

Don’t say that. A little bluebird landed on my shoulder this morning. Said I’d find you sitting right here.

MILLIE

And here I am.

 *They both laugh.*

MILLIE

How is your chemo going?

CORNELIUS

It’s going great. My cancer is terminal but the treatment will go on forever.

MILLIE

Go on.

CORNELIUS

Girl, goin’ on is what I do. How ’bout you?

MILLIE

The streets are still the streets. It’s a hard life.

CORNELIUS

Don’t I know it. I am lucky to have a roof over my head but that’s due to the cancer. And the military. Of course, they only take care of you when you’re dying. That’s what it feels

18.

like anyway.

MILLIE

At least you have a pension. I was supposed to have a pension. School teachers get pensions. But they let me go before I qualified. That no good husband of mine broke my body and my spirit. I wasn’t much of a teacher after that. How was I supposed to take care of all of those kids when I couldn’t even take care of myself?

CORNELIUS

I feel ya.

MILLIE

I don’t know what I feel anymore. But it is nice to run into you out here.

CORNELIUS

I ran into you.

MILLIE

Better than being run over. I’ve been there, too.

CORNELIUS

What do you mean?

MILLIE

My ex paid someone to try to run me over.

CORNELIUS

No shit?

MILLIE

I wish I was making it up. I jumped out of the way and he sideswiped a telephone pole. My ex said I couldn’t get out of my own way so how the hell did I get out of a speeding car’s way? All I can say is, “Thank you, telephone pole.”

CORNELIUS

My auntie told my grandmother when they were at the state fair one summer that if they painted a face on a tree she would talk to it. You haven’t started talking to trees, have you?

 *They both laugh.*

SCENE SEVEN

19.

*An alley. Wayne is sitting on a flattened cardboard box. His back is resting against the wall of a building whose rear entrance is in the alley. He is preparing methamphetamine to be injected intravenously. He takes out a spoon and bends the handle upwards and takes a small pinch of meth crystals out of a small plastic baggie and places them in the spoon. He pours a small amount of water into the spoon to dissolve the methamphetamine and then places a cotton filter in the spoon to absorb the liquid then takes a syringe and places the tip of the needle in the cotton filter still in the spoon and pulls the plunger, filling it with the water mixed with methamphetamine. He then wraps a bandana around his arm, takes out a small paper container, rips it open, removes an alcohol swab and swabs the inside of his elbow. He is now ready to inject the drug. Millie enters stage right. Wayne does not notice her. She does not approach or reproach him. She watches silently, both curious and saddened. Wayne takes the syringe and pokes the vein he has swabbed. He pushes the plunger down. He removes the bandana. He tilts his head back against the wall. The syringe is still in his arm. The lights fade to black.*

SCENE EIGHT

*The convalescent home. Cornelius is lying in a hospital bed. He is undergoing chemotherapy. He has a catheter in his arm for the intravenous drug treatment. He is asleep. His bed is in the center of the stage, bathed in light, while the rest of the stage is in darkness. The lights come on revealing the nurse standing stage right watching over him. He begins to stir and awakes from his slumber.*

CORNELIUS

You watchin’ over me?

NURSE

I think that’s his job.

CORNELIUS

Whose?

NURSE

The man upstairs.

CORNELIUS

God or Santa?

NURSE

Big old white dude with a beard. Didn’t catch his name.

CORNELIUS

That sounds like him.

20.

NURSE

How are you feeling?

CORNELIUS

Tired, girl. Don’t I look it?

NURSE

You do but thought I’d ask.

CORNELIUS

Thank you but why does this life have to be so hard?

NURSE

If I were a white lady I might say, “Life is what you make of it.” But you and I know we black folks aren’t in the decision-making process.

CORNELIUS

Life is what you make of it, huh? Look what I’ve made of mine. Not much.

NURSE

Shush now. You’ve got a lot more life left in you. You’re responding well to the chemotherapy.

CORNELIUS

I’d like to believe so but at this moment it’s starting to feel a little hopeless.

NURSE

Between me, Santa and God we got you covered.

CORNELIUS

Thank you darlin’. And those other guys, too.

NURSE

We do what we can. When we can.

CORNELIUS

Santa’s got it easy. Workin’ one day a year.

NURSE

But what a day.

CORNELIUS

Not like those elves. I heard they don’t even get a day off and the big man takes all the

credit. Life’s a bitch when you aren’t the one in charge.

21.

 NURSE

Life’s a bitch. Period.

SCENE NINE

*Outside the neighborhood market. Abdul is sweeping the sidewalk in front of the storefront. Wayne approaches, looking agitated.*

ABDUL

Good evening, Wayne. Are you in some kind of trouble, my friend?

WAYNE

What?

ABDUL

Is something bothering you? You don’t look well. How are you feeling?

WAYNE

I don’t know. I feel sick.

*Abdul approaches him but Wayne backs away.*

 ABDUL

 Hold on, my friend. I am here to help you.

 WAYNE

 I don’t need any help. I just get confused sometimes.

 *Abdul smiles.*

 ABDUL

 Wait until you get to be my age.

 WAYNE

 I don’t understand.

 ABDUL

 I was making a joke. I am sorry.

 WAYNE

 Don’t be sorry. What’s there to be sorry for?

22.

 ABDUL

 Just an expression.

 WAYNE

 I need a lighter.

 *Abdul holds the door of the store open.*

 ABDUL

 After you, Wayne.

 (*Wayne hesitates then walks into the store. He stands there as if he doesn’t know*

 *where he is or what he is going to do. Abdul walks around him. Something*

 *doesn’t feel right. His guard is up.*)

 How can I help you?

 WAYNE

 I need a lighter.

 ABDUL

 Yes. I forgot. Sorry, my mistake.

 WAYNE

 Don’t be sorry.

 ABDUL

 The lighters are right here.

 *Abdul points to them on the counter.*

 WAYNE

 I don’t have any money.

 ABDUL

 Well, that is a problem. The store merchandise is not free. Do you just need a light?

 WAYNE

 No, I need a lighter.

 ABDUL

 I can offer you a light, sir, but not a lighter. Those are one dollar.

 WAYNE

 I need a lighter.

23.

 ABDUL

 Yes, you said as much but I can only offer a light. There is no smoking in the store my

 customers would not like it. If we were in Yemen we could smoke anywhere we please.

 WAYNE

 I just need a lighter.

 *Abdul gestures towards the door.*

 ABDUL

 After you, sir.

 WAYNE

 My name is Wayne.

 ABDUL

 My apologies. After you, Wayne.

 (*Abdul holds open the door and he follows Wayne out. Abdul takes out his lighter*

 *and Wayne produces a glass pipe from his pocket. Abdul has a look of confusion*

 *and disgust on his face.)*

What is that, Wayne? I will not light that. I thought, perhaps, that you were going to

 smoke a cigarette.

 WAYNE

 I don’t smoke cigarettes.

 ABDUL

 Yes, they are bad for you. A nasty habit. My wife wishes I would quit.

 WAYNE

 I need a lighter.

 ABDUL

 You will have to find one elsewhere. I will not light your pipe. You cannot smoke that

 here on my property.

 WAYNE

 I don’t know what to do.

 ABDUL

 You can return when you have some money. How you live your life is none of my

 business but I cannot have people doing illegal drugs here.

 WAYNE

 24.

 Marijuana is legal.

 ABDUL

 That is not a marijuana pipe. I do not allow that here.

 *Wayne takes a step towards Abdul. Abdul*

 *takes a step back. Wayne charges Abdul*

 *and punches him repeatedly in the head.*

 *Abdul falls to the ground. The lighter lies*

 *to his side. Wayne picks it up. He looks at*

 *Abdul. It finally dawns on him what he has*

 *done. He drops the lighter. He hadn’t*

 *noticed the man and woman approaching*

 *the store. They make eye contact with him*

 *and retreat to the safety of their car where*

 *the man makes a phone call. Wayne begins*

 *shaking uncontrollably. He lets out a cry,*

 *loud and fuzzy, like a radio with the dial*

 *trapped between stations. He is now*

 *sobbing. There is a police siren in the*

 *distance. He looks around then runs away.*

 ACT TWO

 SCENE ONE

 *The top of a parking garage. Wayne sits on the ledge. The garage is five stories tall. It is*

 *a long way down. A crowd starts to form on the street below. Someone yells, “Don’t*

 *jump! Millie approaches.*

MILLIE

 Wayne, come down from there. What are you doing?

WAYNE

 Don’t come near me.

MILLIE

 What’s wrong?

WAYNE

 I did a bad thing.

25.

MILLIE

 How bad could it be to bring you up here? Please come down from there.

WAYNE

 No. I’m going to jump.

MILLIE

 Not if I have anything to say about it.

 WAYNE

 You can’t undo what I did.

MILLIE

 What did you do?

WAYNE

 I hurt somebody.

MILLIE

 How? Who?

WAYNE

 Abdul. From the store.

MILLIE

 No! That nice man? Why, Wayne?

WAYNE

 I just wanted a lighter. He wouldn’t give me one.

MILLIE

 Wayne, what’s got into you? I never knew you to be violent.

WAYNE

 I’m not violent. I just needed a lighter. He offered me a light because he thought I was

 going to smoke a cigarette. But I don’t smoke cigarettes.

MILLIE

 I know what you smoke. Have you lost your mind?

WAYNE

 Huh?

MILLIE

 Sorry. Wrong question.

26.

WAYNE

 Don’t be sorry.

MILLIE

 Stop the crazy talk and come down from there.

WAYNE

 I’m not crazy!

MILLIE

 Of course, you’re not. You just need help. We all need help. Let me help you.

WAYNE

 I could use some help.

MILLIE

 Come down from there.

 *Speaking to himself.*

WAYNE

 Come down from there.

MILLIE

 What?

WAYNE

 Come down from there. My dad said that to me once. Probably more than once. When I

 was on the roof of our house.

MILLIE

 Yeah?

WAYNE

 I was cleaning the rain gutters. They were full of leaves. He came home from work. He

 thought I was screwin’ around up there. Usually he would have been right. I was and still

 am a fuck-up.

MILLIE

 Wayne, don’t say that.

WAYNE

 It’s true. I wouldn’t be here sitting on this ledge if it wasn’t true.

MILLIE

 27.

 Okay. I hear ya.

WAYNE

 I was on the roof. My two friends were in the driveway. I told my dad what I was doing.

 He wasn’t buying what I was selling. I coulda sold it better. I was never good at that.

MILLIE

 Sold it better? I’m not following you.

WAYNE

 I’m a bad liar. Even when I’m telling the truth I sound like I’m lying. But I wasn’t lying.

 I was actually doing something…productive? Is that the right word?

MILLIE

 Sure.

WAYNE

 He looks at me and says, “Your ass sucks canal water.” What the fuck? What does that

 even mean?

MILLIE

 I don’t know.

WAYNE

 A couple of years after that I watched the first *Predator* film at my friend’s house. Jessie

 “The Body” Ventura said, “Your ass sucks canal water,” to somebody. I felt vindicated.

 My friends and I thought it was some weird shit my dad had made up. I have never heard

 it since.

MILLIE

 Wayne, what does that have to do with anything? Come down from there.

WAYNE

 Yeah, come down from there. After my friends left my dad beat the shit out of me for

 lying or being a dumbass or just because he hated me or hated himself or needed

 someone smaller and weaker than him to beat on like his dad beat on him. I don’t know.

 He was a fuckin’ redneck so he kicked me in the stomach with his cowboy boots on.

 Repeatedly. Then threw my skateboard in the fire. It burned while I cried. Only the trucks

 were left after the fire was out.

MILLIE

 The trucks?

WAYNE

 That’s the metal part that the wheels are attached to. They were the only thing left of my

 28.

 skateboard. If I jumped from here what would be left of me?

MILLIE

 You aren’t jumping anywhere except right here with me. Come down from there, Wayne.

 *Wayne comes down from the ledge just as*

 *Officers Threadbare and White approach. They*

 *take him into custody without protest. Millie steps*

 *towards him to offer support but Officer White*

 *puts out his hand like a human stop sign and*

 *Millie stops, her shoulders slumped and her head*

 *down. The officers lead Wayne away.*

SCENE TWO

 *Officers Threadbare and White are driving in their patrol car. Wayne is at the jail where*

 *he is being processed.*

OFFICER THREADBARE

 What’d I tell you.

OFFICER WHITE

 About what?

OFFICER THREADBARE

 The homeless.

OFFICER WHITE

 That they’re all axe murderers?

 *Officer Threadbare responds sarcastically.*

OFFICER THREADBARE

 Ha ha.

OFFICER WHITE

 No, really. The homeless have the axe murderer gene.

OFFICER THEADBARE

 Okay. I’ll bite. How so? I can’t wait to hear this.

OFFICER WHITE

 Have you ever known an axe murderer that wasn’t homeless?

29.

OFFICER THREADBARE

 Even in this line of work I haven’t come across too many axe murderers.

OFFICER WHITE

 I thought you were an expert on the criminal mind.

OFFICER THREADBARE

 Okay. Very funny. You know what’s funny?

OFFICER WHITE

 What?

OFFICER THREADBARE

 My dad used to say that black people had the murder gene.

OFFICER WHITE

 You had to go there, huh? Now we’re getting somewhere. If you like walking on

 quicksand. Your dad? Not you, huh?

OFFICER THREADBARE

 No, my dad. He said, “Look at how many blacks are arrested for murder.”

OFFICER WHITE

 And what did you say? You set him straight, right?

OFFICER THREADBARE

 He’s from a different generation.

OFFICER WHITE

 The generation that freed the slaves?

 *Officer Threadbare responds sarcastically.*

OFFICER THREADBARE

 Ha ha.

OFFICER WHITE

 I wish it were funny.

OFFICER THREADBARE

 What do you think about it?

OFFICER WHITE

 The murder gene? Haven’t killed anyone lately. But I’ve only been on the job for a few

 years. Give me some more time and I might make a dent in the black male murder

 30.

statistics.

OFFICER THREADBARE

 Nothing personal.

OFFICER WHITE

 Oh, it’s personal alright. I don’t know about black people and the murder gene but white

 people have the serial killer gene.

OFFICER THREADBARE

 Now you’re talking some serious bullshit.

OFFICER WHITE

 How many black serial killers have you heard of?

 (*side glances at Officer Threadbare*)

 Still thinking about it?

OFFICER THREADBARE

 There was the child killer in Atlanta.

OFFICER WHITE

 Wayne Williams. He wasn’t convicted for those murders. He’s in prison for killing two

 adult males.

OFFICER THREADBARE

 A model citizen.

OFFICER WHITE

 But not a serial killer. Didn’t shoot up a movie theatre or a church either. Only white

 people do that.

OFFICER THREADBARE

 Okay, I get it. White people are to blame for everything.

OFFICER WHITE

 No. It’s just a fact. Unlike black people being predisposed to murder.

OFFICER THREADBARE

 What’s got into you?

OFFICER WHITE

 The only thing I’m genetically predisposed towards is having to patiently listen to white

folks explain black folks to me.

OFFICER THREADBARE

 31.

Yeah. Sorry about that. You hungry?

OFFICER WHITE

 Always. And if you’re buying I promise not to bring up this conversation again.

OFFICER THREADBARE

 Deal. Mexican, Chinese, burger, sandwich?

OFFICER WHITE

 If you know where to find a Mexican Chinese burger sandwich lead me to it.

OFFICER THREADBARE

 Korean tacos?

OFFICER WHITE

 Kimchi and carnitas. A marriage made in heaven.

OFFICER THREADBARE

 Only in America. Greatest country in the world.

OFFICER WHITE

 Then why do we have to make it great again if it’s already so great?

OFFICER THREADBARE

 Oh, please. You want tacos or nada?

OFFICER WHITE

 What’s Korean for nada?

SCENE THREE

 *A week later. A park across the street from Abdul’s market. Millie, Cornelius, Maria and*

 *Jose, and Chi Chi are gathered together. They are laughing. It is the holiday season but unusually warm for this time of year. The stars are out and they are in a festive mood.*

 *Maria and Jose are each holding a can of beer. There is a nativity scene in the park.*

MILLIE

 Ah, look at that manger. Christmas is right around the corner.

MARIA

I love this time of year.

JOSE

 32.

Especially when it’s not freezing cold.

MILLIE

 We got lucky this year. Even Cornelius is out with us.

CORNELIUS

 You know how I hate the cold.

MILLIE

 You can take the boy outta the South but you can’t take the South outta the boy.

CORNELIUS

 Please, take all the South you like. When people ask me when I left the South I tell them,

 “As soon as I heard there was a North.”

 *They all laugh.*

MILLIE

 Were you ever in a Christmas play at school?

CORNELIUS

 Of course, I bet we all were.

MARIA

 I played Mary.

JOSE

 I was a shepherd.

CORNELIUS

 Looks like Abdul is closing the store early tonight.

 (*raising his voice loud enough to be heard across the street*)

 Hey Abdul!

 *Abdul pauses, recognizes them, waves and starts*

 *to walk towards them.*

MILLIE

 Good, he’s coming.

 (*she waves him over*)

 Happy Holidays.

ABDUL

 Happy Holidays.

33.

MARIA AND JOSE

 Happy Holidays.

ABDUL

 What has brought you all together tonight beside the mild temperatures?

MILLIE

 Remind you of home?

ABDUL

 Nothing reminds me of home but it is a nice night.

MILLIE

 How are you feeling?

ABDUL

 I still have the occasional headache but the doctors say it was not a severe concussion. I

 do not want to know what that would be like. This is bad enough.

MARIA

 We’ve been praying for you. You’ve always been so kind to us. We’re glad you’re

 feeling better.

ABDUL

 One day at a time. What is the occasion tonight?

CORNELIUS

 Just spending time with friends. The holidays can be lonely.

ABDUL

 Yes, they can.

MILLIE

 We were talking about the Christmas plays we were in as school children. I was thinking

 we could put one on now.

ABDUL

 A nativity play? Right here?

MILLIE

 I think Jesus would approve. We outcasts would make a fine acting troupe.

CORNELIUS

 We don’t have a script.

34.

MILLIE

 We don’t need one. We’ll improvise in the spirit of Christmas.

JOSE

 Who’s going to play little baby Jesus?

MILLIE

 How about Chi Chi?

 *They all laugh.*

MARIA

 He’s the only one small enough to fit in the manger.

MILLIE

 Maria, you and Jose can be Mary and Joseph. We three will be the wise men.

 *They all move towards the nativity scene and get*

 *in their respective places but Chi Chi won’t get*

 *in the manger. He is skittish with a touch of*

 *stage fright.*

MARIA

 Come on, Chi Chi. Calm down little fella.

 *Chi Chi growls and tries to wrestle free.*

CORNELIUS

 We need a new Jesus.

MILLIE

 I think that’s a bumper sticker.

 *They all laugh. Jose takes the four remaining*

 *beers and places them in the manger. Maria*

 *looks mortified.*

MARIA

 Jose!

JOSE

 If we can drink the blood of Christ, why not the beer? It’s easier to make water into beer

than into wine.

 *Maria crosses herself.*

35.

MILLIE

 Beer it is. Maria and Jose stand next to the manger. Okay, wise men. Get in position.

 *Everyone gets in place.*

CORNELIUS

 Now what do we do?

MILLIE

 Lower our heads and say a prayer for those that cannot be with us. In the spirit of

 Christmas, Let’s all hold hands.

 *They hold hands in an unbroken circle and lower*

 *their heads. After a minute or so has passed,*

 *Cornelius looks up.*

CORNELIUS

 Now what?

 *Jose takes a beer out of the four-pack and hands*

 *it to Millie. Cornelius, because he is a*

 *recovering alcoholic, and Abdul, because he is*

 *Muslim, do not drink. Jose knows this and does*

 *not offer them a beer. Millie opens her can. She,*

 *Maria and Jose raise their cans together.*

MILLIE

 Merry Christmas everyone!

EVERYONE

 Merry Christmas!

SCENE FOUR

 *Cornelius is at the convalescent home receiving treatment for his cancer. He is waiting*

 *for the nurse to check in on him. He likes her company. He is talking to himself again.*

CORNELIUS

 Christmas is right around the corner and here I am circling the drain. Like a fallen angel

in a drunken stupor.

 *The nurse enters.*

36.

NURSE

 Still trying your hand at poetry, I see.

CORNELIUS

 Gotta make some use of my time. I left my piano at the doctor’s office.

NURSE

 Do you prefer the black or the white keys?

CORNELIUS

 My piano is actually a pianosaurus. Black and yellow keys.

NURSE

 You thwarted my attempt at racial humor. You’re killing my punch lines.

CORNELIUS

 Take a stab at it but now you’ll have to leave out the white people.

NURSE

 That’s no fun. If I leave out the white people than who’s worth stabbing?

CORNELIUS

 That’s cold.

NURSE

 Merry Christmas.

 *They both laugh.*

CORNELIUS

 Are you staying in town for Christmas?

NURSE

 Where am I going to go?

CORNELIUS

 I don’t know. Just askin’.

NURSE

 My husband and I will have our son and daughter-in-law over on Christmas day. We are

 going to a party at some friends for Christmas Eve. Thankfully I only have to cook for

Christmas. Two straight days in the kitchen is not my idea of a holiday.

CORNELIUS

 At least you haven’t lost your Christmas spirit.

37.

NURSE

 You want some Christmas spirit? Wait ‘til I pull that needle out of your arm.

CORNELIUS

 Okay. Call off the dogs. Or are they reindeer?

NURSE

 The reindeer stay on the roof.

 *Cornelius looks up at the ceiling.*

CORNELIUS

 Come down from there. And take me with you.

NURSE

 Between you and Santa there would no room in the sleigh for all the toys.

CORNELIUS

 I’m the gift that keeps on giving.

NURSE

 If I took a look at his wish list I doubt I would see your name on it.

CORNELIUS

 But I’ve been real nice.

NURSE

 And I’ve always been naughty but when I wake up on Christmas morning and take a look

 under the tree all I can say is, “Thank you, Santa.” He’s always done right by me.

CORNELIUS

 Put in a good word for me then. I could use a Christmas miracle.

NURSE

 Are you spending the day here?

CORNELIUS

 Christmas day?

NURSE

I sure don’t mean To-Day.

CORNELIUS

 My family is far away and most of my friends live on the streets.

38.

NURSE

 Some of the shelters and churches have Christmas celebrations for the homeless.

CORNELIUS

 Yeah, I may look into it. I’ve done that before. It could be worse. Anything to prevent me

 from wallowing in self-pity.

NURSE

 C’mon.

CORNELIUS

 The only thing worse than having cancer and being semi-homeless is having cancer and

 being semi-homeless during Christmas.

NURSE

 At least you have me.

CORNELIUS

 And the reindeer on the roof.

NURSE

 On Cornelius! On Cupid! On, Donner and Blitzen!

 *They both laugh.*

SCENE FIVE

*An alley. It is early evening. Millie enters stage right. She looks disoriented. Her time on the streets is taking a toll on her and it is beginning to show. Just pushing her cart seems like so much work.*

 MILLIE

Where do we go now? Where do we go? It’s quiet around here. Too quiet. I’d like some music. Why is there no music on the street? Where are the musicians? Life needs a soundtrack. Even elevators have music…if you want to call it that. What do they call that? Music…music…muzak! No wonder I couldn’t remember it. They took all the soul out of Marvin and all the wonder out of Stevie. But it beats this silence. No one to talk to Millie and Millie’s got no one to talk to. ‘Cept you.

(*she pulls a teddy bear out of her cart and talks to it*)

You’re all I’ve got, Jenny. You and me. I’d be lost without you. When you were born it rained and rained but all that water couldn’t wash my love away. We’re having a dry winter this year. The neighborhood could use some rain, a good cleaning. Soak in a nice

39.

warm bath for a while. Wouldn’t that feel good? You know it would. Sometimes that’s all it takes to wash your troubles away. Moses came from the water. Escaped the Pharoah’s wrath in a basket made from weeds, hidden along the banks of the Nile. You came from the water, too. You were floatin’ in my belly one minute and then lying in a pool the next. That’s how it happened. At least that’s how I remember it. They tried to take you away from me. Tried to separate mother and daughter. Don’t they know they can’t ever do that? We have an unbreakable bond. Stronger than anything. Our love is like superglue. And that shit’s waterproof.

 (*A car passes by on the street, windows down, music blaring, bass thumping.*

 *Millie dances a little jig then puts the teddy bear back in the cart.*)

That’s what I’m talkin’ about.

 *She continues pushing the cart until she exits*

 *stage left.*

SCENE SIX

*Officers Threadbare and White are making a sweep of the alleys to roust any homeless*

*who may be camping there. Millie is sitting on the ground with her back against the wall.*

*A shopping cart with all her belongings sits next to her. She is reading a bible.*

OFFICER THREADBARE

Excuse me, ma’am, but I am going to have to ask you to leave?

MILLIE

Why is that? Are they renovating this alley? When it’s almost perfect the way it is?

OFFICER THREADBARE

No need to give me any lip. Please move along.

MILLIE

I move along everyday. That’s how I ended up here.

OFFICER THREADBARE

There is no need for sarcasm.

MILLIE

Obviously, you’ve never been homeless. A healthy diet of sarcasm is what keeps me

sane.

OFFICER THREADBARE

That’s debatable.

40.

 MILLIE

What the fuck?

OFFICER THREADBARE

Watch your language.

MILLIE

Watch yours.

OFFICER THREADBARE

Just move along, please.

MILLIE

Where am I going to go?

OFFICER THREADBARE

I don’t really care.

MILLIE

When I sit on the sidewalk, they tell me to move along. When I sleep in the park they tell me to move along. When I go some place out of the way, like here, you tell me to move along. I done moved enough.

*Officer Threadbare gestures towards the shopping cart.*

 OFFICER THREADBARE

 Are these your things?

 *Millie has an incredulous look on her face.*

 MILLIE

No, that’s Santa’s sleigh. He’s having a smoke while the reindeer are taking a dump in the park.

 (*regaining her composure*)

 Yes, these things that nobody else wants are mine. Throwaways…like yours truly.

 OFFICER THREADBARE

 Where did you get the shopping cart?

 MILLIE

 Oh, this again? Are you threatening to take my cart? Why don’t you leave both of us

alone? Does our mere presence on the streets offend you so?

 OFFICER THREADBARE

 41.

I’m just doing my job.

 MILLIE

At least you’ve got one.

 OFFICER THREADBARE

 More lip. Okay, here we go.

 *Officer Threadbare reaches for Millie.*

 MILLIE

 Don’t you fuckin’ touch me. What are you going to do? Throw me in the dumpster like a

 piece of trash? I’ve been in a dumpster before and I don’t plan on going back anytime

 soon.

 OFFICER THREADBARE

 Don’t overreact for chrissakes. I’m not throwing anyone in the dumpster. Been there, too.

 MILLIE

 The dumpster? When?

 OFFICER THREADBARE

 Police work.

 MILLIE

 Someone pull the tag off a mattress?

 *Officer White laughs.*

 OFFICER WHITE

 Shit.

 MILLIE

 Now the brother finally speaks. About time.

 (*to Officer Threadbare*)

 What’d you do in that dumpster?

 OFFICER THREADBARE

 I was sunbathing.

 MILLIE

 Look who’s the comedian now.

 OFFICER THREADBARE

 Takes one to know one.

42.

 MILLIE

 Fair enough. I lost my baby in a dumpster.

 OFFICER THREADBARE

 What?

 MILLIE

I lost my baby girl. Gave birth to her. Didn’t want to be in that dumpster but it was

 raining and I needed some privacy. It was raining so hard.

 *Officer White addresses Officer Threadbare.*

 OFFICER WHITE

 Terry.

 *Officer Threadbare shakes his head.*

 OFFICER THREADBARE

 No.

 MILLIE

 Yes it was. It might be fairly dry this winter but it sure was raining then.

 OFFICER THREADBARE

 You gave birth in a dumpster?

 MILLIE

 I’m not proud of it. My baby girl deserved better but try getting an ambulance when

 you’re all alone, homeless and your water just broke.

 OFFICER THREADBARE

 Was your daughter all right?

 MILLIE

 I don’t know. They took her from me. I never even got to hold her. I woke up in the

 hospital asking, “Where is my baby girl?” They said she was stillborn. But I heard her cry

 when she came out. A stillborn baby doesn’t cry, does she?

 OFFICER THREADBARE

 I don’t believe this.

MILLIE

You don’t have to believe it. But it happened.

 OFFICER THREADBARE

 43.

I didn’t mean it that way.

 MILLIE

 Which way did you mean it then?

 OFFICER THREADBARE

 I don’t rightly know. Sometimes there are no words to describe how you feel.

 MILLIE

Words escape me, too, on occasion. But I usually catch them before they make a clean getaway.

 OFFICER THREADBARE

 I hereby deputize you on behalf of the vocabulary police.

MILLIE

Good thing I have this bible right here.

 (*places her left hand on the bible and raises her right hand*)

I do solemnly swear to uphold the covenants, conditions and restrictions pertaining to the laws and bylaws of the…and so on and so forth, as it relates to words and stuff. So help

me God.

OFFICER THREADBARE

 So help you God.

OFFICER WHITE

 Terry.

 *Officer White puts his hand on Officer*

 *Threadbare’s shoulder as they walk away.*

SCENE SEVEN

*A loading dock behind a department store. There is a single dumpster. It is nighttime and it is raining heavily. Officer Threadbare walks toward the dumpster. As he approaches there is a buzzing sound that gets louder the closer he gets. When he lifts the dumpster’s lid a woman’s scream fills the theatre and then silence. Officer Threadbare talks into his radio then climbs into the dumpster where he scoops up a baby covered in blood from the floor and looks around for something to wrap it in. There are some linens but he instead removes his shirt and wraps the baby in that. He kneels next to the woman and tries to*

*tend to her the best he can while holding the baby in his other arm. When the ambulance arrives he climbs out of the dumpster with the baby and walks around the stage not*

44.

*wanting to give the baby to the paramedics but finally relents. Millie is still in the dumpster, bathed in red light. The paramedics and Officer Threadbare just stare at her.*

SCENE EIGHT

 *Abdul is sweeping the sidewalk in front of his store. Wayne has been released from jail.*

 *Abdul has dropped the charges. Wayne approaches Abdul.*

WAYNE

 Hi.

ABDUL

 Hello.

WAYNE

I wanted to thank you for dropping the charges. And to say how sorry I am. I know saying the drugs made me do it isn’t going to cut it but I am truly sorry.

ABDUL

Apology accepted.

WAYNE

Is there anything I can do to repay you? I have given up drugs. It’s only been a short time but I’m clean.

ABDUL

You want to make reparations, eh? Take this broom.

 (*Wayne takes the broom*)

Start sweeping.

*Wayne enthusiastically gets to work. As he sweeps a car pulls up along the curb and the front seat passenger gets out. He looks around as he walks into the store. After a moment there can be heard loud voices and shouting coming from inside the store. Several gunshots ring out. The man runs out of the store and gets into the waiting car as it pulls away from the curb. Abdul staggers out of the store and onto the sidewalk. He is holding his stomach. He is covered in blood.*

*He falls to his knees as Wayne rushes to his aid. Abdul slumps forward as Wayne cradles*

45.

*him. Police sirens can be heard approaching. Wayne, visibly distraught,*

*rears back his head and lets out a silent scream.*

SCENE NINE

*A street scene. An electronics store with a bank of televisions in the window. Millie walks by pushing her shopping cart and stops to look at all the television screens. Millie is facing the audience. The images on the screens are projected against the street scene at the back of the stage. The news is being broadcast. A voice speaks.*

VOICE

A tornado roared through Bucklin, Kansas today destroying twenty-three homes. A family of four were seeking shelter in their car when it was blown into a river. There were no survivors. (pause) Here in town the owner of a neighborhood market was gunned down in his store and died on the sidewalk out in front.(pause) The National Cancer Institute is reporting that the mortality rate for cancer is significantly greater for men than women and particularly African American men, the highest group at risk, who are almost three times as likely to die as the lowest group, Asian/Pacific Islander women. (pause) Here’s a feel good story for you. A woman and her long lost daughter were united over the weekend after twelve years apart. The daughter was taken from the hospital before her mother was able to hold her in her arms. The mother never gave up hope and said she always knew they would be reunited.

 (*Woman’s voice exclaims, “This is the happiest day of my life!”*)

Good night and be well.

 *Millie stares to the back of the theatre and*

 *inhales audibly like she has just seen a ghost.*

 END OF PLAY