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ALL I EVER WANTED

Prologue:

(In the dark, we hear a madrigal sung by a mid-sized community choir.

Lights rise on a bare, raked stage. Furniture pieces, etc., can be used to indicate different settings. ELEANOR, HARMON, KIM and TODD stand at various points on the rake, as if part of a larger group. They sing along, each in his or her own light.

Successively, they address the audience.)

ELEANOR

Sometimes it seems every one in the world wants to move here. And has. Every week there are new faces showing up, at the market, at the Mohawk station, at the second-hand store. But there was something different about her. She stood out. Selling her newspaper at the Lions' Rummage Sale, beaming everytime someone pressed another loonie into her hand. I have to admit I thought: "Ah-hah! A kindred spirit."

(She stands there, remembering. She doesn't resume singing.)

KIM

Sometimes all you have to do is look at a situation to know there's something wrong. Reporter's instincts, I guess. Or common sense. I mean they looked nothing like each other; aren't relatives supposed to look alike? And there was something about the boy, something about the way he could never quite look you in the eye. That wouldn't hold up as evidence in court, of course. But to a journalist, it's like wearing a T-shirt saying "Something Going On".

(As above.)

TODD

All I ever wanted was to stay here.

(As above.)

HARMON

People look at the scenery around here and they say, "Oh, how beautiful." People from down east, people from off the Prairies. Like me, though that was a long time ago now. And it is. Beautiful. But sometimes they don't see what's really here. Don't

see the trees for the forest, so to speak. That girl did, I have to give her that much. She didn't understand everything. But she saw . . . a lot.

(The four of them stand there, remembering, separately. The singing rises to an end.)

Scene 1:

(Eleanor's home, indicated with a table surrounded by a few chairs. A smalltown newspaper, coffee mug on the table.)

HARMON and TODD enter. TODD wears a "Nine Inch Nails" T-shirt. Long hair, or maybe no hair. HARMON calls.)

HARMON

Lenny?

Lenny!

TODD

Maybe she's out back.

HARMON

Tending her pot patch. Lenny!

TODD

She has a pot patch?

HARMON

No.

Well you better get started anyway. Least take a look.

TODD

What if I get her truck up on blocks, all the wheels off, and she wants to go someplace?

HARMON

Then she'll be shit outta luck, won't she?

TODD

You'll drive her.

HARMON

Prob'ly.

TODD
(Starting out.)

That'd be cool, her havin a pot patch.

HARMON
(Muttering.)

Bout as cool as me shavin my head.

ELEANOR!

Judas Priest.

(He spots the local newspaper, the "Valley Echo", on the kitchen table, and sits down to read.

ELEANOR enters, carrying a handful of brochures, but he doesn't see her. She watches him. He absent-mindedly picks up a nearby mug of coffee and drinks from it.)

ELEANOR

That's not your coffee.

(HARMON regards her, regards the mug.)

HARMON

I thought there was something wrong with it.

ELEANOR

Bridgehead. From Guatemala.

HARMON

Yuck. Politically correct coffee. Where were you?

ELEANOR

Why?

HARMON

I'm hoarse from yellin for ya.

ELEANOR

Well then don't yell. I was over at Mavis Hollorhan's, taking her some peas. Then Jim Friesen phoned while I was there so I had to talk to him about tuning the piano. Then

I had to stop at the Shop 'N Go on my way home, where I ran into Sandy Piercy, so I went over to her place to pick up the Tools for Peace brochures.

HARMON

So where were you?

ELEANOR

Marge Dutton's. She needed the brochures. And by the way, it's none of your business where I was.

HARMON

I get tired just hearin about it.

ELEANOR

(Pecking him on the head.)

You and Marge Dutton. She was still in bed.

HARMON

(Reading the paper.)

Ha-ha! Lookit this. Frieda's outdone herself. "Mrs. Rose Gossage gave an exhibition of clog dancing at the community hall, gaily decorated with balloons and irises." Musta been kinda hard to dance, wearin' all that stuff.

ELEANOR

(Laughing.)

Poor Frieda!

HARMON

Why this woman started a newspaper I'll never know. It'd be like me tryna be a air traffic controller.

ELEANOR

What a scary thought.

HARMON

Least I know my limitations.

ELEANOR

(Tossing another newspaper in front of him.)

Well here, have a look at this one. It looks quite professional.

HARMON

What's this?

ELEANOR

It's a new newspaper. Put out by some woman who just moved here from Calgary. Apparently she used to be a reporter.

(HARMON starts to read. TODD enters, with wrench.)

Hello Todd!

TODD

Hey.

ELEANOR

I didn't know you were here.

HARMON

Todd's fixin your truck.

ELEANOR

Oh! Thankyou!

HARMON

He had no choice. It was either that or shovel out our barn.

TODD
(To HARMON.)

Did you bring the flashlight?

HARMON

I thought you did.

TODD

I thought you did.

HARMON

Uh-huh. Well I thought you did.

ELEANOR

Would you like to borrow mine?

TODD

Oh. Thanks.

ELEANOR
(Getting it.)

Thankyou for looking at the truck, Todd. That used to be George's job. It hasn't been tended properly in years.

(She hands him the flashlight.)

I called Aston Lake, by the way.

TODD

Oh yeah?

ELEANOR

They take ten scholarship students a year. Five of them are fine arts scholarships, based on an audition. And one of them, my dear, is going to be yours.

TODD

Yeah right.

ELEANOR

It is!

TODD

Maybe if they got a air drum scholarship.

ELEANOR

A what?

HARMON

Todd plays air drums. Show her, Toddy.

TODD

Oh I don't think she --

ELEANOR

Sure I do!

(Pause. TODD isn't too sure about this. He "centres" himself. Then he launches into a sudden, vigorous and totally silent "drum solo". It ends with a cymbal "crash". Pause.)

TODD

That was "Blonde and Ragged".

(Beat. Shows them his T-shirt.)

Nine Inch Nails.

(Beat.)

It kinda helps if you can hear the music.

ELEANOR

I thought you got that T-shirt at the Home Hardware.

TODD

Anyway, I don't think –

ELEANOR

You don't have to make any decision now. All they're doing is sending us the application. Then you'll fill it out, then you'll get in, then you'll become world-famous, then you'll introduce me to Luciano Pavarotti!

HARMON

They got any scholarships for farmers?

ELEANOR

The choir can't afford to lose any basses, Harmon. You'll just have to stay here.

TODD

I think I figured out what's wrong.

ELEANOR

What?

TODD

(Exiting.)

I'll letcha know!

(He's off.)

ELEANOR

Nice boy.

HARMON

Uh-huh.

ELEANOR

And he sings like an angel. He is going to get into Aston Lake, you know.

HARMON

Ya'd think you were his mother.

ELEANOR

No. I just think, if we don't help a boy like that, what's the point in helping people halfway round the world?

How is his mother by the way?

HARMON

Hm?

ELEANOR

His mother. Your sister?

HARMON

Oh! Um . . . better. Uh-huh. But she's still laid up in bed.

(Something in the paper catches his eye.)

Well I'll be.

ELEANOR

My uncle had arthritis. He suffered terribly too.

HARMON

Well I'll be. Guess I won't be subscribin ta this newspaper, will I?

(He tosses it aside.)

ELEANOR

What?

HARMON

Nothin. Nothin.

ELEANOR

(Picking up the paper.)

Well it must be something. You ears are turning red.

(She reads, HARMON looking more discomfited all the time. Suddenly she bursts out laughing.)

HARMON

Of course.

ELEANOR

It's wonderful!

HARMON

You would find it funny. You think socialism's enjoyin a comeback.

ELEANOR

(Reads:)

"The News --" -- who's The News? --

(Regards the front of the paper.)

Oh, she's The News.

(Resumes reading.)

"The News notes that our federal representative has once again let forth another of his nineteenth-century views on women, this time suggesting the workplace is no

place for mothers. We agree. The place for mothers is in parliament, so we don't have to put up with the likes of him anymore."

(Laughing:)

Marvellous!

HARMON

All right.

ELEANOR

And right on the money!

HARMON

He's a decent man.

ELEANOR

Decent?!

HARMON

I used ta curl with that guy, before he got elected. Besides, there's no need to go makin fun a people like that!

ELEANOR

What about the one before him?

HARMON

What about him?

ELEANOR

You used to make fun of the one before him all the time!

HARMON

The one before him wasn't a curler!

Think I'll stick ta "Western Horseman".

ELEANOR

Where are you going?

HARMON

I gotta go pick up some parts in Courtenay. Wanna come?

ELEANOR

Be still my beating heart.

HARMON

I didn't say it'd be exciting. We'll do something exciting later.

ELEANOR

Dirty old man.

HARMON

Is that a yes?

ELEANOR

To what?

HARMON

Courtenay.

ELEANOR

No. It's my day to take Mrs. Saville her lunch.

HARMON

Old Granny Saville. I remember when nobody liked her. Now people are bringin her lunch.

(As he leaves.)

Amazin how age improves your character . . .

(He's gone. ELEANOR looks to the "News", still open on the table. Looks over the article again. Giggles.)

Scene 2:

(The community hall. Some bleachers. Light, cheerful buzz of choristers nearby.

HARMON and TODD sit on the bleachers.
HARMON leafs through a book. TODD wears a "Porno for Pyros" T-shirt. He looks over his music.)

HARMON

Says here . . . that the average winter temperature in Saskatchewan has risen two degrees in the last ten years.

TODD

You already knew that.

HARMON

Whaddaya mean I already knew that?

TODD

You already knew that. You told me that a coupla months ago.

HARMON

I did?

TODD

Yeah. An it leads the world in innovative grain elevator design.

HARMON

Is that so?

TODD

Geez.

HARMON

Well I'm not surprised. Y'know it really is an amazing province. Don't know why I ever left there. Said I was only comin out here for a year, meant it, an I still mean it. Thirty-two years later.

(KIM enters, looks around. She approaches TODD, HARMON.)

KIM

Excuse me. Is this the choir practice?

HARMON

Cantcha tell?

KIM

I thought probably it was. But I came by mistake yesterday, and that turned out to be a meeting of the Rod and Gun Club.

(Hand out.)

Kim Sayles. How do you do?

HARMON

Well I do very well, Miss Sayles. My name's Harmon Stolee, how do you do?

KIM

Looks like you have quite a lively group here.

HARMON

Oh we're lively, all right. Lively and loud.

TODD

Hi.

HARMON

Oh, uh, this is Todd here. My nephew.

TODD

Hi.

KIM

You're the boy everybody talks about!

TODD

I -- am?

KIM

Oh I've heard nothing but since I got here. Sings beautifully, people say. Looks like Axel Rose, sings like Caruso.

TODD

That's good, right?

KIM

Which part?

(ELEANOR enters, carrying a huge binder.)

ELEANOR

All right! I hope you're all warmed up, we're doing the medley tonight.

HARMON

Good. That means I'm off the hook.

ELEANOR

And Harmon, we're doing your solo.

KIM

Mrs. Demmling? I'm Kim Sayles, we talked on the phone.

ELEANOR

Ahh! The Valley News lady, right?

KIM

Right.

ELEANOR

Come right over here, I want you to meet one of your biggest fans.

KIM

Oh, we've already --

ELEANOR

Harmon, this is the author of that article you liked so much. The one about, how did you put it? -- "Our Jurassic M.P.".

HARMON

You wrote that article?

KIM

It was an editorial. Yes.

HARMON

Oh. Well. Oh. Ta each his own I guess.

KIM

I take it you didn't like it.

HARMON

Didn't say that.

KIM

I've been working on newspapers since I was twenty-two, Harmon. I can kind of tell.
(Pause.)

HARMON

Well, it just uh -- seems to me -- unnecessary.

KIM

What does?

HARMON

Well uh -- makin fun of people that way. In print, I mean.

KIM

Even politicians?

ELEANOR

He was a curler.

KIM

I'm sorry?

ELEANOR

A curler. And all that entails.

HARMON

What I'm gettin at is -- you can get yer point across without bein nasty, can't ya?

KIM

Not always. Sometimes you have to be nasty, or people just shrug it off.

HARMON

I see.

KIM

Though really, I was just trying to be provocative.

HARMON

You don't think they'll shrug it off anyway?

KIM

I don't know. Did you?

TODD

Oooo.

ELEANOR

Quick, somebody get me a tourniquet.

HARMON

Well, I suppose that sort of thing may be all right for the Vancouver Sun. I just hate to see it start happening here, that's all.

KIM

I tell you what Harmon -- you write a letter to the editor and I'll run it at the top of the page.

HARMON

You will?

KIM

I won't touch a word.

HARMON

Can I be nasty?

KIM

Somehow, I get the feeling you don't have it in you.

ELEANOR

Last gentleman left on earth. Now go do your warm-up.

HARMON

(To KIM.)

Maybe she'll forget I'm here.

ELEANOR

There is no hiding from me, Harmon. Your solo must be sung.

(HARMON goes.)

Well. That was hardly violent at all.

KIM

I do have to live here.

ELEANOR

Mm. Well, watch out for those editorials and you'll do just fine. Alto, right?

KIM

I think so.

ELEANOR

I'll get you your music.

(ELEANOR goes.)

KIM stands for a moment, regarding the bustling room around her. Pulls out a notebook, jots down a quick note. Turns.

TODD is on the bleachers, looking over his music. She moves to him.)

KIM

You like "Porno for Pyros"?

TODD

You heard of them?

KIM

Sure. They have a sort of raw but searching quality that's reminiscent of "Stone Roses", but on the whole I prefer the more plangent approach of, say, "Sharkboy".

(TODD is amazed. KIM laughs.)

I don't really know that much. I just read "Spin" Magazine occasionally.

TODD

Still, you're the first person I met around here who's even heard of 'em.

KIM

I'll bet that T-shirt gets a lot of reaction.

TODD

(Pleased.)

Yeah.

(Beat.)

KIM

That might make a good story, actually.

TODD

What?

KIM

Well here you are, a guy who likes "Pyro for Pornos", and yet you sing in the choir, too. And I hear you might be getting a music scholarship.

TODD

Mrs. Demmling told you that, right?

KIM

Uh-huh.

TODD

Well. She thinks so.

KIM

That'd make a good feature. We could talk about that, about how you got interested in music. Your plans for the future.

TODD

You think anyone'd be interested in that?

KIM

They'd be more interested in that than another one of my editorials.

(Pause.)

TODD

My Dad was a musician, actually.

KIM

Really?

TODD

Well, he wanted to be. Well, he was, he just -- didn't get paid for it or nothin. Used to play a lotta blues. Eric Clapton.

(HARMON returns.)

HARMON

Who did?

TODD

Oh, uh, nobody.

KIM

His father.

HARMON

Oh yeah?

KIM

We were just thinking we might do an article.

TODD

Not really.

KIM

Sure we were. On Todd's background, how he got into music, things like that.

HARMON

I see.

KIM

That would be -- your brother, right?

HARMON

Who?

KIM

His father. Your brother.

HARMON

No. Uh, no. I'm -- on his mother's side.

Mizz Sayles, I don't think we'll be able to do that.

KIM

Oh did you want to be part of the interview too?

No. HARMON

It's fine with me. KIM

HARMON
What I mean is -- I don't think Todd will be able to do it. He, uh . . . has a lot on his plate at the moment. Don't you, Todd?

Yeah, that's right. TODD

Well that's the point. He's an interesting guy, I -- KIM

HARMON
I just don't think it's going to work out.
(Pause.)

I thought Todd seemed kind of interested. KIM

Lenny wants the tenors, Todd. HARMON
(TODD goes.)
Thankyou for asking. Sorry we have to say no.
(HARMON goes too, leaving KIM, puzzled.)

Scene 3:

(Music: Domingo. Sweet, yearning. Light up on HARMON.)

HARMON
I guess you could call me a conservative. Small C, of course. Always voted Social Credit. Now I vote Reform -- until they screw up, and we have ta boot them outta office too. Ta me, a conservative is someone who understands there ain't just too much government in peoples' lives -- there's too much people in peoples' lives too. Nosing around. Tryna impose their values on everybody else. I keep mine to myself.

Still . . . when I see an opportunity to help out, I do what I can. That's the key, see -- waitin for the opportunities to come to you. That way yer not rootin around, stirring up

trouble where none exists. I figure if everybody just did what they can when they need to, we might not need any government at all. Course that day is a long way off. Long way off, and not gettin any closer.

Scene 4:

(Harmon's farm. HARMON and TODD, stacking bales of hay.)

HARMON

You had to mention your father?

TODD

Everybody has a father, Harmon.

HARMON

I know that, but if you get your stories crossed up --

TODD

Oh jeez, I hate this, y'know? -- I just hate this.
(Pause.)

HARMON

You hate what?

TODD

All this -- hiding stuff. Y'know? It's such a pile of crap. I feel like some kinda -- pedophile or somethin.

HARMON

It's necessary.

TODD

I know it's necessary, Harmon, I'm not saying it's not necessary, I just --

. . . I woulda liked to do that interview.

HARMON

Have your picture in the paper?

TODD

Yeah.

HARMON
Everybody readin about ya?

TODD
Why not?

HARMON
Last thing I'd care for.

TODD
Yeah, well . . . turns out I'm good for somethin. Who woulda thought it. I can sing. Big friggin deal. But I can do it. So why not let everybody know?

HARMON
Everybody knows it already.

TODD
That's not the same thing.
(Pause.)

HARMON
Well. I can understand that. I guess. Maybe if you're real careful --

TODD
Naw, you're right. It's too risky.

HARMON
Might not be -- the wisest move . . .

TODD
Besides. Mostly I just wanted to spend some time with that Mizz Sayles.

HARMON
'Scuse me?

TODD
Do you know, is she married, or divorced, or what?

HARMON
'Scuse me?

TODD
Hey. A kid can dream.

HARMON

(Getting back to work.)

Don't think that girl from Errington you been going out with would think too much a that.

TODD

I'm just joking Harmon.

HARMON

You gonna be seein her again?

TODD

This Saturday. Oh, by the way. I might need ta borrow twenty bucks.

(ELEANOR, KIM enter. ELEANOR carries a tray with sandwiches and cokes.)

ELEANOR

Here we are. BLTs without the lettuce. The one in your fridge has moved on to a better life.

HARMON

You find everything you need, Kim?

KIM

I took some beef and a turkey. I left a cheque on your kitchen table.

HARMON

(Like a waiter.)

"Enjoy".

ELEANOR

(Taking an envelope from the tray.)

And this is is for you.

TODD

What is it?

ELEANOR

It's your audition date for Aston Lake. Don't worry, it's not till January.

TODD

I don't know if I really want to do this.

ELEANOR

Oh. Well. All right --

(She takes the letter. TODD snatches it back.)

TODD

Yes. I do.

HARMON

Y'know if I'd had a chance like that when I's a kid, I might be a -- farmer right now.

KIM

That's uh -- quite a picture you have laminated on your coffee table, Harmon.

HARMON

Ya liked that, didja?

KIM

I've seen pictures of Elvis like that. But never one of John Diefenbaker.

HARMON

They got a statue a him in Saskatoon 20 feet tall.

ELEANOR

Harmon's been threatening to move back to Saskatchewan ever since I've known him.

KIM

Why?

TODD

That's what we say.

HARMON

Oh, you can make fun all you want. The fact is, Saskatchewan don't have any problem with excessive mushroom growth. Does it? Ah-hah. Now think about that.

And now -- having vanquished my detractors -- we have a pump to fix. Get the tray there, Toddy, we'll run it back to the house.

ELEANOR

Don't lose the letter!

TODD
(Exiting.)

I won't.

(They're off.)

He'll lose it.

ELEANOR

Probably.

KIM

But I've got the date written down anyway. I wasn't a mother for nothing.

ELEANOR
(Waving a slip of paper.)

You must think I'm terribly old-fashioned.

What? Why?

KIM

Bringing the "men-folk" their lunch.

ELEANOR

Oh, no.

KIM

Well, sort of.

It's just -- I love that man. I really do. And Todd too. I wouldn't do it for just anybody.

ELEANOR

You don't have to explain.

KIM

It took me fifty-three years to find Harmon. The funny thing was, all this time he was right under my nose.

ELEANOR

I know the feeling.

KIM

Oh?

ELEANOR

Well, I know the feeling that there's somebody out there who'd be just perfect, if you could only run into them. I think all the time I was married . . . I felt like that.

KIM

Ah.

ELEANOR

KIM

That must sound awful.

ELEANOR

No. Not to me.

KIM

Now I think . . . there must be a place where you fit in . . . if only you could find it. Of course, my daughters thought they had. It was called Calgary.

ELEANOR

Oh dear oh dear.

KIM

They think this is Outer Mongolia.

ELEANOR

Well you did the right thing, coming out here. If it was a marriage like that.

KIM

You think so?

ELEANOR

I know so. I don't know what would have happened if I hadn't got out of mine. Nothing good, that's for sure. George and I . . . had used all our good times up.

But. That's too long ago to worry about. You want to take some cucumbers with you?

KIM

No, thanks.

ELEANOR

I better be getting home myself.

(She starts off.)

KIM

Eleanor.

(ELEANOR stops.)

What would you do if -- oh forget it. Nothing.

ELEANOR

No no. What?

(Pause.)

KIM

What would you do . . . if you found out somebody in the valley was -- doing something -- that you thought other people should know about.

ELEANOR

Ohhh. I know what you're talking about.

KIM

You do?

ELEANOR

Harmon wouldn't let you do that interview with Todd, would he? Well look, just wait a few weeks and --

KIM

No. No, it's not that. I mean something -- dangerous, possibly, that they wanted to keep a secret.

ELEANOR

Heavens. You make it sound like someone's started a bomb factory.

KIM

I mean I know what I'd have done back in Calgary. I'd have gone to my editor, and if he said run with it --

ELEANOR

Run with what?

KIM

-- That's what I'd have done.

ELEANOR

Well can you tell me?

KIM

I don't know if I can tell you.

ELEANOR

Well try me. I'm not a gossip, and if you tell me I can -

KIM

Eleanor, if I was sure I could tell you, I wouldn't have had to ask you in the first place!
(Pause.)

ELEANOR

You're right.

I think.

Well I don't know what I would do. I might go – talk to -- this person -- and then -- well frankly, I'd probably shut up about it.

KIM

That's what I thought.

ELEANOR

Why? Is it something you're going to print?

KIM

I don't know yet.

ELEANOR

Well, whatever it is, it can't be worse than Frieda's report on the pig-calling contest. Now that was truly frightening.

I'm sorry. I shouldn't make fun of --

KIM

Excuse me. I'd better get going.

(KIM leaves, quickly. ELEANOR moves as if to stop her, but doesn't. She stands there, uncertain.)

Scene 5:

(Choir practice. Buzz of choristers. HARMON practising a phrase of music, bass part.)

HARMON

"Hark the herald angels sing . . .

(He's flat:)

. . . angels sing . . . siiiiing . . ."

(ELEANOR enters, carrying a copy of "The News". He glances at her.)

Maybe I'll just leave this one to the altos.

ELEANOR

How long have you been here?

Just got here. Why?
HARMON

You haven't seen the paper, have you?
ELEANOR

Nope.
HARMON

Just as well.
ELEANOR

I know what it says, though.
HARMON

I don't think you --
ELEANOR
(Thrusting the paper at him.)

She called me up three days ago and told me what she was gonna print. That was enough.
HARMON
(Pushing it away.)

(KIM enters, carrying her music folder.)

Evening, Eleanor, Harmon. The beef was delicious.
KIM
(She brushes past them.)

Well now wait a minute. Don't I get a portion of the proceeds?
HARMON

I'm sorry?
KIM

From your newspaper. Since I'm the star attraction this week.
HARMON

That's not the way it works.
KIM
(Trying to keep things light.)

Oh no? And this is?
ELEANOR

(She grabs the paper from HARMON, moves to KIM.)

How can you do this? How can you put your name to this sort of thing?!

KIM

Eleanor --

ELEANOR

I thought you were running a respectable newspaper! And then you go and print something like this!

(Reading:)

"The News has learned" -- why do you do that, by the way? -- "The News has learned" - as if you were somehow above the rest of us!

(Reads:)

"The News has learned that for eight years Harmon Stolee has informally used his farm as a halfway house for boys referred to him by government agencies. The Young Offenders Act prevents us from providing details." The only thing that prevents you from providing details is your lack of imagination!

KIM

It's true, Eleanor.

ELEANOR

It's nonsense!

KIM

(To HARMON.)

Is it?

ELEANOR

(Reading.)

"Asked to comment on this information, Mr. Stolee responded, 'Print what you have to.' I suppose you made that part up too!

HARMON

No. She didn't, Lenny.

ELEANOR

Oh, Harmon. Why would you even talk to her?

HARMON

Because. Like she said. It's the truth.

(Pause.)

ELEANOR

No it's not!

HARMON

Yes. It is.

I been providin special custody for a few years now. Remember Kevin?

ELEANOR

He was your hired hand.

HARMON

He was my hired hand. He'd also been in trouble with the law, and was still on probation. He was the first. Since then -- well, you met all the others.

ELEANOR

Trevor?

Alex?

HARMON

Alex'd been in and out of YDCs for years.

I suppose I should have told people, but I -- thought these boys had enough ta deal with as it was. An -- maybe I was protecting myself.

Might as well make a clean breast of it. Todd ain't my nephew either.

ELEANOR

But your sister --

HARMON

My sister lives in Mexico and runs a bike shop. She don't even have a kid.

(To KIM:)

I'm not sure Todd deserves this, though.

KIM

I didn't name Todd.

HARMON

You didn't have to. Everybody's gonna know anyway.

(TODD enters, beating at imaginary air drums. He stops, when he realizes everybody's watching him.)

TODD

Hey.

ELEANOR

Hello, Todd.

TODD

What's the deal with everybody? Somebody lock up the piano again?

HARMON

Todd --

TODD

Oh hey Mizz Sayles, your daughter -- y'know, the older one, what's her name?

KIM

Monica?

TODD

Monica, yeah, she was lookin at my T-shirts yesterday, like I had em all on display at Video Alley? -- an she was sayin she might like to buy one off me.

HARMON

Todd, I need to --

TODD

But I told her, like, they're not for sale, I was just displayin em, but I was thinking, like, she could have one, you know, for free, I could let her have one.

KIM

That's -- very nice of you, Todd.

TODD

So, like, I'll bring it around to your place, she kinda liked my Alice in Chains T-shirt so that's probably what I'll give her.

(Pause. KIM turns from him. HARMON takes the paper from ELEANOR, moves to him.)

HARMON

Todd. You better have a look at this.

(He hands it to him.)

TODD

Why?

HARMON

Just -- have a look.

(TODD reads.)

Now I don't want you over-reacting --

I don't fucking believe it. TODD

Todd. HARMON

HOW DID YOU FIND OUT? TODD
(He rushes KIM.)

Todd! ELEANOR
(HARMON restrains him.)

Ten! Count to ten! HARMON

I'LL FUCKING KILL YOU, YOU PRINT THAT, YOU FUCKING BITCH. TODD
(HARMON struggles to subdue him. KIM has backed away, terrified.)

Don't do this, Todd, you're just -- HARMON

GET OFF ME! TODD

-- Would you listen to me? HARMON

SHE WANTS TO DO AN INTERVIEW ON ME ONE WEEK, THE NEXT WEEK SHE DOES THIS! TODD
(HARMON has subdued him on the ground.)

This -- is doin nobody any good. Least of all you. Now take a breath and use some a the things you learned. HARMON

It's not gonna work. TODD

Try. HARMON

You don't mean -- Todd is -- ?

ELEANOR
(She looks to KIM, who looks away. HARMON relaxes his grip on TODD, who rises. They regard each other.)

Tell em what you want.

TODD
(He goes. HARMON rises too.)

HARMON
(To ELEANOR.)
Todd was in trouble with the law up in Campbell River. I don't think you need to know more than that. He'll be done his probation in six months. Till then -- I'm responsible for him.

You got any concerns with that, speak to me.
(He goes off, after TODD.)

ELEANOR stands in shock.)

ELEANOR
I think . . . I had better go --
(She starts off.)

KIM
I gave Harmon every chance to tell his side of the story.

ELEANOR
Did you.

KIM
I can't very well report it if he won't talk to me.

ELEANOR
Then don't report anything! How did you find this out anyway?

KIM
It wasn't hard. I made a few phone calls.

ELEANOR
Oh that's right, I forgot, you're a professional reporter.

KIM
That's right, Eleanor, this is what I do!

ELEANOR

What? Cause trouble for people?

KIM

Provide information.

ELEANOR

Good people, people who --

KIM

Harmon's neighbours have a right to know what he's doing! I don't even say it's wrong what he's doing, I just think --

ELEANOR

Oh isn't that kind of you.

KIM

-- they have a right to know!

ELEANOR

So they can sit at home and imagine the worst? Stew in their juices, worrying about robbers and murderers and --

KIM

Eleanor, people have every reason to be concerned with their security. The same issue has a story in it about a break-in at the fire hall. The last issue had a story about a thirteen-year-old kid who was selling drugs to --

ELEANOR

Are you suggesting Todd had something to do with that break-in?

KIM

Of course not!

ELEANOR

Or that he's a drug-dealer, or some kind of --

KIM

This is pointless.

ELEANOR

You ran that story to sell papers!

KIM

That's not true!

ELEANOR

The only reason you don't mention Todd in there is that the law won't allow you to!

KIM

That's right!

ELEANOR

-- That if you did you'd get convicted yourself!

KIM

That's right, and you know what? It could still happen, if somebody wanted to bring charges and some judge decided I'd crossed the line! It could still happen! And then where do you think me and my little home-made newspaper would be?

ELEANOR

Out of business. Which is maybe where you should be.

KIM

Fine. But I poured the last of my alimony into starting this paper. If it goes down, I could have a hell of a time feeding my kids. But I did it anyway, and you know why? Because I thought it was important for people to have this information and make up their own minds about it, whether I get into trouble or not!

So now they have it. It's done.

I don't think I'll stay for practice tonight.

(She goes. ELEANOR looks to the paper, where TODD dropped it on the ground. She picks it up.)

Scene 6:

(Light up on KIM. Aria in background, soprano, low.)

KIM

It's not easy fitting into a new community. Not that I've had much practise at it. Before I came here, I'd led a pretty sedentary existence. Childhood, adolescence, university, all conducted from the same split-level bungalow. Then marriage, and off to another house nearly the same. This is all quite a shock.

When we first moved here . . . I noticed this thing that the people here do. I call it: "The Nod". Like this.

(She gives a sort of blank-faced nod.)

"The Nod". Used in greeting people along the road or at the store. Oh, there are variations on it. "The Wave".

(A gay little wipe of the hand.)

"The Salute".

(A salute.)

But most of the time it's just --

(Nods.)

"The Nod". There's something almost sinister about it. I began to imagine a secret society, and this was their centuries-old signal, their way of recognizing each other, kind of like the Masons. So very quickly I began nodding back --

(She does.)

-- all the time, like an idiot, to everyone and everything, children, dogs, just so they wouldn't know I wasn't really One Of Them.

Of course, there isn't any secret society. There are a few witches around, but they keep posting flyers at the gas station saying they're having another lunar celebration and inviting everyone to come. I suppose when I start doing it without thinking -- nodding, or waving, or -- well I can't see myself saluting somehow, but who knows? -- when that happens . . . I really will have become one of them. I look forward to that day. I hope I know it when it comes.

Scene 7:

(HARMON's house. He sits in a recliner, head back, as if asleep.)

TODD enters. He's been drinking. He starts to sneak past.)

HARMON

Evening.

You're up late.

TODD

So're you.

HARMON

Mm. Well I was just sittin up, listenin to Teresa Stratas. Y'ever heard her, Todd?

TODD

I don't think so.

Here, I'll put er on for you. HARMON

No, that's -- fine. TODD
(Pause.)

We missed you at practise. HARMON

Sorry. TODD

How much have you had to drink? HARMON

Three beers. TODD

How many? HARMON

Four. TODD

Lenny's a little concerned. With you n Her Nibs gone, an me late gettin back . . .
things was lookin a little thin there. HARMON

Well she better get used to it. I'm quittin' choir anyway. TODD

Oh no you're not. HARMON

Look, Harmon, there are certain things you can make me do, but goin ta choir isn't
one of them. TODD

You gonna give in ta Kim Sayles that easy? HARMON

She can go ta hell. TODD

HARMON

That sounds like five-beer talk.

TODD

Yeah, well I'm eighteen years old now, Harmon, I can --

HARMON

Maybe six.

TODD

Fine, maybe I had fifteen beers, Harmon, maybe I drank the place dry! Does it matter? Obviously I'm dangerous, obviously I'm some kinda criminal! WHO CARES IF I'M A DRUNK?

HARMON

Who cares? Me.

TODD

Yeah? Well yer just about the only one.

(TODD sits, spent.)

Lotta people read that newspaper.

HARMON

They will this week.

TODD

Mike Hegel figures I must be some kinda homicidal maniac or somethin. Kept callin me "O.J."

HARMON

Mike Hegel's got his own problems.

TODD

An Jan didden even wanna serve me. Said if I started any trouble, she'd kick me out.

HARMON

Well if you hadn flown off the handle at the hall like that --

TODD

What was I supposed to do?

HARMON

Don't give em more reason ta suspect you!

TODD

Like they wouldn't anyway.

HARMON

Rise above it then!

TODD

Harmon, it don't matter what I do, I can't change what people think!

Huh. I remember my Dad tellin me: "You do one thing wrong in this life . . . and they ain't never gonna forgive you." Guess he knew what he was talkin about.

HARMON

So ya gonna do what he did?

TODD

What.

HARMON

Just keep provin em right?

TODD

I don't know.

HARMON

If I thought you was yer Dad, Todd . . . you wouldn't even be here.

Yer drunk an yer past curfew. I'll haveta punish you, you know that don't you?

(TODD nods.)

Go up ta bed. I'll think a somethin in the mornin.

(TODD starts out.)

Todd.

I told em you was in trouble with the law. I didn't tell them why. I suggest you keep that to yerself.

(After a moment, TODD goes. HARMON sits there.)

Scene 8:

(The hall. Busy. Occasionally we hear snatches of voices singing/practising bits of various Christmas carols.

KIM stands alone, silently going over her music. She looks up from her music, and around. Frowns.

Looks back to her music again.

ELEANOR enters. She gives KIM a slight nod, but continues on her way without speaking.)

KIM

Eleanor.

(ELEANOR stops, turns.)

I've uh . . . been organizing the cakewalk for the school . . . for the Christmas fair . . . I . . . wondered if you'd have time to contribute something.

ELEANOR

I don't have children at the school.

KIM

Oh, well, that's not necessary.

ELEANOR

I don't bake cakes.

(ELEANOR starts away again.)

KIM

Look . . . I'm really trying to do the right thing here . . . I don't really want to be the valley pariah.

ELEANOR

You?

KIM

Though it looks like I may have no choice.

ELEANOR

I don't really think you're the victim here.

KIM

I've been here twenty minutes and I've yet to be spoken to.

(ELEANOR looks around. She can see it's true.)

ELEANOR

You stuck your head up.

KIM

I what?

ELEANOR

You stuck your head up. You created a stir. Some people agree with what you did, some don't. But nobody knows who does and who doesn't, who's on whose side. So it's easier just to ignore you altogether.

KIM

Amazing.

ELEANOR

But it's not the same as having "Go Back to Jail" scrawled on the front of your property.

KIM

What?

ELEANOR

Somebody wrote "Go Back to Jail" on the sign at the front of Harmon's property.

KIM

Oh for god's sake.

ELEANOR

And Harmon tells me people are accusing Todd of that break-in at the fire hall.

KIM

That's ridiculous!

ELEANOR

Is it? Why?

KIM

Well if they --

ELEANOR

What did Todd do up in Campbell River?

You do know, don't you?

KIM

Yes.

ELEANOR

Well then?

KIM

It wasn't a break-in.

ELEANOR

No, but -- what then?

KIM

Look, why are you asking me this?

ELEANOR

Maybe if it was nothing too important, you should report that too.

KIM

I can't report it. You know that.

ELEANOR

You implied once. You can imply again.

KIM

What if it was something important?

ELEANOR

Was it?

KIM

If it was something important, would that change your opinion of what I wrote?

ELEANOR

I can hardly answer that unless you tell me what it was!

(Beat.)

KIM

I don't gossip, Eleanor. I print news.

(HARMON enters. He looks sombre.)

HARMON

Kim.

KIM

Look. If you're still angry, write a letter to the editor, but --

HARMON

It's not about that.

You might want to call home. There's been trouble.

ELEANOR

What sort of trouble?

HARMON

You're in that little rancher down by the Mohawk, aren't you?

KIM

Yes.

HARMON

Well I don't want you panicking, your children are fine, but -- someone's put a bullet through your front window.

KIM

Oh my god –

HARMON

The Mounties are there. They got everything under control.

KIM

Oh my god. Where's a phone?

(She hurries away.)

HARMON

It's in the coat check. They're waiting for you to call!

(He turns back to ELEANOR.)

I was afraid a something like this.

ELEANOR

It could be an accident, you know.

HARMON

I don't think so.

(TODD enters.)

TODD

We haven't started yet?

ELEANOR

Not yet.

TODD

Good. Thought I was late.

HARMON

I thought you weren't coming ta choir anymore.

TODD

Well, I changed my mind. Not gonna let that woman run my life for me. Live n let live, that's what I say.

(They watch as he takes off his jacket, sorts through his music. HARMON moves to him.)

HARMON

Where have you been?

TODD

When?

HARMON

Today. Just now. I haven't seen you much today.

TODD

I've been around.

HARMON

Where?

TODD

In town. Down at the river. I watered the horses, if that's what you mean.

ELEANOR

Todd, there's been a problem. At the Sayles' house.

TODD

What?

ELEANOR

A shooting.

TODD

Someone got shot?

ELEANOR

No, but -- apparently somebody shot out her front window.

TODD

Welcome to the valley, eh?

HARMON

This isn't a joking matter. Where were you before you came here?
(Pause.)

Oh jesus –

TODD

I'd like an answer, please.

HARMON

Jesus! I can't win!

TODD

(KIM hurries back.)

KIM

I have to go, my daughters are hysterical, I --
(She sees TODD.)
-- have to get home.

TODD

I'm sorry to hear what happened, Mizz Sayles.

KIM

What happened? How do you know what happened?

TODD

Mrs. Demmling just told me.

HARMON

Kim, if you'll just leave this to me, I'll --

KIM

No, I won't leave it to you! If things were left to you he'd still be calling you Uncle Harmon!

(To TODD:)

I started as a police reporter, you know. I'm pretty good at tracking down thugs.

TODD

That's it, I'm out of here.

HARMON

Todd.

TODD

I don't have to stand here and be insulted like that!

KIM

You say you had nothing to do with this?

Of course I didn't!

TODD

Then let me smell your hands.

KIM

What?

ELEANOR

Gunpowder. If he's shot a rifle in the last hour -- I'll know it.

KIM

Oh look, that's going a little far. We have no reason to suspect Todd any more than --

ELEANOR

That's not how you felt five minutes ago.

KIM

What do you mean?

ELEANOR

Five minutes ago. When you were grilling me about what he did up in Campbell River.

KIM

Lenny was?

HARMON

I was just asking because -- !

ELEANOR

You were asking because you're as nosy as anyone else around here!

KIM

And you told her I suppose.

TODD

No. As a matter of fact, I didn't.

KIM

Then I will.

TODD

There's no need, Todd.

HARMON

TODD

No, I'll tell her! I'll tell everyone! You all want to know what I did? Fine! Let's all hear what Todd did!

I hit my girlfriend! All right? I hit my girlfriend, and I give her a concussion, and she brought me up on charges of assault!

(Pause. A chill silence has settled over the hall.)

There. So now you know. So now you can all stop gossiping about me. Go find yourself something better to talk about . . .

I hit her. But that don't mean I'm not sorry. Or that I put a bullet through your front window, Mizz Sayles. And here: you wanna smell my hands? Go ahead -- smell 'em.

(He holds them up to her.)

Go ahead. Look at 'em! They clean enough for you? How bout you Mrs. Demmling -- you wanna look at them too?

Now let's sing. I came here to sing tonight. Not to play twenty questions.

KIM

I have to go.

(She exits.)

HARMON

Todd --

TODD

(Sings; it is the first time we've heard him sing. He has an extraordinary voice.)

"Lo, how a Rose e'er blooming
From tender stem hath sprung!
Of Jesse's lineage coming
As prophets long have sung.
It came a floweret bright,
Amid the cold of winter,
When half-spent was the night."

(He stands there. The hall is silent. HARMON, ELEANOR look on.

Fade.)

End of Act One

Act Two

Scene 9:

(Kim's house. A cluttered table. A computer atop it.)

KIM
(Off.)

You can come in for a moment. I have to get my layout finished before tonight.
(She enters, carrying a brown paper bag, followed by ELEANOR.)

Excuse my mess.

ELEANOR

No worse than my own.

KIM

I had to move the furniture when they came to fix the window. I still haven't put things back.

(She reaches in the bag, lifts out a small box.
Peeks in. Surprised:)

A cake.

ELEANOR

For you.

KIM
(Looks in the bag again.)

Two cakes. Thankyou.

ELEANOR

The second box is cupcakes, actually. I know they're too late for the school fair, but -- I hope you and the girls will enjoy them.

Look, I thought about this over Christmas and . . . I think I owe you an apology.

KIM

You do?

ELEANOR

I, uh, gave you all that trouble about . . . printing what you did. But now I think I was wrong. At least I . . . think I understand why you did it.

KIM

Ah.

ELEANOR

I mean if Todd had been charged with -- smoking pot or something . . . but this!

KIM

Is worse.

ELEANOR

Don't you think so?

KIM

Of course, but --

ELEANOR

You don't think it's all right what he did up in Campbell River, do you?

KIM

Don't insult me, Eleanor.

ELEANOR

He gave a woman a concussion!

KIM

Of course it's not "all right".

ELEANOR

Well?

KIM

I'm just not sure there's any need for all this --

(She picks up a letter on her desk, waves it at ELEANOR.)

-- hysteria.

(She opens the letter, reads.)

"Dear Editor: It's about time we stopped mollicoddling these young hoodlums and gave them the stiff jail sentences they deserve -- not vacations on farms."

(Reads another:)

"Funny that we find this out just when there's been another break-in. Maybe Harmon Stolee would like to explain why he's been bringing criminals into our community. And by the way, why's he so interested in young boys anyway?"

Those are the nice ones.

ELEANOR

I can imagine.

KIM

It's one thing to get nasty letters about politicians. It's another to get them about people who live down the road from you. Especially when they're this nasty. Most of them are anonymous, of course: those I'll ignore. As for the rest -- I'll print one or two of them, but -- my god.

ELEANOR
(Reading one:)

This one's nothing but profanities.

KIM

Mm. Misspelled at that.

(ELEANOR puts the letter down, shaken.)

If I'd known people were going to react like this . . . I don't know. Maybe I wouldn't have published that story.

ELEANOR

But you must have known.

KIM

No.

ELEANOR

How could you not?

KIM

I've never lived in a place like this before! I mean in Calgary if I published a tough story -- well, frankly, that was it. There might be a loud phone call or two, a pat on the head from my editor, then it was on to the next one. Here: I ran into Todd at the Shop 'N Go yesterday . . . the way he looked at me I swear I felt a chill pass through me.

ELEANOR

Well you're being awfully understanding.

KIM

Am I?

ELEANOR

For someone whose window got shot out.

KIM

Do you really think Todd did that?

ELEANOR

I don't know what to think.

KIM

Every instinct I have tells me he didn't. But, I overreacted, just like everyone else. Frankly, I'm a bit surprised at the way you're reacting.

ELEANOR

I have my reasons.

KIM

Good ones?

ELEANOR

I'd say so. Yes.

(Pause.)

KIM

I'm sorry I missed choir the other night.

ELEANOR

It's all right. I'm not sure there'll be a Spring concert this year.

KIM

Why?

ELEANOR

Ricky Tefs insulted Harmon so Harmon left. Then Carol Niwa insulted Ricky so Ricky and his wife left. At this rate, we'll be a quartet by St. Patrick's Day.

KIM

I'm sorry.

ELEANOR

Me too.

(Pause.)

KIM

You live in the middle of it here.

ELEANOR

What.

KIM

Your story. And it doesn't go away.

(They sit there. Fade.)

Scene 10:

(ELEANOR's house. HARMON sits at the table reading the "Valley Echo".)

HARMON

"The Valley Echo" will not get loored" -- L-O-O-R-E-D -- "into the sort of sensationalistic reporting of some other newspapers." Hm. I wonder who she means?

ELEANOR

Frieda. Master of the Innuendo.

HARMON

"However, it's time to point out that just because someone has a criminal record doesn't mean he's responsible for everything that goes wrong in the Valley." Y'know . . . the Valley Echo is lookin better to me all the time.

ELEANOR

Unfortunately, you're the only one.

HARMON

You don't think she's right?

ELEANOR

Of course she is. It's just -- oh I don't know Harmon. Put the thing away.
(HARMON regards her for a moment, folds up the newspaper.)

HARMON

We uh . . . haven't seen you much lately.

ELEANOR

Well I have the . . . Women's Festival to get together. And the daffodil drive. And of course there's choir.

HARMON

Todd had his audition. He was sort of hopin you'd be there with him.

ELEANOR

Oh! I meant to be.

HARMON

He seems to think you're maybe avoidin us.

ELEANOR

That's silly!

HARMON

Because of -- you know.

ELEANOR

The only reason I haven't been around is that I'm busy. Now if you want to read more into it than that --

HARMON

Yer always busy. You were born busy. What's so different about it now?

ELEANOR

Your paranoia.

HARMON

I see.

ELEANOR

Now finish your coffee.

HARMON

You haven't maybe changed yer mind about things, have ya?

ELEANOR

Of course not.

HARMON

You haven't maybe thrown yer lot in with Ricky Tefs?
(Beat.)

ELEANOR

Well, I . . . would rather you hadn't kept all this from me.

HARMON

Uh-huh.

ELEANOR

I mean me of all people.

HARMON

Is that what's eating you?

ELEANOR

Why shouldn't it be? We are best of friends! What's more we love each other, don't we?

Don't we?

HARMON

Yes.

ELEANOR

Fine then.

HARMON

But that don't mean I coulda told you.

ELEANOR

Oh go on with you then.

HARMON

How could I a told anybody?! Knowin people'd fly off the handle this way!

ELEANOR

It is hardly flying off the handle to --

HARMON

Tryna turn Todd inta some kind of demon. Tryna run him out of the valley.

ELEANOR

Well maybe he should go!

HARMON

What?

ELEANOR

I mean . . . maybe you should . . . find someplace else for him. Someplace where he . . . wouldn't have to put up with all this.

HARMON

Right.

ELEANOR

I mean maybe he needs more help than you can give him!
(Pause. HARMON prepares to go.)

HARMON

Well. Pretty soon you won't have either of us ta worry about.

ELEANOR

Where are you going?

HARMON

Called Trish van der Lee yesterday. Told her I's thinkin a sellin.

(Pause.)

ELEANOR

Don't be ridiculous.

HARMON

I'm ridiculous, am I?

ELEANOR

You can't retire. You haven't been on vacation in fifteen years.

HARMON

Didn't say nothin about retiring. I mean movin outta the valley. If I wasn't sure before . . . I sure as hell am now.

(Pause.)

ELEANOR

You can't leave.

HARMON

Lenny, the stuff I seen that boy subjected to in the last coupla weeks I wouldn't put a dog through. Forget the calls I been gettin, forget that somebody slashed the tires on my truck! I seen people walk outta stores when Todd walked into them. Seen people cross the street in town just to avoid him! And the girl he was goin with up in Errington broke up with him, said she wouldn't go out with a guy who beat women.

ELEANOR

Well can you blame her?

HARMON

Yeah, I think I can, when he done everything he can to set himself straight! Got counselling, stopped taking drugs. Went to the girl he hit an her family an apologized to their face. Spent two years on probation, but now all people wanna do is keep punishing him!

ELEANOR

It's not a question of punishing him!

HARMON

Well what is it then?!

ELEANOR

Maybe they're afraid.

HARMON

Maybe they oughta think twice about what they're doing. An then on top of it all, you start talkin the same nonsense --

ELEANOR

Oh you silly old fool -- WHY DO YOU THINK I FEEL THIS WAY?

(Beat.)

HARMON

I don't know. That's what I keep tryna --

ELEANOR

WHY DO YOU THINK I MIGHT NOT BE ABLE TO . . . just shrug it all off . . .

(Pause.)

HARMON

What are you saying to me? Are you saying --

ELEANOR

Oh god it's all so long ago now . . . I thought it was all behind me.

(Pause.)

HARMON

George?

ELEANOR

George . . . was not the "good sport" everyone thought he was . . .

HARMON

Mother a god.

ELEANOR

. . . Not always . . . not with me . . .

(Pause.)

HARMON

Ya should of told me.

ELEANOR

Maybe you should have known.

HARMON

I think I did know sometimes. Just . . . wasn't sure what to do about it.

ELEANOR

It . . . wasn't all the time. Just -- towards the end. He'd . . . drink, and then he'd -- lash out.

I can't believe I still feel this way about it.

HARMON

I'm sorry, Lenny.

ELEANOR

Don't be. Just . . . don't go.

It took me twenty-two years to divorce him. Eight years to find you. I don't think I could go through all that again.

Where would you go anyway?

HARMON

Well. You know.

(Beat.)

ELEANOR

Saskatchewan?

(She starts to laugh. HARMON smiles.)

HARMON

Why not?

ELEANOR

Oh Harmon. Saskatchewan. Über alles.

(TODD enters, startling them.)

Todd.

HARMON

What are you doing here?

TODD

I came ta talk with Mrs. Demmling. Guess maybe there's no point.

ELEANOR

You haven't been -- ?

TODD

No, but I can understand it. You don't want me around. I can understand that. I might hit you, y'know, do somethin crazy.

HARMON

How long have you been out there?

TODD

Or scare away tourists, y'know, they find out I'm here, "Ooooo, Todd Horstmann lives up there, we better not go up there."

ELEANOR

I didn't mean --

TODD

But I want you to know if I ever did something like that again, you couldn't hate me more than I'd hate myself! Because I been hit too, Mrs. Demmling! So I know what it's like.

HARMON

I'll call you when we get home. Let's go.

ELEANOR

I don't hate you, Todd.

TODD

(To HARMON.)

An you! -- you decide somethin like sellin the farm without even talkin to me about it?

HARMON

I hadn't decided. I was gonna talk with you about it tonight.

TODD

You leave the valley an yer just giving in. Just like you told me I shouldn't do!

HARMON

That was last month.

TODD

So?

HARMON

So things are different now, aren't they?

TODD

You leave an I ain't goin with you. Because I'd know you was only doin it cause of me!

HARMON

That'll be my decision, son.

(Beat.)

TODD

No. It won't.

Sorry for all the trouble I caused, Mrs. Demmling. I'm gonna try to set things right.
(He goes. Pause.)

ELEANOR

You'd . . . better make sure he gets home okay.

HARMON

He will.

(Fade.)

Scene 11:

(TODD in light.)

TODD

This is "Piggy". Nine Inch Nails.

(Recording fades in. TODD mimes the drum track. The effect might be comic at first. Then the anger in the music and in TODD starts to take over, until he's flailing at the "drums" violently, frighteningly.

Song ends. Fade.)

Scene 12:

(KIM's house. Night. She's writing on the computer.

She hears a sound somewhere. Looks up.)

KIM

Hello?

(Nothing. She returns to her work.

TODD enters. He's been drinking. KIM doesn't see him.)

TODD

Y'know what I've always liked about living here?

(KIM cries out, quickly moves away.)

KIM

How did you get in?

TODD

There's a crime wave on, y'know. You oughta lock your windows.

I said -- you know what I've always liked about --

KIM

Go home, Todd.

TODD

I just got here.

KIM

If you leave now, I won't call the Mounties.

TODD

Yes you will.

What I've always liked about living here -- is -- you can drop in on people anytime and they're happy to see you.

(TODD sits. KIM moves to exit. TODD leaps to his feet, knocking over his chair, and blocks her way.)

TODD

I need to talk to you.

KIM

Not now.

TODD

I wanna make a deal.

KIM

If you need to talk, you call me tomorrow.

TODD

I not gonna be here tomorrow!

Hey Mizz Sayles, whaddaya think? -- think if I leave here tonight, where do ya figure I'll be in a week? Livin on Granville in Vancouver, or back in jail?

KIM

You don't have to leave.

TODD

I do have ta leave! Nobody wants me around here anymore. Besides. Harmon's sellin his farm, you know that Mizz Sayles? -- he's sellin his farm cause a people like you.

KIM

When did he decide to do that?

TODD

Ohhhh, it's a late-breakin news story, Mizz Sayles, you haven't heard? You must be losin yer touch!

(Pause.)

KIM

Look, Todd, I got a call from the RCMP today. They've arrested someone for the shooting.

TODD

Who?

KIM

Morley Crozier. He's also confessed to the break-ins. Apparently he was mad at me for reporting them in the paper, so he took a shot at our window.

TODD

Morley Crozier? Pretty hard ta shoot a gun with a bottle of Jack Daniels in yer hand.

KIM

So I owe you an apology.

TODD

An apology.

KIM

I'm going to report the truth on the front page of the next edition. And as for my newspaper -- not everybody thinks I'm a hero. If people keep pulling their ads the way they have been, pretty soon you may not have to worry about it.

TODD
(Laughs grimly.)

People are such assholes.

KIM

So you don't have to leave.

TODD

No really, people are such assholes, don't you think? They give me an Harmon shit cause of what you wrote, then they give you shit for writing it!

You're gonna tell people it wasn't me?

KIM

Next issue. Yes.

TODD

An yer never gonna write about Harmon again?

KIM

Well I can't guarantee that.

TODD

NO. NO. NOT ANOTHER WORD, YOU HEAR ME? NOT A SENTENCE, NOT A THING!

That guy took me in when I didn't even deserve ta live! He didn't have to, he coulda just sat on his farm, watchin the hay turn. He doesn't do it for the money, he ends up buyin me stuff outta his own pocket! He did it cause he's a good man. A good man, can you believe it, can you believe there's such a thing in the world? So you leave him alone or I swear to god I'll trash this whole house!

KIM

Sit down.

TODD

Hey Ms. Sayles, ya see this?

(His T-shirt.)

"Spoon Blow". Know who they are? Metal group. Broke up.

KIM

I'm not interested in –

TODD

Know why? Lead singer knifed the guitarist.

KIM

My children are asleep!

TODD

Must be the music, huh? Must be the music makes us kids just so darn violent.
(KIM makes a move for the phone. TODD blocks her way, trapping her.)

TODD

Say you'll quit writing about Harmon!

KIM

Let me by.

TODD

Say it!

KIM

I'll quit writing about Harmon.

TODD

Mean it!

(Beat.)

KIM

I can't.

(Pause. TODD turns away. Then he wheels back towards her, fist raised to strike her. He remains that way for a moment, a fierce battle going on within him. Then he turns from her and collapses against the table.)

TODD

Oh christ. What am I doing?

I'm sorry. I shouldn't be here.

(He goes. KIM looks for a moment as if she might go after him. Then she goes to the phone, starts dialing.)

Scene 13:

(HARMON's. HARMON in his chair, reading a letter. ELEANOR enters.)

ELEANOR

No, they haven't seen him.

HARMON

My truck is here. He can't have got far.

ELEANOR

Unless he hitch-hiked.

HARMON

Goddamn it.

(Knock at the door, off.)

That'll be her.

(He exits. ELEANOR regards the letter he was reading, picks it up to examine it more closely. HARMON returns with KIM, who carries a neatly folded pile of T-shirts.)

KIM

I can't stay long, I left my children with Tanya Sandhu. Is he here?

HARMON

No, we don't know where he's got to.

ELEANOR

I'm sure he's just -- gone to spend the evening with a friend.

HARMON

Look, Kim, I'm sorry he come into your house. If that's why you come over, rest assured he'll be --

KIM

No, it's not that.

(She holds out the T-shirts.)

I thought you should see these.

ELEANOR

Clothes?

HARMON

They're his T-shirts. Never seen em so clean.

KIM

My eleven-year-old thought his T-shirts were "cool". He once told her she could have them someday -- after he was gone.

ELEANOR

Did he tell her where he was going?

KIM

I think he meant -- after he was dead.

(Beat.)

ELEANOR

Oh my Lord.

HARMON

Scuse me.

(HARMON exits.)

ELEANOR

Oh my Lord! Maybe you should call the Mounties!

I don't think he'd do something like that.

KIM

He was drunk enough.

ELEANOR

Still . . .

KIM

He told me Harmon's thinking of selling his farm.

ELEANOR

Not thinking. Here's the sales agreement.

KIM

He was upset about that.

ELEANOR

Why wouldn't he be?

KIM

And angry. At one point I thought he was going to hit me.

ELEANOR
Did he hit you?

KIM
No.
(Pause.)

ELEANOR
He came to my house tonight. We didn't know he was there. I -- said some things I shouldn't have. I wasn't thinking, I -- don't know that I've been thinking for the last three weeks.

He didn't even get to see this.
(A letter.)

KIM
What is it?

ELEANOR
His acceptance letter. He got into Aston Lake.
(HARMON returns, putting on a jacket.)

HARMON
My gun is gone. Let's go.

KIM
I'll come with you.

HARMON
I expect he's somewhere on the farm.
(HARMON, KIM exit. ELEANOR lays her hand on the T-shirts for a moment. Then she picks up the letter and follows.)

Scene 14:

(Later. Moonlight. TODD sits on a fence at the edge of one of the farm's fields. He holds a rifle. Sings.)

TODD
"Man mei longe . . .
Him li-ves wene . . .

Ac ofte him . . .
Liyet the wreinch . . ."

(After a moment, HARMON enters.)

'Lo.

HARMON

(TODD looks. Looks away again.)

How'dja know where I was?

TODD

I heard you singing.

HARMON

Shit. I thought I was far enough away.

TODD

(Pause.)

What is that?

HARMON

This?

TODD

(Indicates the rifle.)

The song.

HARMON

"Man Mei Longe". Mrs. Demmling taught it to me. It was my audition piece for Aston Lake.

TODD

Pretty.

HARMON

Mm.

TODD

(Pause.)

You wanna give me the rifle now?

HARMON

(TODD looks to HARMON. Looks away again. He doesn't give him the rifle.)

Y'know, Todd, I've lived here thirty-two years. Maybe that's long enough.

TODD

That's stupid.

HARMON

Uh-huh. Well I'm a stupid man. I thought for a long time this place was special. Paradise. But maybe I was wrong.

TODD

It's your home, Harmon.

HARMON

No. No. Your home ain't necessarily where you live. Not even if it's been thirty-two years. I know this sounds silly to you people, but . . .

(Tapping his head.)

My home is a place up here now. Probably don't even exist anymore, really. But nobody can take it away from me.

TODD

It's my home, then.

HARMON

Is it?

TODD

I thought so.

I thought I could make it . . . I thought I could ignore everything, the looks in the street, the letters in the paper . . . until I heard Mrs. Demmling. And then I realized . . . there's no place here for me anymore.

But if I run away . . . I'll just end up in jail again, I'd be breakin my probation, or I'll end up like my Dad, always lookin over my shoulder, sellin drugs ta get by. I don't wanna live like that Harmon!

HARMON

You don't have to.

TODD

I don't have any choice!

(ELEANOR and KIM hurry on, winded. TODD jumps off the fence, panicked.)

ELEANOR

Is he all right?

(She spots him, the gun.)

What are you doing with that -- ? Give me that gun right now!

TODD

Get away from me, GET HER AWAY FROM ME.

HARMON

Lenny, just stay back.

TODD

(Of KIM:)

She told you, didn't she? She told you to come find me!

KIM

If you didn't want us to find you, you wouldn't have left those T-shirts on my porch.

TODD

Those T-shirts are for Monica!

HARMON

She'll get em, Todd. You can give em to her yerself.

ELEANOR

Todd, look, here it is, your acceptance letter from Aston Lake. You got in. Do you hear me? You got in!

TODD

Yer makin that up.

ELEANOR

No I'm not! Here, read it, read it yourself!

TODD

I don't want to see it.

KIM

Go on.

TODD

I DON'T WANT TO SEE IT, IT'S TOO LATE!

HARMON

You don't think you owe Lenny that courtesy?

TODD

What's the point, Harmon?

HARMON

She went to a lotta trouble gettin you in that place.

(Pause. TODD takes the letter from ELEANOR, reads it quickly. Hands it back to her.)

TODD

There.

(He turns away.)

ELEANOR

And Todd . . . I'm sorry for what I said. I was angry and hurt, just like you, but -- I didn't mean it. I'm sorry. And I am so proud of you for getting into Aston Lake. And for everything you've done to fix up your life. I know how hard that is. And you did it.

(Pause.)

TODD

All . . . I ever wanted . . . was to stay here.

HARMON

I know that, Todd.

TODD

And to stay with you, Harmon. Ta stay with all of you!

(He begins to weep. Falls to his knees, shaking with sobs. He lays the rifle on the ground before him. HARMON moves to take it.)

HARMON

Thankyou, Todd. Thankyou.

(He passes the gun to KIM, kneels to hold TODD, who turns to clasp him closer.

ELEANOR and KIM look on.)

Scene 15:

ELEANOR

Up at the top of the mountain just outside of town . . . down a labyrinthine path that only a few of us oldtimers know about . . . there's a bluff where you can sit and look out over the whole valley. I discovered it when I was a little girl. I used to hike up there after church on Sundays. Used to take dates up there when I was a teenager, show them the ropes. You can see clear down to Courtenay on a clear day. The other 300 days of the year, you can see a lot of clouds.

(A tenor voice, TODD's, singing.)

I'm always amazed at how small it is, our valley . . . even now, when it's bursting at the seams . . . the way the earth looked to the astronauts the first time they saw it . . . you get so used to viewing things from down below, the ant's-eye view, so to speak. You forget there's another way.

I haven't been up there for awhile; the legs are starting to give out. But I like to think . . . there's another little girl up there, or boy, right now, looking down at us right now, holding us together with one glance, reaching out a hand as if to scoop us up.

Scene 16:

(The hall. Buzz of audience nearby.
ELEANOR sits going over her music.)

ELEANOR

"Sumer is icumen in
Lhude sing cu-cu . . ."

(KIM enters.)

KIM

There's something I've been meaning to ask you.

ELEANOR

Yes?

KIM

What is a "lhude" and why is it singing "cu-cu"?

ELEANOR

It's a cuckoo. And it's singing "lhude".

KIM

Oh.

Lewder than what?

ELEANOR

(Laughs.)

That's a good question. All I know is it has something to do with Spring.

Any luck with the job search?

KIM

No. Well Frieda offered me a job.

ELEANOR

You're kidding.

KIM

She wants me to be the Valley Echo's gardening correspondent. No pay, but all the glory I can handle. I guess she figures it's one area where I can't do any harm.

ELEANOR

Little does she know!

KIM

She told me she felt sorry for me because my paper went belly-up. She said this with a malicious glint in her eye. Do you think she was being insincere?

ELEANOR

Frieda? Never!

KIM

Oh good, I'm so glad.

ELEANOR

Do you know anything about gardening?

KIM

No, but I planted some peas yesterday. I expect to be an expert before I hand in my first column.

(HARMON, TODD enter. HARMON is splendidly decked out in a tux and gumboots.)

HARMON

Expert at what?

ELEANOR
(Turning.)

Expert at gar --

(Sees the boots.)

-- dening . . .

HARMON

Whaddaya think?

KIM

What can we think?

HARMON

Figured since this is my last public appearance in the valley I oughta get dressed up.

ELEANOR

You're not actually going out there dressed like that, are you?

HARMON

Wait'll you see my shirt.

(He opens up the jacket. He's wearing the "Nine inch Nails" T-shirt.)

TODD

I gave it to him.

KIM

Very seasonal.

HARMON

(To TODD:)

I'll haveta buy you a new one. This one ripped.

(Beat. Suddenly ELEANOR starts off, holding back tears.)

ELEANOR

Excuse me, I better get ready.

(She exits. Embarrassed pause.)

KIM

I'll uh . . . go make sure she's all right.

(KIM exits.)

TODD

Guess she . . . ain't quite used to the idea yet.

HARMON

You 'n me goin, y'mean.

TODD

Yeah.

(Takes an envelope from his pocket.)

This come to the house today.

HARMON

Yeah, I uh . . . saw that.

TODD

Oh so you know then . . . what it is.

HARMON

Uh-huh.

TODD

So you know then . . . it says I . . . got that scholarship to Aston Lake.

HARMON

Right.

(Pause.)

TODD

Course I can't go.

To Aston Lake that is.

Since we're -- goin to Saskatchewan.

I could -- if we . . . weren't.

But we are.

So I -- can't.

HARMON

Can't what?

TODD

Go to Aston Lake.

Course I understand. Saskatchewan bein your home an all.

HARMON

Well there's no place like home, is there?

TODD

Nope.

HARMON

It's a man's castle, y'know.

Right.
TODD

Home -- is where the heart is.
HARMON

Guess I shouldna tore this up then.
(He reaches into his pocket, extracts some papers
ripped in half.)

What is it?
TODD

Sales agreement. For sellin the farm.
HARMON

You got things ta do here an so do I. Things ta prove. Now that people are watchin
the both of us. Prove people can change. Prove I wasn't wrong about ya. I wasn't,
was I?

No way.
TODD

Good.
HARMON

And uh -- Saskatchewan just wouldn't be any fun anyway without Lenny around.
Only, don't say nothin to her just yet, will ya? I'm savin the big announcement till the
party afterwards.

You got a curfew you know.
TODD

You can punish me tomorrow.
HARMON
(KIM returns.)

She's must be fine. She hollered at us to get in our places.
KIM

Where's our music folders?
HARMON

I thought you brought em.
TODD

I thought you brought em.

HARMON

Uh-huh. Well I thought you brought em.

TODD
(ELEANOR enters.)

Let's go, let's go!

ELEANOR

Hear you're feelin better now.

HARMON

Much. Thankyou.

ELEANOR

Coulda been them left-wing principles a yours y'know. Find em kinda hard ta digest myself.

HARMON
(He goes. TODD does too. ELEANOR looks to KIM.)

Hopeless.

ELEANOR

Completely.

KIM

Better go get in your place.

ELEANOR
(KIM goes. ELEANOR stands for a moment, still struggling with her emotions. Then she starts to go.

She notices a piece of the sales agreement on the floor where HARMON has dropped it. Stoops to pick it up.)

What's this?

What is this?

Harmon, what is this?

HARMON?
(She exits.)

Scene 17:

(TODD appears in light. Sings.)

"Sumer is icumen in
Lhude sing cu-cu;"

(KIM appears, joining in.)

"Groweth sed and bloweth med,
And springth the wo- denu,
Sing Cu-cu . . ."

(HARMON and ELEANOR appear and join in, as
we hear the rest of the choir now too.)

ALL

"Awe bleteth after lomb,
Llouth after calve cu;
Bulloc sterteth buck- everteth,
Murie sing Cu-cu.
Cu-cu, Cu-cu,
Wel singes thu Cu-cu,
Ne swik thu naver nu."

(The song rises and rises, and ends grandly in the
dark.)

End

**Performance rights must be secured before production. For contact information,
please see the [All I Ever Wanted information page](#)**