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COLONIAL TONGUES

by

STEVEN MANSEL ROBINSON

A Thesis

in

the Department

of

English

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts at
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Montreal, Quebec, Canada

April 1992

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ABSTRACT

Colonial Tongues

by Steven Mansel Robinson

Colonial Tongues enacts the loss of community, specifically, the destruction of a small Northern Ontario town by mass corporate culture.

The action of this play takes place on two specific days: the last day of June 1967, and a day in late summer, 1995. The past and the present exist simultaneously in Colonial Tongues. The characters from 1967 are independent of the memory of the characters in 1995; they are the spirit of the place. In this sense, Colonial Tongues is neither a memory play nor a meditation on the nature of memory. On the contrary, according to the main character, history has been outlawed, they've put it in the criminal code.

Some critics hold that tragedy is impossible in our time -- our human concerns have become too insignificant. But locating characters within a specific political and historical context forces them into battles for more than personal stakes. In Colonial Tongues, one character attempts a return to the past. His antagonist dismisses this as mere nostalgia and argues for the acceptance of the contemporary world on its own terms. There is a case to be made for either philosophy. And as other critics note: When we witness the struggle of right vs. right, we enter the zone of tragedy.

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COLONIAL TONGUES

Delirium is the theory of the one, theory is the delirium of the several.

-- François Roustang

Nationalism may be a bad thing, but nihilism is worse.

-- W.L. Morton

and the restless shall go
and the faithful shall stay

-- Steve Earle

CHARACTERS

BUTCH	about 40, working class
HAZEL	a year or two older than her brother, Butch
EDNA BARNETT	the matriarch, 40-45 in 1967
DEL	mid-20s in 1967, the older brother
MADISON	youthful middle-age, entrepreneur

TIME

The scenes between Del and his mother, Edna Barnett, take place on the last day of June 1967. The scenes involving Butch, Hazel and Madison take place in 1995.

PLACE

The bulldozed remains of a small town in Northern Ontario. There is some debris, but the look should be stark and lunar. Butch is rebuilding out of nothing. A cyc would help. A raked stage is a possibility.

MOVEMENT

Scenes have not been noted. Quick cross-fades are preferable to blackout.

The essential stage business of the 1995 scenes is the framing of a small house by Butch. Pre-built stud walls could be flown in or pulled up from the stage and pinned into place. Door frames, windows or a section of a staircase are enough to suggest the rest. This action need not necessarily look or be "realistic". When Butch needs help, the mother is the only one who works with him. When a wall goes up, she might hang a photograph -- they are putting together a home.

ACT ONE

(LIGHTS UP ON BUTCH AND HAZEL. MADISON WATCHES FROM A DISTANCE.

BUTCH HAS A RAGGED GROWTH OF BEARD AND LOOKS LIKE HE HASN'T BEEN EATING TOO WELL. THERE IS SOME EVIDENCE THAT HE HAS MONEY FOR DRINK. HE IS DRESSED IN JEANS AND WORK SHIRT.

HAZEL IS WELL-DRESSED -- FOR A CITY OUTING. SHE WEARS A SKIRT.

MADISON WEARS EXPENSIVE CLOTHING. NOTHING OFF THE RACK.

THE CHANGE IN LIGHTING INTENSITY REVEALS THAT THE STAGE IS NOT QUITE BARE: A FEW INCHES OF FOUNDATION AND FLOOR OF A HOUSE CREATE A PLAYING AREA SLIGHTLY HIGHER AND SEPARATE FROM THE REST OF THE STAGE. BUILDING MATERIALS AND TOOLS ARE SCATTERED AROUND THE FOUNDATION.

BUTCH BREAKS THE TABLEAU, LIGHTS DOWN ON MADISON. BUTCH PICKS UP SOME SMALL MARKERS AND BEGINS TO LAY THEM OUT. THEY STAND ON THE STAGE LIKE GRAVE MARKERS IN A POTTER'S FIELD. BUTCH READS THE OCCASIONAL TITLE ALOUD: "BALLFIELD"; "RINK"; "ROUND HOUSE". HAZEL SITS IN THE HOUSE, WATCHING.

BUTCH PLACES A MARKER AND LISTENS CLOSELY. WE HEAR A SOUND -- MACHINERY MAYBE, OR A TINNY, SMALL-TOWN MARCHING BAND WARMING UP "O CANADA". BUTCH LISTENS, BUT APPEARS TO HEAR NOTHING)

BUTCH: Nothing. (HE REPEATS HIS ACTIONS) Nothing.
(AGAIN) Nothing again, goddammit.

HAZEL: Maybe you should go to plan "B".

BUTCH: There is no plan "B".

HAZEL: Bad organization, Butch. (PAUSE) Here, try this.
(SHE STANDS, EYES CLOSED, ARMS OUTSTRETCHED, A
GROTESQUE SCARECROW) Click your heels three times
and think of Kansas. (SHE CLICKS HER HEELS) Click.
Click. Click. (PAUSE) Are you home yet?

BUTCH: No.

HAZEL: You have to concentrate. Click. Click. Click.
Give it a shot, little brother. It worked in the
movie. Click. Click. Click. Toto! Dorothy!
Kansas!

BUTCH: We're not going to Kansas. We're going home.

HAZEL: (OPENS HER EYES AND LOWERS HER ARMS. SAYS SOFTLY)
Wrong, boy.

BUTCH: You'll see. (HE PLACES MORE MARKERS. THERE ARE
FAINT SOUNDS. BUTCH LISTENS, BUT STILL DOES NOT
HEAR. HE STOPS) Are you making fun of me?

HAZEL: Click. Click. Click. Kansas.

BUTCH: Fuck Kansas!

HAZEL: You've learned to swear. Congratulations.
(BUTCH RESUMES. HAZEL IS IN HIS WAY)

BUTCH: Excuse me. (SHE TAKES HER TIME TO MOVE)

HAZEL: You were a strange kid. No cigarettes. No swearing. Sunday school every week.

BUTCH: What else?

HAZEL: You were strange.

BUTCH: What else do you remember?

HAZEL: Nothing.

BUTCH: (SPITS THE WORD) Kansas. (PAUSE) And you were a fucking liar. (HE PLACES A MARKER AND LISTENS) Sometimes I can almost hear it.

(BY THIS POINT WE ARE HEARING IT -- THE SOUNDS OF A TOWN COMING TO LIFE: BAKERY; HOSPITAL; CPR STATION; CATHOLIC CHURCH; BASEBALL FIELD; POOL ROOM; THE SHOUTS OF CHILDREN AT RECESS; THE ROARING OF THE CHIPPER AT THE MILL; THE CLANKING OF BOTTLES IN THE DAIRY; DIESEL ENGINES IDLING IN THE YARD; BEERY LAUGHTER IN THE LEGION HALL. A SOUNDSCAPE OF 30 OR 40 SECONDS. BUTCH SMILES, LISTENING WITH OBVIOUS DELIGHT. THE SOUND RE-CREATES THE SCENE FOR HIS EYES. THE ROARING VITALITY OF THE TOWN SUDDENLY CUTS OUT. LONG PAUSE IN THE SUDDEN SILENCE)

BUTCH: Things were going like stink. Then -- friendly fire -- the railroad sold us out, and the bulldozers buried the town. Big D-9's rolling over everything -- houses, stores, schools. They tore up the main line, they dropped the hydro poles. They took this

town and they knocked her flat and kicked her front teeth in, ran her body through the chipper. They turned the town hall and the hospital into sawdust and splinters. A free-fire zone. Clear-cut and levelled. Levelled. What did they call it? Yeah. A level playing field. Sure. Bulldozers are good at that kind of thing.

HAZEL: Got something against bulldozers?

BUTCH: (HE SNAPS A MARKER OVER HIS KNEE. HE LOOKS AT IT)
See? See what damage you do? You smashed Desy's.

HAZEL: What the Christ is a Desy's?

BUTCH: You shoplifted there every Friday night for three years. One Coke and one bag of onion and garlic chips. Every Friday night for three years -- at Desy's.

HAZEL: You're still a strange kid.

BUTCH: How can we get home if you keep smashing things?

HAZEL: Click. Click. Click.

BUTCH: How can we get home?

HAZEL: I have a home, thanks. Quite a nice one.

BUTCH: Big as a fucking hockey rink, I bet. And as cold.
Is your big house cold as a hockey rink?

HAZEL: Hockey rinks aren't cold any more.

BUTCH: That's right. They're not cold any more. Hockey in Florida. That's progress. That's bullshit. They took our rink and put it in Florida.

HAZEL: I doubt it. You couldn't fit more than 500 drunks in the shack we had.

BUTCH: Can you swing a hammer? (HAZEL SHAKES HER HEAD -- SHE CAN'T FOLLOW THESE SUDDEN SHIFTS) You'll learn. When I get the house done we can get busy with the rest of it. The station. Main Street. Then the rink. You can't have a Northern town without a rink. Hazel. If you can swing a hammer, we can go home.

(HE EXITS. EDNA ENTERS. SHE CARRIES TWO CHAIRS. TO UNDERMINE THE REALISM OF THESE SCENES THE KITCHEN TABLE MIGHT BE FLOWN IN FROM ABOVE. IT SETTLES ON THE GROUND FLOOR OF THE HOUSE. EDNA UNHOOKS THE RIGGING AND SITS DOWN AT THE TABLE. HAZEL SEES NOTHING. THERE IS A SILENT AND, FOR HAZEL, UNCONSCIOUS CONFRONTATION BETWEEN THEM. SPOOKED, HAZEL LEAVES THE HOUSE AND WANDERS THROUGH THE MARKERS. SHE TIPS ONE OR TWO OF THEM OVER. BUTCH RE-ENTERS, DRAGGING A TRUNK. HE HAS SOME TROUBLE GETTING IT UP INTO THE HOUSE)

BUTCH: Can you give me a hand with this? Hazel?

(SHE DOES NOT RESPOND. WITH SOME EFFORT HE SUCCEEDS) Thanks.

HAZEL: Any time.

BUTCH: Wanna know what's in it?

HAZEL: (WITHOUT LOOKING) Report cards from Grade Three. Christmas decorations you made in Cub Scouts. A prom photo. Wedding pictures from 1940. Letters from Korea. Newspaper stories about the Tet offensive. Am I right?

(BUTCH'S REACTION SUGGESTS THAT SHE IS) Am I right, pack rat?

BUTCH: (HE HOLDS UP A LETTER FROM THE TRUNK) This is a map. You're standing in a map. You can't get home without maps!

HAZEL: (STARTING TO EXIT) You wanna find your way home? Try bread crumbs.

BUTCH: Hazel! Don't leave!

HAZEL: I'm not leaving. I just like to get a little popcorn between the cartoon and the main feature. (SHE'S GONE. BUTCH TAKES ONE OF THE MARKERS AND POINTS IT IN THE AIR. HE MOVES IT AROUND AS IF HE WERE ADJUSTING THE RABBIT EARS ON A TV OR DOWSING FOR WATER. HE IS WITCHING THE ATMOSPHERE FOR SOUND AND MEMORY. WE HEAR SNATCHES OF TOWN NOISE, VOICES,

SENTENCE FRAGMENTS. BUTCH "CHASES" THEM WITH HIS
DOWSING ROD)

BUTCH: They'll see -- they'll see -- the signals are still
too -- intermittent -- it's like a -- radio station
that won't quite -- the signals from the other side
-- keep fading in and -- I just wonder if it was
because -- he didn't love enough -- sometimes the
sound is so clear I can walk into a room and hear a
chair scrape -- Del sneaking a beer before noon --
the cap pops -- then -- static -- no -- not static
-- another station cuts in with a commercial -- for
some -- shiny with all the bells and -- whistles
that -- we won't need for a million -- the reception
I get is -- short-circuited by -- I can't smell --
just things breathing slowly in the basement ,
waiting, swaying like an old man walking down the
aisle in the train -- swaying -- breathing his dirty
breath into your face as the wheels hit a low spot
in the track -- I remember the stink of their breath
in the basement -- I can remember smelling but I
can't remember the smell -- c'mon, Butch -- the
smell -- get to it -- the sound of their dirty
breath -- get to it -- the smell -- the sound -- the
colour of mildew and creosote -- the smell of their
breath is mildew and railroad creosote -- isn't that

it -- no? -- gone again -- focus, Butch, focus --
focus -- tune it in. (HE DROPS HIS ANTENNAE.
PAUSE) When this town goes up I'll have the best
antennae in the fucking country. You hear me, Del?
You son of a bitch. (HE EXITS. EDNA LIGHTS A FRESH
CIGARETTE OFF THE BUTT OF AN OLD ONE. SHE TAKES A
LETTER OUT OF HER APRON POCKET AND READS)

EDNA: Can't you goddamn crooks at least throw me out of my
house in English? Party of the first part, kiss my
royal ass. (SHE SETS THE LETTER ON FIRE. BEFORE TOO
MUCH DAMAGE IS DONE SHE CHANGES HER MIND AND POURS
COFFEE ON THE FLAMES. SHE SMOKES HER CIGARETTE.
SHE PUTS THE LETTER BACK IN HER POCKET. THE TABLE
ROCKS NOTICEABLY AT THE SLIGHTEST TOUCH) Jesus H.
Christ, Del, you said you'd fix this friggen table!
(PAUSE. FINALLY, SHE FOLDS THE CIGARETTE PACKAGE
INTO A SHIM AND PUTS IT UNDER THE TABLE TO STOP THE
ROCKING. SHE LOOKS OUT INTO THE YARD) Hey, Butch.
Go wake your brother up. (PAUSE) Then hit him
back. (PAUSE) I don't care what Jesus says, maybe
Jesus was wrong. He was only human. (PAUSE) And
get me some potatoes from the basement. (PAUSE)
Take a flashlight. (PAUSE) Take the dog and the
flashlight. (PAUSE) You don't need Hazel. (PAUSE)
There's nothing down there but potatoes. (PAUSE)

Don't worry about it. I'll do it. (HAMMERING OFF-STAGE) And watch yourself with those tools. (SHE YELLS UPSTAIRS) Del! Get your drunkard's ass out of bed! (SHE POURS HERSELF A CUP OF COFFEE. DEL SHUFFLES IN. HE WEARS A DENIM WORK COAT, OBVIOUSLY SLEPT IN, AND A BUCK KNIFE ON HIS BELT. EDNA EYES HIM CLOSELY. HE GOES TO WHAT WILL EVENTUALLY BE A WINDOW.)

DEL: I'm up, I'm up, who can sleep with all the racket? What are those goddamn kids up to now, pounding away like goddamn maniacs. (HE WATCHES OUT THE WINDOW FOR A MOMENT. THE HAMMERING CONTINUES SPORADICALLY) What are they building?

EDNA: Something for the parade tomorrow.

DEL: Parade, Christ, there's a goddamn joke. (CHECKS HIS POCKET WATCH) Great. Still the middle of the friggen night. (HE POURS HIMSELF A CUP OF COFFEE AND SITS AT THE TABLE. PAUSE)

EDNA: You look like something caught in a leg-hold trap. (PAUSE) Worse. (PAUSE) You missed a call last night. They couldn't find you. First one in three weeks. You missed it. (PAUSE) Did you hear me?

DEL: (QUIETLY) Screw the railroad.

EDNA: The first work in three weeks.

DEL: I'm tired of crawling under the table for their
goddamn crumbs! (HE LAYS HIS HEAD ON THE TABLE)

EDNA: You want an aspirin?

DEL: I'd prefer a shotgun.

EDNA: (SHE TAKES A BOTTLE OF ASPIRIN OUT OF HER APRON)
Here. (DEL PUTS THE BOTTLE ON THE TABLE) Where
were you?

DEL: Out.

EDNA: Don't remember, do you?

DEL: I remember.

EDNA: Liar.

DEL: I was over at Nita's.

EDNA: They tried Nita's.

DEL: I got there at 10:15. Stayed till late.

EDNA: She phoned looking for you, too.

DEL: I met up with her later.

EDNA: Liar. You're going to lose that girl treating her
like that. And lose the job, too.

DEL: (SNORTS) What job? Jesus. It isn't a job, it's a
joke.

EDNA: Wherever you were, it wasn't jail. (SHE TAKES HIS
HAND AND CHECKS HIS KNUCKLES) No fighting either.
Maybe you will grow up. (PAUSE) Of course, as a
rule it's your face that gets more marked up than

your hands. (SHE LAUGHS AND DEL PULLS HIS HAND AWAY)

EDNA: Well, it isn't funny.

DEL: I wasn't laughing.

EDNA: Drinking three nights running.

(DEL TAKES THE ASPIRIN AND CHEWS THEM UP. THEN HE CHASES THEM WITH COFFEE)

DEL: Hey, mom.

EDNA: Don't change the subject.

DEL: Do you think you could put a little coffee in the coffee?

EDNA: It tastes just nice to me.

DEL: We're not sitting on the porch of the poorhouse.

EDNA: We'll be right inside the poorhouse if you keep pissing your money up against the hotel!

DEL: Sieg Heil.

EDNA: (BACKHANDS HIM ACROSS THE HEAD) Not in this house you don't talk like that.

DEL: Not the head, please. I'm sorry.

EDNA: You need your arse kicked.

DEL: I'm sorry.

EDNA: Sorry. We should've named you sorry. Except for beer it's your favourite word.

DEL: Christ, did I kill somebody on the way home last night?

EDNA: I thought you said you knew what you were up to last night.

DEL: Don't have a clue.

EDNA: What is it? Good news or bad?

DEL: Good or bad?

EDNA: You're your father's son. He drank when he was happy and he drank when he was worried. Which is it?

DEL: Nothing. (PAUSE) Boredom.

EDNA: There's plenty of work around the house. You could start with the table.

DEL: (GIVES THE TABLE A SHAKE) Like brand spanking new.

EDNA: (POINTS TO THE SHIM) Export "A".

DEL: Oh.

EDNA: (MIMICS) Oh. (PAUSE) I'll ask your cousin to fix it.

DEL: I'll get around to it. (HE GETS UP TO LEAVE)

EDNA: (FOLLOWING HIM) Get him to help you.

DEL: I don't need help. I ain't as good a carpenter as Jesus Christ but I can fix a goddamn table.

EDNA: Piss-tank heathen. Are you really my son? (THEY EXIT. SHE KICKS HIM IN THE BACKSIDE ON THE WAY OUT. LIGHTS UP ON MADISON. HAZEL JOINS HIM. DURING THE FOLLOWING EXCHANGE SHE REMAINS PREOCCUPIED BY THE HOUSE AND THE MARKERS BUTCH HAS LAID OUT)

HAZEL: (MUTTERING) What an asshole.

MADISON: Well?

HAZEL: My brother is an asshole.

MADISON: You ought to read the Bible. The exercise would work miracles with your sentence structure. Or certain speeches of, say, Douglas MacArthur. Perfect as crystals. You would never hear Douglas MacArthur say, 'My brother is an asshole.'

HAZEL: Did he have a brother?

MADISON: I forget.

HAZEL: Then how do you know?

MADISON: I'm talking about structure, not sentiment.

HAZEL: Structurally speaking, my brother is an asshole.

MADISON: Drink?

HAZEL: Do you ever go anywhere without booze?

MADISON: (THERE IS A SMALL PICNIC BASKET ON THE GROUND NEAR-BY. HE LOOKS INTO IT) I see Scotch. Drambuie. I don't see any ... booze.

HAZEL: Liquor then, I keep forgetting you were born with a silver carrot up your ass. (MADISON IS STUNG BY THIS. PAUSE) Madison?

MADISON: (STIFFLY) Apology accepted.

HAZEL: When you were a kid. Did you see many vampire movies?

MADISON: Dozens.

HAZEL: Really?

MADISON: No. None.

HAZEL: (A LITTLE SADLY) Do we have anything in common?

MADISON: Numbered Corporation 268909.

HAZEL: Anything else?

MADISON: (COMING UP BEHIND HER, HE KISSES HER NECK) This.
What about the vampires?

HAZEL: They're afraid of garlic ... some guy can live for
500 years ... he can't walk into a room because of
a ... spice. ...

MADISON: Butch is a vampire?

HAZEL: Mirrors, too. ... Mirrors get 'em. ... He's hanging
mirrors around my throat.

MADISON: I get it now. You're a vampire. Come. Suck me.

HAZEL: Did you know that you lose your private school sheen
at the first smell of sex?

MADISON: That's another thing we have in common. (HE CUPS
HER BREAST) The smell of sex. (HAZEL MOVES AWAY
FROM HIM) You don't like his little shed.

HAZEL: It's an eight room coffin. All full.

MADISON: Then forget him. Let's go home.

HAZEL: But I am home. That's what my brother has been
building. Home. I haven't seen it in 20 years and
here it is going up in front of my own two eyes.

He's going home and he's dragging me with him.
Isn't he a fucking sweetheart?

MADISON: MacArthur, love, think of MacArthur.

HAZEL: 24 Ash Street.

MADISON: What?

HAZEL: I grew up there. I lived in that house 17 or 18 years. Drafty old barn. Icicles hanging off the eaves 4 feet long. I used to break them with snowballs -- they'd drop like knives. That's where I put the snowmen -- underneath the eaves. Drop those 4-foot knives right through their skulls. Butch would cry when I did that.

BUTCH: Ah, the innocence of childhood. That's where he is, isn't he? Mourning his childhood and his long-deceased pets?

HAZEL: It looks that way.

MADISON: Thorazine. Lithium, possibly. He needs something.

HAZEL: He needs a kick in the ass.

MADISON: A pharmaceutical lobotomy, I think. Maybe even the actual thing. (PAUSE. HE LOOKS CLOSELY AT HAZEL.) Have you ever suffered from ... delusions.

HAZEL: You mean is there a history of looniness in my family?

MADISON: A genetic weakness, yes.

HAZEL: There's nothing wrong with the family tree. Butch just fell out and landed on his head.

MADISON: An isolated case, then.

HAZEL: Yes.

MADISON: Just an innocent question. (PAUSE) Sometimes there is a general disposition towards --

HAZEL: (PREOCCUPIED) Go to hell, Madison.

MADISON: (OBSERVING HAZEL OBSERVING BUTCH) My God, what a sentimental cliché -- a trunk full of memories. Pathological nostalgia. I hope it isn't genetic. One would be left somewhat ... impaired.

HAZEL: He's so fucking ... what? ... so fucking ...

MADISON: Earnest.

HAZEL: Intense. He's mono-something-or-other.

MADISON: The word is monomaniacal. Only in your brother's case it's nothing so romantic. He isn't single-minded. I'm afraid he's simple-minded.

HAZEL: Maybe.

MADISON: You aren't really interested in childhood. Icicles hanging off the eaves, a little boy's tears. Quaint but useless. A vacation at best. Best leave it alone.

HAZEL: What about him?

MADISON: Have him committed. (HAZEL LOOKS AT HIM.) He's obviously insane. He's building a town in the middle, as they say, of nowhere.

HAZEL: Not a town. A house.

MADISON: (HE LOOKS AT THE STAKES) Arena. School. Dairy. If he ever finishes the house, which of course he won't, he intends, he must intend, to build the rest. Does that sound rational to you, practical, does it sound sane?

HAZEL: Don't browbeat me.

MADISON: (HIS BROWBEATING IS SUBTLE. HE NEVER RAISES HIS VOICE) Have him committed and let's go home. We have a business to run.

HAZEL: He's my brother.

MADISON: Since when?

HAZEL: Since always.

MADISON: You didn't have a brother until you read his sorry little epistle.

HAZEL: Well, I have the son of a bitch now, don't I?

MADISON: Your choice.

HAZEL: Choice, Christ.

MADISON: Your choice.

HAZEL: I heard you the first time. Epistle. Fuck. Give me a goddamn break. Epistle.

MADISON: An archaic word. It complements your ghosts.

HAZEL: (LOOKS AT HIM) I called him a vampire.

MADISON: 'It's an eight room coffin, all full.' Unquote.

HAZEL: Do you want to see the bones?

MADISON: No.

HAZEL: I can tell you little girl stories.

MADISON: Ah.

HAZEL: I've never told you those stories.

MADISON: No.

HAZEL: Would you like to hear them? Little girl stories?

MADISON: Yes.

(HAZEL WALKS HIM THROUGH THE TOWN-SITE)

HAZEL: Jane Farlow got laid here on Halloween. I watched. I was jealous. Mrs. Young burnt up her kitchen with a grease fire. Her birds all died in the smoke. She sort of died, too. I stole guards for my skates at Smith's hardware. I said fuck for the first time. I skated here. Danced here. I learned about the American Civil War in this cold old school. My first good night kiss. My first period. Baby-sitting. Our first television. Softball. Swimming. Wally Beleck fell off the high board and bounced on the dock. Like a rubber chicken thrown on the ice at a hockey game. Saturday night watching Junior B hockey. Love. (SHE LAUGHS AND SNAPS THIS MARKER IN HALF)

MADISON: That's the one I want to hear about.

HAZEL: You think so?

MADISON: I know so.

HAZEL: You want to hear about little girls, Madison?

MADISON: I do.

HAZEL: You want to hear about little girls in a little girl's bed, feeling love for the first time?

MADISON: You're toying with me.

HAZEL: In a little girl's bed. You think you'd like that?

MADISON: There are two things I like especially. Twelve-year-old Scotch and eight-year-old girls.

(HAZEL STEPS AWAY FROM HIM. SHE REACHES UNDER HER SKIRT AND PEELS OFF HER PANTIES. MADISON IS TRANSFIXED. SHE MOVES CLOSE TO HIM, PUTS THE PANTIES IN HIS HAND, THEN MOVES HIS HAND UP TO HIS MOUTH. SHE FORCES THE PANTIES INTO HIS MOUTH. SHE UNZIPS HIS PANTS AND PUTS HER HAND INSIDE. MADISON CLOSES HIS EYES)

HAZEL: Madison. I need you to remind me what's important. (SHE SQUEEZES HARD. MADISON BUCKLES OVER. THEY EXIT ON THE CROSS-FADE TO DEL AND EDNA. DEL ENTERS FIRST. HE SNEAKS A MICKEY OUT OF HIS POCKET AND HAS A DRINK. EDNA CATCHES UP WITH HIM)

EDNA: There's something I want to talk to you about.

DEL: I need a cigarette. (HE ROLLS HIMSELF A SMOKE, SLOWLY AND FASTIDIOUSLY. HE SPIKES HIS COFFEE)

EDNA: (AT THE WINDOW) Come on, Del, you're not rolling for the Queen, I'd like to talk today.

DEL: I can't wake up without a smoke. (HE FINALLY FINISHES AND SITS CONTENTEDLY WITH COFFEE, HAIR OF THE DOG AND CIGARETTE)

EDNA: By the time you wake up you won't have a pot to piss in --

DEL: Give me a minute, alright?

EDNA: Or a window to throw it out of.

DEL: Jesus, you're crude.

EDNA: Whatever it takes to get your attention.

DEL: What? Is the house on fire?

EDNA: (SHE TAKES THE LETTER FROM HER APRON POCKET ON PUTS IN FRONT OF HIM) Yes.

(DEL LOOKS AT THE BURN, LOOKS AT HER. HE READS THE LETTER. TWICE. HE PULLS THE MICKEY OUT AND POURS THEM EACH A SHOT IN THEIR MUGS)

EDNA: Del, it's eight o'clock in the morning.

DEL: Drink it.

EDNA: Is that your solution?

DEL: Drink it. (THEY EACH DRINK) When did you get this?

EDNA: A week. Two. I didn't say anything ... I didn't know what to do. I've been trying to come up with a plan.

DEL: Do? The bank has called in the mortgage. There's nothing to do except (POURS MORE RYE) pack.

EDNA: This is my goddamn house. No one tells me to pack.

DEL: The bank's house. And you've been told.

EDNA: Are you still drunk, boy? We've been evicted? What are you saying? 'Screw it'? 'That's life'?

DEL: Have a drink.

EDNA: I don't want a drink! (SHE SWIPES AT THE MICKEY. DEL SNATCHES IT TO SAFETY)

DEL: Easy, old girl.

EDNA: (COLDLY) If they were coming for that goddamn bottle you'd get up on hind legs. Two weeks I've been sitting on this. What do I get? A shot of rye and a 'go easy old girl.' Thanks for your advice.

DEL: How long were they supposed to wait?

EDNA: I sit in the same church with the son of a bitch and he wants my house.

DEL: His house.

EDNA: Whose side are you on?

DEL: Did you read that letter?

EDNA: This is your house, too!

DEL: I've been thinking about that.

EDNA: You think a lot, sitting on your arse in the beer parlour.

DEL: That's right. I got a lot of time to think. Unemployment does that for you. What I think is this: It isn't one house, it isn't just our house. Ten years from now, 15 maybe, Main Street will look like somebody kicked her front teeth in. Ma. My guess is that this town is dying. It might already be dead. Those goddamn diesels don't need firemen. They don't need the shops. The roundhouse either. It's over. We just got our notice a little early. That's what I think.

EDNA: You were a scrappy kid. Did what you wanted, not what you were told. If you were 12 and I said the bank was coming for our house they'd find a boulder through their front window tomorrow morning.

DEL: I'm not 12.

EDNA: The bullies never got away without a scrap when you were a kid.

DEL: I grew up.

EDNA: Any man who can't figure out the wringer on a washing machine is still a boy.

DEL: You can sometimes beat a bully. But the pros, that's a different story. You don't argue with them. The bank is a pro.

EDNA: Should have killed all the bankers in the Depression.

DEL: There's nice Christian talk.

EDNA: Christians, Jesus, I share a pew with Cyrus.

DEL: Maybe you should have married him instead.

EDNA: I'd rather kill him.

DEL: Marry him first, so you can collect the insurance.

EDNA: (DIVERTED) He's married to Martha Petrunka. Use your head.

DEL: Kill her, marry him, kill him, collect, keep the house. Problem solved.

EDNA: I like Martha!

DEL: You see? He married a woman you like too much to kill. That's a pro.

EDNA: Jesus, what nonsense have you got me talking?

DEL: Go see him.

EDNA: I did. What do you think, I've been sitting on my arse?

DEL: What did he say?

EDNA: He said I should take in boarders. Boarders.

DEL: Well?

EDNA: Well, what?

DEL: Why not?

EDNA: I'm not raising my kids in a hotel. It's bad enough they got a brother who uses this place like one.

That's all we need, four or five goddamn boomers sniffing around Hazel, feeding their booze to Butch.

DEL: Maybe they'll be more interested in you.

DEL: What's that supposed to mean?

DEL: Maybe you ought to get married again.

EDNA: (SURPRISED LAUGH) Married? Are you still drunk, pup?

DEL: I think it would be a good idea.

EDNA: Do you now?

DEL: What do you think about it?

EDNA: Did you have someone in mind or was I supposed to pick him out at gunpoint?

DEL: You aren't ... old.

EDNA: You almost broke your face getting that one out.

DEL: Well, you aren't.

EDNA: Thanks, pup, but I've had it with boomers. (CATCHES HERSELF, GETS BACK ON TRACK) He talked in numbers. Not words. Numbers.

DEL: Cyrus is a banker.

EDNA: He's an adding machine.

DEL: It's his job.

EDNA: His job is to serve the community.

DEL: Isn't that in the Bible somewhere? Genesis, maybe?

EDNA: Keep your heathen tongue off the Bible.

DEL: No. Sounds more like the New Testament. Matthew, Mark, Larry, Moe and Curly Joe.

EDNA: Drunken pup. Should've drowned you at birth.

DEL: What kind of offer did you make him?

EDNA: What do you mean offer? I offered to stay in my house.

DEL: You gotta come up with a plan, ma.

EDNA: I work. I pay my bills and give him whatever's left over. That's my plan. It was good enough last year and the year before that. It should be good enough now.

DEL: But it's not good enough. (HE WAITS) Is it?

EDNA: It's good enough for me.

DEL: It's not good enough for a bank.

EDNA: It's the best I can do.

DEL: 'A' for effort. But it don't pay.

EDNA: I didn't wake you up for your lip.

(DEL PULLS SOME CHANGE FROM HIS POCKET AND SPILLS IT ONTO THE TABLE)

DEL: That help any?

EDNA: If you'd go to work--

DEL: One trip a month buys fuck all!

EDNA: You aren't too big to wash your mouth out with Sunlight soap.

DEL: Nothing. Rien de tout. Zip. Zero. Fuck all. The railroad, ma, it's finished for me. You wanna see an ancient artifact? (HE DOES A ROUGH PIROUETTE) One fireman -- but there's no firing left to do. The diesels took care of that. Stuff me with feathers, hang a sign on my neck and stick me in the goddamn railroad museum. I'm fuck all.

EDNA: You're a human being --

DEL: That's the nicest thing anybody's called me in a week.

EDNA: -- but you roll over like a spayed dog.

DEL: So what kind of a plan can we cook up? Bootlegging? Government's got that racket sown up tight. Grow a little marijuana to sell in Toronto? Moss maybe, but pot don't grow on these rocks. Buy Butch a guitar and make him a rock 'n' roll star? Skim a few bucks from the hockey pool? What's that? Fifty bucks a month? Better'n what I can depend on from the CPR. Maybe we can collect beer bottles. Yeah. As a family. Up and down the lanes, day and night. There's a growth industry for you. Collecting pop bottles. We can do that until the pensions come in. Or I could get a paper route.

EDNA: They can't do this!

DEL: You can't make the earth flat by wishing it.

EDNA: They can't do this.

DEL: Why not?

EDNA: Because ...

DEL: Pretty good, Socrates.

EDNA: We fed them for a hundred years.

DEL: Don't give me that CCF-New Jerusalem hogwash! We'll get a thank you card on the way out the gate.

EDNA: It's not our fault the CPR took your job away. We made them rich.

DEL: Should've made ourselves necessary.

EDNA: They need people like us.

DEL: Hands are 10 cents a pair.

EDNA: We are not just hands. We are not just employees. We are people.

DEL: That's the problem. We're not quite robot and we're not quite slave. Too smart and not smart enough.

EDNA: I am not a slave.

DEL: Whatever you say. Don't fire until you see the red of their taillights.

EDNA: What are you, working for the bank? It's only money.

DEL: Spoken like someone with no cash.

EDNA: Right, Del, blame the victim.

DEL: It's too late. We didn't fight back soon enough.

EDNA: Fight? I raise a family. I pay my taxes. Why should I have to fight. I'm not the enemy. I'm a citizen.

DEL: You watch too many commercials. They only need you at election time.

EDNA: Del, don't fight me. Help me.

DEL: Boarders, ma. Your only hope. (HE MIMICS THE CRETINS HE DESCRIBES) Drunken young men prowling the halls at night --

EDNA: Not in this house.

DEL: Leering, lonely young boomers --

EDNA: Never.

DEL: Horny as goats --

EDNA: You're criminal.

DEL: Pockets jingling with coin, remember, and looking for the love mother used to give them.

EDNA: There's something evil about you. All we need is time.

DEL: Time's up.

(THE ROAR OF MACHINERY OFF-STAGE. BUTCH IS FLYING IN THE FIRST WALL. IT SHOULD BE SOMETHING OF A TRIUMPH FOR HIM -- HIS DREAM IS TAKING SHAPE. EDNA IS HELPFUL, DEL MIGHT EVEN BE DISRUPTIVE OF THE PROCESS. WHEN THE WALL IS UP, EDNA HANGS A PHOTOGRAPH)

BUTCH: (THIS SPEECH SHOULD MODULATE BETWEEN SELF-MOCKERY AND BIBLICAL PROPHECY. A LITTLE BIT OF HAM WOULD NOT BE INAPPROPRIATE) Like everybody else, they've put it in the criminal code -- memory has been outlawed, it's treasonous to keep a past, history is a crime -- like bestiality or sex with an imbecile. Now. Three lousy letters to sum up our lives. Remember that other three letter word, Hazel? Remember it, Del? That's right. God. (SMILES. THE SMILE VANISHES) There's a sign up in God's window. 'Under New Management'. If God's still around he's playing for a farm team, he's with a D-class circus, a sideshow freak, God's on workman's comp, retired without a pension, panhandling in the subway, bumming smokes in the tavern. God isn't dead. He just wishes the rumours were true. Kicked into the street by sons and daughters, granny-bashed. We toss him out of his home, we raid the fridge and crap on the carpets. And all we've allowed him to keep is a Polaroid snap from better days -- God at the beach with a beer in his hand, a sunburned nose and a child on his knee. History, memory, philosophy. Wrong every time. Responsibility. Wrong. Continuity. Wrong. Sacred trust. Wrong. Free of the past, free of the

future. Guiltless, blameless, free to do as we please. Right here. Right now. For all time. Until we end time, too. (PAUSE) Wrong, Hazel. You and Del are so goddamn wrong you can hardly walk. (HE EXITS)

DEL: A house isn't much. Some 2 x 4's, a window to look out of, a roof for the snow and a door to --

EDNA: Slam on a shyster's face.

DEL: -- a door to lock behind you when you leave. You take the family pictures and you find a new wall to hang 'em on. (HE REMOVES THE PHOTOGRAPH EDNA HAS JUST HUNG. HE PUTS IT IN THE TRUNK. EDNA RE-HANGS THE PHOTO)

EDNA: Can't you hear it?

DEL: What?

EDNA: You're deaf, dumb and blind.

DEL: Hear what? The mice in the walls?

EDNA: There's no mice in this house.

DEL: Rats then.

EDNA: Should have drowned you.

DEL: You missed your chance. You won't find a sack big enough for me now.

EDNA: The house talks, Del.

DEL: Jesus! Lock her up. Talking doorknobs.

EDNA: Don't be so goddamned literal-minded. Not voices.

DEL: You said the house talks.

EDNA: Sometimes this house gives me a little nudge.

DEL: The foundation is cracking.

EDNA: The day your father went missing, I was sitting at the table, right where you're sitting now. I felt a tap on my shoulder. The telegram came three days later. Two weeks ago, the same thing. The letter from Cyrus at the bank came a day later. We've been here so long the house knows bad news is coming long before it gets here. It knows.

DEL: Do you know how crazy that sounds?

EDNA: I'd be crazy if I ignored the signs.

DEL: Close your mouth, the neighbours will hear.

EDNA: Ask Mrs. Goldstein. She knows.

DEL: She believes you?

EDNA: She knows. Listen. She looked after the house one January when we were at your aunt's. A blowy cold night. She was worried about the furnace going out and the water freezing up. She stoked the furnace, then made herself a cup of tea, you know, just to sit for a moment till the kitchen warmed up a little. She was hardly finished her cup when the creaking started on the stairs, like someone was coming down. The creaking stopped about halfway.

DEL: Frost.

EDNA: Someone came down. Looked over the banister and saw a friend of the family sitting drinking tea in the kitchen. It turned back upstairs. Then went to bed, I guess.

DEL: Mrs. Goldstein makes a lot of dandelion wine for a widow.

EDNA: Don't judge other people by your own mirror, boy. Especially one as cracked and black as yours. (LONG PAUSE) Some nights I hear him breathe.

DEL: Who?

EDNA: Your old man.

DEL: Dreams.

EDNA: No. It's him that's dreaming. Sometimes he snores. Like he's been drinking heavy, maybe even poisoned himself. His breath catches in the back of his throat, that's what wakes me up, that catch and the sudden silence. I lie awake waiting for his breath and his heart to start again. He starts to breathe. Then I can sleep.

DEL: It's a dream.

EDNA: Sometimes I know ... I know that he's still alive.

DEL: Fifteen years.

EDNA: You hear stories of men wandering around with amnesia, drifting after the war. Living alone when they have a wife and kids, pets even, a house and

job waiting for them maybe just over in the next town. But they don't know. They can't remember. But your old man isn't like that. I see him getting off the train, looking up the street, looking down the street, then flagging a ride for anywhere but here. Maybe for the sandy, sunny south.

DEL: I don't think so, Ma. Fifteen years.

EDNA: Missing in action. No casket. No funeral. He could be anywhere.

DEL: He's dead.

EDNA: You haven't heard him snore.

DEL: If I lived in a haunted house I'd leave.

EDNA: Would you?

DEL: Oh yeah.

EDNA: You might get lonesome for your ghosts.

DEL: They'd have to find me and they'd have to stop me.

EDNA: You don't know ghosts.

DEL: Maybe you know them too well.

EDNA: I'd be lost without them.

DEL: No.

EDNA: I would.

DEL: You've never tried. You haul them around like old trunks. Busting your back moving them from room to room, stubbing your toes. You should think about travelling light for a change.

EDNA: Travelling light. I'm not 20 any more. (PAUSE)
And I don't think I'd want to be.

DEL: Ghosts. Jesus.

EDNA: You've never felt anything here?

DEL: I liked living here. But the house never talked to me.

EDNA: That's too bad.

DEL: Maybe.

EDNA: If a house doesn't talk to you then it's not your home.

DEL: Maybe I haven't found my home yet. We're all going somewhere. You, too. That's what the letter says. P.S. Goodbye. (HE EXITS. EDNA WATCHES BUTCH DRAG HAZEL IN BY THE ARM -- AN EXCITED CHILD TRYING TO INSPIRE A SCEPTIC. EDNA EXITS WHEN THE SCEPTICISM GETS TOO MUCH FOR HER. BUTCH PUTS THE SECOND WALL UP IN THE FOLLOWING SCENE)

BUTCH: You're standing on Main Street. It's 1967. What's at the west end of the street?

HAZEL: Christ, I don't know.

BUTCH: Close your eyes. You are 12 years old. Standing on Main Street. Facing the river. Turn to your left. What do you see at the end of the street?

HAZEL: Nothing.

BUTCH: Snow. September. Baseball uniforms. The sand pit. Clothes on the line. Walking to school, creosote on the ties.

HAZEL: No. Nothing.

BUTCH: People then. Think of the people you liked. Who's on the street?

HAZEL: All the people I liked lived somewhere else.

BUTCH: Pick a day you liked in '67.

HAZEL: I prefer anything after 1986.

BUTCH: There was no town by '86.

HAZEL: Exactly.

BUTCH: They didn't even leave a ghost town. It's buried. Here. As if an earthquake took it. A mud slide. An ICBM.

HAZEL: Pretty thorough, I'd say.

BUTCH: Don't you dream of where everything started? Don't you dream of home?

HAZEL: I have a home. 500 miles south of here.

BUTCH: South, that fucking borderland? It's a picture ripped out of a cheap cookbook, it's a grainy newspaper photo. Your home is here.

HAZEL: And you have a home, too.

BUTCH: They tore up the mainline, they knocked the buildings over. They buried it 20 feet down!

HAZEL: Most people leave home, Butch. It's called growing up.

BUTCH: But we didn't leave. It was taken. We had no say.

HAZEL: So?

BUTCH: A home is everyone's right.

HAZEL: You have one.

BUTCH: It's been faked.

HAZEL: You want the world.

BUTCH: I want what's mine.

HAZEL: It wasn't yours.

BUTCH: We built it with our sweat and our blood.

HAZEL: (LAUGHS) You were a kid.

BUTCH: We cleared the land and we put the railroad through and we dug the mines and we hauled ore by hand. Our ancestors are buried here. Pioneers.

HAZEL: You were a kid.

BUTCH: (SHOWING HIS WRISTS) This is the same blood.

HAZEL: Watered down Kool-Aid. If you were a hardy-assed old pioneer you wouldn't be whining like this. They went where they had to go.

BUTCH: Before the CPR said thanks for everything and started running freight through the northern States. Before then. When we had a mainline here. A place to live. You remember.

HAZEL: No.

BUTCH: There was no movie on Wednesdays. One played Thursday to Saturday. A new movie Sunday to Tuesday. Every week for years, you'd see the film cans on the sidewalk, going to the train. Until the show closed down cause everybody was sitting at home with their VCR's and cable and dishes. And sometime after that they killed the passenger trains. And sometime after that they killed the freights, too. But the show was the first thing those bastards killed.

HAZEL: The show.

BUTCH: We called it the show. 'Goin to the show tonight?' 'Yeah'. 'Wanna go to the Redwood for a pop, first?' You remember.

HAZEL: You're whistling through your ass.

BUTCH: You remember the parades on the first of July.

HAZEL: No.

BUTCH: We dressed the dog in baby clothes and pushed him around in the carriage. In '67 we dressed up as coureurs de bois. We had a canoe. Mocassins. Leg-hold traps. We won a prize. It was the Centennial year. It was a big deal. We won first prize in 1967. Remember? (SINGS) 'One little, two little, three little provinces, we love -- '

HAZEL: Don't be such a goddamn retard.

BUTCH: Ha! You see? Retard. No one uses that word any more. Retard. 'What are ya, some kinda retard?' That's history. History, Hazel. History!

HAZEL: Oh, Jesus H. Christ!

BUTCH: Mom used that expression.

HAZEL: So does half the western world.

BUTCH: You heard it from her. Potlicker.

HAZEL: What?

BUTCH: 'How ya doin, ya old potlicker?' Del used that one. Do you even remember Del? Tall guy, big goofy smile, lost his job when the diesels came in, started into the booze --

HAZEL: Shut up.

BUTCH: You can't re-invent him, you can't pretty him up, he was a goddamn drunk.

HAZEL: Shut your fucking yap about Del.

(BUTCH HAS FOUND SOMETHING HERE, BUT DOESN'T FOLLOW IT UP)

BUTCH: What's a lard sandwich? Depression food, from the 30s. Ask me what's for dinner. (HAZEL IGNORES HIM)

'What's for dinner?' Potatoes and point. Then you eat your fried baloney and point at a picture of roast beef, say 'mm good roast,' yeah, you remember. What was the Legion? The beer parlour. What happened Wednesday afternoons? The stores closed.

And Andy from the hardware went to the beer parlour and got pissed. No. Not pissed. Half cut. And you remember.

HAZEL: What would I win, the fucking lottery?

BUTCH: There was a forest fire. The town was evacuated. We loaded up the station wagon. The cat hid under the wood pile, we were going to leave her behind. Socks. Yes. At the gas station three drops of rain landed on the windshield. We went back to the house. Did we unpack the car? (HAZEL DOESN'T ANSWER) We drove around that night. All the houses were dark. It was scary, eh Hazel. Mom talked to the chief of police. We went home. We were the only ones on our street. It was quiet. Like in a horror film. Did you sleep that night? Everybody we knew got to go away for a few days. Not us. We sat in that empty town until the fire stopped moving towards us and everybody came home telling great stories. You hated mom for depriving you of that trip. You said she was nuts. For trying to save the house with a garden hose. Like pissing on a volcano, you said. But she was born there, raised there, worked there, married there, raised us there.

HAZEL: The town was gonna burn to the ground.

BUTCH: Only if she let it.

HAZEL: What are you saying, Butch, the old girl saved the town by pissing on her roof?

BUTCH: She stayed. Like the cat. That's all it took. One old woman and a cat and the town was saved.

HAZEL: She sounds like Moses talking to the burning bush.

BUTCH: She believed the town wouldn't burn and it didn't.

HAZEL: What if I believed the sun wasn't coming up tomorrow?

BUTCH: It wouldn't.

HAZEL: (A SERIOUS QUESTION) Are you ill?

BUTCH: Ill?

HAZEL: Are you?

BUTCH: You mean does my elevator go all the way to the top floor?

HAZEL: Does it?

BUTCH: In other words, am I three sandwiches short of a picnic?

HAZEL: Are you?

BUTCH: Why did you come home?

HAZEL: Why did you ask me?

BUTCH: Colour.

HAZEL: Colour?

BUTCH: Yes. (HE PAUSES. HAZEL GESTURES AT HIM TO CONTINUE) I lived down south so long the sky started to look like a sidewalk. The snow was

black. Blue eyes white. I was losing my vision.
I lived down south so long I went colour-blind.

HAZEL: (LOOKS AT THE HOUSE) Hang some Christmas decorations.

BUTCH: (GRINNING) I missed you.

HAZEL: I'm laughing in your face and you go grinning like an imbecile.

BUTCH: I really did.

HAZEL: You haven't changed, you're still a goddamn twit.

BUTCH: (GRINS AGAIN) Colour. Can I explain?

HAZEL: Any time.

BUTCH: On second thought, maybe not. Not yet. (HE BEGINS STRINGING ELECTRICAL WIRE IN FRONT OF THE HOUSE. IT HAS A SINGLE LIGHT BULB ON IT) I have two kids. Twelve and fifteen. Same age difference as us. Del's the baby.

HAZEL: Del is a good name.

BUTCH: His sister bosses him pretty good.

HAZEL: Sounds familiar.

BUTCH: Her name is Hazel. (HAZEL LOOKS AT HIM. PAUSE) I miss them.

HAZEL: Go home.

BUTCH: Del and Hazel. Quite the names to stick my kids with, eh? Kids prefer cool names. Soap opera stars. American soap operas.

HAZEL: It's ... the names are nice, Butch.

BUTCH: Sentimental.

HAZEL: That's OK.

BUTCH: You have to help me.

HAZEL: Money? I have money. Shopping carts of it.

BUTCH: Help me to see. The house. The town. The time. This.

HAZEL: I'm not much on nostalgia.

BUTCH: There's a word you learned in the city.

HAZEL: I might have learned it on Mars. You're still looking backwards.

BUTCH: Wrong! Wrong! Wrong! Wrong! Wrong! You sound like my goddamn wife, born in a goddamn shopping mall window. You're supposed to know better.

HAZEL: Go home, Butch. Go home to the wife and kids. There's nothing wrong with shopping malls.

BUTCH: I am home.

HAZEL: This is a ghost town.

BUTCH: They didn't even leave that. Didn't leave a goddamn building for a ghost to get in out of the rain. (PAUSE) Do you know the name Pol Pot?

HAZEL: Sure. He ran the greasy spoon you got staked out down the way.

BUTCH: He emptied the cities of Cambodia, drained half a million people from Phnom Penh. They said he was a

psychopath, that he drank blood warm from a baby,
they ran out of words for his sins. But. But.
But. He let the cities stand. Get it? When Pol
Pot was gone, the people went home.

HAZEL: Is there a punch-line to your story?

(BUTCH LEAVES WHAT HE IS DOING AND SORTS THROUGH HIS
GEAR WITH SOME VEHEMENCE. HE FINDS A BOOM-BOX AND
A CASSETTE TAPE. HE STARTS THE TAPE AND CRANKS THE
VOLUME. A LIVE RECORDING OF A MORTAR ATTACK IS
PIPED OVER THE HOUSE P.A., UNCOMFORTABLY LOUD.
NEITHER OF THEM MOVE. FINALLY, BUTCH FLIPS THE TAPE
OFF)

BUTCH: Friendly fire.

HAZEL: In English, please, not your nursery rhymes.

BUTCH: I found Nita. (PAUSE. ANGRILY) She was Del's
girlfriend.

HAZEL: I know who she was!

BUTCH: Good. (HE TAKES A CANADIAN FLAG OUT OF THE TRUNK)
And this?

HAZEL: It's a diaper.

BUTCH: The end of June. 1967. We followed him to Nita's.
She gave him this. She got naked and danced,
wearing this. (HE WRAPS HIMSELF IN THE FLAG AND
DANCES) They got drunk and cried. We watched
through the window till it was time to go home.

HAZEL: What do you do when you're not remembering? Do you have any kind of life? A real life?

BUTCH: This house is real.

HAZEL: This is a nut house.

BUTCH: Echoes of Mom. 'Barn.' 'Hotel.' 'Nut house.' She had lots of names for the place. Nita lives on the street in Cornwall. She eats out of garbage cans --

HAZEL: Bullshit.

BUTCH: -- jerks off the drunks for sandwich money --

HAZEL: She was Del's --

BUTCH: She went over to Vietnam in '69 or '70. She was a nurse. I guess she didn't like what she saw. Cooked. Burnt. Toute fini.

HAZEL: I don't believe you.

BUTCH: She gave me the tape. 'Friendly fire.' That's the sound of her brain frying, big sister. Friendly fire. American 'ordnance' landing in the wrong place. All the blood and the lies were mixed up with Del and high school and the kids they were going to have. When I saw her, she needed new shoes. I bought some for her. I saw her one time after that, a day or two later. She must've hawked the shoes as soon as I turned the corner. She looked like the wrath of God, though, new shoes or not.

HAZEL: I guess she won't be coming home then.

BUTCH: (FURIOUS) I guess you're not here to bang nails. If you're looking for something from mom's will, there was no money. Since that's what you're looking for.

HAZEL: I didn't end up like Nita.

BUTCH: Run a chip wagon in Ottawa or something? Sell foot-long hot dogs in front of the House of Commons? Those are the only jobs they left for us.

HAZEL: Let's just say I'm not a Laurentian hillbilly any more.

BUTCH: (GESTURING TOWARDS THE OFF-STAGE MADISON) Screw your way to the top?

HAZEL: Kiss my royal ass. I earned what I have. Madison's my partner. (SOFTENING) Things are going well for me. I could help you, give you a job.

BUTCH: Company car, secretary, expense account?

HAZEL: Don't get greedy.

BUTCH: Stock options, interest free loans, my very own Member of Parliament?

HAZEL: Don't sneer, little man. I've done everything I've ever wanted. I can offer some of that to you.

BUTCH: I'm pretty tied up these days. But if you're looking for something to do ... But you're not. I told you. There wasn't a cent. Jesus Christ,

Hazel. Not a goddamn postcard. Not a collect call.
Nothing.

HAZEL: I was in jail.

BUTCH: Cut the bullshit.

HAZEL: A bordertown whore house? No? I was named a Senator. I was embarrassed. I didn't want anyone to know I'd become such a sorry meat-puppet.

BUTCH: Not a squeak. And now you're sniffing like a dog around the bones.

HAZEL: Get off it, kid! I could have bought that old lady a hundred times over out of parking-meter money. I don't want the pennies off her eyes or your goddamn junk. I didn't come here for a goddamn thing. (SHE PICKS UP ONE OF THE MARKERS. WE HEAR THE LOW SOUND OF TWO WOMEN TALKING AND LAUGHING.) Mrs. Berzel and Mrs. Roland yakking over the back fence. They're talking about swapping husbands.

BUTCH: I can't hear anyway. You don't have to ruin it with smart-arse talk! (HE PICKS UP ANOTHER MARKER. WE HEAR THE SOUND OF CHEERING IN A RINK) Saturday night. 1967. March. It's the last game of the Junior B playoffs. Against Wawa. Hear the crowd?

HAZEL: I don't want to hear anything.

BUTCH: (HE PICKS UP ANOTHER MARKER. THE SOUND OF A TEAM OF HORSES) Mr. Creighton. He was always old. The

horses, too. He picked up the garbage. He had bad teeth, he needed a shave, never said a word to us or waved to us but we went out every garbage day. Scared to go alone. The horses were mysterious and huge and magical. Steam from their nostrils in the winter. Patient as saints as Mr. Creighton dumped the cans into the wagon. The wagon was wood. We watched together. Every garbage day. No one had to ask us to take the garbage out in those days. Hear it?

HAZEL: You're alone. You've rebuilt the rink and you're alone in the stands. You're alone on the ice and you're watching yourself play and you're hearing yourself cheer and you're all by yourself. Alone.

BUTCH: Don't be afraid.

HAZEL: You're the police chief and the garbage man and the captain of the hockey team. You've got it all to yourself.

(BUTCH TAKES THESE FINAL SHOTS. THEN HE SORTS THROUGH SOME PHOTOGRAPHS HE CARRIES IN A SMALL FOLDER HE CARRIES IN HIS POCKET. HE CAREFULLY "FRISBEES" EACH ONE TOWARDS HAZEL'S FEET)

BUTCH: That's what was in the will. That's all you get. That's all there is. (SHE PICKS UP THE PHOTOS AND

EXAMINES THEM CAREFULLY. THEN SHE LOOKS DOWN THE
"STREET")

HAZEL: Butch. I do see something down at the end of Main
Street. The icehouse.

BUTCH: (RELENTING INSTANTLY) The icehouse. (HE PICKS UP
ANOTHER MARKER AND PUTS IT IN POSITION. WE HEAR THE
SHORT BLAST OF A TRAIN WHISTLE) That's right. The
icehouse. Big blocks of ice to cool the passenger
trains -- when? -- 1954?

HAZEL: Shit brindle brown.

BUTCH: Pardon?

HAZEL: The colour. Shit brindle brown. CPR shit brindle
brown. Whenever I think of home that's the colour
I think of. Shit brindle brown. The colour of
outhouses.

BUTCH: (GRINNING) Thank you. Shit brindle brown. Colour.
Now we begin. (EDNA ENTERS WITH A BRIGHTLY COLOURED
CURTAIN. SHE HANGS IT ON THE WINDOW DURING HAZEL'S
LINES ABOUT "SHIT BRINDLE BROWN". SHE STAYS AT THE
WINDOW. DEL ENTERS AS HAZEL AND BUTCH EXIT
OPPOSITE)

EDNA: They're good kids. Aren't they, Del?

DEL: You did a good job, ma.

EDNA: I hope so.

DEL: Are you happy?

EDNA: What kind of a question is that, now?

DEL: Just a question.

EDNA: It's a question for people with their heads in the clouds.

DEL: They're called philosophers.

EDNA: Beer-parlour philosophers if you ask me. You know the kind.

DEL: Are you happy? Forget about the house.

EDNA: Forget?

DEL: For a minute.

EDNA: I told you. I don't have time to worry about it one way or the other. Besides. It changes like the weather.

DEL: In general.

EDNA: In general ... it isn't winter all-year round.

DEL: If I told you could move anywhere, anywhere at all, where would you go?

EDNA: Are you in trouble with the law?

DEL: Anywhere at all.

EDNA: What's this, more nonsense from your beer parlour cronies? (SHE RELENTS) I hear Perth's nice.

DEL: Jesus.

EDNA: I hear it's nice.

DEL: I said any place. (PAUSE) How about the States?

EDNA: What about them?

DEL: Isn't there a place you've thought about?

EDNA: I told you. Perth.

DEL: In the States.

EDNA: You are in trouble with the cops. What did you do?

DEL: Ma.

EDNA: Cheboygan.

DEL: What?

EDNA: Cheboygan. It's in Michigan. I always liked the name. Cheboygan. Cheboygan. This is a stupid conversation.

DEL: I said any place. Christ. Michigan is packed with places like this. Dirty little towns stuck in the middle of the bush.

EDNA: This town is only dirty if you're lying in the gutter.

DEL: Anyway, Michigan's cold.

EDNA: I didn't realize you were such a tender little flower.

DEL: There's a whole country to choose from. Chicago. San Francisco. New York.

EDNA: Cities. American cities.

DEL: Yes, cities. People. Museums. Jobs.

EDNA: Jobs. Yes, I've heard of those things.

DEL: And more than one goddamn movie house.

EDNA: How many movies can you see in a week?

DEL: Restaurants.

EDNA: Hmm.

DEL: Decent schools. A dentist. Art galleries.

EDNA: High on your list I can tell.

DEL: Bars.

EDNA: Now you're being honest at least.

DEL: You see?

EDNA: New Orleans is a long way to go for a beer-parlour.

DEL: You have the imagination of a partridge.

EDNA: So who is it?

DEL: Who's what?

EDNA: Maggie Edwards said you've checked the mail every day for the past two weeks. You must be expecting a letter from someone.

DEL: If Maggie paid as much attention to sorting as she does to reporting the news we might get the right letters.

EDNA: Who is it?

DEL: What?

EDNA: The girl.

DEL: What girl?

EDNA: You aren't going to sweet talk Maggie so it must be some girl from out of town. This nonsense about New Orleans. You met an American girl, didn't you? Is

that why you've been ignoring Nita? Because you met an American girl? (PAUSE) It is a girl, isn't it?

DEL: (LAUGHS) As opposed to a boy? It's not a girl, ma. (RECONSIDERS) Well, maybe.

EDNA: Maybe. Sounds like something from a circus sideshow.

DEL: I meant that I might have a surprise for you.

EDNA: I don't like the kind of surprises you come up with. (PAUSE) You're leaving. Aren't you? You're leaving town.

DEL: No.

EDNA: Don't give me that. If it isn't a girl what are you mooning around the post office for? Did you join a goddamn book club?

DEL: What if I did?

EDNA: It would have to be a club for colouring books.

DEL: You're a hateful woman.

EDNA: Then tell me what's going through that beady little mind of yours. The truth.

DEL: One call in three weeks. (HE BEATS HER TO IT) Even if I was sober enough to work the call, I'm barely paying my way here. I'd be better off -- we'd be better off if I was working somewhere else.

EDNA: What is it with the men in this family? When the going gets tough, you pack.

DEL: Listen.

EDNA: You think women were born to listen.

DEL: Things have a way of working out.

EDNA: But they don't always work out well. (PAUSE) What about Butch and Hazel?

DEL: You usually say I'm a bad influence.

EDNA: At least you're around.

DEL: Get them a dog.

EDNA: I don't treat you that way. Jesus, can't we have just one conversation? You're as slippery as minnows. (PAUSE) Where are you going?

DEL: South.

EDNA: There's a lotta south, Del.

DEL: I know.

EDNA: My brother went west. Your father went so far west he ended up in the east. South. I didn't know you cared for the bright lights.

DEL: Me neither.

EDNA: When?

DEL: Soon.

EDNA: What do you think it is about railroad towns that makes everybody want to move? I wonder if it's the yard engines sitting in the yard at night, shaking our beds. The shaking wakes up you and leaves you

restless. You get up ready for breakfast and ready to move to anywhere that isn't here.

(LIGHTS UP ON MADISON AND HAZEL. EDNA EXITS. DEL HANGS BACK TO LISTEN TO HAZEL. HE APPROVES OF HER RESISTANCE TO MADISON. HE EXITS)

HAZEL: 'Thank you. Shit brindle brown. Now we can begin.'
The spooky son of a bitch.

(MADISON PUTS DOWN HIS CELLULAR PHONE. HE MAKES AN ENTRY ON HIS LAPTOP COMPUTER. HE PUNCHES IN SOME NUMBERS ON A POCKET CALCULATOR. HE COMES UP BEHIND HAZEL AND PUTS HIS HANDS ON HER SHOULDERS)

MADISON: Kentucky has made another offer.

HAZEL: (DISTRACTED) Who?

MADISON: Kentucky Corp. To use the vernacular: The pot has been considerably sweetened.

HAZEL: Are you still talking to those fuckers?

MADISON: Hazel.

HAZEL: No.

MADISON: Hazel. We will discuss this.

HAZEL: Madison. We have discussed this.

(MADISON PUNCHES THE NUMBERS UP ON THE CALCULATOR AND SHOVES IT TOWARDS HER. SHE DELETES THE NUMBERS AND HANDS IT BACK TO HIM)

MADISON: Are you too willful even to read numbers?

HAZEL: Fuck Kentucky.

MADISON: Must you think like a hillbilly?

HAZEL: I have other things on my mind.

MADISON: The question of your unfortunate brother can be solved with a keystroke. Delete. Clear screen. New document. Next order of business. Kentucky Corp. The best offer we will ever, ever get.

HAZEL: I have other things --

MADISON: Forget them.

HAZEL: Tell me the truth. You were born 30 years old. Aliens stole your family. What?

MADISON: Yesterday or today. Your choice.

HAZEL: Fuck, Madison. His talk of Del and my mother. It's like bait. He's reeling me in like a sloppy old pickerel. They were gone! I was free. As free as you.

MADISON: You've stopped working at it. (HAZEL LOOKS AT HIM) Do you want 'freedom', as you put it? (HE PUNCHES THE NUMBERS ON THE CALCULATOR AGAIN. SHE STUDIES THEM)

HAZEL: I told you 21 times. No.

MADISON: Hillbilly.

HAZEL: Don't call me that.

MADISON: Do you prefer to live here?

HAZEL: Nothing to do with here.

MADISON: No?

HAZEL: Abso-fucking-nothing.

MADISON: Such foulness.

HAZEL: Stop judging me! (PAUSE) Butch is a side issue.

MADISON: I think not.

HAZEL: I told Kentucky Corp. to fuck off last month and the month before that. Before Butch crawled into my brain like an earwig.

MADISON: Nostalgia, Hazel. Pathological nostalgia.

(DEL ENTERS. HAZEL SMASHES THE CALCULATOR UNDER HER HEEL. DEL LAUGHS. AS HE STARTS TO TALK, EDNA ENTERS. SHE HAS A BROOM)

DEL: It's a bad habit looking backwards. Somebody catches you looking the wrong way -- bang -- a cross-check in the back of your head. You're flat on the ice for the rest of the game. It's pretty to look backwards. But it'll cost you your head. We had a union that looked backwards. Now the union has a few less members, I got no job and nowhere to go but out.

EDNA: (BEGINS TO SWEEP THE KITCHEN) Cross-checking, Jesus, you're drunk again.

DEL: There's not a goddamn thing else to do.

EDNA: It's easy for you, isn't it? To pack up and move off like some bum of a boomer. Are those kids out there nothing to you? Are we nothing?

DEL: Did I invent the diesel? Do I look like some accountant in Montreal who figures out a buck is more important than a man? Don't blame me. I don't call the shots. But I won't be shot like a partridge too dumb to fly.

EDNA: I am not a partridge.

DEL: (POINTS HIS FINGER AT HER) Bang. Bang.

EDNA: Boomer.

DEL: What's the problem with boomers anyway? They do a job, make a little money, move on. Does that make them some kind of criminal?

EDNA: Maybe.

DEL: Aw, horse shit.

EDNA: Boomers don't care who they touch. Who they hurt. They drift in sassy as silk and when they've had their fun they drift out again. Boomers are liars, Del. Liars. I don't need any more liars in this family. Marrying one was enough.

DEL: C'mon, ma.

EDNA: He was a goddamn boomer! A Christly, lying run-around son of a bitch.

DEL: You don't want to talk like that about Dad.

EDNA: I'm always generous to the dead.

DEL: He did what he had to do.

EDNA: What he wanted to do. Like you. Selfish.

DEL: There's a simple solution to the problem.

EDNA: I'm not leaving.

DEL: You've decided on bootlegging.

EDNA: You're a grand goddamn help -- No!

DEL: Then you're stuck with the horny young boomers.

EDNA: Tell me, Del. Do you think any man can make out the difference between a home and a hotel?

DEL: I don't know ... the barmaid in a hotel knows how to smile?

EDNA: Boomer. You'll work a job till you get bored or meet a nice girl who scares you into hopping the fastest freight on the line.

DEL: There aren't going to be any freights on the line.

EDNA: Boomers never finish anything they start. Never. Nothing.

DEL: Boomers make money. Isn't that what you're looking for?

EDNA: I'm not asking you for anything.

DEL: No?

EDNA: I don't want your boomtown money.

DEL: Bullshit.

EDNA: I want a family not a warehouse. Is there something wrong with that? Yes, I want my home. And on my terms. It isn't a rock I found on the beach, it isn't a souvenir. I built it. Not with my hands,

alright, but I built it with my heart. Yes. Smirk.
Laugh. Whatever you like. I want those kids to
learn something besides restlessness. I don't want
your money.

DEL: That's the kicker, ma. It's not money I'm offering.

EDNA: Then it's a good thing I wasn't quite on my knees
begging.

DEL: I'm offering the tickets out. I wasn't just
shooting the breeze about New Orleans. We can go
there if you want. Key West. California. Whatever
you want.

EDNA: Did you up and join the circus, Del?

DEL: I joined the army.

EDNA: The army?

DEL: Yes.

EDNA: Christ. (PAUSE) How is that going to get you to
the States? Since when did we send soldiers to the
goddamn States? Use your head.

DEL: I joined the American army, ma.

EDNA: The American army. (PAUSE) Where are they sending
you? Key West? New Orleans? Nashville?!

DEL: (SHEEPISH) How about Vietnam?

EDNA: Bullshit.

DEL: I asked to go there.

EDNA: Bullshit.

DEL: They said sure. (EDNA SWINGS THE BROOM AT HIM. HE
 CATCHES IT WITH ONE HAND)

BLACKOUT -- END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

(LIGHTS UP ON DEL AND EDNA)

DEL: I joined the American army, ma.

EDNA: The American army? (PAUSE) Where are they sending you? Key West? New Orleans? Nashville!?

DEL: (SHEEPISH) How about Vietnam?

EDNA: Bullshit.

DEL: I asked to go there.

EDNA: Bullshit.

DEL: They said sure.

(EDNA SWINGS THE BROOM AT HIM. HE CATCHES IT WITH ONE HAND. SHE DECKS HIM WITH HER FIST. SHE SITS DOWN AT THE TABLE AND LIGHTS A CIGARETTE. DEL GETS UP AND JOINS HER. HE ROLLS A SMOKE. THEY SIT. SOUND OF A CHAIN SAW SNARLING OFF STAGE)

DEL: That friggen parade nonsense is gonna drive me crazy.

EDNA: Don't change the subject, pup.

(BUTCH ENTERS WITH SAW AND SOME LUMBER. HE MIGHT LAY A STAIR-TREAD OR A FLOORBOARD OR PUT UP A PIECE OF CROSS BRACING FOR THE WALLS. HE BEGINS TO SET UP

THE THIRD WALL. MADISON ENTERS. HE WATCHES BUTCH CAREFULLY)

BUTCH: You ever build a house, Madison? The second best thing about house building is the language. Take footings, for example. A footing is the fat part of your foundation -- good footing, good foundation. You might have heard the phrase in everyday conversation -- 'She's on a pretty good footing there.' You probably think it means she's wearing sensible shoes. Not so. The origin of that expression is right here in the ground. You should try building something, Madison.

MADISON: I know what you see when you look at me: a man with hands so soft ... please excuse the language ... I could never have done anything so manual as ... jerk myself off.

BUTCH: Building has a poetry of its own. Look at cement work: coarse aggregate. Striking off. Bull-floating. Even grout is a good word. There was a man from here whose last name was Grout. Arthur Grout. No one laughed at him though -- he half-ran the town. Hard as a chisel that man.

MADISON: You must look deeper than my lack of callouses.

BUTCH: Lots to prove, hauling around a name like Arthur Grout. Like living up to something like Madison Avenue.

MADISON: You've heard, no doubt, about corporate raiders? A most felicitous phrase, though not a concept I personally agree with and to which I will return shortly. But it does conjure up the correct images of the cut and thrust of takeovers, the blood on the trading floor, the rolling of heads, the head-hunting. But beneath this lack of callouses we are gypsies, nomads, explorers, astronauts. Warriors.

BUTCH: When the concrete cures it's time to talk of plumb and level ...

MADISON: Warriors. Yes. The 21st century is not a time for cowardice.

BUTCH: ... furring, kerfs and nosing ...

MADISON: The 21st century is not a time for pondering, for contemplation, for nostalgia.

BUTCH: ... #1 clear pine, marine plywood ...

MADISON: If we hesitate, if we show a single sign that we contemplate retreat, we are lost. The 21st century is upon us. It will take no prisoners.

BUTCH: ... timber and joinery ...

MADISON: I mentioned raider capitalism. That is not my way. I'm a craftsman not a labourer. I see a job through

from conception to execution. I imagine, I design, I select the proper tree, I fell it, mill it, shape it, turn it inch by careful inch into a true work of art.

BUTCH: ... half-lap and blind dowels ...

MADISON: I don't believe in raider capitalism. I believe in capitalism, taking an idea and realizing it.

BUTCH: ... bull nose boards ...

MADISON: I draw the map and then I build the country. I hear the music, then I invent the instrument. I give birth. Creation, not adoption.

BUTCH: ... cheek cuts, twin double tenons with mortise locks ...

MADISON: I'm not being clear. What I have been trying to say is that you and I have much in common. I too am somewhat old-fashioned, sentimental even. (BUTCH SHOOTS HIM A LOOK) I mean that in the best sense of the word.

BUTCH: ... knock-down fittings. Haunched, wedged, pinned and foxed ...

MADISON: But life is war-fare. And the only wars that can be won are lightning wars. Blitzkrieg. I understand what you're trying to do. I understand it completely. But you're doing it ... wrong. France spent the 20 years between the First and Second

World Wars building trenches. Do you know what happened? Blitzkrieg. The lightning war. And you, like the French, are digging trenches. Utterly useless against the 21st Century. Trenches, my friend.

BUTCH: I'm building a home.

MADISON: May I be so bold as to give you a quick lesson in political economy? Capital is essentially nomadic. It no more owes you a home than it owes itself one. There is no dollar lonelier than the American dollar. And what can we do? Nothing at all. Life is life. In the 21st Century, the marketplace is our home.

BUTCH: Garbage trains.

MADISON: I beg your pardon?

BUTCH: You sucked us dry and gave us garbage trains in return. You clear-cut the bush, you gutted the earth like she was a fish. Then you killed the freight trains that used to run the mainline hauling cattle and lumber and ore. Instead you filled them up with PCB's and shit-filled Pampers and plaster from yuppie renovations and you shipped the garbage north to us. 'You want jobs?' you said. 'Become a garbage dump for Toronto, Montreal, for New York City and you'll have all the jobs you can handle.'

You starved us out and then you gave us shitty
diapers to gnaw on. One royal fucking up the ass.

MADISON: You must adapt or die.

BUTCH: People like you are killing this country.

MADISON: Men like me prefer to think of it as national
euthanasia. Home towns? Provinces? Phantom
concepts as useless as art. And of course, the
whole idea of nation states is completely
retrograde. (HE PICKS UP THE CANADIAN FLAG FROM THE
EARLIER SCENE) What is this? A piece of textile,
made where? (HE CHECKS THE LABEL) Malaysia.
Cheaply. Efficiently. (HE TAKES A LIGHTER FROM THE
KITCHEN TABLE) Just a piece of textile. Made by
ignorant women. Valued for its merely symbolic
value by ignorant school children. (HE PUTS THE
FLAG TO THE FLAME)

BUTCH: You son of a bitch. (HE LOOKS FOR A WEAPON, GRABS
THE CHAIN-SAW. HE CRANKS IT ONCE, TWICE, AGAIN. IT
WILL NOT START. HE DROPS IT AND GOES FOR MADISON.
MADISON STOPS HIM COLD WITH AN ACCUSING GESTURE)

MADISON: Do you love your sister!? (BUTCH HESITATES) Do
you!? (BUTCH FALTERS AND RETREATS. MADISON
EXTINGUISHES THE FLAMES) Of course you do. That's
the other thing we have in common.

BUTCH: We have nothing in common.

MADISON: She's so different from any of the women in my family. Butch. The women in my family are proper and ... I hate to say it ... tight-assed.

BUTCH: What do you want?

MADISON: All the women I knew had spent their lives on an emotional leash. There was a way to walk and talk, a prescribed way to see and be seen.

BUTCH: What do you want, Madison?

MADISON: Consequently, I lived on an emotional leash as well. Your sister changed that.

BUTCH: You must be ... what? ... grateful?

MADISON: (SMILES) You anticipate my next point. In the last few weeks, your sister has lost her ability to think and act freely. Now she has been put on a leash. The leash, I'm afraid, is you.

BUTCH: Because I asked her to come here.

MADISON: You have stirred up certain ...

BUTCH: I've stirred up the sludge on the bottom of the river.

MADISON: Precisely.

BUTCH: And you want the sludge to settle again.

MADISON: I would like Hazel to be happy.

BUTCH: Me, too.

MADISON: I'm glad you agree.

BUTCH: But it can't be done.

MADISON: Anything is possible.

BUTCH: We took a wrong turn 20 years ago. Swung south when we should have beared straight on. That's why she's unhappy. If she's unhappy. Personally, I think she's just waking up and feeling a little groggy. Twenty years is a long time to sleep.

MADISON: You have stirred up, as you say, the sludge of sentiment, certain nesting instincts, thoughts of home -- stasis and entropy. You have stirred these things up at precisely the wrong moment. It is time for Hazel and me to move -- Blitzkrieg -- not to dig a trench. I am prepared to make an offer.

BUTCH: I'm not for sale.

MADISON: Of course you're not for sale. I simply want you to disappear for one year. Leave this archaeological site tonight, without a word to Hazel. After that, you will be free to return. You will have plenty of money to finance this rather remarkable ... vision. You will need money for this.

BUTCH: Don't worry about me. I have plans to make money. I'm going to open a lodge for terror-tourists. You might have seen the old mine sites they turned into garbage dumps on your drive up here -- northern sites, southern garbage. Garbage trains haul once a week out of Toronto, a hundred cars of stink from

the city. I'm going to offer eco-freaks the opportunity to blow them up. I'll be offering excitement, squalor and violence. Just like a third-world vacation. Then, if that works --

MADISON: I'm not offering you fantasy money, you alcoholic imbecile! (BUTCH TAKES A STEP) I am doing this for Hazel! (BUTCH STOPS) Excuse my outburst. You upset me. You are standing in the way of Hazel making the most important decision of her life.

BUTCH: Which is?

MADISON: The details are unimportant. We have to make a deal with some gentlemen in Kentucky. (CHECKS HIS WATCH) Now.

BUTCH: You're gonna sell her out.

MADISON: In some places fear is a basic drive, like hunger. The past is sacred, a religion, inviolate. A businessman makes a hard decision and the clergymen and the union organizers stop to stare. 'Look,' they say, 'He's wearing a necklace made of children's ears.' I am not a clergyman.

BUTCH: No, you're a poet.

MADISON: I do what must be done.

BUTCH: That's some partnership you two got going there.

MADISON: Hard decisions must be made. It's for her own good.

BUTCH: I've heard that line somewhere before. Last election, I guess. How much? (MADISON RUNS SOME NUMBERS UP ON ANOTHER POCKET CALCULATOR. BUTCH LOOKS THEM OVER) Pretty.

MADISON: Extremely attractive.

BUTCH: You asked me if I loved Hazel. What does she gain?

MADISON: Everything she ever wanted.

BUTCH: And if I keep digging trenches?

MADISON: The numbers on the screen? Multiply them by zero. That's what she would be left with. I do not have the time to wait for her to recover from her recent illness.

BUTCH: Ah. Friendly fire.

MADISON: Pardon?

BUTCH: Friendly fire. It's nothing. (HE POCKETS THE CALCULATOR. MADISON SMILES, OFFERS A HANDSHAKE. BUTCH DOES NOT MOVE. MADISON EXITS. BUTCH GOES INTO THE HOUSE AND SITS AT THE TABLE WITH DEL AND EDNA)

EDNA: (COLDLY) Why?

DEL: The North Vietnamese--

EDNA: No bullshit!

DEL: Cigarettes 'n' beer aren't a life.

EDNA: And no riddles.

DEL: I'm bored.

EDNA: And you can start making sense any time at all now.

DEL: I am making sense.

EDNA: You're bored.

DEL: I'm dying of it.

EDNA: Fine choice of words.

DEL: Look, it's done, let's get on with the good news.

EDNA: I deserve an explanation.

DEL: I gave you one.

EDNA: Boredom? Bullshit.

DEL: That's all I've got. Why did Dad go to Korea?

EDNA: Because he was a goddamn fool and I guess it runs in the blood.

DEL: You don't mean that. About him.

EDNA: Don't tell me what I mean.

DEL: He was a hero.

EDNA: Where'd you get that idea?

DEL: From you.

EDNA: Hero? Fool? I get the words mixed up, four letters each, you know. I was never much of a speller.

DEL: Ma --

EDNA: Did they send you a letter? Give it to me.

(A MOMENT OF STANDOFF. THEN DEL HANDS IT TO EDNA. SHE TEARS IT UP)

DEL: (SOFTLY) That won't change anything.

EDNA: I won't let you go. I'll tell them you're insane.
(DEL SMILES) I'll break your legs.

DEL: No, you won't.

EDNA: With a baseball bat.

DEL: Forget it.

EDNA: I'll tell them you're a queer.

DEL: They already checked.

EDNA: I'll say you just started.

DEL: A nice try.

EDNA: I'll pay someone to say he's your boyfriend.

DEL: That won't work.

EDNA: Vietnam. Could you even find it on a map?

DEL: I don't have to fly the plane.

EDNA: Don't smart-arse me. We got goddamn Yankees lined up three deep so they don't have to go to that place and you turn around and ask to go. Do you have rocks in your head? Rocks? Muskeg? What? Bored? Jesus H. Christ. Rocks in the goddamn head. Why can't you be like everybody else who wants to leave, piss off to Sudbury or Windsor, get a shitty job and come home for a visit every third Christmas? Christ, Vietnam! People are dying there. Have you forgotten that? Have you forgotten your father?

DEL: I remember.

EDNA: No. You can't remember and hand me that letter.

DEL: I remember the telegram. I remember 21 nights running you didn't go to bed. Twenty-one. I remember. I counted. I remember 21 days of Campbell's canned tomato soup. Twenty-one days of cigarette smoke in the kitchen. Twenty-one days of laundry on the floor.

EDNA: Then what?

DEL: I came home from school on the 22nd day and the kids were cleaned up, there was laundry on the line, the floors were scrubbed and supper was on the stove.

EDNA: Then what? (SHORT PAUSE) Then I kicked your arse for swearing in the street where the whole neighbourhood could hear.

DEL: Yeah, I guess you did.

EDNA: I did.

DEL: And we were back to normal.

EDNA: (TURNS TO HIM SLOWLY, SAYS QUIETLY) And that, my blue-eyed child, is where your memory is wrong.

DEL: Not normal but --

EDNA: Not normal, not normal, never again normal, blue-eyed child, eat, sleep, school, play, church, yes, but never ever never again ... normal.

DEL: OK.

EDNA: No. It's not OK. Not then. Not now. Not tomorrow. Never. Understand me? It's not OK,

ever. We were never normal again. (DEL STARTS TO LEAVE. SHE PUSHES HIM DOWN IN HIS SEAT) You stay put. You're not going anywhere until this is fixed. (DEL SITS BACK DOWN. BUTCH LEAVES THE TABLE AND CRANKS THE "FRIENDLY FIRE" TAPE TO THE MAXIMUM. HE CROSSES TO THE WING AND STARES OFF-STAGE. HE COMES BACK TO CENTRE AND LOWERS THE VOLUME TO A REASONABLE LEVEL)

BUTCH: Irritating, isn't it? Depressing even. C'mon. C'mon. That's it. (HE GOES BACK TO WORK RAISING THE FOURTH WALL OF THE HOUSE. HAZEL ENTERS. SHE SNAPS THE TAPE OFF) Where do you think you are? Home?

HAZEL: Can't you leave anything alone, you morbid fuck?

BUTCH: I've left things alone for too long. (HE TURNS THE TAPE BACK ON. LOW VOLUME) So have you.

HAZEL: What battle are you re-fighting now?

BUTCH: You say what Madison says. I guess you see what Madison sees. Good trick. He's trained you well.

HAZEL: Kiss my ass.

BUTCH: But then all the children in our family learned to listen well. Who did we get that from? Certainly not from Mom. She took orders from no one. So my analysis ... (HE LAUGHS) ... analysis ... Madison's

getting to me too ... my analysis is that we got our gullibility genes from Dad.

HAZEL: Leave him alone.

BUTCH: Another crack in the ice.

HAZEL: He's not doing you any harm. Leave him alone.

BUTCH: Gullible. Blind. And in the end ... ridiculous.

HAZEL: Butch!

BUTCH: I've been waiting a long time to say that.

HAZEL: Shut your mouth. Butch, just shut your fucking mouth. He wasn't ridiculous. He was more of a man than you. Christ, mom was more of a man than you'll ever be.

BUTCH: You're partly right. But she was actually tougher than any man. Our old man, he took the hook right into his guts, swallowing that little minnow about what? Democracy, communism, America? That little minnow right down into his guts. The only one who wouldn't eat the minnow was mom. The old man took it. Del took it. You took it. I took it for 20 years. That's what they've been feeding us on. Minnows. I'm tired of the diet. Aren't you? You'd leave, Hazel, but I've hooked you too, and you just can't spit that hook out of your mouth. (HE JERKS HIS HANDS AS IF SETTING A HOOK) I'm just setting it now. You're coming into the boat. Oct. 17, 1951.

Dad sends the following postcard from Korea.
'Bullshit. Bullshit. Bullshit. Bullshit.
Bullshit.' Then three lines are scratched out.
Then. 'If either of the boys thinks about fighting
in any war at all I will kill him myself. Love,
Dad.' (PAUSE) The second sentence is clear. War
was worse than dying. But what about the first
part? 'Bullshit. Bullshit. Bullshit. Bullshit.
Bullshit.' What do you think he was talking about?
The food?

HAZEL: Let him die.

BUTCH: Keep him dead, you mean.

HAZEL: Wasn't once enough?

BUTCH: No. Not enough. Once too often. Bullshit.
Bullshit. Bullshit. Bullshit. Bullshit.

HAZEL: If you miss him, just say it. There's nothing wrong
with that.

BUTCH: That hoe-head, that glutton for punishment, that
dumb bunny? I don't miss him. You know who I do
miss? Del. (HE LOOKS TO SEE IF SHE REACTS) Del is
the guy I do miss. It's the old man's fault Del
isn't here. The old man ran away. Listened to the
voice of America and crawled off to Korea, snuck out
the window one night when we were all asleep. One
last lousy postcard admitting that it was all

bullshit -- too late. He got his liver blown out the next day. They lied to him. He listened. He lied to us -- except for that postcard -- and we listened to him. Del especially. We listened to him and we took the shaft right through the head, ear to ear. (FROM THE TRUNK HE TAKES OUT ONE OF THOSE GAG ARROWS THAT GO IN ONE SIDE OF THE HEAD AND COME OUT THE OTHER. HE PUTS IT ON) Remember this, Hazel? No? This is us listening to the bullshit that leaked out the old man's ear. (PAUSE) He has to be set straight.

HAZEL: Butch?

BUTCH: He took a wrong turn.

HAZEL: Butch.

BUTCH: I figured out a way to fix it.

HAZEL: Butch!

BUTCH: Get him back on track.

HAZEL: I swear to Christ I'll do the lobotomy myself.

BUTCH: Back on track. A railroad pun. Get it?

HAZEL: He's dead!

BUTCH: Who's dead?

HAZEL: The old man.

BUTCH: I know that.

HAZEL: (A LITTLE MORE CONFUSED THAN USUAL) Well. Good.

BUTCH: I'm talking about Del.

HAZEL: He's dead. Dad. Mom. Del, too. Everybody.

BUTCH: You know what your problem is? You're gullible. You trust your buddy Madison. You trusted Del. You're going to end up with nothing. Again.

HAZEL: I can't follow your nonsense.

BUTCH: No. But you can feel it. You can feel the house going up. Feel it filling up. You can feel the lies the family swallowed like minnows 20, 30, 40 years ago. And you can feel that I know something about Del. And you're almost certain that I know something about Madison. You think I'm a lunatic? Wrong.

HAZEL: You need help.

BUTCH: I got help. The minute you arrived.

HAZEL: (QUIETLY) Are you planning to kill me?

BUTCH: (TAKEN COMPLETELY OFF GUARD) Hazel ... when ... my God ... is ... I ... this is going all wrong.

HAZEL: You have a grudge against me? Or some sicko sex thing, maybe?

BUTCH: Don't be disgusting.

HAZEL: Maybe you'd like to kill me, chop me into spoon-sized pieces and jam me into your trunk of memories.

BUTCH: Jesus Christ!

HAZEL: And drop me in the Kebesquasheshing River for my crimes against the family.

BUTCH: Stop it!

HAZEL: Was that a crime, leaving some place that had only two or three years left? Is that why you hate me? The town was finished. I wasn't around to help you and mom turn off the lights. Is that a crime?

BUTCH: I don't hate you. Madison hates you. I don't hate you. Madison does. You're confusing yourself again. I know about Kentucky.

HAZEL: Fuck Kentucky.

BUTCH: He offered me money. A wheelbarrow full.

HAZEL: You should take it.

BUTCH: All I have to do is stop reminding you about things like ... home. (CONTINUING QUICKLY) You don't have any kids, do you?

HAZEL: Like a goddamn pinball machine, bing, zoom, tilt.

BUTCH: I don't blame you really. If I'd known the cities were going to turn into piss-pots I wouldn't have had them either. I thought I was building a home. I tried, too. To build a home. About 20 years I tried. Couldn't make it. People don't make homes there ... my wife didn't want a home ... she was making ... an investment. Investments. That's what we do now. You must have known that. That's why

you never had any kids. You always could see the clearest, the furthest of any of us. Madison's lying to you, though. I don't know how you missed that.

HAZEL: I can take care of Madison. Forget him.

BUTCH: Madison's the cotter pin that holds this whole mess together. The thing's all wrong. I had hoped we would become friends again first. But you still don't trust me.

HAZEL: Bingo.

BUTCH: Under the B. Basement. Do you remember --

HAZEL: No.

BUTCH: When Mom wanted something from the basement, potatoes maybe, or to hit the re-set button on the furnace. I wouldn't go.

HAZEL: You wouldn't go alone.

BUTCH: I think it was the old coats hanging from the stringers. Out of the corner of your eye, in that swaying 40-watt light, it was like someone was hanging there. Dad's railway uniforms. And then later on, Del's winter parka and his hunting jacket. It was like the two of them were hanging in that damp old basement. The old man and Del. Night and day.

HAZEL: (SADLY) Can nothing rest in that mind of yours?

(BUTCH GOES TO THE TAPE MACHINE AND TURNS THE FRIENDLY FIRE TAPE ON. IT PROVIDES A LOW, RUMBLING SOUNDTRACK)

BUTCH: We can't hear the town, but we can hear this.

HAZEL: Please turn that thing off.

BUTCH: I need something from the basement.

HAZEL: Turn it off! (SHE TRIES TO DO IT HERSELF. BUTCH STOPS HER) You sick bastard. You're listening to him die, understand that, you're listening to him get blown to pieces. Don't you care? Are you that far gone? Butch. He's our brother. Turn it off!

BUTCH: Alright. We're in the basement now. Smell the mildew? Hear the water run down the waste pipe? See the bag of potatoes, a thousand eyes growing through the burlap? Remember the riddle? Remember?!

HAZEL: No.

BUTCH: (A SING-SONG, DANGEROUS) 'Cut me up in pieces, bury me alive the young ones will live, the old ones will die.'
(PAUSE) Just a harmless riddle about potatoes. What are you afraid of? (DOESN'T WAIT FOR AN ANSWER) Hear the furnace. Smell the oil. One 40-watt bulb dangles from the stringers in the centre of the room. Give it a push, Hazel, make those

shadows dance, get those skeletons jiggling, Hazel, let them go, watch them do the hootchie-koo. (HAZEL HAS NOT MOVED) Do it!

(HAZEL SWINGS THE BULB. THE STAGE LIGHTS DIM AND THE STAGE IS SWINGING WITH SHADOWS FROM THE BULB -- MOTHER, DEL, THE FRAMEWORK OF THE HOUSE)

BUTCH: There's Dad's railway uniform. And there. Beside him. There's Del. See him? There's Del.

HAZEL: Del's clothes!

BUTCH: Del! Not his suit, not his parka, not his hunting jacket. Del in the flesh.

HAZEL: Butch, he's --

BUTCH: And right beside dear brother Del is your buddy Madison. See him? See his seven hundred dollar suit? See his tie that'd pay somebody's rent for a week? See his shirt that'd feed a family of six for the weekend? What the hell is Madison doing in our basement? That's a good friggen question. What the hell is Madison doing in our basement? Look closely now. He's ... he's whispering in Del's ear? Whispering. Yes. Can you hear him? No? Sounds like ... Kentucky. No. Not like Kentucky. Sounds like ... Key ... West. That's it. Key West. Madison's saying something about Key West. Hear them now? Kentucky. Key West. Kentucky. Key

West. The two of them in our basement. Like fucking termites. Eating away at the post and beams. Like frost, cracking the foundation. Like sewage backing up in the pipe. Fucking cold, stinking termites. The whole house collapses. (HE GRABS THE SWINGING LIGHT. THE SHADOWS FREEZE. LIGHTS RESTORE) Del's alive. He runs a bait shop and fishing charter outfit in Key West. Been there since '71. I don't know where he was between Tet and '71. Probably shacked up in Thailand or the Philippines. But he's been in Key West for 25 years. He's got a nice tan. (HE TAKES SEVERAL PHOTOS OUT OF HIS POCKET) Here. Look. (LONG PAUSE. HAZEL FINALLY TAKES THE PHOTOS. ANOTHER PAUSE)

HAZEL: Del?

BUTCH: He says "hi".

HAZEL: Hi?

BUTCH: After Mom died, he sent a short letter. Said he was sorry that he couldn't see any of us. We were over for him. Something like that. It was a very crazy letter. Like Dad's. I think our Del took a little too much heat in Vietnam. Not as much as Nita. Just enough to brown him on one side.

HAZEL: And this? (SHE CRANKS THE FRIENDLY FIRE TAPE BACK TO FULL VOLUME)

BUTCH: (TURNS IT DOWN) It's probably real. But it has nothing to do with Del. (DEL AND EDNA HAVE NOT LEFT THE HOUSE)

DEL: Even Nita wants me to go.

EDNA: You got a girlfriend who wants you to go to Vietnam? Get rid of her.

DEL: She likes men in uniform.

EDNA: Jesus, how can anyone get so ignorant? That war isn't a Boy Scout jamboree.

DEL: She knows that.

EDNA: You bring her over for supper tonight.

DEL: We're busy tonight.

EDNA: You bring her. I want to talk to her.

DEL: You stay out of it.

EDNA: I want to read her some of your father's letters from Korea.

DEL: She's not coming over.

EDNA: I'll read the parts where he says he puked every morning and shit himself when the fighting came at night. Doesn't she want to know that?

DEL: We've talked it all over.

EDNA: All. What do you know about 'all'? The 'all' the goddamn TV tells you? The newspaper 'all'? The

newspapers don't come smeared in puke and blood, little Del. This isn't good guys and bad guys after four, little Del -- does she know that?

DEL: Yes.

EDNA: How does she know?

DEL: She knows. She's not stupid. She can read between the lines in the papers.

EDNA: I'll give you something to read. (SHE GOES TO THE TRUNK TO RETRIEVE SOME LETTERS. SHE HOLDS THEM OUT FOR DEL)

DEL: It won't do any good.

EDNA: Read the letters, Del. That picture on the wall, the fireman with the big arms and the sparkle in his eye? The man you remember as your Dad? Read the letters, Del. That man evaporated in 8 months. Read the letters. Memorize them. I have.

DEL: I've heard it all in the Legion. The same old thing. Beer and B.S.

EDNA: Your father talking. To you. Beer and B.S.?

DEL: With a good story those guys drink all afternoon.

EDNA: Your father isn't sitting in the Legion Hall. Is that what you and Nita think, they all come back to work on their beer bellies in the Legion? Does she think you've got some kind of guarantee on your

scrawny little hide? (SHE GRABS HIM BY THE SHIRT)
Del. (HOLD. SHE TURNS AWAY)

DEL: She bought me a flag.

EDNA: A what?

DEL: A shiny new maple leaf. To fly over camp.

EDNA: Red and goddamn white. A target in the green
jungle. (PAUSE) I guess she'll put on a Santa
Claus suit for your funeral.

(HAZEL CONTINUES)

HAZEL: He's alive?

BUTCH: The bastard.

HAZEL: In Key West?

BUTCH: The prick.

HAZEL: Fishing tuna?

BUTCH: The fucker.

HAZEL: That bastard.

BUTCH: Yes.

HAZEL: Brilliant.

BUTCH: What?

HAZEL: Del. He's a fucking genius.

BUTCH: What the hell do you mean by that?

HAZEL: You don't get it, do you?

BUTCH: (ALARMED) Get what? (HAZEL TIPS OVER SEVERAL
MARKERS) Get what? (BUTCH CRANKS THE TAPE UP
AGAIN, SCREAMS TO BE HEARD OVER THE NOISE) What is

it that I don't get? (MADISON ENTERS. HE LOOKS AT THE TWO OF THEM, THEN HE SWITCHES OFF THE MACHINE)

MADISON: Boys and girls. Boys and girls. Must you make such a racket? You're damaging a very splendid afternoon.

HAZEL: It's nothing, Madison. Butch just fell down the basement stairs. He skinned his knees. (SHE GOES INTO THE HOUSE FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE THE FIRST SCENE) Son of a bitch. You crazy son of a bitch.

MADISON: Hazel? Hazel? (SHE IGNORES HIM. TO BUTCH) What did you do to her?

BUTCH: I told her.

MADISON: Told her what?

BUTCH: (THROWS THE CALCULATOR AT HIM) I told her that 10 minutes ago you cut a deal with the boys in Kentucky.

MADISON: You had no right.

BUTCH: I got more rights than you want me to have.

MADISON: You have nothing. (MADISON GOES INTO THE HOUSE)

BUTCH: Wrong, Madison. We got our house back. (HE CLIMBS A LADDER AND LEANS OVER THE UPSTAGE WALL OF THE HOUSE) Good luck.

MADISON: Butch. Please.

BUTCH: You're in my house.

MADISON: (TURNING BACK TO HAZEL) What did he say?

HAZEL: He told me stories.

BUTCH: You wouldn't be interested.

MADISON: Can't you just go away?

BUTCH: My house. My rules.

MADISON: It's a little late to discover your backbone.

BUTCH: Dead's too late. You haven't killed me yet.

MADISON: Hazel. It's time to leave.

BUTCH: Blitzkrieg.

MADISON: (TO HAZEL) We have certain matters to clarify.

BUTCH: You have an air-strike to call in, oops, wrong co-ordinates, aw gee, friendly fire, another clear-cut Martian desert to add to your collection.

MADISON: Hazel.

HAZEL: Madison, shut the fuck up, Jesus Christ. I just gained a brother.

MADISON: I didn't realize your horizons were so limited.

BUTCH: Del's alive.

MADISON: I'm glad.

BUTCH: He says 'hi.'

MADISON: That's wonderful.

BUTCH: How's Kentucky Corp. doing, Madison? Are they still interested? Clock's ticking.

HAZEL: Fuck Kentucky.

MADISON: Don't go feminine on me now, don't go waving any flags. You'll end up building a mausoleum alongside

your brother. You've come too far to do something as silly as that.

BUTCH: Sounds like he's modelled you out of plasticine. You should be polite. Kneel before your creator.

HAZEL: Shut up.

BUTCH: Or a dog. Roll over now. Good girl. Hazel want a tummy rub? Through the hoop now, Hazel! (PAUSE) You remind me of someone. Who could it be? How about Del? Yeah. That's it. Del couldn't have found Vietnam on a map with both hands and a search light, but someone told him a story about how the real world worked and how he had to take his place in the machine. He couldn't tell the difference between communism and the common fucking cold, the Pentagon from Pepsi-Cola or imperialism from impotence. But he went, took their stories hook, line, sinker, rod, reel, boat, motor -- swallowed everything down to the life jackets. Del would understand Kentucky. He cut himself a deal, good for him, bad for us. Nita didn't do so hot. Dad did worse. That happens when the rules are fluid. Right, Madison? Or are rules another form of nostalgia? (HE COMES DOWN OFF THE LADDER)

MADISON: I'm going to make you a rich woman.

HAZEL: I am a rich woman.

MADISON: Are you?

HAZEL: I am.

MADISON: I know we have a deal. But our little parliament was always meant to be -- informal. I have taken the liberty to make arrangements with Kentucky Corp.

HAZEL: You have, have you?

(BUTCH IS BEHIND MADISON)

MADISON: I was forced to act alone. You wouldn't listen.

BUTCH: This drill, Madison. 9.2 volts. 1100 rpm's. A little slower with a bit like this, 1 inch spade. Bores a nice clean hole. It's a useful tool, Madison. It doesn't whine. It builds. If I stuck it in your throat ... and squeezed the trigger ... I guess I could haul a vein right out of your body, the long blue worm twisting round and round the bit, yards of it. I should do that. Maybe you'd understand that kind of talk. I don't know what else to say to a guy who pisses on everything he touches.

MADISON: Shall we discuss this like citizens of the 21st Century? Hazel.

BUTCH: Here it comes. The political weaseling. Wait for it. A speech like he's running for office.

MADISON: Public office? And become a butler in my own house? No, thank you. (TURNS TO HAZEL) I know that we

agreed to certain formalities, love. But sometimes the reality takes precedence over pretence. We understand this in a democracy. Power may corrupt but absolute power is ... essential. Sometimes democracy needs to be insulated from discussion, Hazel. I hope you are not too upset. But we are going to be very, very happy people.

HAZEL: I am satisfied.

MADISON: A synonym for complacency. The situation demanded a change in strategy.

BUTCH: Past tense. You see? He's done it.

HAZEL: He's done nothing.

BUTCH: You could be with a man like this for 200 years, a thousand years, and he'd still throw you out the window like a pot of piss. (BUTCH JABS THE DRILL BIT IN MADISON'S NECK)

BUTCH: Kneel down, my pirate friend. (HAS TO JAB HIM AGAIN) Thatta boy. I wish I could be more eloquent. This will have to do. (BUTCH ATTEMPTS TO URINATE ON MADISON)

HAZEL: Butch.

BUTCH: I'm trying to concentrate.

HAZEL: Butch!

BUTCH: He brought the bulldozers in on you. Friendly fire.

HAZEL: 'A': He likes that kind of thing. Or used to. You know. AIDS and all.

BUTCH: It's impossible to shame a thing like you, isn't it. I ought to unscrew the veins in your throat.

HAZEL: 'B': (SHE CROSSES TO HIM AND DECKS HIM. SHE LEANS OVER HIM) And 'C': I am in control of my life.

BUTCH: Wrong. (SHE SLAPS HIM) Wrong. (SLAPS HIM AGAIN) Wrong. (AGAIN) Wrong. (HAZEL WALKS AWAY IN DISGUST) You didn't read the fine print.

HAZEL: Shut up, Butch.

BUTCH: (QUOTING) 'This life, issued to the holder, is the property of the institution. This life is subject to revocation for violation of regulations.' It's the fine print on your birth certificate.

HAZEL: You are insane. Do you know that?

BUTCH: I have a home. What do you have? (LONG PAUSE) You can have your old room back.

HAZEL: Jesus Christ.

BUTCH: And Del can have his room back. And then we can start all over.

HAZEL: Jesus H. Christ.
(DEL CONTINUES)

DEL: What are you going to do?

EDNA: I don't want your blood money, your Judas silver.

DEL: I'm offering a way out of here.

EDNA: One. I never said I wanted out of here. Two. The price of the ticket makes me sick.

DEL: New Orleans. San Francisco.

EDNA: I know fancy places too. The Yalu River. Inchon. Hospital ships off of Seoul. I didn't like the price of that ticket either. Have you thought of that?

DEL: Yes.

EDNA: Have you?

DEL: It's me that's going. Not you or the kids. My neck. Not yours. Don't talk to me about the price. I'll be paying it.

EDNA: No one asked you for a goddamn thing.

DEL: Jesus. You've been crying poor mouth for 10 friggen years. What the hell was that? Noise to keep you company the way you leave a radio on to keep a puppy quiet? But I listened. It wasn't noise to me. I took it seriously. About the fucking government --

EDNA: Don't start that gutter language until you're --

DEL: -- about the fucking government holding up the pension because he was listed as missing, about the pennies the CPR doled out to you on widow's allowance. Scraping and cutting corners and making do. Christ. Regular as Sundays, bitch and moan and whine. The only thing that surprises me is that I

didn't take to robbing banks to shut you up. You know what I say when I hear some young guy complain about his parents rattling on about the Depression? I tell them they're lucky. The Depression in my family never ended -- every day it seems to get worse. Baloney and macaroni. Rummage sales. Peeling paint and faded linoleum. Day old bread. You never shut up about any of it. If you hadda laid off with the bellyaching we never would have noticed we were broke.

EDNA: You'd have noticed all right, you noticed your bikes weren't new. You noticed --

DEL: OK. We noticed. But we wouldn't have cared. Don't you know Hazel's jokes about Christmas morning, how you cut holes in our pockets so we all had something to play with?

EDNA: That's a filthy ... If I complained it's because I wanted you to have more.

DEL: You wanted more. You. And you're going to get more. The Grea. Depression, 1952 to 1967 is officially over. It took another war to get the economy going in this house again but I found that war. It's not a pretty war, it's not clean and clear like going after Hitler, but it's a war and it'll do the trick. You can quit crying poor mouth

just about any time now and wait for the cheques.
They'll be in the mail at the end of every month.

EDNA: Lance a boil and look what pus streams out. You scratch at the floor like a guilty dog trying to hide your mess before anyone can point the finger at you.

DEL: The finger isn't pointing at me.

EDNA: Turn it around, turn it around again, pass the blame as fast as you can, maybe no-one will notice. For me? You're doing something for me? What the hell happened to you? Did you undergo some kind of conversion on the road to the beer parlour last night? You're going to do something for someone else for a change?

DEL: That's right.

EDNA: If I had a dollar for every promise --

DEL: It's not a promise. It's a gamble. Do you want in?
(NO ANSWER) C'mon, ma. Lead, follow, or get out of the way.

EDNA: Alright, Del. Enough of that smirking tone, this is still my house.

DEL: Read the letter. You're barely a tenant.

EDNA: This is my home.

DEL: You're a guest who's stayed too long.

EDNA: Del.

DEL: You've been told to leave.

EDNA: Del!

DEL: There's one way to keep the place.

EDNA: No.

DEL: Then you'd better buy a tent. Jesus. (LONG PAUSE)

EDNA: (STANDS. DIGNIFIED) I'll buy a tent. If that's what it takes. You keep your U.S. Army dollars. We don't need them.

DEL: You need them.

EDNA: Yes. I need them. But I won't take a penny.

DEL: The house will be sold.

EDNA: I'll figure it out.

DEL: Jesus, ma, it's a bank. You're not up against some old ladies on the church committee.

EDNA: Old ladies built this community. I wouldn't spit on us from too great a height if I were you. You snot-nosed kids think you invented the world. You wanna be so goddamn conceited, you better start earning it. It's easy to run from something. It's easy to take a thing apart. You put one thing together, Del, one thing, and I'll grant you your conceited snot-nosed B.S. One thing. (HE IS SILENT) You don't remember the silk trains. Number one priority from Vancouver to Montreal. Before rayon and all that stuff. Pure, raw Chinese silk,

big bucks, armed guards, the fastest trains in the country. Even Mackenzie King took the siding one night for a silk train. That was my father's favourite story. That sawed-off little criminal of a Prime Minister sitting in a siding waiting for a freight train to pass.

DEL: The silk trains are gone.

EDNA: (CONTINUING) And the men who rode them. You never saw anybody walk so tall, so much swagger and stroll after a run like that. They were so pretty.

DEL: The silk trains are gone.

EDNA: Yeah. Yeah, they're gone. But the men who worked them -- they were proud people. All you got is your conceit.

DEL: Be careful, old lady. You're on thin ice.

EDNA: (STOMPS HER FOOT THREE TIMES) I can swim, pup. But I won't swim in blood.

(HAZEL CONTINUES)

HAZEL: (TO MADISON) Let's get going, sweet cheeks.

(MADISON, STILL LYING ON THE GROUND, DOESN'T MOVE)

BUTCH: (STILL ON HIS BACK) He's screwing you.

HAZEL: You're a slow one, little brother. We aren't on our way to Kentucky. We're going to Japan. The paper work came through (SHE CHECKS THE DATE ON HER WATCH) four days ago.

MADISON: What?

HAZEL: Japan, baby, Japan. I did the dirty deal, beat you to the punch. I figured you were going to pull something.

MADISON: I don't believe you.

HAZEL: Don't fuck with a Lake Superior hillbilly. (SHE CURTSIES)

BUTCH: You, too? Like the rest of them?

(MADISON STARTS TO GIGGLE)

HAZEL: Me, too. (SHE CROSSES TO MADISON AND PUTS HER FOOT ON HIS CROTCH) I learned a new saying: "Commondare e meglio fotterre." "Ruling is better than fucking." Get dressed, Madison. There is nothing we can do for my little brother.

MADISON: Japan? My God, how she learns. You're magnificent. Japan. Did we do very ...?

HAZEL: Very.

MADISON: Ruling is better than fucking. Magnificent.

BUTCH: What about Del?

HAZEL: What about him?

BUTCH: He's alive!

HAZEL: I'm glad.

BUTCH: He's been hiding for 20 years!

HAZEL: Like I said, you don't get it. You build Disneyland here, you leave your kids to come and build

Disneyland. Why? For me? For Del? We don't want it. Why do you think we left in the first place?

MADISON: Commondere e meglio fotterre.

BUTCH: Because --

HAZEL: Good answer, kid. But we left because we hated it.

BUTCH: Liar!

HAZEL: Hated every second in this fucking shit house. Every minute dead or dying. Nothing but the sound of the world passing by. All those pretty boys turning 18 and working on the road -- senile by 25. Booze and babies, babies and booze. Thanks but no thanks. Christ. And you want to rebuild that?

BUTCH: I don't see it that way.

MADISON: Magnificent. Ruling is better ...

HAZEL: No. You got too much of the old lady in you.

MADISON: (SUDDENLY WORRIED, HE SITS UP) You aren't going to stop ... loving me, are you?

HAZEL: I haven't started fucking you yet. We better get going. I'll meet you at the car.

MADISON: (GETS UP) Magnificent. (TO BUTCH) Whoever gave you the name 'Butch' must have had a sense of humour. In the end, and unlike your sister, you are much too soft to make the really hard decisions. (HE URINATES ON THE HOUSE, THEN EXITS, HUMMING HAPPILY)

HAZEL: If the old lady was alive she'd come back here. You shoulda tried to reach her.

BUTCH: She's dead.

HAZEL: Del stayed away for 20 years. He isn't coming home. Neither am I.

BUTCH: Then you're dead too.

HAZEL: Go home. Go to your kids. (SHE EXITS. PAUSE. BUTCH IS STILL ON HIS BACK. EDNA HAS BEEN WATCHING THIS SCENE CLOSELY. WHEN HAZEL EXITS, SHE FOCUSES ON BUTCH. HE REACHES FOR A PIECE OF 2x4 AND STARTS KNOCKING DOWN MARKERS. HE CUTS DOWN A LARGE SWATH OF CLEAR SPACE. EDNA SMILES IN ENCOURAGEMENT. HE EXHAUSTS HIMSELF. HE LIES IN THE CLEARING. DEL CONTINUES)

DEL: I'm doing it for you.

EDNA: (PAWING AT THE FLOOR WITH HER FOOT) Scratch. Scratch. Scratch. But the dirt isn't getting buried.

DEL: You'll keep the house. What's so dirty about that?

EDNA: You don't care damn all about this place.

DEL: I'm going to Vietnam so you can keep this goddamn barn.

EDNA: If you want to be a hero go shoot a bank manager, go shoot the CPR bosses who took your job. Go shoot the politicians who gave the CPR half the country

and then watched them start killing the trains because the CPR wasn't making enough goddamn money. What is it with you men? Only when it comes to war do you fight. You get all patriotic and fight. The rest of the time it's impossible to get you to give a good goddamn about anybody but yourselves. (PAUSE. QUIETLY) You don't give a shit about Vietnam. You're going overseas so you can hunt human beings. The uniform's just a license to poach humans.

DEL: Jesus H. Christ.

EDNA: I guess you're tired of the four-legged kind.

DEL: Do you know what you're saying?

EDNA: Was I being vague?

DEL: Is that what you said to Dad? That he was a killer?

EDNA: I should have taken the butcher knife and cut his trigger finger off at the elbow.

DEL: (TAKES OUT HIS POCKET KNIFE AND OPENS IT) Here. (OFFERS IT) Here. You think I'm a murderer. Stop me. C'mon. Stop me. C'mon. Cut my hand off. C'mon! Before I go and poach some children.

(EDNA MOVES TO TAKE THE KNIFE. HE PULLS IT AWAY)
The butcher knives are in the drawer. You can get my fingers while I'm sleeping.

EDNA: You think I won't.

DEL: You won't.

EDNA: Why shouldn't I?

DEL: I'm your son.

EDNA: Another license.

DEL: I'm not out for blood.

EDNA: What are you going to do overseas? Flip hamburgers?

DEL: Maybe. They have to feed those guys you know. Maybe they'll give me a tow truck to drive, make me a pencil pusher, a radio man, a medic, I don't know. They're not all John Wayne, 'boom boom'. Maybe I'll be the friggen mail man. You cut my fingers off and I won't be able to tie up the goddamn parcels. Ma. Dad was in the front lines. I probably won't be. There's an even chance I can get close enough to a combat zone to get my brownies without shooting anything more than the breeze. An even chance. I've done my homework. One year in a combat zone and I'm an American citizen. That's the deal-- one year -- New Orleans -- citizen of the republic.

EDNA: You're a bigger goddamn fool than I gave you credit for.

DEL: One year. Sounds like a deal to me.

EDNA: You'd kill people for a --

DEL: No one said --

EDNA: -- for a passport? You got a passport. You'd kill for a thing like that? What the hell is wrong with you?

DEL: No one said I had to kill people and there's nothing wrong with me. This country is finished. That's what's wrong. You can get out while the getting is good or you can go down with the barge. I'm getting out.

EDNA: (QUIETLY) You're making a deal with the devil. You goddamn little fool!

DEL: There's no devil, ma. Just fat men down south pushing pencils. Between 9 a.m. and coffee break -- bingo -- my life isn't mine any more. I want to run my own life. Is that such a terrible thing to do?

EDNA: Did you say ruin your own life?

DEL: Run. I said run.

EDNA: You'll run it alright. But somebody else will pay for it.

DEL: I've been paying. I'm tired of paying. Aren't you tired, too? Haven't you paid enough? Haven't Butch and Hazel paid enough. No father. No house. No future. What about them? What are you doing for them? (GOES TO THE WINDOW) Telling them stories about the silk trains, about the goddamn glory days doesn't cut it when your furniture is parked in the

street. Look at them out there. You'd think they were the bastard children of John Alcoholic MacDonald.

EDNA: Shut up.

DEL: Suckered, ma. Suckered. The country's a hundred years old, big bucks, big deal. But this town and a thousand like it are going down the sewer. And up on Parliament Hill all those school kids will be singing 'One little, two little, three little provinces.' Jesus H. Christ! How stupid are we?

EDNA: It's faith, Del. Something I guess you never ha . I feel sorry for you.

DEL: Faith. Jesus. In what?

EDNA: Faith. When you say there is no past in this country, you're saying this family never existed. You're saying it will not exist. (SHE CROSSES TO HIM AND LOOKS HIM IN THE EYE) Bullshit to you, too. (THERE IS NOTHING LEFT TO SAY. DEL GOES OUTSIDE AND BREATHES IN THE MORNING AIR. HE HAS A STASH OF BEER UNDER THE HOUSE. BUTCH "FEELS" HIS WAY INTO THE MEMORY. THIS IS THE ONLY TIME HE HEARS CLEARLY. HE IS EXCITED AND NERVOUS. BUT HE IS ALSO A BOY OF 12 TALKING TO HIS OLDER BROTHER.)

BUTCH: On the last day of June 1967, the forest fire was out. The Seven Day War was over. It was almost

Canada Day. (PAUSE) The fine print was still drying on our birth certificates.

DEL: How ya doin, Bu'ch? Gonna be a clear day for the parade tomorrow, eh? Hey, Butch. C'mon, sunshine. Cat got your tongue? Don't tell me you're mad at me, too. (PAUSE. NEW TACTIC. HE CRACKS ANOTHER BEER FOR HIS BROTHER) You want a beer?

BUTCH: I'm a kid!

DEL: It won't kill you.

BUTCH: I'll go to hell.

DEL: Where do you get that stuff from anyway?

BUTCH: Not from you.

DEL: (SITS WITH HIS BEER) The old lady is mad at me.

BUTCH: Mom.

DEL: Mom is mad at me.

BUTCH: What else is new?

DEL: You don't give anybody any slack, do you?

BUTCH: Hazel says I'm a sawed-off little prick.

DEL: (LAUGHS) She does, does she? (PAUSE) She's just talking. You're a good kid.

BUTCH: Yeah?

DEL: You bet.

BUTCH: What's mom mad about?

DEL: She's having trouble with the bank.

BUTCH: What does that mean?

DEL: It means Jesus needs a hearing aid.

BUTCH: You're going to hell.

DEL: In a hand basket. Here. Drink this damn beer.
It's gonna go flat.

BUTCH: Not with you around.

DEL: I'm not gonna be around.

BUTCH: You going down the lake?

DEL: The bush, yeah, sort of.

BUTCH: Can I come?

DEL: You got school.

BUTCH: You taking Hazel?

DEL: No.

BUTCH: (REALIZES) I got no school till September! (PAUSE)
How long you going for?

DEL: Until I get back. Not a second sooner.

BUTCH: You coming back?

DEL: You want my room while I'm gone?

BUTCH: No.

DEL: That banker giving mom a hard time. He needs a rock
through his window.

BUTCH: I don't do that kind of thing.

DEL: Jesus kicked the bankers out of the temple.

BUTCH: I'll think about it.

(EDNA HAS TAKEN A SIGN OUT OF THE TRUNK. SHE CLIMBS
THE LADDER AND NAILS IT INTO PLACE. IT SAYS 'ROOMS

FOR RENT'. SHE ALSO HANGS THE CANADIAN FLAG. NO ONE, OF COURSE, NOTICES THE CONDITION IT IS IN)

BUTCH: What does that mean?

DEL: Later.

EDNA: (JOINING THEM) That beer'll stunt your mental development, Butch. Look at your big brother. (BUTCH TRIES TO HIDE HIS BEER) Oh, go on, drink it. Tomorrow's the first of July. If you can't drink a beer on a holiday, when can you drink it? (PAUSE. ABOUT THE EVENING AIR) Quiet.

DEL: Yeah. Too quiet.

EDNA: What's that supposed to mean?

DEL: Nothing. It's a cliché from every war movie I ever saw.

EDNA: No more of that. We'll talk some more tomorrow.

DEL: Mom ...

EDNA: (FINAL) Tomorrow. (PAUSE) I was thinking that maybe the next time you go down the lake, I'd go with you. We could all go. For a change. If you don't mind.

BUTCH: You'd have to clean up the beer bottles first.

DEL: You be quiet. (TO EDNA) No. That'd be good. When do you want to go?

BUTCH: Not before the parade.

EDNA: We'll go in a couple of days. How's that?

DEL: Sure. That'd be good.

EDNA: Do you think Hazel's feeling too grown up to come down the lake with us?

DEL: She'll come. She likes it there.

BUTCH: I get to drive the boat.

EDNA: You drive the boat. (SHE LOOKS UP AT THE SIGN) Is it crooked?

BUTCH: (THE SIGN IS HUNG CROOKEDLY. HE TILTS HIS HEAD TO COMPENSATE) Mom?

EDNA: It's straight, isn't it?

BUTCH: The house is crooked. (EDNA AND BUTCH TILT THEIR HEADS FROM SIDE TO SIDE)

EDNA: Butch.

BUTCH: What?

EDNA: The town is crooked.

BUTCH: Mom?

EDNA: What?

BUTCH: The country is crooked.

EDNA: Butch?

BUTCH: What?

EDNA: The sky is crooked.

BUTCH: Mom?

EDNA: What?

BUTCH: The universe is so crooked God just skidded off. Like he fell off a roof.

EDNA: Where'd he fall off to?

BUTCH: Mom?

EDNA: What?

BUTCH: I don't know.

EDNA: No?

BUTCH: Nope.

EDNA: Can you see anything?

BUTCH: Just ...

EDNA: Yeah?

BUTCH: Just his army boots.

EDNA: Army boots?

BUTCH: And sometimes he goes stomp.

EDNA: (PERFORMS THE ACTION) Stomp. Stomp. Stomp.

BUTCH: Just like he did to Daddy in Korea.

EDNA: Hey, Butch. You don't want to think like that.

BUTCH: I have nightmares.

EDNA: Butch.

DEL: Jesus.

BUTCH: I see him walking in the snow with only one boot on.
His foot is all black and red. I see him with a
white shirt with a tie and flowers in his pocket.

EDNA: You're thinking of the wedding picture.

BUTCH: He has a gun. I hear him talking.

EDNA: You don't remember. You weren't even born yet.

BUTCH: He talked to me through your belly button. He told me jokes and stories about the guys he worked with on the railroad.

EDNA: Tell us.

BUTCH: What?

EDNA: One of the stories you heard through the belly button.

DEL: He doesn't remember anything.

BUTCH: This man gets on The Canadian at Nipigon. He's been drinking beer all day. He gets on the train and falls asleep. When he wakes up he goes to the conductor and asks if he can see his ticket. Daddy was the conductor. So Daddy goes: 'How come you want to see your ticket?' The drunk guy goes: 'If I could see my ticket then I'd know where I was going.' (LONG PAUSE) That's what I heard. If I could see my ticket then I'd know where I was going. (PAUSE) Daddy laughed. (PAUSE) It was funny. (HE LOOKS AT EDNA. SHE NODS. BUTCH GOES INTO THE HOUSE AND TAKES A PHOTO OFF THE WALL. HE PICKS UP HIS TOOL POUCH AND EXITS. EDNA LOOKS AT DEL AND SMILES.)

END