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Cast of Characters

ERNIE HARDAWAY: A Man Who is Larger than Life, 40s.

HENRY CARSON: A Man Who is Just the Same Size as Life, 40s.

YOLANDA PASTICHE: A Woman Who Keeps Culture Fiesta on the Rails.

SUZIE CARSON: A Woman Who Keeps Her Life on the Rails, 40s.

PENELOPE: A Cheerful Chopper Pilot.

ZHAO MARTINEZ: A Man Who Isn't What He Appears, 20s.

MR. NEIBERDING: A Head-Hunter from Extreme Terror Plummet Park.

MS. FJELDSTAD: A Head-Hunter from Mega Family Christian Praise Park.

TERRANCE CARSON: Son of Henry Carson.

Place

Orlando, Florida, and Points West.

Time

Next Week.

Setting

A sparsely furnished stage representing different areas in Florida and the West in the very near future.

Production Note

Natural Selection can be performed by 6-9 actors. If casting for six, one woman can play Yolanda, Penelope, and Ms. Fjeldstad; one man can play Ernie and Mr. Neiberding.

Acknowledgements

Natural Selection premiered at the Humana Festival of New American Plays at the Actors Theatre of Louisville (Marc Masterson, Artistic Director) in Louisville, Kentucky, on March 16, 2006. It was directed by Marc Masterson. Scenic Design by Kris Stone, Costume Design by Lorraine Venberg, Lighting Design by Deb Sullivan, Sound Design by Martin R. Desjardins, Video Design by Jason Czaja, Props by Doc Manning, and Dramaturgy by Julie Felise Dubiner and Joanna K. Donehower. The cast was as follows:

HENRY CARSON Jay Russell
ERNIE HARDAWAY, etc Mark Mineart
YOLANDA PASTICHE, etc Heather Dilly
SUZIE CARSON Melinda Wade
ZHAO MARTINEZ Javi Mulero
TERRANCE CARSON Joseph Benjamin Glaser

All production groups performing this play are required to include the following credits on the title page of every program:

Natural Selection received its World Premiere in the 2006 Humana Festival of New American Plays at the Actors Theatre of Louisville.

NATURAL SELECTION

by Eric Coble

ACT I

(AT RISE: Darkness. Silence.)

(Then a COYOTE HOWL.)

(Faint drumming. Chanting/singing.)

(In Navajo. Drumming, singing louder... Louder... then it CUTS OFF.)

(Lights up on HENRY CARSON, 40s, in a suit and telephone headset, sitting behind a desk. Beside him stands

YOLANDA PASTICHE, a sharp woman in a sharp suit, glasses, and headset.

In a chair on the other side of the desk sits a big bear of a man in full safari outfit and headset: ERNIE HARDAWAY.)

ERNIE. So it's like the whole world's coming to an end, right? The chopper's entirely in flames now, right?

HENRY. Oh my god.

ERNIE. Debris everywhere, metal stalagmites jutting out of the black smoke, I look down and my entire arm is glittering—

HENRY. Glittering?

ERNIE. A thousand shards of glass in my skin, I'm like a walking disco ball, a crystal porcupine—

HENRY. Oh my god.

ERNIE. —and I grab the two guides—one of 'em's screaming, the other's trying to scream, but he's just spitting out blood and gobs of flesh—

HENRY. Oh god—

ERNIE. I throw 'em clear of the wreckage—twenty feet, I swear, I hurl this 180 pound man twenty feet—and the pilot—the pilot's out cold—probably 'cause her lower half has been ripped clean off—

HENRY. Oh dear god—

ERNIE. —and I'm thinking, this is what I get for letting a woman drive! But I grab what's left of her and drag her out of the crash—and no sooner am I out of the ribs of the fuselage than BOOM!!

(HENRY jumps.)

Reserve fuel tanks, whatever, BOOM!! I'm blown back thirty feet, face scorched, half my beard on fire—

HENRY. Oh god, Ernie—

ERNIE. But I'm already face down in the charred grass and rocks, I just rub my face in the ground— *(Demonstrates.)* BHHRRRHRR—put out the flames—and I look around and I see, my god in heaven, somehow all of us—all of us—are still alive! So of course my thoughts go to the obvious question—

HENRY. “How do I get help?”

ERNIE. “Who's going to eat who first?”

HENRY. Oh god, Ernie!

ERNIE. We're miles from *anything*, Henry! We're out in the exposed air and light—we're one little helicopter—who's gonna come looking for us?

HENRY. I know, but—

ERNIE. We were in the Adirondacks, Henry! Do you know anyone who's been to the Adirondacks since The Change?

HENRY. Well, no, but the Wilderness Channel ran a special—

ERNIE. I used to think the Montana-Texas Dust Belt was the most godforsaken no-man's land on Earth, but I swear this whole continent, it's all gone to shit—and of course my gun's all twisted to hell, useless—my grandfather gave me that gun—

HENRY. I remember—

ERNIE & HENRY. —graduation present—

ERNIE. Useless. Then I notice the heat from the chopper's inferno is actually melting the glass in my arm—I got liquid glass trickling down my wrist—

HENRY. Oh man—

ERNIE. So I drip the glass onto the open wounds in the pilot and the one guide—it solidifies almost instantly, cauterizes the gaping veins and arteries—

HENRY. Jesus, Ernie—

ERNIE. We looked like stained glass pictures in Hell, Henry, I swear, sparkling with colors and textures man was not meant to see. And the smell—Jesus!

HENRY. I can imagine.

ERNIE. No. You can't.

HENRY. Well, I can just guess—

ERNIE. You can't guess. You weren't there, you never will be there, you will not try to impose your tiny little sensory imagination on my life.

HENRY. ...I wasn't.

ERNIE. You can't imagine the smell.

HENRY. I can't.

(Beat. ERNIE stares hard at HENRY. HENRY waits...)

ERNIE. What we did have was a thirty story plume of black smoke and ash rising into the clear sky. I figured if we had any chance that was it. And I still had my knife—

HENRY. The one your uncle gave you—

ERNIE. Strapped to my thigh like a second dick, my friend. I whipped that sucker out and started hacking down any and every piece of foliage I could—most everything was dead anyway—

HENRY. —the drought, the plague—

ERNIE. —throwing it all on the fire, leaves, bark, birds, woodland animals, everything—

HENRY. You saw actual living wild animals?

ERNIE. And they spotted us. Troop of Cub Scouts on one of their Extreme Wilderness Weekends—only group left dumb enough to leave the cities—

HENRY. God bless the Scouts—

ERNIE. I was delirious with lack of blood, sleep, food—I could taste it—pure adrenaline in my mouth, my throat, feel it pulsing behind my eyes—you ever tasted the secretion of your own adrenal glands?

HENRY. ...no.

ERNIE. Pray you never do. Tastes like mud, like the primordial ooze we crawled out of, mixed with blood and semen.

HENRY. No. I've never tasted that.

ERNIE. I guess I didn't stop when the Scout troop showed up, kept carving, kept moving, kept swearing—apparently I took out two kids trying for a wolf badge in first aid.

HENRY. Jesus.

ERNIE. But the point is—and I don't think this was lost on the Cub pack—I survived. I looked right into the jaws of the oblivion beast, that dread maw of eternal night, and I said—not for the first time either—“Fuck You.”

YOLANDA. So you didn't collect the inventory.

HENRY. Yolanda! This man just looked into the dread maw of eternal night—

YOLANDA. And the short and curly of it is, he's been gone a month and we still have no new inventory.

ERNIE. Listen, if I need a ball-bustin'—

YOLANDA. Henry's performance review is coming up and I think he was counting on new inventory, weren't you, Henry?

ERNIE. You can be one selfish sonofabitch, you know that, Henry?

HENRY. No! I'm glad you're okay! I mean, Thank God! You're a hero! You're my personal hero, Ernie, you know that—

ERNIE. I don't wanta be your hero. I just want a little common respect.

HENRY. It's just Yolanda's right, we've got the big picture to frame here—I've gotta justify the expenses incurred—

ERNIE. Goddam women pilots. I never had any luck with women pilots. Every crash I ever had: female pilot.

(YOLANDA gives him a look. HENRY is desperately scanning his laptop.)

HENRY. The question is, can we get you back into the Adirondacks and secure the inventory before the end of the month...

ERNIE. I'm not going back.

HENRY. What?

ERNIE. I had the best North-Eastern guides in the country, Henry. They ain't gonna be guidin' anyone for at least a year. I'm not goin' into the brush without them.

HENRY. Then how am I going to get the replacement Indians for the Native American Tribal Pavilion?

ERNIE. We don't know that I would've found any anyway—

HENRY. There were multiple sightings! You know how often I get indigenous sightings outside of casinos?

ERNIE. Pretty rare, I bet.

HENRY. I get more sightings of primitive Mongolians! And you know if we're looking, every other theme park and cultural pavilion is out scouring too—

ERNIE. They won't get nowhere. I had the two best guides.

YOLANDA. We can't afford any more losses, Mr. Hardaway. Attendance is down and the mortality rate of our performers is

increasingly distressing—we have yet to fully repopulate the Chinese and Madagascar pavilions—

ERNIE. You guys are WonderWorld, you can do robots for a while—

YOLANDA. We're Culture Fiesta, Mr. Hardaway. We don't do "robots."

HENRY. Genuine native people in authentic native habitats. That's what we do. Ernie knows that, don't you, Ernie?

ERNIE. I can get you some guys from the cities—I know a lot are 1/16th Cherokee—

HENRY. Do they know any tribal dances, crafts, ceremonies?

ERNIE. Not unless they involve watching T.V.

HENRY. Dang it! All the courses in cultural anthropology, museum science, interactive realism, and I'm gonna end up painting our interns brown.

YOLANDA. Not on my watch. All our performers are 100% pure-blood representatives of their national origins.

ERNIE. Stop your whining. Jesus. If it'll shut you up, I got one more lead. One I wouldn't need a guide for.

YOLANDA. What.

ERNIE. There's a sportsman, mostly small game, outta Newark, he says he's seen some rurals in northern New Mexico.

HENRY. By Taos?

ERNIE. Maybe.

HENRY. They were probably re-enactors from Santa Fe—

ERNIE. He says they were the real deal. Out in the desert, hogans, sheep, the whole nine yards.

YOLANDA. Did he give you a location?

ERNIE. Not precisely, but I know the canyons he hunts. It's the best I got for you, amigo.

HENRY. I was counting on the Adirondacks.

ERNIE. You rustle up some cash, and I'll bring you back a Southwestern native.

HENRY. (*Scanning his laptop.*) We just lost a Navajo—we could use another Navajo—

YOLANDA. Another Navajo would give us more rugs. Those things sell like crackcakes.

HENRY. We've never had any Hopi or Zuni though. The Hopi Sun Prayer is beautiful, Yolanda—and actually the Zuni words for “daylight” and “life” are the same words, isn't that—

YOLANDA. Henry.

HENRY. Sorry.

(*To ERNIE:*)

You think there might be a chance they might be Hopi or Zuni?

ERNIE. I know they'll be better than an intern painted brown.

YOLANDA. You think there's a serious chance?

ERNIE. I'm sayin'—

YOLANDA. Henry's going with you.

HENRY. *What??*

ERNIE. Aw, no—

YOLANDA. You take Henry with you on the hunt or you don't go.

HENRY. I don't, I'm not—

YOLANDA. He's got vacation days.

ERNIE. Look, I've known Henry since he was wetting himself in gym class—

HENRY. I—I—I—I—I—

YOLANDA. Henry, Mr. Hardaway is still not—though he is the best in his field, I have no doubt—he is still not a member of the

WonderWorld Culture Fiesta family. I authorized the last trip on his terms and we've seen how that worked out.

ERNIE. Listen—

YOLANDA. If I'm going to justify another expedition, I do it on my terms, and my terms are I want a company rep repped to make sure it's done right this time.

HENRY. Absolutely, that's a totally valid position, but I've never—

YOLANDA. It's like your dream—what is it—you have that dream of being in the desert, right?

HENRY. Yeah, but I'm always a rabbit getting chased by wolves—

YOLANDA. Well, now's your chance to live the dream, Henry.

ERNIE. Look, Ms...

YOLANDA. Pastiche.

ERNIE. It's nature. Not the indoor-processed-sanitized-air-for-your-protection-Culture Fiesta-nature, but real honest-to-God outdoor rotten-disease-plagued-no-ozone-no-laws-dead-zone-humans-can't-live-here-anymore Nature.

HENRY. I won't last twenty minutes out there!

YOLANDA. And the natives may not last *that* long! Why do you think it's so hard to repopulate the indigenous pavilions? It's because no one is indigenous anymore! If the next generation is going to see honest-to-god native people on anything other than a CD-ROM, it's going to be in Culture Fiesta. We owe that to the children. We owe it to the Natives. You owe it to yourself, Henry. Isn't one of your ancestors some big Indian hunter?

HENRY. What?

YOLANDA. You're descended from...

HENRY. "Kit" Carson, yes, okay, but—

ERNIE. The guy who killed the Navajos? You never told me that.

HENRY. It's not a fact I'm particularly proud of—

YOLANDA. My point is that bagging natives is in your blood. This is your chance to look in the dread maw and say “Fuck You.”

HENRY. Yolanda—

YOLANDA. Two words, Henry: Performance. Review. I’ll get your leave papers by tomorrow.

(And she walks out. HENRY and ERNIE turn to look at each other.)

ERNIE. How are you gonna explain this to the little woman?

(Lights shift. ERNIE exits as HENRY turns to see SUZIE, his wife, 40s, in comfortable clothes and phone headset, typing on her laptop at their dining room table, taking swigs of her bottled water. HENRY carries a small bouquet of flowers.)

HENRY. *(Presenting the flowers:)* Da, da-da-da-da DAAAA!

SUZIE. Henry. Are these real?

HENRY. Yep. The garden crew made them. They just came out of the tube yesterday.

SUZIE. They’re gorgeous. Let me get a shot of them.

(She aims her little webcam at the flowers.)

These are so much nicer than the synth ones we have at work.

HENRY. And I bought us dinner!

(Holds up an Applebee’s bag.)

Lasagne burritos.

SUZIE. *(Kisses him.)* Ooo, Henry—

HENRY. I thought a little romantic meal before Terrance comes downstairs from school—

SUZIE. He’s actually up there in soccer practice right now. It’s being webcast in real time. I was checking in on it—

HENRY. *(Looks at her laptop screen.)* How’s he doing?

SUZIE. Pretty well. The coach has been instant messaging notes on what he needs to work on—

HENRY. We're so lucky Mr. Klerksdorp is willing to coach from South Africa.

SUZIE. Now if we can just find him an acting coach before his school play. Let me get a shot of you and the flowers.

(She points the webcam at HENRY who poses.)

This is going straight onto my blog.

(Typing:)

"6:52 p.m. B-HOE brings flowers and dinner—"

HENRY. "B-HOE"?

SUZIE. "Best Husband On Earth." My acronym for you ever since you re-grouted the bathroom.

(She kisses him again as he opens his own laptop and sits down.)

HENRY. Man's gotta do what a man's gotta do.

SUZIE. Most of my readers all agree—the feedback is skewing highly in your favor. And this picture of you with the flowers is darling.

(Showing him her screen as she types.)

"Is there a more darling man?"

(To HENRY:)

And the burritos are from Applebee's—I'll hyper-link to them, I'm sure they'll appreciate the plug.

HENRY. *(Looking at his screen:)* Huh.

SUZIE. What.

HENRY. Oh, I was just checking the weather.

SUZIE. Why? You're not going back out are you?

HENRY. No. Just looking at the southwest United States. Looks clear and dry. Good flying weather.

SUZIE. You're not re-tracing the butterfly migration patterns again, are you? You know they're not coming back, sweetheart.

HENRY. No. Ernie's flying out to Arizona, Utah, to look for new stock for the Native Pavilion.

SUZIE. I thought he was in the Adirondacks.

HENRY. That didn't work out.

SUZIE. Send a camera with him this time. I can post his shots in the "Can You Believe It" section of my site.

HENRY. That's a fantastic idea, honey.

SUZIE. Always thinking. You want your burrito heated up?

HENRY. Maybe I can go with him and shoot the photos myself.

(SUZIE pauses.)

SUZIE. What?

HENRY. Since he's going anyway, I could tag along. E-mail some pictures back to you and the office—

SUZIE. You're not going to Utah.

HENRY. Maybe not Utah, but maybe Arizona and New Mexico.

SUZIE. Are you insane?

HENRY. Did you know there's still evidence of Anasazi pueblos around Chaco Canyon, Suzie? Pueblo Bonito alone was four or five stories tall, it—

SUZIE. Henry.

HENRY. Sorry.

SUZIE. Ernie came to your office today, didn't he? You told him about the desert dream, didn't you—

HENRY. I didn't—

SUZIE. *(Typing.)* "6:54 p.m. Former B-HOE goes completely off his rocker—"

HENRY. Don't make me a Former B-HOE—I'm not a *former* B-HOE—

SUZIE. (*Turns the camera on herself and types:*) “If anyone’s watching this in real-time—HELP! My husband’s gone suicidal—”

HENRY. We need new natives—I’ll just run get a new native—

SUZIE. Can’t you just paint some interns brown?

HENRY. Suzie!

SUZIE. We’re talking about the desert, right, Henry?

HENRY. Exactly—plateaus, cliff dwellings, painted sand—

SUZIE. —and how many miles to the nearest TGI-Fridays?

HENRY. I’m sure there’s good restaurants in Santa Fe, Phoenix—I don’t know—

SUZIE. Exactly. You don’t know. How often have you left Orlando?

HENRY. I go to conferences all the time—Buenos Aires, Beijing, Cairo—

SUZIE. Places where they speak English and drink Coke-a-Cola and have cell phone reception. Not the desert. Not Wile E. Coyote country.

HENRY. I know.

SUZIE. (*Typing:*) I bet there’s a Traveler’s Advisory on the Southwest—

HENRY. Of course there’s a Travel’s Advisory—there’s Advisories about the entire planet—

SUZIE. (*Reading her screen:*) Sunlight at 730% Recommended Daily Allowance, Particulate Matter at 210% RDA, new viruses reported in thirteen counties, 56% chance of Separatist activity—

HENRY. I know.

SUZIE. I am *not* going to be a single mother widow to our son.

HENRY. I know—

SUZIE. On my income! Can you imagine? Wal-Mart pays well but not that well.

HENRY. Suze—

SUZIE. You don't want to pull up the rug!

HENRY. What??

SUZIE. You said you'd pull up the carpet on the stairs to the attic this weekend—you're trying to get out of pulling up the carpet, aren't you!

HENRY. Oh god.

SUZIE. You're scared. You're scared of dust mites, aren't you?

(Typing:)

“Hubby'd rather face plagues and killers than pull carpet tacks—”

HENRY. Will you stop typing on your blog?? This is a private conversation—

SUZIE. My readers thrive on my private conversations—I keep it real, Henry, you will *not* edit me—

HENRY. And you won't edit me, Suzie!

(They stop. Staring at each other...)

This isn't my idea. Yolanda's making me do it.

SUZIE. ...oh god.

HENRY. My performance review is coming up, if I don't bring back something—

SUZIE. She's willing to kill you to restock the park!

HENRY. She's willing to risk me, not kill me, we don't know that I'll die—

SUZIE. I hate her. I hate her I hate her I hate her—

HENRY. I know. I guess it's my turn to look into the dread maw and say “Fuck You.”

(Beat. He holds her.)

I can pull up the carpet tacks when I get back on Tuesday.

(Pause.)

SUZIE. What are you going to tell your son?

HENRY. I guess... I have to tell him I'm going on an adventure.

(Sound of a chopper. SUZIE exits as HENRY pulls on a coat and runs to meet ERNIE, in full safari gear, and PENELOPE, a pilot in sunglasses, ball-cap, headset, and active wear. They sit in three chairs, now in a helicopter—HENRY and PENELOPE in front, ERNIE sulking in the rear. HENRY looks airsick—barely hanging on. They yell over the chopper engine.)

PENELOPE. *(Shouting:)* You know what I love about the desert? It's so damn quiet! The hustle and bustle of the city starts gettin' on your last nerve, grindin' you down like a whetstone, grinding you to a pointy little spike—grinding, grinding, grinding, grinding, grinding, grinding, grinding, grinding—

HENRY. Yes.

PENELOPE. But you take a quick jump out here and it's just you and the sand and sage and sky. Almost enough to make you believe in God, innit?

HENRY. Yes.

PENELOPE. Sometimes I think if there is an Almighty, this is where He's gotta be, right? Last place anyone would think to look. But if I glance out the corner of my eye real quick I might spot Him popping out from behind a cactus or running from rock to rock. And then I think, well, maybe that was just a lizard. 'Cause if it was God, He'd have to have a hell of a high sunscreen to survive out here, wouldn't He?

HENRY. Yes.

PENELOPE. You know the other thing I love? I love that it's three-dimensional!

HENRY. ...what?

PENELOPE. When you're on the ground, it's just you and terra firma, you know? Accent on the "firma." I'm in my office fillin' out paper work, accident reports, insurance claims, whatnot, I get a lit-

tle squirmy, the best I can do is hop on my desk or crawl under the water cooler, you know? But up here, I feel a little twitchy, and—

(She shoves the steering column forward and they PLUMMET.)

HENRY. AAAAAAAAAA—

PENELOPE. YEEAAAHHHH!!

(ERNIE scowls. PENELOPE pulls up.)

Gives you a whole new world view, don't it?

HENRY. Please. Let's do two dimensions. I'm very fond of two dimensions.

PENELOPE. Office jockey, am I right?

HENRY. It's not that—

PENELOPE. Free as a bird! That's what they used to say. Back when they had birds.

HENRY. We have 34 species of birds in our aviary—

PENELOPE. Sweet. Take the controls a minute, will ya?

(She rustles in her backpack as HENRY grabs the steering.)

HENRY. Jesus God!

(ERNIE reaches over and helps steer. PENELOPE sits back up with an Applebee's bag. She pulls out a sandwich and takes the controls.)

PENELOPE. Gotta keep my blood sugar up or I pass out.

HENRY. Oh god.

PENELOPE. Curry Salmon bagel. You want some?

HENRY. No. No thank you.

PENELOPE. Heavy on the creamed spinach and cheese. You sure?

HENRY. *(Not looking.)* No thank you.

PENELOPE. *(To ERNIE:)* You?

(ERNIE snorts.)

Your buddy back there a mute?

ERNIE. I'm not a mute.

HENRY. He's just worried.

PENELOPE. That we're not gonna catch anything?

ERNIE. That we're not gonna live to see the right canyon.

PENELOPE. Ooo, grumpy bear! Grumpy Bear!

HENRY. He's had bad luck with pilots lately.

ERNIE. Certain pilots.

PENELOPE. Well, no worries here, mate. I haven't pulled a flamer in 8 and 1/2 months. And pretty near everyone got out of that one.

ERNIE. Christ on wheat.

HENRY. Do you think we're getting close? I'm just... All the movement and noise and cramped space—I'm not sure what a heart attack feels like, but—

PENELOPE. And I don't want to be a big Gloomy Gertie, but our fuel's in the yellow— if we don't head back pretty quick, we will be testing the ol' airbags again.

ERNIE. What is this, Pre-school Safari? You go on the hunt, you stay on the hunt, you start listening to the pounding blood in your ears and the hiss of sweat in your eyes, and you tell the voice of reason to shut the hell up.

HENRY. But, Ernie—

ERNIE. Shut the hell up, Henry. Live up to your heritage, if you die today you die like a man. Now fly into that goddam slot canyon over there. I got a feeling.

PENELOPE. That's a tight squeeze.

ERNIE. Of course it's a tight squeeze! You think the natives are gonna be wanderin' around in the open? They didn't survive this long by being stupid. They're cunning. We gotta be cunninger.

(PENELOPE steers them over...)

HENRY. Oh god... she's right, Ernie, this is a really tight canyon—I don't—

ERNIE. *(To PENELOPE:)* You got stealth?

PENELOPE. Bad idea, Great White Hunter. It'll use up the fuel too fast.

HENRY. You've got stealth?

ERNIE. Click on the damn stealth.

PENELOPE. I'm not using stealth.

HENRY. You've got stealth?

ERNIE. You don't use stealth, we might as well put our dicks into the rotor blades right now.

PENELOPE. That's not a problem for all of us!

HENRY. You've got—

ERNIE. Use the damn—

PENELOPE. I'm not—

HENRY. You've got—

ERNIE. *(Waving his rifle.)* CLICK ON THE DAMN STEALTH!!

(CLICK. PENELOPE hits a button. The rotors go to a quiet hum.)

PENELOPE. Jesus, I hate male back seat drivers.

ERNIE. This is stealth. I got this on my Humvee. Never know when you'll need the element of surprise.

HENRY. Where?

ERNIE. I go on a lot of blind dates.

(HENRY gives him a look...)

HENRY. I don't think you should be waving your gun in here.

ERNIE. Probably right. I don't know this one yet. I think this is the safety.

PENELOPE. *(Looking out.)* Whoa, whoa, whoa, what's that?

HENRY. What.

PENELOPE. Those.

ERNIE. Those are cotton bushes.

HENRY. They're moving.

ERNIE. Choppers blowing them.

HENRY. They're running away.

PENELOPE. Cotton plants don't run.

ERNIE. Then they're tumbleweeds!

HENRY. Unless I miss my guess... those are sheep!

PENELOPE. Bingo.

HENRY. Oh my god, real sheep, that means we're close, Ernie! Sheep have been synonymous with primitive Navajos for centuries—blankets, commerce, mutton—do you know how many recipes there are for mutton?

ERNIE. Will you shut up, Henry?

HENRY. Sorry.

ERNIE. Those are probably wild sheep.

PENELOPE. The wild sheep were history before the birds and horses. Professor Mutton's right. Where there's sheep there's shepherds.

ERNIE. Then keep hovering here...

HENRY. There must be three dozen of them... Oh shoot!

(He fumbles with his cell phone.)

PENELOPE. Don't even bother, there's no reception out here.

HENRY. Photos—this is exactly what Suzie wants on her website—

(Trying to aim his phone camera.)

Can you keep the chopper still?

PENELOPE. I'm trying not to ram a wall...

ERNIE. There!

PENELOPE & HENRY. Where!

ERNIE. (*Pointing.*) Human figure at 10:15—got a staff—he’s a shepherd!

HENRY. Ohmygodohmygodohmygod—

PENELOPE. He’s running!

ERNIE. Turn the chopper so I can get a shot!

PENELOPE. I can’t!

HENRY. (*Aiming his camera.*) I can get him—

ERNIE. You’re gonna get a shot of my silky white ass if you don’t clear the way—

(They’re scuffling—trying to move...)

PENELOPE. Careful! Watch it!

ERNIE. Henry—

HENRY. I’m trying—

(THOONK! The rifle goes off.)

ERNIE. AAAAAA!!!

(He falls back in his seat.)

HENRY. Ernie!!

PENELOPE. Oh my god!

(She swerves the chopper.)

ERNIE. Shot myself in the goddam leg!!

HENRY. Ernie!

ERNIE. Fuckin’ tranquilizer dart—I hate when this happens...

PENELOPE. Native’s getting away!

ERNIE. Had to get your goddam picture—

HENRY. What do we do? What do we do??

ERNIE. (*Reloading:*) I got another dart, I can... I got anotheerrrr...

PENELOPE. He's running for that little shed—

HENRY. That's a hogan!

PENELOPE. If he gets in we have to go on foot—

HENRY. We're not going on foot—

ERNIE. (*Trying to aim.*) ...just bank the starboard bow— Iganjus-geeaaaa...

HENRY. Watch the gun! Watch the gun!

PENELOPE. The guy's in jeans and flannel shirt—he's not even primitive—

HENRY. He's got sheep, city natives don't have sheep, he's gotta be the real thing—

ERNIE. Imnaafininzoaaanyy...

(ERNIE passes out, slumped over HENRY and PENELOPE—she fights to keep steady—)

PENELOPE. Abort mission! Abort mission!

HENRY. NO!!

(HENRY GRABS the gun and tries to aim out the window—)

PENELOPE. He's almost in—

HENRY. Angle me around!

PENELOPE. We're—

HENRY. Jesus jesus jesus—

PENELOPE. I can't keep her up—

HENRY. I gotta shoot him in the back, I can't shoot him—

PENELOPE. Goddammit—

HENRY. I can't—

PENELOPE. Shoot!!

HENRY. Can't—

PENELOPE. SHOOOO—

(THOOM. HENRY fires. They all freeze.)

(Lights shift. PENELOPE and the helicopter disappear. HENRY and ERNIE step back into Henry's office, setting down an UNCONSCIOUS MAN in jeans, flannel shirt, and no telephone headset. He could be Native American, could be Latino. His hands and feet are tied.)

(ERNIE sits with his head in his hands, rubbing his leg occasionally, as HENRY gently places Navajo bowls, baskets, and rugs around the prone figure. They all look worse for wear...)

ERNIE. Christ, it still feels like a hangover.

HENRY. You should have seen me, Ernie, you would've been so proud. I, I grabbed the gun, your gun, and I got him in my sights and it was so loud, like you say, the pounding and throbbing and I completely forgot my nausea for, for an eternity it felt like, and, and I shoved you back, and I aimed, I really aimed, and BLAM-O. I just squeezed the trigger. I just pulled the trigger and Blam-O.

ERNIE. That's how it usually works.

HENRY. It did! Blam-O. And he was falling forward. Right into the dust, like in slow motion, but not slow. He just fell right over. Blam. Thump. It was instant. I was there. I mean I was *there*, Ernie.

ERNIE. So was I.

HENRY. But in here I was there. And now he's here. And we're here. And I'm still there! A little.

ERNIE. What the hell are you doing?

HENRY. I'm surrounding him with familiar objects. So when he comes to he won't be so terrified.

ERNIE. *(Looks at a bowl:)* Where'd you get this Apache crap?

HENRY. Navajo. I ordered from Trail-Of-Tears.com.

ERNIE. Nice.

HENRY. I hope they smell authentic. Natives have a very keen sense of smell, you know.

ERNIE. You might wanta pull the bar-code off the rug.

HENRY. Darn it.

(He does.)

I tried not washing my hands, more grease and soil build-up, you know. And no deodorant since we got back. And I removed all the air-fresheners from my office. Shouldn't his tranquilizer be wearing off?

ERNIE. When did we give him that second dose for the plane trip?

HENRY. Eight hours ago.

ERNIE. Should be anytime now. Assuming his heart don't stop.

HENRY. Don't say that. Don't even think that. God, look, my hands! They're still shaking! I can't tell you the last time my hands trembled!

ERNIE. You let the little woman know you're back yet?

HENRY. Oh god!

(Grabs out his phone.)

She must be worried sick, I haven't—I didn't get any pictures! Except at the Albuquerque airport when we first landed! Oh god. She'll be furious.

ERNIE. Take some of Anasazi boy.

HENRY. I can't. He's Culture Fiesta property now. Copyright issues. Let me take some of you.

ERNIE. I don't want my picture took.

HENRY. Just a couple.

ERNIE. No.

HENRY. Ernie—

ERNIE. No!

(In steps YOLANDA, as sharp as ever.)

YOLANDA. Welcome home, Henry.

HENRY. Yolanda! Oh god! I'm so—I can't—you shouldn't be here. You should wait 'til we're in the observation room with the two-way mirror.

YOLANDA. I wanted to see our newest acquisition before the docs and costume designers get their hooks into him.

(To ERNIE.)

Congratulations, Mr. Hardaway.

(ERNIE tries to stand, almost falls, catches himself on the desk.)

Are you all right?

ERNIE. Aw, it's bullshit. My leg. Hunting accident. Nothing a good shot of gin and a piss won't cure.

YOLANDA. Well, Henry, congrats to you as well.

HENRY. He's a beauty, isn't he?

YOLANDA. Doesn't look very primitive.

HENRY. He was in a canyon. Herding sheep! I mean, you can't expect them to wear loin cloths and feathers, Yolanda.

YOLANDA. *(Kneeling beside the figure.)* Who did the clean up?

HENRY. Nobody. He's all natural.

YOLANDA. You brought him to your office without decontaminating him? Henry! What is the protocol? Why do we have regulations?

HENRY. I just—

YOLANDA. *(Quickly pulling on plastic gloves.)* We could be dealing with lice, ticks, chiggers, mice—

HENRY. I just wanted him to wake up in a friendly environment, not surrounded by guys in Hepavac suits scouring him down. Look at him, Yolanda! Isn't he beautiful?

YOLANDA. You're putting everyone in administration in jeopardy.

ERNIE. That's our Henry. Rebel, rebel.

HENRY. I'm not a rebel. I mean, you know, not all the time. Sometimes. A man's gotta do what a man's gotta do.

YOLANDA. I'm sorry, Henry, but I can't abide this.

(Into her headset:)

Dial Tone. Securit—

(The figure stirs.)

HENRY. Wait! He's waking up! Shh shh shh shh—he's waking up! Don't call security, let him get his bearings—just give me two minutes—

ERNIE. *(Pulling out his big knife.)* Besides, I got us covered if he gets frisky.

YOLANDA. How'd you get that through security??

ERNIE. I got my ways.

HENRY. Get out.

ERNIE & YOLANDA. What?

HENRY. Get outside! Please. Wait outside—You'll freak him out, I don't want him freaked out by a crowd—

YOLANDA. But—

HENRY. Five minutes! Gimme five minutes to acclimate him—

MAN. ...uhhhh...

HENRY. Go!

YOLANDA. Henry—

ERNIE. You need help, just scream.

(He's out.)

YOLANDA. You are pushing the envelope here, Henry, and not in a good—

(HENRY closes the door on her.)

HENRY. Thank you.

(He turns. The figure stirs. HENRY clicks on a little CD player on his desk.)

(A traditional Navajo song starts quietly. HENRY scoots a little bowl in front of the MAN, crouches a safe distance back from him.)

(The MAN blinks his eyes—looks around... dazed...)

(Quietly:) It's okay. Um. "Ya' ta' Hey." "Dineh." Safe. You're safe. See?

(Holds up a little rug.)

Home? Safe at home?

(Beat. They stare at each other.)

MAN. What the fuck is goin' on?

HENRY. What?

MAN. Why am I tied up? I want a lawyer—I didn't do nothin'—

HENRY. No. Oh no. No.

MAN. Where am I? Get those goddam pots away from me!

(He kicks a basket across the room.)

HENRY. Don't kick it! Native Americans don't kick their own artifacts!

MAN. ...what?

HENRY. Tell me you're Navajo, please tell me you're Navajo—

MAN. What the hell you want to know for? I got rights. I can get a lawyer. You can't keep me here—

HENRY. Oh crap. Oh crap oh crap oh crap—

MAN. Untie me, man! I ain't done nothin'!

HENRY. Okay. Listen. Just listen. Um. Are you Native American?

(Beat. The man looks at HENRY.)

MAN. Navajo on my mother's side, asshole.

HENRY. Just your mother?

MAN. My dad's from Guadalajara.

HENRY. You're not even a full-blood.

MAN. What's that got to do with anything?

HENRY. You were herding sheep in the open desert! What the heck were you doing herding sheep in the open desert when you're only part Indian??

MAN. I was visiting my tia and tio on the Rez. They got sheep. Is that illegal now?

HENRY. Are your aunt and uncle full-bloods? Why am I even asking? The budget's gone! I just blew the budget!

MAN. I'm not talkin', 'til I get a lawyer.

HENRY. Darn it!

(Beat.)

Shoot!

(HENRY stares at the MAN, who stares back. Long moments pass... HENRY taps his fingers on his desk lightly... Then...)

You want something to drink? I can get you a Vanilla Cherry Lime Pepsi. Or something.

(Beat. The MAN stares at him.)

My treat.

(The MAN stares. More moments pass... Then HENRY laughs.)

Surprise! This is... ah...

(Begins untying the MAN.)

—it's a new promotion we're doing. To, ah, to get folks into the park. Get it? "It's so much fun, you'll have to be tied down!" My understanding is rope burns disappear very quickly. There shouldn't be any lasting... redness...

(The MAN sits up, now free. They look at each other.)

MAN. Where am I?

HENRY. WonderWorld, you idiot!! Sorry! Sorry. I just assumed—Hooo! Still a little tense. My first... first marketing foray. As it were. On behalf of everyone at Culture Fiesta, allow me to welcome you to the Jolliest Place On Earth.

(At his desk.)

And we would like to offer you a five day pass—all expenses paid—it's all on us—including airfare back to New Mexico. We already flew you here. What, ah, what name should I fill out on the paperwork? Benally? Begay? Yazzie?

MAN. Martinez.

HENRY. Of course. Mexican.

MAN. Zhao Martinez.

(HENRY puts his head in his hands.)

ZHAO. Named for my grandpa. He was Chinese-Brazilian. Met my grandma in Jamaica.

(HENRY slumps further down on his desk.)

You shoot everyone you want to come to your park?

HENRY. *(Shoves a paper across the desk.)* I'm, ah, I'm going to need you to sign a release form. To get the tickets.

ZHAO. *(Tries to stand.)* Damn, man. What the hell'd you hit me with?

HENRY. Did I say five day pass? Let me make that a ten day—

(KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK from the door.)

YOLANDA. *(Off-stage:)* Henry? Everything all right in there?

HENRY. Dang it! Fine! It's all fine—we're... bonding!

YOLANDA. I need to let the de-contam guys in—

HENRY. Just a minute! We're at a very delicate stage!

ZHAO. What the hell's goin' on, man?

HENRY. (*Quietly:*) Okay. To get the tickets, this is a very special trial offer, and to get the tickets, you need to not say anything to anyone out there. Not a sound. You understand? You can smile and nod. Okay? Even if they... kind of strip you down and de-louse you.

ZHAO. What?

HENRY. Standard park procedure! Can't be too careful nowadays!

ZHAO. Look, I don't know the game here—

HENRY. No game! Just sign—

ZHAO. —but I know the smell of shit on shoes.

HENRY. What?

ZHAO. You stepped in something *bad*, man. I seen that expression on my friends before, usually right before their ass ends up in the pokey.

HENRY. I don't, I, I don't know what you're—

ZHAO. Look, man, I don't know what the hell you were doin' out there on the Rez with your Black Hawk whatever. But I know this. You want me to keep my mouth shut, it's gonna take a shitload more than a ten day pass to fuckin' Culture Fiesta.

(Beat. They watch each other.)

HENRY. What do you want?

ZHAO. (*Points to the CD player.*) First, can the damn chanting and drumming. It's killin' me, man. Don't you got no "Bajo Bacas" or "Norteño Pimps"?

HENRY. (*Turns off the CD.*) No.

ZHAO. I gotta be honest with you—what's your name?

HENRY. Henry. Henry Carson.

ZHAO. (*A flash of a grin.*) Carson? Henrito. I was visiting my relatives 'cause I had a lot of free time and kind of needed to lay low.

HENRY. Yes.

ZHAO. I'm kind of between things right now.

HENRY. Yes...

ZHAO. I'm fuckin' unemployed, man. You want to keep my trap shut, you find me a job here with the Jolly People.

HENRY. I don't—technically we're not hiring right now—

(BANG BANG BANG on the door.)

YOLANDA. Henry, need I remind you of your increasingly perilous upcoming performance review?

HENRY. One second! I think I just gained his trust!

(To ZHAO:)

How would you feel about being WonderWorld's new Native American?

ZHAO. Like in a stunt show with tomahawks and horses and shit?

HENRY. Like you sit around and get looked at and do Corn Grinding dances and chants and serve fry bread and mutton to tourists.

ZHAO. Like working at McDonald's.

HENRY. More singing and rug-weaving, but yes.

ZHAO. What kind of salary?

HENRY. I don't know. We don't pay the other exhibits—just room and board—I'd have to take the money out of Native upkeep and maybe the Christmas party... maybe... ten dollars an hour?

ZHAO. You got yourself a deal, Henrito.

HENRY. Excellent!

ZHAO. But I don't speak hardly no Navajo.

HENRY. You can pick it up from discs and some the other genuine natives.

ZHAO. The Navajo ones.

HENRY. Exactly. Don't hang around with the Central Kalapuyan or Tilamook. Just stay silent at first. You're a newbie, they'll expect some fear.

ZHAO. And I don't know shit about rugs or bowls.

HENRY. Turquoise?

(ZHAO shakes his head.)

Don't you have *any* indigenous skills?

ZHAO. I rock at GameSplice and Brady Bunch trivia.

HENRY. *(Winces.)* Okay. We can get you books and DVD's. You can study them secretly in my office in off-hours.

ZHAO. Like a little espionage, huh?

HENRY. Oh god...

ZHAO. We used to play cowboys and Indians when we were pups in the irrigation ditches—

(ZHAO moves like lightning, viciously "shooting" HENRY, jamming his fingers into Henry's ribs and neck—HENRY leaps back with a yell.)

Doov-Doov! Dooh-Dooh-Dooh-Dooh-Dooh-Dooh—

HENRY. Aaaaaa—

(It looks for a second like ZHAO is about to go for a major artery... then he pauses... grins a wicked grin and stands triumphantly over HENRY who is sprawled over his desk.)

ZHAO. Somehow the Indians always ended up with AK-47s in our games.

HENRY. That's... that's great. Just... no shooting the tourists.

ZHAO. No way, man. I'm gonna be a good little Indian.

HENRY. Then... we have a deal?

ZHAO. The adventure begins today, my white brother.

(They shake hands.)

HENRY. Then let's go get you de-loused.

(He opens the door and ZHAO walks out.)

(Lights shift. SUZIE enters with her laptop and webcam, sitting down at her table as all the various locks on the front door click open. HENRY steps in with his suitcase. He looks frayed. She looks up at him.)

HENRY. Whoa! Wind's really picking up out there! Big storm coming... I just beat it...

(She watches him... takes a swig of water... then goes back to her typing.)

Okay. I'm sorry. You were right, cell phone reception was non-existent. And I had to go straight to the office when I got back. I came home as soon as I could... The weather's slowing everyone down...

(She keeps typing.)

I said I'm sorry!

(She keeps typing. Pause. He grabs out his laptop, sits down beside her and quickly types something himself. Pushes a button, sits back and looks at her.

(DING! from her computer.

(SUZIE hesitates... and clicks her mouse. Reads what's on her screen. Quickly types something, sends it.

DING! From Henry's computer. He reads his screen, winces. Types something fast and sends it.

DING! From Suzie's computer. She reads her screen... can't help herself—she smiles.

SUZIE. I think the carpet can wait until tomorrow.

HENRY. You sure? I can get a crowbar—

SUZIE. You just better have some darn good photos to show for this.

HENRY. ...ah. Well.

SUZIE. Oh, Henry.

HENRY. I was too busy doing it to take a picture of it, Suzie! You know?

SUZIE. So how are you going to remember it?

HENRY. What.

SUZIE. “It.” Whatever “it” was you were “doing.” It’s come, it’s gone, you’ve got no permanent record, it might as well never have happened—

HENRY. I brought it back.

SUZIE. What?

HENRY. I brought him back. A native. I shot a native and brought him back.

(SUZIE watches him a beat longer...)

SUZIE. *(Typing fast:)* “OMG, 10:37: H. walks in the door and announces he’s shot someone—”

HENRY. Tranq darts. He was just drugged. He’s okay.

SUZIE. But you actually pulled the trigger?

HENRY. I did. From an open chopper. In a canyon. I did.

SUZIE. Oh my god.

HENRY. I know.

SUZIE. Oh my god, Henry!

HENRY. I know!

SUZIE. Jesus, I wish you’d gotten some pictures!

HENRY. You can come see him—the guy—he’s in the pavilion—

SUZIE. But of you with the gun and the chopper! Are you all right? Oh my god, Henry, are you okay?

HENRY. I’m okay. I’m kind of great.

SUZIE. Your skin’s not crisped.

HENRY. I covered up.

SUZIE. And you were de-loused, sterilized, everything?

HENRY. Everything.

SUZIE. *(Holding him, kissing him.)* I was terrified, Terrance was so terrified—

(Offering her laptop.)

—read my journal—you’ve got to read my journal—

HENRY. I will. I just want to— I’m not quite here yet, you know?

SUZIE. Well, get here!

(Kissing him.)

Get here now! And tell me about it! All about it!

(She sits beside him.)

HENRY. Where should I—

SUZIE. *(Grabbing her laptop.)* Did you journal? Please tell me you journaled.

HENRY. I didn’t write any of it down, I was—

HENRY & SUZIE. —too busy doing it.

SUZIE. Wild man. Look at you.

(She points the webcam toward his tired happy face and types.)

“I think my husband...”

(Looks at him... smiles... types.)

“—just aced his performance review.”

HENRY. Well, you know.

SUZIE. Has anyone else upgraded their inventory?

HENRY. Phil and Maureen were setting up stuffed wolves in the Siberian pavilion, their eyes blink—

SUZIE. Henry! Name it! Claim it! You’re the new Culture Fiesta Fattie!

(HENRY laughs.)

Raise—Ching! Promotion—Ching! You're gonna be head of the whole Western Hemisphere side of the Reflecting Pool! God, I'm getting all tingly! We can refinish the kitchen again, we can—

HENRY. Well, we just introduced him, I don't know if he'll take—

SUZIE. What tribe is he?

HENRY. He's... you know, Navajo.

SUZIE. Ooo. Good one! Nice rugs!

HENRY. Yes. Yes, it sure is! Navajo's a very good one.

SUZIE. I think your son needs to see you.

HENRY. Is he in bed?

SUZIE. *(Pushing a button and showing him her monitor.)* Of course.

HENRY. We should re-adjust the camera—I can't see his feet.

SUZIE. Let's go wake him up.

HENRY. Can we?

SUZIE. He'll kill me if I let him sleep through this. Wait 'til you read his journal—

HENRY. *(Pauses.)* Huh.

SUZIE. What?

HENRY. Whenever... ah. Whenever the chopper would tilt or plummet or anything... I'd think "I can't die. I have to get home. I have to see Terrance and Suze." And, ah. I did it. I got home.

SUZIE. *(Holds him.)* B-HOE.

HENRY. I'm an okay-HOE.

SUZIE. You came back. Is there anything better a husband can do than come back?

(She kisses him.)

Let's go show your son what a father looks like.

(She leads him off. We hear the first clap of thunder.)

(Lights shift. HENRY immediately reenters in a fresh business jacket and briefcase, straightening his tie and hair while a slick man and sweet woman in suits and headsets, carrying briefcases, come out to surround him. These are MR. NEIBERDING and MS. FJELDSTAD.)

MR. NEIBERDING. Mr. Carson!

MS. FJELDSTAD. Good morning, Mr. Carson!

MR. NEIBERDING. It's my understanding you've recently procured a new exhibit for your Native Pavilion.

MS. FJELDSTAD. Congratulations, Mr. Carson!

HENRY. ...thank you.

MS. FJELDSTAD. I'm Danita Fjeldstad. We met at a conference in Dublin.

MR. NEIBERDING. I'm Jerry Neiberding from the auction in Mogadishu.

MS. FJELDSTAD. *(Handing a card.)* I'm with Mega Family Christian Praise Parks.

MR. NEIBERDING. *(Handing a card.)* Personnel Manager for Extreme Terror Plummet Parks.

HENRY. Oh right. Thank you. I need to get to my office—

MR. NEIBERDING. Reason I wanted to catch you, wanted to say excellent work on the indigenous grab—

MS. FJELDSTAD. A big big salute on that one, Mr. Carson.

HENRY. Thank you. I really have to get inside. The air—

MS. FJELDSTAD. Absolutely. But I wondered if we could speak informally, avoid the secretaries and monitored phone lines and such—

MR. NEIBERDING. If I may, I wondered that first, Henry. If you'll check my ticket, I think you'll find I pulled into this garage several full minutes before Ms. Fjeldstad.

HENRY. What do you want??

MS. FJELDSTAD. Well. I think we're all aware of the skidding attendance numbers and of course the mortality rate of the performers—

(*To MR. NEIBERDING:*)

—for everyone. But I am proud to say that Mega Family Christian Praise Park is expanding our Holy History Islands of Eden—

(*MR. NEIBERDING laughs.*)

What.

MR. NEIBERDING. I believe the Islands of Eden are best known for the Singing Serpent Jamboree and the Cain and Able Lazer-Tag—

MS. FJELDSTAD. We want to add an Old West island featuring missionaries and Mormons, and to be honest with you, we've found several authentic cowboys out of Denver, but the Native American component is proving problematic—

HENRY. Of course.

MS. FJELDSTAD. We can come up with Mexican/Native mixes, but no 100%'s like you've procured.

HENRY. Right.

MS. FJELDSTAD. Mega Family Christian Praise is prepared to pay a substantial amount for the rights to your newly acquired performer.

MR. NEIBERDING. So he can shout “woo woo woo” as he shepherds hippos onto the ark simulator? Do you have any idea who you're talking to? This is Henry Carson! This is Culture Fiesta! They do not mix time periods, they do not mix genres, they are about 100% honest accurate portrayals of honest peoples of the world, am I correct, Henry?

HENRY. That's right—

MR. NEIBERDING. Which is why Extreme Terror is preparing a new Wild West Stunt Show—totally authentic, totally period-appropriate. We don't want actors, we want *people*. Real honest-to-god

western people who duke it out on horseback with rifles and arrows surrounding Fort Splash-A-Lot.

HENRY. Oh god.

MR. NEIBERDING. Can your man throw a tomahawk, Henry?

MS. FJELDSTAD. With all due respect, Henry, Mr. Nieberding is full of horse doo. The portrayal of Native Americans as strictly a warlike people has been discredited for decades. We propose to show the native in his true habitat, surrounded by teepees, animatronic buffalo, and selling drums and dreamcatchers to the guests.

MR. NEIBERDING. We offer a full educational outreach program in which we plan to act out legends, lore, and engage in a respectful discussion of animism.

MS. FJELDSTAD. We offer air-conditioned dormitories for all performers, with a reasonably equipped fitness center and basic satellite—

HENRY. He's not for sale!

(Beat.)

MR. NEIBERDING. I understand your hesitancy, Henry, but let me assure you that not only do we offer a terrific work environment, but our park is prepared to allow all our performers to take part in the new Va-Va-Voom Bikini Wet'N'Wild Whipped Cream Parade.

MS. FJELDSTAD. He's putting your native in an underwear show, Henry—

MR. NEIBERDING. Bikinis. And whipped cream. It would all be done with the utmost taste and respect.

MS. FJELDSTAD. Let me say that if it's fun your native wants, Mega Family Christian Praise Park is fully prepared to feature him as part of our Wubulous World of Dr. Seuss.

MR. NEIBERDING. What??

MS. FJELDSTAD. I'm just thinking off the top of my head here, but I can see "The Indian and the Sneetches in their rawhide leather breeches" —

MR. NEIBERDING. I give you my word there will be no rhyming at Extreme Terror.

MS. FJELDSTAD. "The Cat in the Hat and the Wampum Mat" —

MR. NEIBERDING. What happened to "authentic environments"?

MS. FJELDSTAD. It's the Cat's authentic environment. The Indian would come for a visit.

HENRY. Please, I can't—

MR. NEIBERDING. We'll pay shipping.

MS. FJELDSTAD. We'll give him real animal skins.

MR. NEIBERDING. We'll give him shiny beads every month!

MS. FJELDSTAD. We'll pay for his whiskey!

HENRY. No!! I can't... he's mine! I rode in the chopper. I braved the raw air. I pulled the trigger. I dragged his body back to civilization, he's mine! You take your grubby little poaching fingers out of my pavilion and go get your own damn Native American!

(And he storms out. They stand staring... Pause.)

MS. FJELDSTAD. Fuck WonderWorld!

(And they're out of there.)

(Lights shift as more thunder rolls. HENRY collapses at his desk as ZHAO enters, now wearing a traditional purple velvet shirt with string turquoise necklace, turquoise bracelets, white pants, woven belt and headband. He carries a portable T.V. from which a fast Navajo riding song is heard.)

ZHAO. Those guys can really dance!

HENRY. Are you even *trying* to learn the songs?

ZHAO. Why don't you watch with me? You might learn somethin'.

HENRY. I've got all the paperwork that piled up while I was gone. I still haven't read all my e-mails—

ZHAO. I can take the T.V. back to the pavilion—

HENRY. No! No books, T.V., no outside influences to contaminate the environment.

ZHAO. What about me? Am I an outside influence?

HENRY. Are you talking to the other performers?

ZHAO. Not too much. It's like they're all sittin' in the pool, just waitin' for me to wade in. They keep lookin' at me funny.

HENRY. Natives are like that. Sensitive. In touch with the earth. They operate on a different plane, between dream and reality—

ZHAO. I just want'em to teach me to make fry bread without burnin' my fingers.

HENRY. I had a dream last night. It was about the paperwork. I was back over the desert and Yolanda was sitting in the backseat telling me what to do, yapping yapping yapping, and I was trying to watch for a native—for you I think—and she just kept going on about the paperwork, and I just, I got so pissed off, I threw the papers up into the rotorblades!

ZHAO. Ow!

HENRY. Rip rip rip rip rip—shreds of paper *everywhere*. Flying through canyons, over the sand and yucca plants. It was like snow. Corporate snowflakes falling over the desert, covering everything. Covering the world.

ZHAO. Man, you oughta start hangin' out with the “performers.” They'd get all over that dream in a heartbeat.

HENRY. (*Holds up papers, indicates his laptop.*) ...but in reality...

(*ZHAO eagerly tries a few more awkward dance steps...*)

You gotta get better than that. And learn some the lyrics while you're at it.

ZHAO. Gimme a beer first.

HENRY. *(Pulls a can from a cooler and tosses it.)* This is your last one tonight.

ZHAO. I don't know why we're botherin'. Nobody's gonna come see us in a hurricane.

HENRY. Please. This is not a hurricane. This is light rain. You'll know a hurricane when it happens.

ZHAO. When I see bagpipes and totem poles flyin' by at 130 miles an hour.

HENRY. That's a clue. Yes.

(He goes back to typing. ZHAO chugs the beer and tries some more steps...)

ZHAO. You know the stories I'm humpin' most?

HENRY. What?

ZHAO. The Coyote stuff. How he tricked the chickenhawk and hummingbird ladies to sleep with him and everything. He was whacked, man.

HENRY. *(Grinning, stepping from his computer.)* Whacked. Yes. He was absolutely whacked! See, what's neat is Coyote's all over the map—everything from—in, in Crow tradition, Old Man Coyote actually *created* everyone else out of mud, but in the Hopi language the words for “Coyote” and “sucker” are the same word! ...He actually... um. Sorry.

ZHAO. What.

HENRY. This is where people usually tell me to shut up.

ZHAO. Not me, man. I'm in for the ride.

HENRY. Well, ah, other tribes, you know, have other tricksters—uh, the Eastern woodlands tribes it's the rabbit, the Northwest coast had Raven—

ZHAO. Yeah but Coyote kicks their ass! You can't even kill him, man! He didn't even keep his life in his chest, he hid it so the otters and chickenhawks and even his own wife could like—

(POUNING on Henry's desk, in his face:)

—POUND HIM TO A THOUSAND BLOODY BONY PIECES AND HE COULD COME BACK!! AROOOO!!!

HENRY. Zhao!

ZHAO. Sorry, white man.

HENRY. No one can know you're here. Please.

ZHAO. I forgot.

(ZHAO spins away and starts fancy-dancing, heavy steps in a fast rhythm, suddenly pretty damn graceful.)

HENRY. What are you doing?

ZHAO. Dancing.

HENRY. A minute ago you were stumbling around...

ZHAO. *(Grins.)* Some tribes dance to bring on the end of the world, am I right?

HENRY. Right—and some to get to the next one—

ZHAO. Get over here, Henrito! Come dance with me, man—

HENRY. I can't—

ZHAO. *(Still stepping.)* Try!

HENRY. *(He's up.)* ...I don't—

ZHAO. Try!

(HENRY is on the verge...)

Tell me more stories, Carson-man! Fill me up!

(Henry's phone rings. He checks it.)

HENRY. Shoot. It's Suzie. What time is it—I have to get home.

ZHAO. *(Stops dancing.)* That sucks.

HENRY. We can talk more later. Come on. I have to get you back to your pavilion and lock up.

ZHAO. *(Sits down with his small T.V.)* I got a lot of discs to read, bi-lagaana. Words to learn.

HENRY. I know. I just—

ZHAO. You want me authentic or not?

HENRY. *(Takes a card from his desk.)* Here. Here's a temporary backstage pass card. It'll get you back into your pavilion when you're done here.

ZHAO. *(Takes the card.)* Stay and tell me one more story. I'm still empty, man.

HENRY. I have to get home!

ZHAO. I need to learn! Not from these—

(Holds up a box of CD-ROMS.)

From you. I need you, Henrito.

(HENRY pauses.)

HENRY. Well. I mean if you want to, we could keep talking at my house.

(Beat.)

ZHAO. You inviting me home for dinner?

HENRY. I guess I am. Yes.

ZHAO. What do you and your woman eat?

HENRY. I don't know. Whatever Suzie microwaved. Maybe some sushi or stuffed cabbage.

ZHAO. *(Stops dancing.)* Damn. All we get here are sandwiches and chips and a pickle.

HENRY. Well.

(ZHAO looks at him.)

That's how it works.

(ZHAO stares at him.)

Look, I'm sorry, but I'm offering you something better—

ZHAO. You promise no sandwich and chips and a pickle, right?

HENRY. I promise.

ZHAO. Okay. Let's try the Carson Cuisine.

(He turns off the little T.V. Low rumble of thunder...)

(Lights shift. HENRY unlocks and walks through the door to his house, waving to ZHAO to wait outside—he leaves the door ajar as SUZIE stands looking at her laptop.)

HENRY. Hey, Honey, I'm home—

SUZIE. *(Beckoning him over.)* Look at this site. Tell me what you think of this site—

HENRY. Actually, first you should—

SUZIE. You've got to see this before Terrance finishes orchestra... Mr. Indian Hunter.

(She drags him to her laptop.)

It's all native rituals, Henry. Native rituals to prepare for the big hunt—it's called LoveSnake.com.

HENRY. *(Looking at her screen.)* This is a porn site!

SUZIE. They're tantric Native rituals. It seems very authentic. Positions, face-paintings—I mean, I'm not sure we want to go there—I'm not as flexible as I used to be—But I thought maybe on the eve of your performance review...

(She pulls open her blouse to reveal her bra just as ZHAO walks in behind them...)

ZHAO. *(Waves.)* How, man.

SUZIE. Oh my god.

(She reflexively backs up, trying to button herself back up...)

HENRY. There's some other rituals I should probably tell you about. Like inviting someone over for dinner. This is... Leonard. Leonard Yazzie. The new Navajo.

SUZIE. Ah.

HENRY. This is my wife Suzie.

ZHAO. (*Offering his hand.*) How you doin'?

SUZIE. Um—

HENRY. (*To ZHAO:*) You can meet my son when he's back from orchestra rehearsal.

ZHAO. That's cool.

HENRY. (*To SUZIE:*) He's picked up a lot of English.

SUZIE. That's wonderful.

(Subtly backing up to touch her laptop.)

Henry usually just brings home pots and arrowheads.

HENRY. Had a heck of a time convincing Ahmed to let us through our gate. I'm just inviting him home for dinner—the crap they eat at the pavilion, it's just crap. Right, Leonard?

ZHAO. Pretty bad, yeah.

SUZIE. Well.

(A little too loud.)

Would you like a sandwich? We have chips—

HENRY. I thought I could microwave something.

SUZIE. Let me!

HENRY. No, I'll do it.

SUZIE. But—

HENRY. I'll do it!

(Quietly:)

It's your chance to visit the desert with me, Suzie. To kind of be there.

SUZIE. Honey...

HENRY. Think what your readers will say!

(HENRY darts out. SUZIE and ZHAO look at each other. She smiles and unconsciously touches her laptop like a security blanket.)

ZHAO. Where's your son play orchestra?

SUZIE. Upstairs. He's in a video-conference orchestra. He plays clarinet.

ZHAO. That's a good instrument.

(Pause.)

SUZIE. You must have played a lot of flute on the reservation?

ZHAO. No.

(Pause.)

SUZIE. That's so exotic. To be from the desert.

ZHAO. It's okay.

(Pause.)

SUZIE. Florida must seem like another planet to you.

ZHAO. It's wetter.

SUZIE. Of course.

ZHAO. More mosquitoes, less stink bugs.

SUZIE. Well, it was a swamp. You know. Before we paved it over.

ZHAO. It keeps raining, it'll be a swamp again.

SUZIE. Right!

(She laughs. Quickly starts typing.)

ZHAO. What you workin' on?

SUZIE. My blog. I just realized I needed to finish an entry.

ZHAO. Oh yeah? What's your site?

SUZIE. SuzieC4real.com.

ZHAO. That's cool. My cousin had a blog.

SUZIE. Really?

ZHAO. He eventually turned it into a porn site. More money.

SUZIE. Ah.

ZHAO. He started by recordin' his own stuff with girlfriends on his webcam. Kind of spiraled from there.

SUZIE. Really.

(She subtly inches her webcam away. Pause. She takes a drink of bottled water.)

ZHAO. It's called LoveSnake.com.

(She spits her drink all over her laptop.)

SUZIE. Oh god!

ZHAO. I haven't seen a girl spit like that in a long time—I'll dry it off—

SUZIE. It's all right, it's all right—

(He tries to use his shirt-sleeve to dry the screen, SUZIE trying to block his view of the screen—He playfully moves around her, under her arms—they're increasingly tangled up... And HENRY comes in with plates of food on a tray.)

HENRY. Ah...?

ZHAO. She was showin' me her blog—

SUZIE. —he was telling me about his cousin's porn... site...

HENRY. Ah.

ZHAO. Your wife's got a good mouth, man. She's good with the spit.

SUZIE. I was taking a drink—

HENRY. Well, I brought dinner!

(He sets down the tray.)

Instant Sloppy Joes. Beats sandwiches anyday.

(Pause. They sit looking at each other...)

Although... I guess... it kind of is sandwiches. But no pickles.

ZHAO. No, I like sloppy joes. They were always my favorite lunch at school.

(He takes a sandwich already overflowing with sloppy joe mix.)

That and we had somethin' called "Surprise Burgers," they were like this sealed white bread roll with something inside. But you never knew what 'til you bit in.

SUZIE. Oh god.

ZHAO. It was usually just chuck and onions or whatever. But we were always pretty sure we'd get a mouthful of pus and blood and snot or something.

(SUZIE and HENRY stare at their own sandwiches... ZHAO pauses, ready to take a big bite.)

Sorry. Do you guys do a prayer or something?

HENRY. No.

(Laughs.)

No, no. We just dig right in!

(Putting sloppy joe mix on his bun.)

Should we get Terrance?

ZHAO. Yeah, get your boy down here—I'll show him how boys play out on the rez—

SUZIE. On the other hand, there's something to be said for his staying upstairs and giving us a chance to talk as grown-ups for a while!

ZHAO. I like grown-up talk too. Ho' zho' ni'!

(He takes a HUGE BITE—juicy red meat and sauce pour out the other side of the bun onto the plate and table, staining his hands and face.)

SUZIE. What's that mean?

HENRY. Beauty. Ho' zho' ni'!

(And HENRY takes a massive bite—more red glop splatters around. ZHAO laughs with his mouth full. SUZIE picks up a napkin and goes for Henry’s face.)

No! Eat your sloppy joe!

SUZIE. But your face, Henry—

HENRY. Eat, woman!

(He takes another huge bite, as does ZHAO. SUZIE hesitates... sees the others enjoying themselves immensely... and takes a huge bite. Meat and sauce go everywhere.)

HENRY & ZHAO. Yaaaahh!!

(More big bites—they look like wild animals. SUZIE laughs.)

HENRY. We gotta get Terrance down here for this—

SUZIE. No! After all we taught him about “polite bites”—

HENRY. Exactly!

(Calls out:)

Terrance—

SUZIE. Shh! SHH!

(She laughs, stops him, putting her hand over his mouth, leaving red stains on his cheeks.)

(Beat. She looks at him.)

Oh my god. You look like a wild animal.

(He watches her... scoops out sloppy joe mix on one finger... and puts a mark on her nose.)

HENRY. So do you.

(She hesitates...)

SUZIE. For the Performance Review hunt tomorrow?

(HENRY nods. They stare at each other... She gets more meat... and draws a line down his throat. He does the same to her, pauses... then down across her chest.)

(She dabs red around his lips and kisses him slowly...)

(And in a frenzy they TUMBLE behind the table, making passionate noises.)

(ZHAO watches them. Takes a small bite of his sandwich.)

(A child's voice crackles over an intercom.)

TERRANCE'S VOICE. *(Voice-over:)* Mom? Dad? Is dinner ready?

HENRY & SUZIE. *(Shouted from behind the table:)* NOT YET, HONEY!!

(Thunder outside. They go back at it.)

(ZHAO scoops up some red mix on his finger... looks at it... and drags careful lines across his cheeks and forehead—war paint in red dripping hamburger...)

ZHAO. Ho' Zho' Ni'.

(HUGE CLAP OF THUNDER. Blackout.)

End of Act I

ACT II

(Thunder. Lights up on Henry's office, as at the top of Act I.)

(But now HENRY leans back in his chair like the king of the world, eyes shut, in a headset and casual shirt with no tie. There may be some slight red stains still around his mouth.)

(YOLANDA, in an even sharper business suit and headset, sits across from him with her palm pilot.)

YOLANDA. Henry.

(HENRY, lost in thought, continues smiling like the cat that ate every damn canary in the shop.)

Henry. I've only allotted five minutes for this performance review.

(HENRY opens his eyes.)

I suggest we start.

(HENRY spins his chair lazily.)

HENRY. I suggest I agree.

YOLANDA. Are you all right?

HENRY. *(Shoots his forefinger at her, grinning.)* Locked, loaded, safety off.

YOLANDA. Right. Then let's get right to it. Your first three quarters were marked by a solid level of work in the face of some challenging circumstances. The death of old Nathan Takoda and having to put down Wikimak in the Canadian portion, coupled with the lukewarm reception to the Nike moccasins and Native Bobble-head Dolls.

HENRY. It's like scaling McKinley, you know? Always looking for the next chink, the next foothold—

YOLANDA. Well, your visitor numbers stayed constant with those of the South African and Ukraine pavilion, if not in the German and Italian stratosphere.

HENRY. And let's be honest. They have all that beer and pizza. Spring Break alone sets them—

YOLANDA. Never-the-less, you showed adequate progress toward the company's goals.

HENRY. Damn straight.

YOLANDA. Then the fourth quarter starts.

HENRY. As it inevitably does.

YOLANDA. It certainly didn't go unnoticed that your willingness to personally acquire a replacement for Nathan Takoda was unparalleled by any other Culture Fiesta manager—

(HENRY jumps up, pacing.)

HENRY. Jesus, Yolanda, you should have been there, *all* the managers should go out in the field for inventory—to actually hold the rifle—

YOLANDA. Yes. We've heard. I think you should sit down now.

HENRY. Whoo!

(He sits.)

YOLANDA. Since your return, however, some of the work habits of your division have... faltered.

HENRY. ...What do you mean.

YOLANDA. For one, we still don't have the complete paperwork from your expedition. Your Release Forms 380, 461, Extenuating Expenses CE—

HENRY. Those are coming—

YOLANDA. The physical reports on your acquisition. His final DNA Form 816, Lineage Forms B and D, skill set forms A2, B4, and C3—

HENRY. —on their way—

YOLANDA. And productivity, Henry. Your new native isn't weaving, isn't throwing pots, isn't making sand paintings—

HENRY. He's new—

YOLANDA. He better get up to speed. You could have selected any Native American, you selected him, there has to be a reason.

HENRY. I—

YOLANDA. I don't have to know that reason, but I do have to have the paperwork to back up that reason.

HENRY. You will—

YOLANDA. And since the arrival of the new acquisition, the other natives appear to not be meeting their own productivity standards. So where are your weekly P-VAL forms to monitor and address the situation—

HENRY. I don't—

YOLANDA. This new global storm alert is already kicking us in the sweetmeats, we cannot lose one more visitor—

HENRY. I—

YOLANDA. You don't want to become Alan Donaldson, do you?

HENRY. No!

YOLANDA. The day the Native American Pavilions become the Latvian Pavilion, is the day I turn in my resignation and blow up all of Culture Fiesta.

HENRY. I think—

YOLANDA. Is that what you want, Henry? To blow up Culture Fiesta?

HENRY. No!

YOLANDA. Then where are your 380's, 461's, A2's, and P-VALS?

(HENRY lunges over the desk at her.)

HENRY. Will you give me a chance to answer??

(Beat.)

YOLANDA. I prefer to hold performance reviews with both parties seated, Mr. Carson.

(HENRY *sits.*)

And this is a discussion, not an argument.

HENRY. I'd like to discuss—

YOLANDA. They may eat this shit with mustard at Mega Families and Extreme Terror, but this is *Culture Fiesta*, Carson.

(*Beat. They stare at each other.*)

HENRY. I know that.

YOLANDA. I'm afraid I can't recommend you for your annual raise, much less promotion.

HENRY. Is it my turn to discuss now?

YOLANDA. There's a space at the bottom of your evaluation for "Employee Comments"

(*And she walks out.*)

(*Lights shift and HENRY leaps over to SUZIE who enters with her laptop into their dining room. Her face is now clean again.*)

HENRY. We did the hunt rituals! Didn't we do the hunt rituals??

SUZIE. Yes!

HENRY. Who does she think she is?? I'm the Culture Fiesta Fattie!!

SUZIE. Complete bitch.

HENRY. Alan Donaldson! She compared me to Alan Donaldson in Latvia!

SUZIE. I hate her. I hate her I hate her I hate her—

HENRY. I swear, Suzie, every time she said the words P-VAL or B4 or 461, I just wanted to leap over the desk and rip her frickin' throat out with my frickin' teeth! RAARRR!

(*She stares at him.*)

You know what I'm talkin' about, right? You work for Wal-Mart! RAAA!

SUZIE. RAAA! Absolutely! ...But you didn't actually rip her throat out, did you, Henry?

HENRY. I grabbed the fattest blackest dry erase marker I could and I scrawled "FUCK YOU" on her evaluation! That's my Employee Comment!

SUZIE. ...and did you turn that in?

HENRY. Tomorrow morning. First thing. On her desk. BAM. RAA!

SUZIE. RAA! I think you should shred that evaluation and ask for a new one.

HENRY. What?

SUZIE. Let's sit down.

HENRY. I don't want to sit down.

SUZIE. Henry, Terrance is going to come downstairs from his swimming lessons any minute—

HENRY. And it's time he saw his real father! A father who stands up to the corporate staple-heads and says "F.U.!"

SUZIE. Well. I also kind of want him to see a father who's still employed.

HENRY. There are more important things than being employed, Suzie!

(She stares at him.)

...aren't there?

SUZIE. Two words: Health. Insurance.

HENRY. What kind of health are we insuring?

SUZIE. Henry, it's okay you didn't get the raise, I can work more hours—they're always asking me to—I can sell ad space on my blog—we don't have to get ahead, but we have to keep where we are.

HENRY. What about "complete bitch"—what about "I hate her I hate her I hate her I hate her—"

SUZIE. I do! Just because you hate someone doesn't mean you can't work for them! Henry. You're doing what you love, right?

(Beat.)

Right?

HENRY. Yes.

SUZIE. It's going to be the same everywhere, honey. They're going to ask for paperwork and forms—

HENRY. Not in the desert.

SUZIE. Then take vacations in the desert, Henry! That's what vacations are for, to escape the hell you go through to get them! But when you come back, you'll still have food and clothes and air-conditioning... I want you to be happy, Henry. I do. But I want us all to be alive.

HENRY. You know when I was alive? When you streaked my face with war paint. When you created a mask of blood and meat. Henry was gone. Henry and Suzie were subsumed.

SUZIE. *(Holding him, smiling.)* I know. But that was here. In our home. What's acceptable on our floor and what's acceptable in your office are two different things.

HENRY. But—

SUZIE. I understand the need for adventure, honey. I go crazy on my blog sometimes. I'll just write wild run-on sentences and report rumors I read on other sites without even verifying them. But it's controlled. The world's too small, sweetheart. There's no room for epic adventures.

(Kisses him.)

You're an astonishingly good man, Henry. Please fill out the B4's, 461's, and P-VALS.

(Lights shift. Thunder. SUZIE leaves as HENRY slowly walks to his desk... picks up a sheet of paper with the words "FUCK YOU" scrawled in thick black letters... He looks at the sheet a moment... and quietly feeds it into a shredder [or crumples and tosses it]. He

leans on his desk as ZHAO walks in behind him, still in traditional dress, but listening to an iPod. He flops down on a pillow.)

HENRY. *(Holds up various papers.)* Can't you at least fill in the skill set forms?

ZHAO. Why?

HENRY. Because I'm already filling out your lineage, health and psych forms!

ZHAO. So how crazy is this "Leonard Yazzie"?

HENRY. Zhao.

ZHAO. I'm cruisin' to this music, man. The Bluebird Song, Slow Round Dance. It speaks to me. In here.

(He pounds the rhythm on his chest.)

HENRY. It's gonna stop speaking anywhere if we don't get our ducks in a row.

ZHAO. *(Laughs.)* "Ducks in a row"

HENRY. Zhao!

ZHAO. I'll do it tomorrow.

HENRY. It's always tomorrow.

ZHAO. Must be a cultural thing, huh?

HENRY. Listen—

ZHAO. Chill down, Henrito. We're only gettin' a few people a day anyway.

HENRY. They'll come back. The rain will stop and they'll come back.

ZHAO. The old guys in the pavilion...? They say the rain ain't gonna stop this time.

HENRY. Oh, where'd they get that—their extrasensory Native Doppler Radar?

ZHAO. Careful.

HENRY. Well, I mean, geez.

ZHAO. Those old guys know shit.

HENRY. Then why aren't you learning from them?

ZHAO. I am. We're learnin' from each other.

HENRY. Then weave a damn rug! Make a pot or a dreamcatcher!

ZHAO. They're lookin' past that stuff now.

HENRY. What do you mean? They love doing crafts. They always smile and nod—

(ZHAO laughs.)

They were fine 'til you got here. Everything was fine 'til you got here.

ZHAO. I wasn't.

HENRY. Morale's going down the toilet. No one wants to work—

ZHAO. What can I say? They dig my style.

HENRY. The natives are getting surly.

ZHAO. Henry, Henry, Henry, man. Ya'ta' Hey, man. Breathe.

(Offering earphones.)

Listen to the music.

HENRY. I don't have time to listen to the music!

ZHAO. Then come with me. I'm on a hunt tonight.

HENRY. What?

ZHAO. I'm goin' foraging the Eastern Asian pavilions. I was cookin' with the western Europe guys last night.

HENRY. What??

ZHAO. That German beer knocks your moccasins off, man. And the Spanish coffee! I could almost forgive 'em what they did to Colorado and Mexico for that coffee—

HENRY. You can't. You can't visit other pavilions!

ZHAO. How come we got no rides, man? The Norwegians got this wooden boat trip past trolls and vikings and crap. How come the Native Americans got no ride?

HENRY. You've got a splendid movie—

ZHAO. We got no ride! You could do a little covered wagon train through history—past the Trail of Tears, the Long Walk, Wounded Knee. At the end you could sell little scalps and blankets infected with TB and whooping cough!

HENRY. See, this is why we find performers with limited English skills.

ZHAO. You wanta boost morale, put in a roller coaster or stunt show, man.

HENRY. How'd you get in the Norwegian pavilion?

ZHAO. I don't know. Someone gave me a pass.

HENRY. This doesn't happen. The tourists move from world to world. You stay put. Pure, untainted.

ZHAO. So I can be authentic?

HENRY. Exactly!

ZHAO. You don't want authentic, you want frozen. You want to pick a time and say "There. *That's* who they were. That's the real them." So I get to dress up like this. Except we didn't start dressin' this way 'til we started hangin' around with white people. The Indians before that were the "authentic" ones. Except they didn't start actin' that way 'til they got to the southwest. So the ones before them are the *real* authentic ones. Except...

(HENRY stares at him.)

We move, Henrito. We keep jumpin' from world to world takin' pieces of everywhere and everyone we ever been. It's all real. It's all "authentic."

(HENRY keeps staring at him...)

Why you gotta make my job so hard?

HENRY. ...Excuse me?

ZHAO. The egg's crackin', man, all you gotta do is get outta the way of the hammer.

HENRY. Look, the, the only thing cracking is my patience—

ZHAO. You invited me into your home, Henrito. We sloppy-joeed together! Don't you dare dam that up—

HENRY. What's acceptable on my floor and what's acceptable in my office are two different things.

ZHAO. The Italian and French girls don't think so.

HENRY. No more. Give me back the pass.

ZHAO. I must've left it in my other loin cloth.

HENRY. I'm not kidding around. If anyone caught you crossing borders—

ZHAO. They don't catch me. I'm on stealth, man. My paws are silent and my breath is clear.

HENRY. Give me the pass.

ZHAO. Or.

HENRY. You're my employee. Not Culture Fiesta's. Mine. They may eat this shit with mustard on the "rez," but this is Henry Carson Land. You like the music, you like the old guys? You play by the rules. Or you'll be back on unemployment in Tucumcari.

(Pause. ZHAO and HENRY watch one another...)

ZHAO. Then I'll see you there. 'Cause once I go on T.V. about how a guy from WonderWorld shot me in the back while I was helping my old auntie and uncle, and he dragged me to work as a glorified robot—

HENRY. You ungrateful sonofabitch—I selected you—

ZHAO. You want me to "get my ducks in a row"? You better fasten your fuckin' seatbelt, asshole. You wanta keep on filling out skill sheets and psych forms, keep fillin'—I just wanta be there when you see what water does to file cabinets and hard drives.

(He starts out. Pauses. Turns.)

And I selected *you*, Henry. Not the other way round. I'll say hey to the Thai and Burmese girls for you.

(And he leaves.)

(HENRY stares... blinking... as YOLANDA enters in a different area, on her headset.)

YOLANDA. Henry, the rain seems to be shorting out the animatronic wolves and badgers—they just shot sparks from their eyes at some priests from Portugal.

HENRY. ...I'm on it...

(SUZIE enters in a different area, on her headset.)

SUZIE. Henry, can you Google and zip some more sites home? Terrance wants to finish up the beadwork on his costume for the school play.

HENRY. ...on it...

(ERNIE strides into a different area with two glasses of alcohol on a small bar table, on headset, with band-aids on his face and one severely bandaged hand.)

ERNIE. I'm throwin' myself a goin' away party, amigo. Wanta join?

HENRY. Absolutely!

(Lights shift as the women leave and HENRY hurries to sit beside ERNIE, drinking. Low thunder.)

I mean, that's where it was real, wasn't it, Ernie? The chopper scraping the canyon walls—your body slumped over mine—the pilot's fighting, *fighting*, to maintain control—and I'm there with the gun—

ERNIE. I know.

HENRY. And I've got this one shot, it's now or never, the guy's almost into the hogan—sheep scattering everywhere—like cotton plants exploding in the wind—

ERNIE. Yeah.

HENRY. And Boom! I pull the trigger, BOOM!

ERNIE. That's what I hear.

HENRY. And the guy goes flying through the air—Whoosh—THUMP! Just like that, WHOOSH... THUMP!

ERNIE. This was a real peak experience for you, wasn't it, Henry?

HENRY. God, yes! Wasn't it for you?

ERNIE. Honestly, not so much.

HENRY. Every sound, every smell—

ERNIE. Now this trip I got comin' up, outside Philly—*that's* gonna be a clusterfuck on a D-Day scale.

HENRY. What are you doing?

ERNIE. I'm goin' after bats for a collector out of Montreal. Once every seventeen years these blue-headed somethings pass through this river valley—or what's left of 'em—this'll probably be their last run—just a dozen or so left—good as dead anyway, so of course this guy wants to stuff'em—

HENRY. I guess that's best.

ERNIE. But here's the fist up the rectum: only way to get 'em—hangliders.

HENRY. No!

ERNIE. Swear on my father when he dies.

HENRY. Wow.

ERNIE. Gotta come in silent behind'em, through'em, and use these needle guns to leave no visible marks. Course it's stormin' there too, winds at 60 m.p.h., no visibility, and I'm gonna be danglin' off Ben Franklin's kite shooting steel at targets no larger than my nut-sack.

HENRY. Jesus.

ERNIE. So see, shootin' some poor fleeing sombitch in the back? My nephew's done that eight times and he just turned twelve.

HENRY. When do you leave for the bat hunt?

ERNIE. Assuming the swelling in my hand goes down—

HENRY. What happened?

ERNIE. Guy hired me to take care his termite problem. So of course I start riggin' up a makeshift flamethrower out of a can of hair-spray... didn't work out like we hoped. But my point is, if I can fly, I leave tomorrow night. Also assuming my plane can get out of this soaker. I hear we're losin' the entire gulf coast.

HENRY. I can be ready by then.

ERNIE. What?

HENRY. I want to come with you.

ERNIE. One drink and you just buy your ticket to fuzzy-wuzzy elf-land, don't ya?

HENRY. I'm not drunk! I want to go see the bats!

ERNIE. Stick to the natives, Henry. You had your adrenaline rush, more than most jerks will in a lifetime. Count your blessings and go check your E-mail.

HENRY. My E-mail's killing me, Ernie. I don't even see the words any more. I just see black lines in random shapes on a gray screen, forcing themselves into patterns, trying to mean something—anything—trying to stitch together the wounds to hold in the scream about to vomit out of the meaningless void!

ERNIE. No more Shirley Temples for you, pal.

HENRY. I need to get out, Ernie! I need to escape!

ERNIE. Henry. You got responsibilities. And you're a man. A man toughs it out.

HENRY. A man runs away! When the going gets tough, men run off and have adventures!

ERNIE. I am not gonna sit here and listen to you denigrate male motives.

HENRY. I'm not denigrating, I'm admiring! I want to be me again, Ernie. The genuine honest-to-God Henry Sumner Carson.

ERNIE. Your e-mails are the real Henry Carson, Henry. Get over it.

HENRY. And the real Ernie Hardaway is a blowhard who can't actually *live* in the real world either, he just likes to visit and steal something and run home like everybody else, except that he shoots himself and sets himself on fire—

(CRACK! ERNIE decks HENRY, who crashes to the floor. Pause.)

ERNIE. I liked your mother, Henry. She was a fine upstanding woman who baked the best pecan sandies this side of the Gulf. And she treated me with respect even when everyone else was calling me “hoodlum” and “vandal” and “goat fucker.” It's in honor of her memory that I don't rip your spinal cord out and play it like a flute in the Main Street USA Electric Parade. Get back to your office.

(He stalks out. HENRY pauses on the floor... feels his face... and staggers to his desk as Lights Shift and SUZIE enters into a different area, looking at her handheld monitor, on headset.)

SUZIE. Henry! Are you coming home or aren't you?

HENRY. I, ah...

SUZIE. Terrance's school play! It's starting! I thought we were going to watch together!

HENRY. We can.

(At his computer.)

Where is it?

SUZIE. At the school's site—click on “Arts in Education.” I wanted us to sit on the couch and watch...

HENRY. Did he get his costume together?

SUZIE. He said he did.

HENRY. *(Reading his screen:)* “The Third Grade Class proudly presents—”

HENRY & SUZIE. “—The History of Florida: From Savage To Civil”

HENRY. Look at all those kids—are they all eight-years-old?

SUZIE. The next generations of Americans, sweetheart. Aren't they incredible? Kids from every background, every country—

HENRY. Are they actually in the same room?

SUZIE. They're green-screened in from all their different houses.

HENRY. But where's Terrance? I don't— there he is! I see him! Oh, there's my boy!

SUZIE. Are you recording this? I'm recording this—does his Indian costume look good?

HENRY. *(Touches the screen, quietly:)* ...Ho' Zo' Ni'.

(YOLANDA storms into Henry's office with her palm pilot.)

YOLANDA. Henry! Why aren't you answering your phone?

HENRY. Look. Yolanda. My boy. My son's playing a native with the other kids, not *with* the kids, just in his room, but he made the leather breeches and feathers himself—we researched them together online... just the two of us...

YOLANDA. Cute.

(Pushes a button on his keyboard.)

But we've got a crisis.

HENRY. Hey!

YOLANDA. *(Pointing to his monitor.)* The Japanese pavilion. What do you see?

HENRY. That's not the Japanese pavilion—there's...

HENRY & YOLANDA. ...cactus.

YOLANDA. Exactly. Somebody tore the banzai trees out of the rock garden and replaced them.

HENRY. Oh... crap.

YOLANDA. And you'll notice the Japanese performers are handing out beads and arrowheads instead of kites and brown rice toffee.

HENRY. Why are they doing that?

YOLANDA. (*Pushes a button:*) Maybe for the same reason that in your own pavilion—

HENRY. —the Indians are giving out jugs of saki??

YOLANDA. To the kids. In the rain. Somebody opened the ceiling and let the rain flood over the desert.

HENRY. No!

YOLANDA. My sentiments exactly. Get'em into line. Now. I have my hands full with the stupid flooding at the Netherlands pavilion—there aren't enough little Dutch boys with fingers for all the dikes.

(She types.)

HENRY. (*Typing:*) I do not believe this...

SUZIE. (*Watching her screen:*) There he is!

HENRY. What!

SUZIE. He's on! Terrance is coming out to confront the Spanish for the first time! Aren't you watching?

HENRY. I'm split-screening—we're having a little emergency here—

SUZIE. Oh god, look at him—he's about to lose all of Florida and he doesn't even know it.

HENRY. No! Tell him no!

(Shouting at his monitor.)

Run! RUN! Sink their boats and drown them in mud and use their helmets for piss pots but DON'T SHAKE HANDS!

YOLANDA. (*To HENRY:*) What the hell's wrong with your SurroundVision-360 history movie?

HENRY. What.

YOLANDA. It's running backward—apparently the settlers are fleeing back East while the Natives re-take the continent.

HENRY. Oh my god. ...He's doing it. How's he doing it?

YOLANDA. Who?

SUZIE. That's it. Ponce De Leon just took it all. Bastard.

(Typing.)

I'm going to I-M him.

HENRY. Ponce De Leon?

SUZIE. Terrance! He was brilliant! Weren't you watching him?

HENRY. I couldn't— I'll call him in a second—

YOLANDA. Holy Shit!

HENRY. What?!

YOLANDA. *(Reading her screen:)* Your animatronic roadrunners are trying to mate with the penguins in the Arctic pavilion.

HENRY. Oh dear god.

SUZIE. Henry.

HENRY. What.

SUZIE. You did just watch your son's school play, didn't you?

HENRY. I did. Mostly.

SUZIE. Then you darn well better watch the recording before you get home. I'm making Lo Mein and Cheese to celebrate, and when he asks you— ...Henry? Hello? Henry, are you there?

HENRY. Suzie? Hello, Suzie?

(To YOLANDA:)

Something's wrong with my phone, it—

(On his screen.)

What are you doing?

YOLANDA. What?

HENRY. What are you doing to my files?

YOLANDA. I'm not doing anything!

HENRY. Someone is. They're disappearing.

YOLANDA. *(Pauses.)* What?

HENRY. All my Native Americans. Their files are vanishing.

YOLANDA. *(Pushes him aside and types on his computer.)* No one has access to those files but you—

HENRY. I know...

YOLANDA. Oh sweet Jesus...

HENRY. What!

YOLANDA. *(Watching her screen.)* —the South American natives are going... what the hell is happening?

HENRY. I don't even have those files, you can't blame me—

YOLANDA. *(Pressing keys.)* The sub-Saharan... Australians... Iranians... Jesus, every record on every nationality... is vanishing. Henry. ...what the hell is going on?

(Lights flicker. They look up.)

HENRY. I have a really strong guess.

(Thunder. Lights flicker.)

YOLANDA. *(Reading her palm pilot.)* ...and management's all heading for the helicopters... Goddammit! They are so not evacuating without me!

(And she's out of there.)

HENRY. Wait! I know who's responsible—I can find the guy responsible—

(He turns straight into ZHAO, now wearing his old flannel shirt and jeans again, soaking wet.)

—aaAAAH!!

ZHAO. Boo, Bilagaana.

(He stalks in, pacing, ...tense—)

HENRY. I didn't hear you—

ZHAO. My paws are silent, my breath is clear.

HENRY. What did you do to the files?

ZHAO. It ain't me. It's the storm.

HENRY. Did the storm put jugs of saki in our pavilion too?

ZHAO. No, that was me.

HENRY. Why are you doing this?? You're destroying everything I spent my life working for!

ZHAO. Isn't that why you brought me here?

(Beat. They look at each other.)

HENRY. Look, I want to run, I do, I want to get the heck out of here and start over, but not like this!! I do not want to be the damn rabbit!! I will not let you be the wolf and me the damn rabbit in the damn desert getting eaten by the damn wolf—

ZHAO. Then be a Cherokee rabbit. They're smart, right?

HENRY. Yeah, well, I don't feel very smart right now.

ZHAO. Then get busy. My guys are ready to go.

HENRY. What guys?

ZHAO. Everybody. Every "performer" in every pavilion. They're followin' me. We're leavin'.

HENRY. No. Not in the middle of a storm. They need to stay safe where they belong—

ZHAO. Where they belong??

HENRY. We've always kept them warm and dry and well-fed and clean—

ZHAO. Goddammit, Henry! I thought we were past this!!

HENRY. Past what? Past me caring about the natives I'm supposed to take care of?

ZHAO. Who said that was your job? Who. Ever. Said that?? You made that job up for yourself! Like you made up this whole fuckin' park, this whole fuckin' country! Everything you spent centuries makin' up is all bein' unmade, Henry. Open your eyes. You live in a vacation land and take vacations to the real world. How long did you think you could keep that up??

(HENRY stares at him...)

(Holding Henry's stare.)

This isn't no ordinary storm. It's takin' apart the whole Wonder-World piece by piece, file by file. Every wall is cracking, every pavilion is flooding. If we stay in this park we are all gonna die. You *know* that.

(HENRY pauses, staring... and nods.)

HENRY. *(Pulling cards from his desk.)* Here. Here. Take these passes, open every pavilion, tell everyone to get to the staff exit behind the Arctic Ice Cream Shoppe. I can use my ID to hold open the gates and shutters. There should be only one guard there and if I tell him I have authorization, by the time he proves otherwise, you can be gone.

ZHAO. ...I can do that.

HENRY. You'll need vans.

ZHAO. No. We walk.

HENRY. What?

ZHAO. I know where we're supposed to go. We'll walk.

HENRY. Nobody walks anywhere in Florida on a good day! Much less in a hurricane!

ZHAO. Those theme park guys weren't idiots. They built on some of the highest land in Florida. We just have to walk to the highest of the high.

HENRY. Okay. That actually makes some sense.

THIS PLAY IS NOT OVER!

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