

MY FATHER'S HOUSE  
A Modesto Tragedy

A Play in Three Acts

by

Ken White

(Inspired by Actual Events)

Ken White  
1108 Wellesley Avenue  
Modesto, CA 95350-5044  
(209) 567-0600  
[Ken1White@aol.com](mailto:Ken1White@aol.com)

Cast of Characters  
(In Order of Appearance)

DOCTOR GUITAR, 32, street musician and high school classmate of MIKE PROKES.

MIKE PROKES, 31, public relations man for Peoples Temple.

JAMES WARREN JONES, 47, Founder and Pastor of Peoples Temple.

THE VIETNAM VET, 30, a white male Jonestown survivor.

THE ARTIST, 20, a white female Jonestown survivor.

THE TV REPORTER, 32, a female journalist for *NBC News*.

THE NEWSPAPER REPORTER, 35, a male journalist for *The Modesto Bee*.

THE GRANDMOTHER of a Jonestown victim, 50-something African-American.

THE GRANDFATHER of a Jonestown victim, 50-something African-American.

THE BLIND BEGGAR, 40, an African-American female Jonestown survivor.

THE TEACHER, 36, a white male high school government teacher.

THE FRIEND, 31, a white male childhood friend and college roommate of PROKES.

THE COLLEGE STUDENT, 19, a male Modesto Junior College student and reporter for *The Pirates' Log*.

THE OLD FLAME, 31, a white female high school sweetheart of PROKES.

MARY PROKES, 50, a housewife and the mother of PROKES.

THOMAS PROKES, 50, a plant manager and the father of PROKES.

THE PUNK, 31, a white male high school classmate of PROKES.

JIM JON (KIMO) PROKES, 4, the stepson of PROKES.

THE MENTOR, 43, a white male news anchor for KXTV, Channel 10.

### Time

The play begins on Thursday, March 8<sup>th</sup>, 1979, and ends the following Tuesday night, March 13<sup>th</sup>, 1979.

### Place

The action takes place in the Park Hotel in Georgetown, Guyana, Peoples Temple in San Francisco, a cemetery in Oakland, the campus of UC Berkeley, a TV studio in Sacramento, and various locations in Modesto, California, including a motel room, a classroom and the gym at Grace M. Davis High School, a bar, the student center at Modesto Junior College, a church, a street corner, Prokes's childhood home, a park, and a carnival funhouse.

### Production Notes

Although many of the locations and incidents depicted in the Play are real and the characters presented are based on, or are compilations of, real people, the characters' words and actions are a work of dramatic fiction. Other characters are totally fictional and some incidents are products of the playwright's imaginings of what might have happened in those final days.

Regarding the physical sets, the simpler the better. A few pieces to suggest time and place. It needs to be staged in such a way that every scene feels claustrophobic, as if the world is closing in. A fixture throughout will be the TV monitor up right. It will be fed with pre-recorded video segments. Music and sound effects play a critical role in setting the mood, tone, and theme for each scene.

Scene changes will employ the cast, as well as the crew. It's perfectly acceptable to witness the theatrical illusion.

ACT I

Scene 1

(Black.

A SINGER (DOCTOR GUITAR) sings the song  
"Cult of Personality" by Living Colour  
low off-stage.)

MIKE PROKES (OFF-STAGE)

They say the road to Hell is lined with good intentions.  
It's true.

(Jungle sounds. An airplane engine  
revs. A tractor idles. A shotgun  
blasts.

Lights up. Limbo set. Day. The  
pavilion at Jonestown, Guyana.

Up right, a television monitor hangs  
suspended from the ceiling. On it  
plays documentary footage from the  
Jonestown mass suicide.

Center stage, bathed in a pool of  
light, sits a green wooden cabana chair  
perched atop a white platform. Above  
it hangs a sign that reads: "Those who  
do not remember the past are condemned  
to repeat it."

Off-stage, we hear the voice of JIM  
JONES above eerie background music and  
wailing children.)

JIM JONES (ON TAPE)

"... must trust, you have to step across ... We used to  
sing: "this world, this world's not our home." Well, it  
sure isn't. ... take our life from us, we laid it down,  
we got tired. We didn't commit suicide. We committed an  
act of revolutionary suicide protesting the conditions of  
an inhumane world. ..."

(A gunshot.

Slam to black.)

ACT I

Scene 2

(Black.

Street traffic hums. A parrot squawks. A steel-drum band plays "Jingle Bells."

Lights up. Limbo set. Day. The outdoor dining room of the Park Hotel. Georgetown, Guyana. A seedy, colonial relic.

Up right, the television monitor plays news coverage of the aftermath of the Jonestown mass suicide. NBC correspondent Fred Francis reports from the scene. Center stage, bathed in a pool of light, sits three green, Adirondack-style patio chairs. A square table squats in front of the chairs.

The television monitor goes dark.

MIKE PROKES, 31, THE VIETNAM VET, 30, and THE ARTIST, 20, enter. Prokes is dressed in a Hawaiian shirt and khaki pants. The Vietnam Vet wears a jogging warm-up jacket and jeans. The Artist wears a denim skirt and white blouse.

Each gestures for the other to sit first and take the center chair. It's a Three Stooges routine. Until Prokes finally takes the middle chair.

A spot comes up on THE TV REPORTER, 32, sitting in another patio chair. She holds a steno pad and pen. Behind her stands a video camera on a tripod, pointing at the three chairs. A shotgun microphone, attached to a C-stand, booms out over the three interviewees. The TV Reporter waits for them to settle in.

All three look scared shitless.  
Stunned. Deer in the headlights.

The camera light kicks on, blasting the  
three with a bright, unmerciful light.  
They squint.)

THE TV REPORTER

Okay, let's get started. Why don't you tell me where  
you're from so we can get a sound level?

(She points at The Vietnam Vet with her  
pen.)

THE VIETNAM VET

My home is Oakland, California.

THE ARTIST

I'm from San Francisco.

PROKES

Jonestown, Guyana.

THE TV REPORTER

My backgrounder says Modesto, California.

PROKES

I was raised there. This is my home.

THE TV REPORTER

Really?

PROKES

In a previous life, I lived in California. In this life, I  
live in Jonestown.

THE TV REPORTER

Lived.

PROKES

This is my father's house.

THE VIETNAM VET

We built it.

THE ARTIST

We are his children.

THE TV REPORTER

Mike, how long have you been in protective custody?

THE VIETNAM VET

Four very long days. Me and the Carter brothers, Tim and Mike, turned ourselves in over in Port Kaituma.

THE ARTIST

The rest of us have all been here at the hotel ever since ... you know.

THE VIETNAM VET

Doing interviews. With the police and the media. And just waiting.

THE TV REPORTER

Everyone's here. The whole gang. Witnesses, survivors, family members, and people like you. The inner circle.

PROKES

It's like a really bad high school reunion.

THE VIETNAM VET

CIA and Justice Department. All the alphabet agencies.

PROKES

They're pretty easy to spot.

THE VIETNAM VET

You'd know.

(Prokes reacts.)

THE TV REPORTER

It all reminds me of a Graham Greene novel.

THE VIETNAM VET

They always end badly, too.

THE TV REPORTER

Were you there when they started drinking the Kool-Aid?

PROKES

It wasn't Kool-Aid. It was a grape-flavored drink called Flavor Aid.

THE VIETNAM VET

We were in a meeting. Figuring out what to do after Ryan and the others left.

THE TV REPORTER

Congressman Leo Ryan?

Yes. I walked back to the Pavilion. They had already started. I saw my baby girl. She was in the arms of my wife. One of the women, a pediatric nurse practitioner, still held the syringe she'd used to squirt the poison in my daughter's mouth. My wife just stood there, tears streaming down her face. My daughter was dead, her little lips covered with foam. That's what happens with arsenic and cyanide. It foams at the mouth. I put my arms around my wife, and just kept on sobbing, "I love you so much. I love you so much." I held her until she died. I wanted to kill myself. Right then. But, I had a voice saying, "You cannot die. You must live."

THE ARTIST

I lost three generations of my family. My mother, my sister, and my niece.

PROKES

We all lost someone.

(The Vietnam Vet and The Artist react.)

THE TV REPORTER

There was a Jim Jon Prokes. Any relation?

PROKES

I married his mother, Carolyn Moore Layton, before he was born. We nicknamed him Kimo.

THE TV REPORTER

He was your son?

PROKES

Yes. Sort of. My stepson.

THE VIETNAM VET

In name only.

PROKES

I went to find them. I couldn't. We got our orders and left.

THE TV REPORTER

I'm so sorry. For all of you.

THE VIETNAM VET

They helicoptered us back to ID the bodies the next day.

THE TV REPORTER

That had to be painful.

THE ARTIST

I saw Jones's body up on the stage with a bullet hole in the side of his head, you know. Bleeding on his wooden throne.

THE VIETNAM VET

Staring at heaven's door, man. That cheap red shirt flapped open, exposing his gut. No way God was letting him in.

THE TV REPORTER

He didn't die of poison?

PROKES

No. They found the .38 that killed him about 30 feet away.

THE TV REPORTER

That doesn't sound self-inflicted.

PROKES

May not have been.

THE VIETNAM VET

I remember thinking, "The son of a bitch didn't even die the way everybody else did."

THE ARTIST

Like, only two people were killed by gunfire. Jones and Annie Moore.

PROKES

Carolyn's sister.

THE VIETNAM VET

When the recovery workers tried to get in the West House -

THE ARTIST

That was Jones's private cabin, you see.

THE VIETNAM VET

- they found the door blocked by Annie's body. There were twelve other bodies in there. Maria Katsaris died in Jones's bed. Moore, Karen Layton -

PROKES

Carolyn and Kimo.

(Prokes tenses for a reaction. There is none.)

THE VIETNAM VET

And another boy. John Victor Stoen. Tim Stoen was a lawyer. Used to be Jones's right-hand man. He asked Jones to father a child with his wife, Grace.

THE ARTIST

That was little John Victor.

THE TV REPORTER

Sounds perverse.

PROKES

It was what it was.

THE VIETNAM VET

Stoen turned on us. Jones wouldn't let them take John Victor. They got into a big custody battle. That's part of what led to Ryan's visit.

THE TV REPORTER

And the rest we know.

THE VIETNAM VET

They found a .357 Magnum handgun and a stenographer's notebook with Annie's final will and testament. She had blown her head off.

PROKES

There were bodies scattered all over the compound. It looked like a patchwork quilt. A lot were face down. Their children hidden beneath them.

THE ARTIST

At first, they, like, thought there were only about three or four hundred dead.

THE VIETNAM VET

But, they were stacked on top of one another. The more bodies they moved, the more they found.

PROKES

They're up to 800 and still counting.

THE ARTIST

There were bottles of cyanide and needles covering this old picnic table, you see. The big metal vat with the punch was still in the middle of a wooden walkway. And this poor old parrot just sat there, keeping watch over the dead. It was sad.

THE VIETNAM VET

As I walked through the pavilion, I identified what bodies I could. I saw injection marks in people's arms. I saw one in the back of somebody's head. I saw them on somebody's neck. It was pretty obvious to me that people had been just flat-out murdered. Held down and injected. The ones that didn't want to drink the poison.

THE ARTIST

All those poor children. They didn't choose that. Man, that's homicide not suicide.

PROKES

Those were my friends. My family.

THE TV REPORTER

Knowing what was happening, how could you not stay and try to stop it? How could you let the rest of your people die?

PROKES

It was over. They made their point. They got your attention. What they did took courage.

(The Vietnam Vet glares at Prokes.)

THE VIETNAM VET

Nothing that happened that day was normal. Or courageous. I could see a whole lot of things that I could've done, should've done and everything else, but I didn't. I knew it was wrong, but I didn't do anything to stop it. How many times you heard that?

THE TV REPORTER

Mike, some of the other people here are raising serious questions about how you could have left with guns and money.

PROKES

I told you. They were given to us. They don't have to believe us. You don't have to believe us. It's the absolute facts. They've been investigating for a week. We've been cleared of the investigation. It's as simple as that. It wouldn't have made sense if we had done everything they said we did and then turned everything over and turned ourselves in. It was me and Mike Carter that had the guns. The point was to kill ourselves if we were caught.

THE TV REPORTER

Why would you accept the mission, especially if it meant killing yourself?

PROKES

I don't know about the Carters, but I never planned to kill myself.

THE VIETNAM VET

Death wasn't, and isn't, always the answer. Sometimes. Not always.

THE TV REPORTER

Who gave you the money?

THE VIETNAM VET

Maria Katsaris. She was the financial secretary for Jones. And one of his lovers. She gave the suitcases to him.

(He points at Prokes.)

PROKES

There were three. One each. We were told to take the money to the Soviet embassy in Georgetown. We were also given letters authorizing transfer to the Soviet government.

THE TV REPORTER

Was it true that Jones had planned to escape in a helicopter with his guards? Then meet you at the embassy?

THE VIETNAM VET

No way. Jones had a death wish. Ryan fulfilled it. He wasn't going anywhere.

PROKES

Where were we going to get a copter?

THE TV REPORTER

So, you took the money and left?

THE VIETNAM VET

They wanted some people out of the way. People they knew wouldn't go along with the White Nights. People who might've talked them out of it.

THE TV REPORTER

Like who?

(He points at Prokes again.)

THE VIETNAM VET

Like him and Tim Carter.

PROKES

We didn't get too far. Katsaris stuffed everything in those suitcases. Pretty much cleaned out the safe. They were almost too heavy to carry.

THE TV REPORTER

What was inside?

PROKES

There was some money in plastic bags. Some gold. It was heavy.

THE ARTIST

A little bit of jewelry. But, most of it was money, you know. A little Guyanese, but mostly U.S.

(The TV Reporter glances at her notes.)

THE TV REPORTER

To be exact. \$550,000 in U.S. currency and \$130,000 in Guyanese currency. And an envelope containing two passports and three instructional letters, the first was to Feodor Timofeyev of the Embassy of the Soviet Union in Guyana. The letters listed accounts with balances totaling in excess of \$7.3 million to be transferred to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

THE VIETNAM VET

Sounds about right.

THE TV REPORTER

And two passports. That could've gotten interesting.

PROKES

We dumped it all.

THE TV REPORTER

Dumped or buried?

PROKES

We buried a bunch in a chicken feed bag near the piggery. Some more in a banana grove near the Pavilion. When we got to the railroad tracks that ran to Port Kaituma, we got rid of some more.

THE TV REPORTER

Were you going to go back and get it?

PROKES

There was no going back.

THE VIETNAM VET

Some railway workers found most of it a few days later.

THE TV REPORTER

That must have been a nice surprise, considering they make about five dollars a day.

THE ARTIST

The Guyanese police, like, got their hands on all of it.

THE VIETNAM VET

That was the last anybody saw of it.

PROKES

Me and the Carters followed the railroad into town. We stopped at one point and Tim grabbed the gun from his brother and put it to his head. He wasn't the only one.

THE VIETNAM VET

Things were falling apart. They had been for a while. I wasn't sure how long I could take it. I mean the witchcraft. The violence. The mind games. The abuse.

(The other two cringe.)

THE VIETNAM (CONT'D)

I hated it. And I was sorry. I wanted to see my brains blown out.

(The TV Reporter distracts herself with her notes.)

THE TV REPORTER

Where was the shooting party? Weren't you a little concerned they might try to stop you?

PROKES

They got back just as we were getting our final instructions.

THE VIETNAM VET

The tractor-trailer that had gone to the airstrip pulled up and stopped at the kitchen, near where we had gone to wait. Jones's "Red Brigade" - Wilson, Kice, and Touchette - jumped out and yelled, "We got the congressman."

PROKES

And we got the hell out of there.

THE VIETNAM VET

And some of us split for the jungle.

THE ARTIST

We heard cheers. Then gunshots. Man, it was scary.

THE TV REPORTER

Did it surprise you at all to realize how much money there was?

THE VIETNAM VET

I had no idea.

THE TV REPORTER

Where did it all come from?

PROKES

Foster care checks. Donations. Pay checks. People sold their homes. Almost \$65,000 in welfare payments came in each month.

THE ARTIST

The state, like, started holding up the checks when things got a little unusual.

(The TV Reporter flips over a page in her notebook.)

THE TV REPORTER

According to some sources, the Temple's total wealth was estimated to be around \$13 million.

THE VIETNAM VET

That could buy a lot of salvation.

THE TV REPORTER

Were you ever afraid?

PROKES

Wouldn't you be? We had the guys who just shot a U.S. congressman coming at us from the front, we've got people committing suicide behind us, and a U.S. transport plane on the tarmac at Timehri airport. They were not going to let us get to Russia.

THE TV REPORTER

They? You mean the U.S. government?

THE VIETNAM VET

On the runway was a troop transport. I'd seen them in Vietnam. Been on a few when I was in the service. American soldiers were unloading disassembled choppers and jeeps and small armaments.

THE ARTIST

The Guyanese had no idea why they were there, you know.

THE TV REPORTER

Why were they?

PROKES

Why do you think?

THE TV REPORTER

To stop you?

THE VIETNAM VET

Bingo.

THE ARTIST

Jones used it, you know. He told everyone the troops were there to invade us. They were going to come and take our children away.

PROKES

And then he convinced everyone to poison the children first.

THE TV REPORTER

Did you believe him?

THE VIETNAM VET

Do you have children?

THE TV REPORTER

Not yet.

THE VIETNAM VET

If you did and you saw your child die, would you want to live?

THE TV REPORTER

I don't know. I suppose not.

THE VIETNAM VET

No, I suppose not.

THE TV REPORTER

Are you worried?

PROKES

About what?

THE TV REPORTER

You weren't the only survivors. There are rumors of death squads.

THE VIETNAM VET

Jones's avenging angels. Loyal to him and lethal to anyone who wasn't ... isn't.

PROKES

Katsaris radioed a code to Temple Headquarters in Georgetown. She instructed the angels to kill all of the enemies there. Tim Stoen in particular. Then they were told to kill themselves.

THE VIETNAM VET

A mother killed her children.

THE ARTIST

Slit their throats with a butcher knife.

PROKES

Then killed herself.

THE VIETNAM VET

Someone in Georgetown called San Francisco.

THE TV REPORTER

The message?

PROKES

Even the score.

THE TV REPORTER

They say these "killing angels" are still in the jungle.

THE VIETNAM VET

Targeting survivors ... and NBC journalists.

(The camera light shudders.)

PROKES

They're out there.

THE VIETNAM VET

And don't want the rest of the story told.

(A car backfires. They all dive for cover. Realizing it wasn't a gunshot, they return to their seats, dust themselves off, and grin sheepishly.)

THE TV REPORTER

Just a car.

THE VIETNAM VET

This time.

PROKES

Look, we're not the only witnesses.

THE ARTIST

Everything was taped, you see.

PROKES

The FBI found more than 900 audiotapes. Jim was counting on someone writing about it. Some day. Maybe we will.

THE VIETNAM VET

Everything is there.

THE TV REPORTER

If it gets out.

PROKES

It will.

THE TV REPORTER

Why?

PROKES

Because it needs to. People need to know what happened here.

THE VIETNAM VET

So they don't blow it. Like we did. So they don't make the same mistakes. So they don't repeat history.

THE TV REPORTER

No, why Jonestown? You're all bright young people. Why did you do this?

PROKES

Plain and simple. Something was wrong with our country.

THE VIETNAM VET

That's why over one thousand Americans chose to leave the United States and live communally in the middle of the jungle of a Marxist country in South America. We were teachers, nurses, lawyers, laborers, professors, artists, business people, students, and parents. We were the faces of America. Not mindless zombies.

PROKES

Anyone who knew us, who visited, were impressed. With the people. With the principle -

THE ARTIST

Not the preacher.

THE VIETNAM VET

What made the folks in Peoples Temple different was our commitment to the belief that together we could change things. We could eliminate racism, sexism, ageism, greed-ism, and all the other "-isms."

PROKES

We dedicated our lives to that belief and to making that happen.

THE VIETNAM VET

We did our best to "walk the talk," not simply "talk the walk."

PROKES

We had committed, well-known activists on our side. People like Charles Garry and Mark Lane. They were there when Ryan was.

THE TV REPORTER

Their motives may not have been all that altruistic. Wasn't Lane on the payroll?

PROKES

He was, but he was trying to get out the truth to counter the lies.

THE VIETNAM VET

Garry was still fighting for the little guy. Like he had all his life. The San Quentin Six, the Panthers, the Chicago Seven. All the rest.

THE ARTIST

He and Lane didn't get along all that well, you know.

THE TV REPORTER

Where were they when the suicides started?

THE VIETNAM VET

Last I saw, they were being escorted to East House.

(The TV Reporter flips to a new page in her notebook.)

THE TV REPORTER

Where'd it go wrong?

PROKES

It didn't.

THE VIETNAM VET

We put up with a lot. The White Nights, catharsis, the sex, the box, the learning crew, Big Foot.

THE ARTIST

All that weirdness because some of us, like, believed, "The ends justified the means."

PROKES

Sometimes you have to intimidate people to get them to do what you want.

THE VIETNAM VET

Our end was a society free from elitism. I can only speak for myself, but I didn't expect to create a utopian, heaven-on-earth in the jungle of Guyana. I did expect to build a community that allowed my children - and my children's children - to grow up in a more peaceful, humane, and caring society that eventually might become a Utopia. If I didn't agree with some of what I saw, heard, and felt, so what?

THE ARTIST

Looking back, you know, that was dangerous. And there were a lot of red flags. We should've seen them.

THE VIETNAM VET

The ends were worthy. The means weren't. The means won.

THE TV REPORTER

What now?

THE VIETNAM VET

We ship the bodies back.

THE ARTIST

We pick up the pieces.

PROKES

We go home. And finish the story.

THE ARTIST

What we lived through was, like, absolute chaos and insanity. I know that I'll never get the sounds and the sights and the smells of Jonestown out of my mind. Ever.

THE VIETNAM VET

I'll never eat almonds again. Cyanide smells like almonds. That's what it smelled like that day. Like almonds.

PROKES

Like death.

(Lights dim.)

ACT I

Scene 3

(Black.

DOCTOR GUITAR sings "American Roulette" by Robbie Robertson low off-stage.

Thunder rolls. Raindrops splatter. A clock ticks. Voices murmur. Chairs scrape.

Up right, the same television monitor plays live images of FACES IN THE AUDIENCE.

Lights up. Limbo set. Evening. A motel room in Modesto.

Center stage, bathed in a pool of light, is a chair and a round table. On the table sits a desk podium, facing the audience. Left center is a meticulously made bed and a side table with a lamp and phone. Right center, a door separates the main room from a small bathroom with a sink, toilet, and shower stall. The door separating the main room from the unlit bathroom is ajar. Next to the podium lies a worn Sierra Club backpack. Several radio and TV microphones are perched on the podium. Two portable audiotape recorders are set up on the table in front of the podium. A camera light casts a bright light on the podium. Its power cable runs into the bathroom.

The television monitor goes dark.

A spot comes up on DOCTOR GUITAR, 32, sitting down right in a tattered lawn chair. He sings and plays his Les Paul Cherry Sunburst guitar through a tiny Pignose amp. He wears a red nylon mesh baseball cap with the word "Molesto"

stenciled on the front. Blue jeans, sneakers, and beneath the plaid work shirt, his raggedy-ass T-shirt bears the image of his god, Stevie Ray Vaughan.

He stops singing.)

DOCTOR GUITAR

My name is George. Around here, I'm known as Doctor Guitar. Here is Modesto, California. The town where summer lasts longer. It's a small town. Least it was when we were kids. About 30,000 back then. Me and my bud, Mike Prokes, grew up here. Just your typical valley boy. A Baby Boomer wishing and hoping to change the world.

(A spot comes up on a row of folding chairs down left, facing the table. THE NEWSPAPER REPORTER, 35; THE BLIND BEGGAR, 40; a 50-something AFRICAN-AMERICAN COUPLE; THE TEACHER, 36; THE FRIEND, 31; THE OLD FLAME, 31; JIM JON "KIMO" PROKES, 4; THE VIETNAM VET, 30; THE MENTOR, 43; MARY PROKES, 50; AND THOMAS PROKES, 50, sit in two rows.)

DOCTOR GUITAR (CONT'D)

It's coming up on 7PM, March 13th, 1979. A lot of the country is watching Bird and Magic battle it out in the NCAA basketball finals. The rest are getting ready to watch "The Nightly News" and then "Happy Days," or maybe "The Paper Chase." It's been just about four months since the voodoo went down at Jonestown. A dark day Mike survived. He's called a press conference here at the Motel 6 to tell the rest of the story.

(The Doc stands and exits, singing "For What It's Worth" by Buffalo Springfield.)

A spot comes up on the table. Prokes enters stage right. His suit, though looking like it's seen better days, is cleaned and pressed. He carries a manila folder and an armful of stapled papers. He crosses to the table. He hands the papers to The Newspaper Reporter and motions for him to

distribute them. He does. Prokes opens the manila folder, removes some typed papers, and stacks them neatly on the podium. He gazes at the faces before him, one at a time. He sees his mother and frowns. He takes a sip of water from a Styrofoam cup. He looks up and addresses us, the audience.)

PROKES

I have made copies of a statement about the final hour of Jonestown. I have attached several pages of transcripts of radio interviews following the deaths, as well as press releases I wrote while the press contact for Peoples Temple. I would now like to read a statement.

(Prokes reads.)

PROKES (CONT'D)

"Why did Jonestown end the way it did? I believe at least a good part of that answer can be found on the tape recording of the last hour of life in Jonestown. It's been kept locked up by the government and has never been played publicly. Until now."

(He touches the backpack.)

PROKES (CONT'D)

"Jim Jones asked that all meetings be recorded and I have no doubt that the last meeting was any exception because I believe he wanted to leave something that would prove why the people died. An article in *Rolling Stone* magazine said it concisely. It stated, 'The mass suicides of history, Masada and Saipan, had occurred when a people were under siege and surrounded by enemies.' Jones and the people of Jonestown were no exception: for months they had been harassed, persecuted, surrounded and besieged by shadow forces. When the final attack was imminent and undeniable, they chose to die."

(Prokes looks up and stares at The Newspaper Reporter.

Lights dim.)

ACT I

Scene 4

(Black.

Doctor Guitar sings "Strange Days" by  
The Doors low off-stage.

A fog horn blows. A cable car clangs.

Lights up. Limbo set. Day. The  
sanctuary of Peoples Temple in the  
heart of the Fillmore District, San  
Francisco.

Up right, the television monitor plays  
news coverage of the shipping of  
caskets, personal effects, and Temple  
possessions to San Francisco. Center  
stage, bathed in a pool of light, an  
oak pulpit stands sentry. Scattered  
loosely around it are filing boxes.  
Stuffed with adding-machine paper, file  
folders, envelopes. Office supplies.  
Stacked up left are larger packing  
boxes. Filled with coats, shoes,  
books, phonograph records, photographs,  
children's drawings. Personal items.  
Each has a price tag stuck to it.

The television monitor goes dark.

The song stops.

A spot comes up on Doctor Guitar down  
right, sitting on some packing boxes.)

DOCTOR GUITAR

The doctor is in. 1979. Man, what a funky butt year that  
was. International year of the child. Shah of Iran got  
booted. Some raghead named the Ayatollah returned from  
exile. Steelers beat the Cowboys. President Carter  
pardoned Patty Hearst. China invaded North Vietnam  
figuring to get some of what we couldn't. Voyager buzzed  
Jupiter. Sadat and Begin made nice-nice. Three Mile  
Island melted down. Strange, strange days.

There was definitely some heavy shit in the air. And it was going to get heavier. So heavy you'd need a hat.

Nobody here at home got it. Mikey was moving up at Channel 10 one day. Front man for some religious nut the next. Mike could always take care of himself. An ego just big enough to think he was bulletproof. We all thought he was in a little over his head on this one. So, buckle up, folks. It's going to be a bumpy ride.

(The Doctor stands and exits, singing "End of the Innocence" by Don Henley.

Prokes enters. His face is gaunt, eyes hollow. A far cry from the vibrant, athletic young man he once was. He's dressed in a three-piece suit creased sharp as a knife. He removes a metal flask from his inside coat pocket. He takes a pull and puts the flask back. He crosses to stand in front of the pulpit.

Up right, THE NEWSPAPER REPORTER, 35, kneels in the shadows below the television, examining a box of artifacts. He's dressed in the standard-issue field reporter uniform - photographer's vest, denim shirt, jeans, and work boots. He stands up, into the light.)

THE NEWSPAPER REPORTER

I was hoping you'd come around, Mike.

PROKES

I'm not giving any interviews, big guy.

THE NEWSPAPER REPORTER

I'm not doing any. Just curious.

PROKES

About?

THE NEWSPAPER REPORTER

What made it back from Guyana.

PROKES

Not much. They're still censoring the dead. One more act of fascist racism.

THE NEWSPAPER REPORTER

Seems so.

PROKES

Should've buried it with them.

(Prokes stoops to remove a child's drawing from one of the boxes. Flames envelope a grinning skull. The large, scrawled name reads: "Kimo.")

Prokes hands it to The Newspaper Reporter.)

THE NEWSPAPER REPORTER

Someone you knew?

PROKES

It's complicated.

THE NEWSPAPER REPORTER

I still dream about it, you know.

PROKES

Who doesn't.

THE NEWSPAPER REPORTER

The corpses, syringes, steel vats, Dixie cups. I think it was the clothes that got to me. Empty shoes, hats, socks. Everywhere you looked. Stuck in the mud. A garage sale from hell.

PROKES

It was pretty bad.

(The Newspaper Reporter hands the drawing back. Prokes carefully folds it and puts it in his inside coat pocket.)

THE NEWSPAPER REPORTER

Never thought you'd make it out alive.

PROKES

I did.

THE NEWSPAPER REPORTER

You're a sharp guy, Mike.

PROKES

So were all the others.

THE NEWSPAPER REPORTER

You should've known better.

PROKES

You sound like my father.

THE NEWSPAPER REPORTER

Why'd you spy on them, son?

PROKES

I thought it'd make a good story. My fifteen minutes.

PROKES

Pitched it to the Stockton bureau. Station liked the idea.

THE NEWSPAPER REPORTER

What changed?

PROKES

The Temple was doing some good. I just couldn't screw them anymore.

THE NEWSPAPER REPORTER

The government was pretty relentless. You don't want big brother on your back.

PROKES

We were under fire. The Establishment doesn't like you being too free.

THE NEWSPAPER REPORTER

Everyone there knew they were going to die, didn't they?

PROKES

Every day. We practiced all the time.

THE NEWSPAPER REPORTER

The White Nights.

PROKES

Our last stand. Against their persecution.

THE NEWSPAPER REPORTER

Did anybody really hear you?

PROKES

I don't know. I hope they did.

THE NEWSPAPER REPORTER

Some people say you wanted to leave. Your heart wasn't in it.

PROKES

Really.

THE NEWSPAPER REPORTER

They told me the only reason you stayed was because you were counting on Jones dying. Overdosing or something. You wanted to be there to run Jonestown the right way.

PROKES

It could've been so much more. We could've shown everyone.

(The Newspaper Reporter removes a notepad from his vest pocket.

Prokes shoots him a look.

The Newspaper Reporter shrugs and flips through the pages.)

THE NEWSPAPER REPORTER

Another source claims the money was the main reason behind the suicides.

PROKES

They don't know what they're talking about.

THE NEWSPAPER REPORTER

Where's the money, Mike?

PROKES

Ask the Guyanese police.

THE NEWSPAPER REPORTER

They're not saying.

PROKES

Not my problem.

THE NEWSPAPER REPORTER

It must've gotten to you.

PROKES

What's that?

THE NEWSPAPER REPORTER

Knowing Jones was wrong. Knowing you underestimated him.

PROKES

We all did. Even the Feds.

(The Newspaper Reporter pockets the notepad, kneels down, and rifles through a file box of documents.

He stops and lifts out a letter-sized manila envelope. It's stained with blood. He shakes it. Something rattles inside.

The Newspaper Reporter turns the envelope over. The word "CONFIDENTIAL" is written in bold letters across the front.)

PROKES (CONT'D)

That's mine.

(Prokes has moved next to the pulpit.

The Newspaper Reporter looks up.)

THE NEWSPAPER REPORTER

Easy, Trigger.

PROKES

Please give it to me.

(Prokes pulls his suit coat back with his right hand. He rests his left hand on the .38 pistol tucked into the waistband of his pants.

The Newspaper Reporter stands.)

THE NEWSPAPER REPORTER

What's up with that, Mike?

PROKES

They're after us.

THE NEWSPAPER REPORTER

The death squads.

PROKES

People.

THE NEWSPAPER REPORTER

You won't use that.

PROKES

Don't bet your life on it.

THE NEWSPAPER REPORTER

You're not that kind of guy.

PROKES

Jones didn't think I was either.

(The Newspaper Reporter hands him the envelope.)

THE NEWSPAPER REPORTER

Take it if you want it that bad. Really doesn't matter to me.

PROKES

Does to me.

THE NEWSPAPER REPORTER

It's good you got out, Mike. I mean that.

PROKES

The real story needs to be told.

THE NEWSPAPER REPORTER

I told the story I saw.

PROKES

You need new glasses.

THE NEWSPAPER REPORTER

You going to tell the "right" story?

PROKES

Yes.

THE NEWSPAPER REPORTER  
All of it?

PROKES  
Yes.

THE NEWSPAPER REPORTER  
When?

PROKES  
Soon. I'm going home. Tomorrow, actually.

THE NEWSPAPER REPORTER  
Back to Modesto?

PROKES  
My class reunion.

THE NEWSPAPER REPORTER  
That could be rough.

PROKES  
Could be. I scheduled a press conference.

THE NEWSPAPER REPORTER  
Maybe I'll see you there.

PROKES  
Maybe.

THE NEWSPAPER REPORTER  
Are you all right, Mike? You doing all right?

PROKES  
I've got my head together.

THE NEWSPAPER REPORTER  
Don't give up. I'll never forgive you if you do.

PROKES  
No promises.

THE NEWSPAPER REPORTER  
One thing.

PROKES  
What's that?

THE NEWSPAPER REPORTER

Did you shoot him?

PROKES

What difference does it make?

THE NEWSPAPER REPORTER

You tell me.

PROKES

How could I shoot my father?

(Lights dim.)

ACT I

Scene 5

(Black.)

Doctor Guitar sings "Reason to Believe" by Tim Hardin low off-stage.

Doves coo. A lawn mower drones. A BART train horn sounds.

Lights up. Limbo set. Day. Evergreen Cemetery in Oakland.

Up right, the television monitor plays news coverage of the burial of the Jonestown dead. Center stage, bathed in a pool of light, stands a granite gravestone. It is inscribed simply: "In memory of the Jonestown tragedy."

The television monitor goes dark.

The song stops.

A spot comes up on Doctor Guitar down right, lounging against a grave marker topped by an angel.)

DOCTOR GUITAR

Everyone needs dreams. Who but a corpse don't. We all believe in hope and a brighter day. We need to. Helps us make it through the night. That's what Mike was all about.

He just wanted to turn things around. And let it ripple out. Like Kerouac. He loved this passage from *On the Road*.

(The Doctor removes a well-worn paperback from his back pocket. He reads.)

"I was standing on the hot road underneath an arc-lamp with the summer moths smashing into it when I heard the sound of footsteps from the darkness beyond, and lo, a tall old man with flowing white hair came clomping by with a pack on his back, and when he saw me as he passed, he said, 'Go moan for man,' and clomped on back to his dark. Did this mean that I should at last go on my pilgrimage on foot on the dark roads around America?"

It did. And Mike did. He gave it all he had left. And he survived. Not everyone did. There but for fortune go you or I and all that.

He just wanted it to be okay, you know. Wanted to get back home. Back to safe harbor. Just wanted to know he had done his best. He didn't want anyone to fix him. He just wanted someone to listen. To hear him. And maybe get some understanding. A little love and forgiveness. Was that so much to ask?

(The Doctor exits, singing "I Think It's Going to Rain Today" by Randy Newman.)

Prokes enters. He crosses to the gravestone, kneels, and places a bouquet of white and red roses at the base of the marker. He clasps his hands and bows his head.)

PROKES

I'm sorry, Kimo. More sorry than you'll ever know.

(He looks skyward, opening his arms wide. Then lowers his eyes to stare at the marker.)

PROKES (CONT'D)

I'm sorry your mother died. I thought there'd be time. I didn't think he'd do it. Didn't think everyone else would

go along.

(Prokes removes Kimo's drawing from his coat pocket. He stares at it a moment. He lowers it to see ...)

A red liquid oozing from the gravestone. It shapes itself into a cross. Prokes touches it with his fingertips. It's blood. He tries to wipe it off with his handkerchief. It won't come clean.

THE GRANDMOTHER and GRANDFATHER enter. They're AFRICAN-AMERICAN and in their 50s. They cross to stand over a kneeling Prokes. Their shadow darkens the bloody cross. Prokes looks up.)

THE GRANDMOTHER

I know you. You're one of them.

(Prokes looks confused.)

THE GRANDMOTHER (CONT'D)

One of the survivors. One of those rich white kids that was going to save the black man.

PROKES

We gave it our best shot.

THE GRANDFATHER

"Power to the people, right on." Look what that got them.

THE GRANDMOTHER

You gave them hope. That killed them sure as any poison.

(Prokes stands.)

PROKES

Was better than the Tenderloin.

THE GRANDMOTHER

Was it? How would you know?

PROKES

I was there. I saw it. I lived it. Race had nothing to do with it. We were a family. A community.

THE GRANDFATHER

Another bleeding heart do-gooder.

THE GRANDMOTHER

A family doesn't abuse its children. A community doesn't take folks's welfare checks and foster care checks and put them in a private bank account.

PROKES

I gave everything I had in this world. More than ten thousand dollars. Because I wanted to help.

THE GRANDFATHER

Fool.

THE GRANDMOTHER

Good people don't do bad things in the name of God.

THE GRANDFATHER

Amen.

(The Grandmother kicks the flowers off the grave.)

THE GRANDMOTHER

This is sacred ground, boy.

THE GRANDFATHER

Sanctified by their ashes. You don't belong here.

THE GRANDMOTHER

Nobody wanted them. They didn't want them buried in their back yard. They were afraid people would come here looking for something. Some kind of shrine. Some kind of holy place.

THE GRANDFATHER

True believers.

THE GRANDMOTHER

I'll never see my grandbabies again.

PROKES

My stepson is ... was ... one of them.

(This shocks her.)

THE GRANDMOTHER

How could you?

PROKES

We did what we needed to do.

THE GRANDFATHER

You could have shot the bastard.

(Prokes removes the manila envelope from the inside pocket of his suit coat.)

PROKES

Take this, please.

THE GRANDMOTHER

We don't want anything from you.

(The Grandmother jerks her arm up to back-hand Prokes. Her husband grabs her wrist.)

THE GRANDFATHER

Don't get your hands dirty.

(The Grandmother breaks into wrenching sobs. Her husband leads her off-stage.)

Prokes turns back to face the gravestone.)

PROKES

It's not over, Kimo. It's far from over.

(Lights dim.)

Act I

Scene 6

(Black.)

Doctor Guitar sings "Satan's Jewel Crown" written by Edgar L. Eden and performed by Emmylou Harris low off-stage.

A police siren wails. A street-corner preacher rails at the non-believers. Students laugh and chatter.

Lights up. Limbo set. Day. Sather Gate. The entrance to UC Berkeley.

Up right, the television monitor plays a documentary or photo montage illustrating the African-American struggle for freedom and equality, from Emancipation to now.

The television monitor goes dark.

The song stops.

A spot comes up on Doctor Guitar down right, lounging against one of the pillars of the gate.)

DOCTOR GUITAR

Why is it we always burn out our best and brightest?

Mike was small-town ambitious and had some chops. Living in the valley, he felt like he was missing out on all the action. Jones was his ticket to ride. And he rode. And rode. And he changed.

The Greek philosopher Heraclitus wrote, "No man ever steps in the same river twice, for it's not the same river and he's not the same man." Mike could look up river and see where and who he had been, look at where he was standing and see where and who he was now. But, when he looked down river, he had no idea where he was going or who he was going to be. No clue about what was on the horizon.

(sings)

"I wish I had a river  
I could skate away on  
I wish I had a river so long  
I would teach my feet to fly"

(stops singing)

Martin Luther King once said, "Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter." Mike wasn't going to let that happen. He cared too much. Later, he didn't care enough.

Too bad good people do the wrong things for the right reasons. I guess, sometimes, smart people just do stupid things. Most folks never have to face the fact that at the right time and right place, they're capable of anything. Fact is, we've all got what it takes to make big mistakes

when we try to do what's right. If we're not careful, we can sometimes do evil in the name of stopping evil. Mike found out the hard way he could be as bad as anyone.

(The Doctor exits, singing the spiritual "I'll Fly Away.")

A spot comes up on THE BLIND BEGGAR, 40, an androgynous African-American. She sits on a peach crate in front of Sather Gate. A tattered, oversized handbag lies at her feet. She holds out an empty hand for spare change. The spot forms a halo above her head. A pre-Raphaelite, dreadlocked Madonna, she wears mirrored sunglasses.

Prokes walks past her toward Sather Gate. He stops and walks backwards to face her. He smiles.)

PROKES

Guess who?

(She sniffs.)

THE BLIND BEGGAR

Jade East. Only one man didn't care enough about what others thought to wear that cheap shit. Got to be Monsieur Mike. The Mighty MP. Michelle, *ma belle, c'est moi*.

PROKES

I hated that nickname.

(She shrugs and smiles.)

THE BLIND BEGGAR

What you doing here, *cher*?

PROKES

My little brother lives here. Going to UC. What about you?

THE BLIND BEGGAR

Trying to make a living.

(She holds out her empty hand.)

PROKES

I'm amazed you survived.

THE BLIND BEGGAR

You, too. I was in Georgetown with Jim, Jr. and the rest of the basketball team. Good thing, too, or you would be dead because those boys could shoot the lights out. And I'm not talking hook shots. Un-huh.

PROKES

I just walked up to the counter and asked for a plane ticket to New York. They gave me one without batting an eye. Promised my mom I'd be home for Christmas. Just got back.

THE BLIND BEGGAR

If Stephan had been there, it might not have gone down that way.

PROKES

The only one who could take on God was the son of God.

THE BLIND BEGGAR

Late one night, after one too many brandies and Valium, Father Jim and Mother Marceline got in a big old argument over who experienced more pleasure during intercourse, man or woman. Father claimed it was men, Mother claimed it was women. I sided with Mother. On a scale of one to ten, women enjoy sex nine to men's one. In a rage, Father hit me and I fell. I could never see from that day forward.

PROKES

But, you could. You saw everything.

THE BLIND BEGGAR

Not everything.

PROKES

I guess none of us really saw it coming, did we? Or wanted to.

(The Blind Beggar pulls a joint out from behind her ear, lights it, takes a hit, and offers it to Prokes.

He shakes his head "no.")

THE BLIND BEGGAR

It's over, isn't it?

PROKES

Pretty much.

THE BLIND BEGGAR

Such a shame, it is. All that good hope and faith wasted.

PROKES

We were so close.

THE BLIND BEGGAR

Only counts in horseshoes and hand grenades, darlin'.

PROKES

At least we tried.

THE BLIND BEGGAR

We were living Dr. King's dream. For a moment.

PROKES

I'd do it again tomorrow. I'd just change the ending a little.

THE BLIND BEGGAR

Ditto. If we could but turn back the hands of time.

PROKES

I have no doubt it was the right thing to do.

THE BLIND BEGGAR

It was.

(The Blind Beggar spreads her arms.)

THE BLIND BEGGAR (CONT'D)

This was my world. Then. Nowhere to go but up. I lived in the Castro by way of Haiti. Oh, child, I remember those Halloween street parties. And Harvey Milk. Sweet, sweet Harvey.

PROKES

It was a pretty incredible scene. Especially early on. A lot of good, positive energy. And fun, too.

THE BLIND BEGGAR

Amen to that.

PROKES

And out front was Harvey.

THE BLIND BEGGAR

Another pale white Messiah.

PROKES

Messiahs have a short shelf life in this state.

THE BLIND BEGGAR

A real tragedy what they did to Milk and Moscone.

PROKES

They were a threat to the way things were. Like us. And they died for it.

THE BLIND BEGGAR

I still believe. And will until the day I die.

PROKES

So will I.

THE BLIND BEGGAR

I got friends who still don't get it. I still don't get it myself. How could we let that white man - those white folks, you white people - lead all us poor black fools to our deaths. What made us so sure he was our ticket to salvation?

PROKES

We were starving for a better world.

THE BLIND BEGGAR

Back in the day, Peoples Temple was all about equality. Remember? No rich, no poor. No white, no black. No old, no young. No man, no woman.

(smiles and sings)

"No woman, no cry."

PROKES

Somewhere, somehow, one day that all got lost.

THE BLIND BEGGAR

It was never really about religion, was it? No, sir. It was always more a social and political thing. Yes, indeed.

PROKES

Apostolic Socialism. That's what he called it. He believed you could do the good work of the Apostles without

believing in Jesus Christ or *The Bible* or any of that other stuff. Socialism was salvation.

THE BLIND BEGGAR

We believed in people. And the cause. We cared about taking care of the uncared for. The greatest good for the greatest number. Right on. Health clinics, a drug and legal aid program. A dining hall that served more people than St. Anthony's. All free. All financed by the Temple without any support from anyone. All in the name of love with a capital "L."

PROKES

It was a real mixed bag of misfits.

THE BLIND BEGGAR

Lord it was. Over here was the old school. All those old, black ladies, like my momma and aunties, who had gone to church their entire lives. They were Christians who wanted a better life for the world and themselves. Father offered them a family. And a love and acceptance they had never known. Powerful, powerful.

PROKES

The Prince of Light of Dark Town.

THE BLIND BEGGAR

Then, there was the new school. Young blacks who were so far away from your easy-street world. Addicts, prostitutes, and hustlers. Folks like me. Street seducers seduced by the hope of radical change. And a new world.

PROKES

A brand new day. Right now.

THE BLIND BEGGAR

Right on. The American dream promised equality and justice. It just never delivered. So, we went looking elsewhere. Peoples Temple was our sanctuary. It was a real church. Not what churches are now, but what churches were created to be. A community of caring people. Jesus would feel right at home in our church. Right at home.

PROKES

They lived as a community and they died as a community. They believed in it and they died for it. They couldn't live in peace, so they died in peace.

THE BLIND BEGGAR

I've been around the block a time or two and I'd never seen black and white get along as well as they did in Jonestown. Never. We loved living in Jonestown. We wanted it to work, and it was. It was.

PROKES

Jonestown may have been Hell for the defectors and detractors, but it was Paradise for anyone who'd been beaten down by the ghetto. Death was better than going back to the corruption and temptation of the States.

THE BLIND BEGGAR

Jonestown was our Shambhala, El Dorado, and Garden of Eden. Our Shangri-La and Promised Land. We were immortal.

PROKES

Until we left. Until the snake offered us the apple.

THE BLIND BEGGAR

We just never felt like we belonged in the land of the red, white, and blue.

PROKES

That hasn't changed.

THE BLIND BEGGAR

We were not sick people, we were sweet people. We left family and friends and home to create a heaven on earth.

PROKES

It smelled like freedom.

THE BLIND BEGGAR

Father was crazy-ass weird, but he spoke the truth. America did not practice what it preached. What he preached. A crying shame.

PROKES

There was a big gap between what we needed and what we got. Father filled it. And that hunger still lives. We forget how badly people want to belong to something that wants to do good.

THE BLIND BEGGAR

It will happen again. If no one can provide that caring and community and cause, a cult will be happy to.

PROKES

But, our Utopia was flawed. Our Paradise had a serpent.

THE BLIND BEGGAR

I fear we've learned nothing, Michelle. Any of us. Now all they see out there is that demon Jones and people like you. Not all the others. All those poor souls. All those little lives lost. So early.

PROKES

People think of us as crazy if they think of us as people at all.

THE BLIND BEGGAR

Who's responsible? Who's to blame? It wasn't all Mister Jimmy. It wasn't just us.

(The Blind Beggar turns to face the audience. She opens her arms wide.)

THE BLIND BEGGAR (CONT'D)

(sings)

"Do you want to know a secret?

Do you promise not to tell?"

(stops singing)

Do you really want to know?

PROKES

I guess not.

THE BLIND BEGGAR

No, I guess not.

PROKES

It's good to see you. Good to see a friendly face. Good to talk with someone who knows. Someone who understands.

THE BLIND BEGGAR

Nobody else does and I despair.

PROKES

No one wants to hear what we have to say. It's like all those soldiers who came home from Vietnam. No one wanted to know. No one cared. We'd been splattered and nobody wanted to touch us.

THE BLIND BEGGAR

I hear you. It happened to me when I returned to the nest.

PROKES

We survivors. We know. We'll take that to the grave.

THE BLIND BEGGAR

What next, Michelle? What you going to do to close the circle?

PROKES

I wish I knew. Once I was lost, then I was found. Now ...  
I don't know.

THE BLIND BEGGAR

Make their deaths mean something. So their lives were not lost in vain. Tell their story. Our story. Only you can do that.

(sings)

"Only you can make this world seem right.  
Only you can make the darkness bright.  
Only you and you alone."

PROKES

I'm not sure anymore. What can one man really do?

THE BLIND BEGGAR

Make the world new again.

PROKES

Some day.

THE BLIND BEGGAR

(sings)

"One of these days it will soon be all over cut and dry  
And I won't have this urge to go all bottled up inside  
One of these days I'll look back and I'll say I left in  
time  
Cause somewhere for me I know there's peace of mind  
There's gonna be peace of mind for me, one of these days."

(stops singing)

Let love fill this parched land and make it live again.  
But, don't look back. The Devil might be gaining on you.

PROKES

He needs to wait his turn.

THE BLIND BEGGAR

My brother, I don't have enough tears to wash your soul clean.

(The Blind Beggar pulls her junkie kit from inside the tattered handbag.

Prokes gives her a questioning look.)

THE BLIND BEGGAR

I can't help myself, *ma belle*. My last, best hope died in that jungle.

(Lights dim.)

ACT II

Scene 1

(Black.

DOCTOR GUITAR sings "The Times They are a-Changin'" by Bob Dylan low off-stage.

Up right, the television monitor plays live images of FACES IN THE AUDIENCE.

The television monitor goes dark.

The song stops.

A spot comes up on Doctor Guitar down right, sitting in his lawn chair.)

DOCTOR GUITAR

This wasn't our first goat rope. People do get crazy when they lose their freedom. They pretty much don't feel it's worth going on. Folks have been committing mass suicide since time began. Just about any time their rulers threatened to cage them. People got no problem giving it all up when they got nothing left to lose.

Masada. Saipan. Heaven's Gate. Waco. Jonestown. We've all been here before. Sure hope it never happens again.

(The Doctor exits, singing "Déjà vu" by Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young.

Lights up. Limbo set. Evening. The motel room in Modesto.

Prokes stands at the table. He continues to stare at The Blind Beggar,

seated with the rest of the witnesses in the two rows of chairs. He touches the backpack and continues reading his statement.)

PROKES

"It would take a lot of pressure for this tape to be played because it would reveal too clearly something that the government does not want to admit, and cannot admit - that Jonestown represents a symbol of the massive institutional failure of this country to meet the needs of its own citizens. It's no coincidence that most of the members of Peoples Temple were black, when you consider that most of the inhabitants of the huge slums and ghettos in virtually every large city of America are black. They don't like living in misery and if they could get out they would, but they aren't being provided the opportunities they need to do so. That's why so many blacks joined Peoples Temple - it provided the opportunity to escape the misery of their lives in the ghetto.

I believe in the basic rightness of the life and work that went on in Jonestown, and I can't disassociate myself from the people who died, nor do I want to. They were beautiful people who cared about each other and who identified with all people who suffer oppression and persecution around the world. After moving 6000 miles to get away from racism and harassment, they weren't going to be pushed around anymore. Maybe it sounds trite but they were saying basically the same thing as Patrick Henry, that is, 'Let us have our freedom, or we will die.'"

(Prokes looks up, stares at The Teacher, and smiles.

Lights dim.)

ACT II

Scene 2

(Black.

Doctor Guitar sings "Abraham, Martin, and John" by Dion low off-stage.

A class bell rings. Students chatter. A pep band practices.

Lights up. Limbo set. Day. A high school classroom in Modesto.

Up right, the television monitor plays documentary footage of the 60s - sit-ins, love-ins, protest marches, Vietnam, the assassinations of John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, and Robert F. Kennedy.

Up center, bathed in a pool of light, is a school blackboard. An American flag dangles above the blackboard. Written in chalk are the words, "Government 101." Left center, in profile, is a teacher's desk. Right center, in profile, is a row of three student's desks.

The song stops.

Music under and out.

A spot comes up on Doctor Guitar down right, straddling a teacher's chair.)

DOCTOR GUITAR

This was not one of my favorite places. I'm sweating just thinking about being here. Is it real or is it Memorex? I used to hunker down in the back. Kept a low profile. Do it long enough, they pretty much forget you're there.

(A spot comes up on the desk. Sitting on the front edge is THE TEACHER, a charismatic 36-year-old man. He wears a tailored suit, white shirt, black tie, and black wing-tips.)

THE TEACHER

I saw you back there. I saw everyone, everything.

DOCTOR GUITAR

Not everything, teach. Not everything.

THE TEACHER

You could have tried harder.

DOCTOR GUITAR

Wasn't all that fascinating.

THE TEACHER

You didn't enjoy our scintillating lectures about the bicameral legislature?

(The Doctor nods out, snoring dramatically.)

THE TEACHER (CONT'D)

How could you not love memorizing the Preamble?

(The Doctor sticks his finger down his throat and gags.)

THE TEACHER (CONT'D)

Surely being expected to remember the exact number and order of our Constitutional amendments made you a better citizen?

DOCTOR GUITAR

I don't vote.

THE TEACHER

Too bad. You missed a lot.

DOCTOR GUITAR

So'd Mike.

THE TEACHER

Not really. He soaked it all up. Asked questions. Even borrowed some of my books. He had a passion to know why. It was my job to help. To open his eyes.

DOCTOR GUITAR

A little knowledge is a dangerous thing.

THE TEACHER

Not if you use it right.

DOCTOR GUITAR

He for sure staked it all on Mr. Jones. Rolled the dice figuring Big Jim was going to be the next John or Martin or Bobby. When Mike's Messiah turned out to be one of the Charlatans, he couldn't deal with it.

THE TEACHER

He was a sensitive kid. A good kid

(The Doctor stands and exits, singing  
"Ballad of a Thin Man" by Bob Dylan.)

A second spot comes up on the row of  
student desks. Prokes sits in the  
middle desk.)

PROKES

Not all that sensitive. Maybe not all that good. Looking  
back.

THE TEACHER

When did you get in, Mr. Prokes?

PROKES

Last night.

THE TEACHER

Easy drive?

PROKES

It's not far. My brother brought me home.

THE TEACHER

Nice to see you.

(Prokes looks around.)

PROKES

Things haven't changed.

THE TEACHER

Just the faces.

PROKES

They get it?

THE TEACHER

It's a decent crop. Not up to your class. You people had  
the fire.

PROKES

Had.

THE TEACHER

You look good. Still playing hoops?

PROKES

I used to shoot around a little with our camp team. I wasn't any good. They didn't care.

THE TEACHER

Have you been watching the NCAA tournament?

PROKES

My father has.

THE TEACHER

Michigan State and Indiana State, Magic and Bird. Those two kids are stars who know how to play as part of a team. They'll be big when they go pro.

PROKES

The Coach still around?

THE TEACHER

Still here.

PROKES

He was tough. Demanding.

THE TEACHER

That was his job.

PROKES

Lot of guys didn't like him.

THE TEACHER

That's not what he was there for. He was there to teach you to be competitive and tough mentally. To never give up. On yourself, or others. You can't win if you're not in the game, Mr. Prokes.

PROKES

He taught us well.

THE TEACHER

One team, one face, one goal. You against them.

PROKES

Déjà vu all over again.

THE TEACHER

He knew all about discipline.

PROKES

Coach?

THE TEACHER

Jones. He also knew what keeps us together and what keeps us apart. The culture of fear. That's what separates us, what turns us against one another. Fear.

PROKES

Jonestown offered something different. To all the loose change of the Sixties. Freedom from fear. For a very brief moment.

THE TEACHER

Freedom has a cost. Remember your American history, Mr. Prokes?

(Prokes grimaces.)

THE TEACHER (CONT'D)

Patrick Henry. "Give me liberty, or give me death."

PROKES

We paid the price. Then they painted us as brainwashed cultists.

THE TEACHER

The government wanted us all to believe that. It was easier to sell the slaughter.

PROKES

Still selling it.

THE TEACHER

Jones understood the sickness that has always crippled America. His crime was he spelled it out. And that made him dangerous.

PROKES

Jonestown had its problems, but it was heaven compared to home.

THE TEACHER

I've always admired your power of positive thinking.

PROKES

It works. Most times.

THE TEACHER

The root of the evil was white elitism and racism. America had the disease. Jones had the cure. And the Establishment couldn't handle that.

PROKES

We'd gone off in search of America and found it didn't exist.

THE TEACHER

We're a long way from tolerance and understanding, Mike. A long way from taking care of our own.

PROKES

We were almost there.

(Prokes remembers.)

THE TEACHER

What went wrong?

PROKES

It all changed in the jungle.

THE TEACHER

He became the master. You became his slaves. You were back on the plantation. Absolute power corrupted -

PROKES

Absolutely.

(The Teacher smiles at his student.)

PROKES (CONT'D)

He once said, "Without me, life has no meaning. I'm the best thing you will ever have."

THE TEACHER

They believed him and they followed him. Straight to hell. All except you.

(The Teacher stands. He crosses to loom over his former student.)

THE TEACHER (CONT'D)

What happened, Mike? Why didn't you see it through?

(Prokes stares at his balled fists resting on top of the desk.)

THE TEACHER (CONT'D)

I'll tell you what I think. You got selfish. Maybe a little greedy.

PROKES

You're wrong.

THE TEACHER

It was there. It was easy. You got out. They didn't.

PROKES

Don't throw any stones.

THE TEACHER

I taught you better.

Prokes opens his fists and lays his hands palm-down on the desk. He looks up at his former teacher.

PROKES

No, you set us up. With your "-ologies" and "-isms." With your expectations. The poison didn't kill them. Expectations did.

THE TEACHER

I showed you the way. The road to take. You chose another. I'm disappointed, Mr. Prokes. What happened to your compass?

PROKES

I didn't need it.

(The Teacher steps away from his student.)

THE TEACHER

Winston Churchill once said -

PROKES

Enough with the lectures.

THE TEACHER

This will be your last one. "Success is never final, failure is never fatal. It is the courage to continue that counts."

PROKES

I've got one last shot.

THE TEACHER

Teaching is the ultimate act of optimism, Mike. We try to give you the tools to survive. Then let you go. Most of the time we never know if it made any difference. We only hear about who didn't make it, or what didn't work out.

PROKES

Sometimes we do. Sometimes it doesn't.

THE TEACHER

Which one will you be?

PROKES

You tell me.

THE TEACHER

I can't help you, Mike. I'm only a teacher.

(Lights dim.)

ACT II

Scene 3

(Black.

Doctor Guitar sings "In My Life" by The Beatles low off-stage.

Glasses clink. People talk. Pool balls clack.

Lights up. Limbo set. Night. A dive bar in Modesto.

Up right, the television monitor plays images of Modesto/the Valley in the 60s.

Up center, bathed in a pool of light, is a juke box. Left center, in

profile, is a wooden bar with two bar stools. Right center, in profile, is a dart board.

The television monitor goes dark.

The song stops.

A spot comes up on Doctor Guitar down right, feet hooked over a bar stool.)

DOCTOR GUITAR

This is more my style. Spent a lot of hours in dives like this. Playing "Gloria." Crowd never got tired of that fucking song.

THE FRIEND (OFF-STAGE)

Mike hated losers.

(A spot comes up on THE FRIEND, 31. A cigarette hangs loosely from his lips. He's dressed in a loud Hawaiian shirt, blue jeans, and cowboy boots.)

THE FRIEND (CONT'D)

And their hangouts. Didn't like bull-shitters or assholes or non-believers. Don't know why or how we stayed friends all these years.

DOCTOR GUITAR

Common ground.

THE FRIEND

I suppose that was part of it.

DOCTOR GUITAR

And, he was easy.

THE FRIEND

No, he was angry. Crazy liberal and lucky and didn't mind taking chances. Bad-ass combo. Back in college, he'd get in fights at Wallace rallies. He hated that bigot. Didn't much like Republicans, either. He really despised plastic liberals and weekend revolutionaries. And he was no Pacifist. He fought for what he believed. You were either with him or against him. In or out.

DOCTOR GUITAR

None of that both sides now shit for our boy.

THE FRIEND

That's probably why he wasn't afraid of dying. He truly believed he'd end up in a better place.

DOCTOR GUITAR

Beyond the blue horizon.

(The Doctor stands and exits, singing "Both Sides Now" by Joni Mitchell as he exits.)

A spot comes up on the dart board. Prokes steps into the light and toes the throwing line. He's still buttoned up in his suit. It's getting a little funky. The tie is loosened. He throws his last dart. It's a bull's-eye.)

PROKES

Bang a gong, get it on!

THE FRIEND

Lucky shot.

(Prokes struts to the board and retrieves his three darts.)

PROKES

Lucky shot my ass. I can make those all night long.

(The Friend steps to the throwing line. He sights in. Prokes stands to his right, trying to psych him out.)

THE FRIEND

I can't see you.

PROKES

Sure you can.

(The Friend throws his three darts in rapid succession. 20-20-Bull.)

THE FRIEND

Never a doubt.

(The Friend retrieves his three darts.

Prokes throws one of his darts at The

Friend's feet, making his friend dance.

As Prokes reaches to pull his dart from the floor, the gun slips from his waistband and clatters to the floor. Prokes snatches it up and stuffs it in his front pants pocket.)

THE FRIEND

You got a banana in your pocket, or you just happy to see me?

PROKES

A little protection.

THE FRIEND

From what? That's some serious shit.

(Prokes waves his question off.)

PROKES

Let's make this interesting.

(Prokes pulls a \$50 bill from his pants pocket. He slaps it below the dartboard and stabs it with a dart, impaling it against the wall.)

PROKES (CONT'D)

Double or nothing.

THE FRIEND

Candy from a baby.

PROKES

We'll see.

THE FRIEND

Man, you look guilty as sin.

(Prokes does a double-take.)

THE FRIEND (CONT'D)

Like you got caught with your hand in the cookie jar.

(Prokes smiles.)

PROKES

Doesn't matter. I was right.

THE FRIEND

You're never wrong, are you?

PROKES

I can live with it. Can you?

(The Friend drains his beer.)

THE FRIEND

Man, it doesn't get any better than this. Darts, beer, and loose valley chicks.

(Prokes looks around.)

PROKES

Seriously?

THE FRIEND

Well, two for three gets you into Cooperstown.

(Both men cross to sit at the bar. Prokes pours them another glass of beer from the pitcher. They've emptied five pitchers already. Off-stage, a police siren wails.)

PROKES

Town's gotten big.

THE FRIEND

Everyone wants to live in California. Even here in the great unwashed Central Valley.

PROKES

They're all searching for Merle Haggard.

THE FRIEND

Or George Lucas.

(Prokes removes the manila envelope from his inside coat pocket. He opens it and spills a key onto the bar counter. He toys with it as they talk.)

PROKES

Most of the guys going to be there tomorrow night?

THE FRIEND

Far as I know. All the usual suspects.

PROKES

How about you know who?

THE FRIEND

Yep. She'll be there. Haven't seen much of her lately.

PROKES

Can't believe she never left.

THE FRIEND

Lots didn't. Some came back.

PROKES

How can you stand it?

THE FRIEND

It's not all that bad.

PROKES

Too hot in the summer. Too foggy in the winter. Too flat. Deadens everything.

THE FRIEND

You just get used to it, I guess.

PROKES

My news reports from here were always the same.

(He lifts his left hand to his mouth as if it were a microphone.)

PROKES (CONT'D)

"This is Mike Prokes at the corner of 10<sup>th</sup> and J in Modesto. And, as you can see ... nothing is going on. Back to you in the studio."

THE FRIEND

You kill me. That is truly funny shit.

(Prokes sings to the tune of Sam Cooke's "Been a Long Time.")

PROKES

"I was born in the fog.

Like the fog,

I been clueless ever since.  
It's been a long time coming.  
A change is gonna come."

THE FRIEND

That's bad.

PROKES

So bad it's good.

THE FRIEND

So, you coming to the reunion or not?

PROKES

Haven't decided.

THE FRIEND

It'll be good for you.

PROKES

Maybe.

THE FRIEND

How are the folks?

PROKES

They're the same, too. Mom goes to church. Dad watches TV. She does good. He does crosswords.

THE FRIEND

I love your mom. Your dad's okay, long as he's not hassling me or reciting Shakespeare.

PROKES

They miss you, too.

THE FRIEND

Been home yet?

PROKES

Later.

THE FRIEND

Maybe I'll swing by while you're in town.

PROKES

That'd be nice.

THE FRIEND

Will you stop playing with that?

(The Friend indicates the key.)

PROKES

Nervous habit.

THE FRIEND

What the fuck is it?

(Prokes lays the key flat on the bar and spins it. It stops, pointing right at him.)

PROKES

Jones pulled a Nixon.

THE FRIEND

How's that?

PROKES

He taped everything. Everything.

THE FRIEND

You gonna Deep Throat 'em?

PROKES

Depends on if they come after me.

THE FRIEND

Jimmy Boy sounds like some strange dude.

PROKES

You have no idea.

THE FRIEND

I hear he led with his dick. Must've had one long schlong to get all those people to follow him to the middle of nowhere.

PROKES

He screwed everyone. Everyone.

(It takes a moment for The Friend to get it.)

The Friend drains his beer and pours

them both another one.)

THE FRIEND

Man, that's a bummer about Carolyn and Kimo.

PROKES

Still can't believe they're both dead. Thanks to that cornholer.

THE FRIEND

Why didn't you go back?

(Prokes smiles a crooked smile.)

PROKES

It was too late.

THE FRIEND

Talk them out of it. Something. Anything.

PROKES

Easy for you to say.

THE FRIEND

What a nightmare.

PROKES

Can't wait to wake up.

(The Friend lifts his mug in toast.)

THE FRIEND

Here's to surviving.

(Prokes doesn't respond.)

THE FRIEND (CONT'D)

Okay, then, here's to the Grace Davis Spartans, Class of '65. All hail to thee Grace Davis High.

(Prokes stares at his glass.)

THE FRIEND (CONT'D)

How about another game?

PROKES

Too wasted.

THE FRIEND

Come on. I finally find something I can kick your ass at and you won't give me the satisfaction.

PROKES

Get in line.

THE FRIEND

So, what you want me to do with that shit you sent?

PROKES

Hang onto it for a while.

THE FRIEND

Sure.

PROKES

You mind?

(The Friend shrugs.)

PROKES (CONT'D)

Need you to do something else.

THE FRIEND

Name it.

(Prokes takes five thank-you-card-sized, stamped envelopes out of the left side pocket of his suit coat. They're wrapped with a thick rubber band.)

PROKES

Mail these.

(Prokes holds the letters out. The Friend takes them. He moves the rubber band to look at the address.

Prokes covers it with his hand.)

PROKES (CONT'D)

Just some overdue bills.

THE FRIEND

Whatever you say.

PROKES

Listen, you're going to start hearing things about a press conference I'm supposed to be doing. Don't believe it. Just another lie the government is putting out there. Ignore it.

THE FRIEND

Again, whatever you say.

PROKES

Thanks for everything.

(The Friend smiles and softly punches his old buddy in the shoulder.)

THE FRIEND

Man, I thought you had the world by the tail. Have to admit, I was a little jealous.

PROKES

Things change.

THE FRIEND

I guess. That jungle must've sucked all the life out of you.

PROKES

Left just enough.

THE FRIEND

You're really bumming me out. Let's cruise around town. Get some air.

PROKES

That the best you got to offer? Nothing changes in this town. Nothing.

THE FRIEND

Some things change.

PROKES

Suit yourself.

THE FRIEND

You gotta tell me, man. What really happened down there? I thought I knew you, but what I heard didn't sound like the guy I grew up with.

PROKES

We did the best we could.

THE FRIEND

Come on, Mike. I do know you better than that. You never did anything in your life that didn't benefit you. What blows is, it always did. Nothing ever worked out for me. I mean I'm still here doing the same old shit. You've been a player. On the big stage.

PROKES

That can cut both ways.

THE FRIEND

Bullshit. But, hey, I'll never know. I'll always be the guy telling the story, not the guy the story's about.

PROKES

And how do those stories always end? They're a disaster.

THE FRIEND

I feel for you, but I can't reach you.

PROKES

Sure you can.

(Prokes smiles that winning smile that made him big man on campus.)

THE FRIEND

Fuck you. It's true and you know it. Always in the right place at the right time. Always sliding through. Nothing ever sticks.

(The smile on Prokes's face snaps off as the nightmare comes flooding back.)

PROKES

No hard feelings.

THE FRIEND

No hard feelings. I'll send you a fan.

(Lights dim.)

ACT II

Scene 4

(Black.

Doctor Guitar sings "Dirty Laundry" by Don Henley low off-stage.

Students chatter. A cash register chimes. A pinball machine dings.

Lights up. Limbo set. Day. The Student Center at Modesto Junior College.

Up right, the television monitor plays news coverage or documentary footage of Woodward and Bernstein breaking the Watergate story or clips from the movie, "All the President's Men."

The television monitor goes dark.

The song stops.

A spot comes up on Doctor Guitar down right, standing beside a metal rack holding the school newspaper - *The Pirates' Log.*)

DOCTOR GUITAR

Ah, the Fourth Estate. British parliamentarian Edmund Burke said, "there were Three Estates in Parliament; but, in the Reporters' Gallery, there sat a Fourth Estate more important far than they all." It was up to the Fourth Estate to protect the common man from being victimized by the rich and powerful. They were there to defend the truth. But, there are as many ways to tell the truth as there are ways to leave your lover.

The very people and organizations the media was set up to protect us from, it now promotes. It's become a propaganda tool for corporations, politicians, and patriarchs. For whoever's got the money, honey.

It uses fear to keep us in line and keep us from

questioning. It mesmerizes us. We look without seeing, listen without hearing. We do not think or challenge. We just drink it up.

Today's media is filled with comforting falsehoods and inconvenient truths. It's more soft porn than hard news. These days, the news readers are mostly the bringer of bad tidings because it sells. When there is no real news, they kind of make it up. Or, they spend time on infotainment and what passes for news, like celebrity fuck-ups and freak shows. Not things that build us up, but things that tear us down.

I have two favorite quotes about the media. "I fear three newspapers more than a hundred thousand bayonets." That was Emperor Na-pull-a-bone-apart.

"If I had my choice I would kill every reporter in the world, but I am sure we would be getting reports from Hell before breakfast." And that courtesy of old scorched earth himself, William Tecumseh Sherman.

The Romans had their Bread and Circuses. Here in 1979, we have dirty laundry like *The Enquirer*, "An American Family," *The New York Daily News*, and cable TV. More channels than you can shake a stick at. Nitwit night lights like Morton Downey, Jr., Tom Snyder, and Don Imus. Motley fools all. Edward R., we need you.

When he started out, Mike believed in the power of the Fourth Estate as originally established. But, somehow, it all changed and he found himself acting as a mouthpiece for those he had dedicated his life to exposing. A solid, above-the-fold lead story for "Newservice 10" opened a Pandora's Box he couldn't close. A by-line became an albatross.

"Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears;  
I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him;  
The evil that men do lives after them,  
The good is oft interred with their bones."

Mike started out wanting to bury men like Jones. He ended up praising them.

(The Doctor exits, singing "Won't Get Fooled Again" by The Who.)

A spot comes up on a long lunch table, center stage. On one side sits THE COLLEGE STUDENT, 19, a reporter for *The Pirates' Log*. His notepad is open, his pen poised. He stubs out his cigarette, reaches down and pulls a portable audiocassette recorder out of the backpack lying at his feet.)

THE COLLEGE STUDENT

Mind? I can't write all that fast.

PROKES

That's a permanent record. You can't change it. People have gone to jail for less. Unless you erase parts of it.

THE COLLEGE STUDENT

Right on. Like Tricky Dick did.

PROKES

People shouldn't record things they don't want other people to know about. Jones made that mistake.

THE COLLEGE STUDENT

Nixon recorded stuff to protect his legacy. Jones, too?

PROKES

It was his back-up. So the whole story would be a matter of record. He wanted to go down in history.

THE COLLEGE STUDENT

He will. In flames.

PROKES

And he felt compelled to take us all along.

THE COLLEGE STUDENT

I'll be careful.

(He starts the recording.)

THE COLLEGE STUDENT (CONT'D)

So, how awesome was it the first time you saw your name in print, or saw yourself on TV?

PROKES

(smiles)

It was pretty cool. It was something I always wanted to do. And it started right here at Modesto Junior College.

Thanks to all my teachers. They showed me what was possible.

THE COLLEGE STUDENT

I can dig it. Why did you go into news and broadcasting?

PROKES

To not let people get away with things, I guess. To protect the unprotected, I suppose. To be a voice for the voiceless. Any time people had no food, I wanted to be there. Any time a cop was beating someone up, I wanted to be there. Any time a regular Joe was getting screwed, I wanted to be there.

THE COLLEGE STUDENT

You wanted to be Woodward and Bernstein?

PROKES

Didn't we all?

THE COLLEGE STUDENT

Pretty much, though I kind of like Geraldo. He's a bit of a street fighter.

PROKES

He's had his moments. I see him as more of a video gunslinger, not a serious journalist. But, time will tell.

THE COLLEGE STUDENT

Yes, it will.

PROKES

Are you familiar with angel's trumpet? It's a magnificent weed. It has elegant green leaves and a spectacular purple flower. It's so beautiful, you never want to kill it. It camouflages its true character. Problem is, it's poisonous.

THE COLLEGE STUDENT

I get it. Like, things are never what they seem.

PROKES

Especially in this business.

THE COLLEGE STUDENT

In any business. Heck, in anything, right?

PROKES

You're very perceptive. You remind me of me.

(The College Student smiles, flattered, then confused.)

THE COLLEGE STUDENT

What was it like living in the jungle? Off the map like that?

PROKES

At first, it was Utopia. We loved it. We all worked together to make it real. Jones was a great leader. The right man at the right time.

THE COLLEGE STUDENT

Like Moses. Like Martin or Gandhi.

PROKES

Yes, and then it all changed. He changed.

THE COLLEGE STUDENT

Moses wanted to be God.

PROKES

He had all the power. And it went right to his head. No one could stop him. No one could question him. He became Herod.

THE COLLEGE STUDENT

Or Kurtz, in *Heart of Darkness*.

PROKES

Ah, college. I miss it. English 1A. Phillips or Nicholson?

THE COLLEGE STUDENT

Phillips.

PROKES

Me, too. Great teacher. Blew out all the doors and windows. Introduced this valley boy to something completely different. Made us question what we knew and accepted. That's what college is all about, isn't it? Exposing us to brave new worlds, bold new ways of thinking. Challenging us to question what is and to ask what if? Giving us the tools to go out there and do something with our brains. To make sure we don't get fooled again.

THE COLLEGE STUDENT

Did Jones become Kurtz?

PROKES

Pretty much. He was isolated. He was crazy. He was on drugs. He was sick. He really thought he was God. It wasn't good. And some of us in the leadership group really weren't sure what to do.

THE COLLEGE STUDENT

Savior on speed surrounded by dazed and confused disciples.

PROKES

Nice tag line. You should be a reporter.

(The College Student smiles.)

THE COLLEGE STUDENT

Why didn't you just take over? Stage a *coup d'état*?

PROKES

Leo Ryan arrived.

THE COLLEGE STUDENT

And the shit hit the fan.

PROKES

Yes, it did. And we all got splattered. The collateral damage is still spreading.

THE COLLEGE STUDENT

You became the story. Isn't that the worst thing a real reporter can do?

PROKES

Yes, it is. But, by then, I wasn't a "real" reporter any more.

THE COLLEGE STUDENT

But, you were still part of the problem, not the solution.

PROKES

I guess I was.

THE COLLEGE STUDENT

What advice do you have for students like me who want to be good reporters?

PROKES

Be vigilant. Be true to yourself, your story, and your audience. Don't compromise. Every compromise you make destroys a little piece of your soul. Until there's

nothing left. Make good choices. Look before you leap.  
But never stop believing in tomorrow.

(Lights dim.)

ACT II

Scene 5

(Black.)

Doctor Guitar sings "American Woman" by  
The Guess Who low off-stage.

Voices murmur in prayer. Church bells  
ring. Footsteps echo.

Lights up. Limbo set. Day. A church  
sanctuary in Modesto.

Up right, the television monitor plays  
images of holy men and saviors like  
Christ, Mohammed, and Buddha intercut  
with images of holy terrors and sinners  
like Hitler, Mussolini, and Stalin.  
Intercut with images of Jim Jones  
tending his flock.

Up center, bathed in a pool of light,  
is a life-sized crucifix. Left center,  
in profile, is a pulpit. Right center,  
in profile, is a row of three pews.  
Light streams through a stained glass  
window hanging above the crucifix.

The television monitor goes dark.

The song stops.

A spot comes up on Doctor Guitar down  
right, hunched in a confessional. He  
leans into the light.)

DOCTOR GUITAR

She's the kind of girl you want so very much. You know the  
kind. Every girl named Sandy, Debbie, Judy, Cathy, or  
Nancy. Every girl we fantasized about getting to second  
base with. Copping a feel. There weren't many Babe Ruths  
in our bunch, but that didn't stop us from dreaming.

Except Mike. Oh, the stories we could tell.

All those stick-shift kings and tuck 'n roll queens, wrestling around in the back seat. Ah, Paradise by the dashboard light. Course we never thought it would happen to us. Never worried about getting somebody knocked up. But it happened. And that was it, man. The end of the innocence.

There always came that day. At least for anyone with dreams, or any kind of ambition. Do you love the life you got, or get the life you love? I've heard it said that happiness is not having what you want, but wanting what you have. Mike was as clueless as the rest of us on that one. Man, I loved those skin-tight skirts.

(The Doctor stands and exits, singing "Once I Was" by Tim Buckley.)

A spot comes up on the pews. THE OLD FLAME, 31, sits in the front pew. Everything about her is frozen in time. Bouffant hairdo, tight skirt, dark eye-liner, saddle shoes, white lipstick. Head bowed, she strokes a small gold cross around her neck. Prokes sits next to her. He looks like shit warmed over.)

PROKES

How long's it been?

THE OLD FLAME

High school graduation night. You wanted to make out. I puked in your car.

PROKES

I left. Eventually.

THE OLD FLAME

And forgot about us.

PROKES

I had to get out. It was time.

THE OLD FLAME

Why now, Michael?

PROKES

The reunion. And some other things to take care of. You going?

THE OLD FLAME

Not in this condition.

(The Old Flame touches her stomach.)

PROKES

You always wanted kids.

THE OLD FLAME

Back then. With you. Not now. I'm too old.

PROKES

You're never too old.

(She shoots him a look that says, "How would you know?")

THE OLD FLAME

How long you staying?

PROKES

Depends.

THE OLD FLAME

Maybe we can do this again.

(For a moment, he drifts away, lost in thought.)

THE OLD FLAME (CONT'D)

A penny for your thoughts.

PROKES

We're together.

THE OLD FLAME

To old times.

PROKES

To now.

(In their eyes and body language, there's still a spark, a yearning, a reaching out.)

THE OLD FLAME

Ever wonder what would've happened if we'd stayed boyfriend and girlfriend, beau and belle?

PROKES

From time to time. You?

THE OLD FLAME

(says like a  
wedding vow)

I do.

PROKES

Why?

THE OLD FLAME

I dunno. I guess maybe it's about time slipping away. Missed opportunities. Could haves and should haves. Same old silly stuff.

(Prokes looks away.)

THE OLD FLAME (CONT'D)

Did I say something wrong?

PROKES

No, just thinking about some things.

THE OLD FLAME

It seems like we're all doing more of that these days.

PROKES

Why are we here?

THE OLD FLAME

How much time you got?

PROKES

No, why here? In a church?

(She gazes lovingly around the  
sanctuary.)

THE OLD FLAME

Gee, I don't know. I guess 'cause it's safe and predictable and reassuring. I come here a lot now.

PROKES

More of us are.

THE OLD FLAME

We're lost and we're looking and we don't know why.

(He punches the back of the pew.)

THE OLD FLAME

It's not good living with regrets, Michael.

PROKES

That's all that's left me.

(She reaches to curl her arms inside his and lean closer. He pulls away. She frowns and withdraws.)

THE OLD FLAME

This baby needs a father.

PROKES

Bad timing.

THE OLD FLAME

Maybe we could go back to ...

(sings)

... "The way we were."

PROKES

Nothing ever stays the same.

(Prokes leans back, stretching his arms out on the back of the pew. He stares heaven-ward.)

The Old Flame looks more closely at him. His scruffy face, blood-shot eyes, dirty hands, soiled suit.)

THE OLD FLAME

What happened to you, Michael? You had so much to offer.

(He turns on her, suddenly pissed.)

PROKES

What's up with you people? I didn't live up to expectations. Big deal. Is that so bad? It's not like I killed someone.

(He pauses. He has to think about that a minute.)

THE OLD FLAME

You don't need anybody, do you? Never did. You could live the rest of your life alone and be fine.

(He shrugs. She caresses her stomach.)

THE OLD FLAME (CONT'D)

I don't know what I'm going to do, Michael.

PROKES

What about an abortion?

(She shoots him a horrified look.)

THE OLD FLAME

He would never forgive me.

(She glances up at the crucifix.)

PROKES

What about adoption?

THE OLD FLAME

I would never forgive myself.

PROKES

Then keep it and raise it.

THE OLD FLAME

I don't think I'm strong enough.

PROKES

How strong do you have to be?

(She gives him that look again that says he doesn't have a clue.)

THE OLD FLAME

What's the point?

PROKES

What do you mean?

THE OLD FLAME

No one cares. About me or this kid. It's a cruel world, Michael.

PROKES

What about me?

(That gets her attention.)

THE OLD FLAME

You're just trying to make me feel better.

PROKES

That, too.

THE OLD FLAME

Don't fuck with me, Michael.

(A bemused smile curls around his lips.)

PROKES

Wouldn't dream of it.

(Awkward silence.)

THE OLD FLAME

What do we do now?

PROKES

Pray?

THE OLD FLAME

I don't trust you.

PROKES

Story of my life.

THE OLD FLAME

Look at you. You're a mess. You can't even take care of yourself. How you going to care for two more people? What was I thinking? Hormones are making me stupid.

PROKES

You're right. I couldn't save any of them. Not one.

(He leans forward, clasping his hands and bowing his head.

She reaches to touch his head, then thinks better of it.)

THE OLD FLAME

Have you ever thought about suicide?

(That gets his attention.)

PROKES

Excuse me?

THE OLD FLAME

Suicide, you know -

PROKES

I heard you.

THE OLD FLAME

They say it's the ultimate act of selfishness.

PROKES

Don't know about selfish. Inconvenient maybe.

THE OLD FLAME

Inconvenient. Really?

PROKES

You know, for the ones left behind.

THE OLD FLAME

Messy. Isn't that what you mean? It's messy. For the survivors.

PROKES

Why would you even think that?

THE OLD FLAME

It'd be simpler.

PROKES

Simpler isn't better.

THE OLD FLAME

I've run out of possibilities.

PROKES

It isn't simple. It isn't pretty. I've seen it. You die alone. It's just you. All alone.

THE OLD FLAME

I'm alone right now.

PROKES

Not that kind of alone.

THE OLD FLAME

What's the point?

PROKES

It's not just you now.

(Prokes touches her stomach.)

THE OLD FLAME

Sorry. Guilt doesn't do anything for me anymore.

PROKES

Just think about it. If you'd seen ... you might see things differently.

(Prokes buries his face in his hands.)

PROKES (CONT'D)

They're all dead. All of them. I should have stayed.

(He leans into her shoulder. She places her hand on his hand.)

THE OLD FLAME

Promise me something.

(She touches his head.)

THE OLD FLAME (CONT'D)

Don't become the kind of person you have to hold your breath around.

(He looks into her face.)

PROKES

Will you miss me?

THE OLD FLAME

Yes.

PROKES

No regrets.

THE OLD FLAME

No tears ...

(she stands)

Goodbye.

PROKES

Forgive me.

THE OLD FLAME

I wish I had that kind of power.

(Lights dim.)

ACT II

Scene 6

(Black.)

Doctor Guitar sings "Magic Carpet Ride" by Steppenwolf low off-stage.

Street traffic hums. A clock tower clangs six times. A fire engine honks.

Lights up. Limbo set. Evening. A street corner in Modesto.

Up right, the television monitor plays images of sex, drugs, and rock n' roll in the 1960s.

Up center, bathed in a pool of light, is a street light. Left center, in profile, is a row of garbage cans. Right center, in profile, is a wall tattooed with graffiti.

The television monitor goes dark.

The song stops.

A spot comes up on the base of the street light. Doctor Guitar is hunkered down in his tattered lawn chair. He finishes playing "Magic Carpet Ride" and launches into a soulful rendition of "Riding with the King" by John Hiatt, punctuated with some decent blues licks.

Prokes enters. He stops to listen for a moment. He's impressed. He moves closer. He leans down to drop some money in the Doctor's guitar case. The Doctor grabs his arm. Prokes recoils.)

What the -

PROKES

I know you, man.

DOCTOR GUITAR

Doubt it.

PROKES

Oh, yeah. We went to high school together.

DOCTOR GUITAR

(Prokes looks closer.)

PROKES

What's your name?

DOCTOR GUITAR

Birth certificate says George. Now they call me Doctor Guitar.

(The Doctor reels off a wicked run.)

PROKES

I could use a good doctor.

DOCTOR GUITAR

I'm always on call.

PROKES

What happened, man?

DOCTOR GUITAR

Ask you the same thing, dude.

(The Doctor gently lays his guitar down and stands to face Prokes.)

DOCTOR GUITAR (CONT'D)

What're you doing in town?

PROKES

Class reunion.

DOCTOR GUITAR

Nobody told me.

PROKES

You got an address?

DOCTOR GUITAR

My license plate.

PROKES

It's tonight. At Davis. In the gym.

DOCTOR GUITAR

Have to check my calendar. I'm a busy man.

PROKES

I can see that.

(The Doctor pulls a small, tattered spiral notepad from his back pocket. He flips through the pages.)

DOCTOR GUITAR

Nope. Clear as the valley sky after a hard rain.

(The Doctor stuffs the notepad back in his pocket and picks up the guitar. He plays a classical guitar piece.)

PROKES

You're pretty good.

DOCTOR GUITAR

Always have been.

(He punctuates his sentences with guitar licks.)

PROKES

Sure, I remember now. You were really good. Like cover of *Rolling Stone* good. The next Clapton.

(The Doctor touches his heart and the image of Stevie Ray emblazoned there on his T-shirt.)

DOCTOR GUITAR

Stevie Ray Vaughan, actually.

PROKES

How come you never did anything with it?

DOCTOR GUITAR

I like home cooking.

PROKES

You used to play all our school dances. Junior high on. A three-piece, right?

DOCTOR GUITAR

The Detours.

PROKES

Exactly.

DOCTOR GUITAR

And a bunch of others. Different decade, different name, different look, different sound.

PROKES

Tough business.

DOCTOR GUITAR

You have no idea.

PROKES

You got a home?

(The Doctor jerks his thumb over his shoulder.)

DOCTOR GUITAR

My van. I make house calls.

PROKES

You interested in checking out the reunion?

DOCTOR GUITAR

Not really. I never liked those people back then. Probably won't like them now.

PROKES

Why not?

DOCTOR GUITAR

Didn't fit in. Didn't like the classes.

(sings)

"Didn't like the teacher's dirty looks."

(stops singing)

Couldn't wait to hit the silk.

PROKES

You could sit in tonight.

DOCTOR GUITAR

Not for them ducks.

PROKES

Give it a chance.

DOCTOR GUITAR

Got nothing to prove. Nothing to show.

PROKES

No dreams?

DOCTOR GUITAR

Play music on the streets. Die young and tax-free.

PROKES

You can do better than that.

DOCTOR GUITAR

Don't want to.

PROKES

Man, you're missing out.

DOCTOR GUITAR

On what? Your life? All stoned on salvation and freedom and shit.

PROKES

There's a big world out there.

DOCTOR GUITAR

Yes, there is. And I'm going to leave it out there.

PROKES

Why do you stay here?

DOCTOR GUITAR

I like to see the sun and know where I'm going.

PROKES

Some place. My mother always said there was a dark shadow over this town. Bad things always seem to happen here.

DOCTOR GUITAR

Must have followed you.

(Prokes eyes the good Doctor.)

DOCTOR GUITAR (CONT'D)

Look, this town, warts and all, is what I know. It's what inspires me. It's something I can count on.

PROKES

I couldn't wait to kick the dust off my shoes.

DOCTOR GUITAR

(sings)

"Stuck inside of Mobile with the Memphis blues again."

(stops singing)

You know, the heart is a strange and funny thing, Mikey. In the summer it longs for winter, and in the winter it longs for summer.

(Prokes takes the flask out of his coat pocket and offers it to the Doctor. The Doctor holds his hand up, declining the offering.)

PROKES

Why not?

DOCTOR GUITAR

Don't do that trash anymore. Makes me lose control. I don't like that.

PROKES

Thought it was better to burn out, not fade away.

DOCTOR GUITAR

Works for some, I guess.

(Prokes chug-a-lugs. It goes down wrong. He chokes, then nearly pukes.)

PROKES

Damn.

(Prokes takes a handkerchief from his back pocket and covers his mouth.)

DOCTOR GUITAR

You remind me of someone.

PROKES

Not likely.

DOCTOR GUITAR

Yeah, you do. You know, that dude who cuts all the ropes so he won't hang himself.

PROKES

Wrong guy.

DOCTOR GUITAR

Lots of similarities.

PROKES

If you're going to talk truth, cowboy, you better have one foot in the stirrup.

DOCTOR GUITAR

Stop wasting your light.

PROKES

And save it for what?

DOCTOR GUITAR

Hope is a powerful thing, man.

PROKES

Hope dies alone.

DOCTOR GUITAR

We're all going to die. What's important is who we are when it comes.

(The Doctor sings "Broken Wings" by John Mayall.)

PROKES

I'm done with sermons.

DOCTOR GUITAR

Just remember one thing.

PROKES

What's that?

DOCTOR GUITAR

You got to wake up a virgin each morning.

PROKES

Don't ever gather disciples, Doc. They'd have you on the cross faster than you can say, "Amen."

DOCTOR GUITAR

Not a problem. Got nothing to preach.

(Lights dim.)

ACT II

Scene 7

(Black.

Doctor Guitar sings "Circle Game" by  
Joni Mitchell low off-stage.

A dishwasher hums. A coffee pot  
percolates. A grandfather clock chimes  
eight times.

Lights up. Limbo set. Night. The  
living room of the Prokes's home.

Up right, the television monitor plays  
images from "The Ozzie & Harriet Show."  
Up center, bathed in a pool of light,  
hangs a painting of Jesus Christ. The  
traditional Anglo, long-haired version.  
Left center, in profile is a console TV  
set. Its projected blue light dances  
on the stage. Right center, facing the  
audience, is a couch fitted with a  
plastic slip-cover.

The television monitor goes dark.

The song stops.

A spot comes up on Doctor Guitar down  
right, sitting at a kitchen table.)

DOCTOR GUITAR

What is it about mothers and fathers? We would kill for  
our father's qualified approval, but we take the  
unconditional love of our mother for granted. Without it,  
man it can get real twisted and ugly. When it's not there,  
a home is just a house. That's just not right.

Because your home is always your home. It's always  
supposed to be there. All your memories are there. The  
trophies on the shelves. The photos on the walls. The

drawings on the refrigerator. All those future ruins. Without those, there is nothing. There is no you. Because you have no history. No footprints. No breadcrumbs. That's where they store all your stuff. All those old term papers and yearbooks, your baby book and the clothes you'll never wear again, the birthday cards, report cards, baseball cards. Home is where all that shit lives. Until you settle down and get a place of your own where you can stash it all. When someone comes along and takes you away. Your folks are supposed to keep it all until then. They're not supposed to give it to the kid next door, or put it in a garage sale, or give it to the Salvation Army. They can turn your room into a gym or a pottery studio, but they can't sell it all and just move away. They just can't. It's your last safe harbor. Without it, you're a man without a country. Forever sailing from port to port.

(The Doctor stands and exits, singing "Wonder Why We Ever Go Home" by Jimmy Buffet.)

A spot comes up left center on a recliner facing the TV console. THOMAS PROKES, 50, sits in the recliner watching college basketball. Tie loose, the sleeves of his white dress shirt rolled up, he half-watches college basketball while doing a crossword puzzle.

A spot comes up on the couch. Prokes sits beside his mother, MARY PROKES, also 50 years old. Her clasped hands rest on her kitchen-aproned lap.)

PROKES

What are you watching, Dad?

(Thomas tosses the *TV Guide* at his son. It lands at Mike's feet. He ignores it.)

Prokes removes a picture of a LITTLE BOY from his coat pocket. He also gently removes the folded drawing of the skull and flames.)

PROKES

Jim Jon would have been four end of last January.

(He hands his mother the picture.)

MARY

He's beautiful, Michael.

(She hands the picture back.)

PROKES

I found this in a box at the auction.

(He unfolds the drawing and hands it to his mother.)

MARY

Poor child.

THOMAS

You should have taken that boy, his mother, and gotten the hell out of that godforsaken place.

PROKES

Couldn't do that, Dad. We didn't think that way.

(Mary hands the drawing back to Prokes.)

THOMAS

All the time in that commune made you soft in the head, son.

MARY

You let my grandson die, Michael.

PROKES

He was just my stepson.

THOMAS

He had your name. He was your son. He was your responsibility.

PROKES

He's buried in Oakland. I brought him some flowers.

THOMAS

Generous.

PROKES

I needed to do something.

THOMAS

What about running to the Russian embassy? Was that what you needed to do?

PROKES

I was never there.

THOMAS

That's not what I heard.

PROKES

Heard wrong.

THOMAS

You weren't empty-handed, either.

PROKES

Wrong guy.

THOMAS

Was Jones going to join you? Was that the plan, boy?

(Prokes bristles.)

MARY

Let's change the subject, Thomas. Please.

THOMAS

What was in that suitcase could have saved a lot of souls.

MARY

Only love gets you into heaven. And forgiveness.

THOMAS

You keep believing that, Mary. You and your son and all the other true believers.

(Prokes glares at his father, then turns to face his mother.)

PROKES

I need to go back tomorrow.

MARY

I still haven't decided.

THOMAS

What good will having that cross do you, anyway?

PROKES

May not do any good.

(Prokes re-folds the drawing and tucks it and the photo carefully away inside his suit coat.)

PROKES (CONT'D)

I really can't - don't want to go back without it.

THOMAS

Stop badgering your mother. She'll let you know as soon as she knows.

PROKES

Then let her say that.

(Thomas slowly sets the crossword aside, puts the recliner's footrest down, leans forward, and turns to face his son.)

THOMAS

You're all the same. Selfish. Your brothers and sisters are just like you. You take and take and expect more. It's probably our fault for spoiling you. You get what you want, what you came for, then you leave. And I have to pick up the pieces. I have to hold her hand and wipe away her tears when she cries herself to sleep wondering what she said wrong. Worrying that you still love her. That's what mothers do. They die a little each night because of their children. And we fathers have to tell her it's all right. It doesn't mean anything. They still love you. But, the fact is my boy, you - none of you - will ever love her as much as I do.

(Thomas turns back to the TV, grabs the crossword, lifts up the footrest, and settles back into the recliner.)

MARY

Are you sure that's what you want, Michael?

PROKES

It'd be easier.

THOMAS

Easy? Nothing is easy.

PROKES

If you say so.

THOMAS

The easy way isn't always the best way. Or, the right way.

PROKES

I guess.

THOMAS

Back in college, I read somewhere that the only difference between a saint and a sinner is that every saint has a past and every sinner has a future.

(Mary gazes lovingly up at the glowing portrait of Jesus, then looks at her son.)

MARY

I don't know, Michael. It was your grandmother's.

THOMAS

Hell, just give it to him, Mary. Where she is now, it won't do her any good.

MARY

Everyone has a seed of sin within them, Michael. Everyone. If we care about people, if we love people as Jesus taught, that love would reach out to everyone and there would be nothing bad here on earth. If we truly believe that God is love, then the love of God will free us of the illusion that there is evil or sickness in this world.

THOMAS

That sure explains men like Hitler and Stalin. And Jones.

PROKES

They were wrong. We were right.

THOMAS

We raised you better.

MARY

It's all an illusion. This vale of tears. Matter is unreal and temporary. Only the Spirit, our unity with God, is real and eternal. We simply have to survive this life.

THOMAS

Be careful what you wish for.

(Lights dim.)

ACT II

Scene 8

(Black.)

Doctor Guitar sings "Blowin' in the Wind" by Bob Dylan low off-stage.

Cars hum along the highway. A train screeches to a halt. A factory whistle shrieks.

Lights up. Limbo set. Night. The motel room in Modesto.

Up right, the television monitor plays images of Robert F. Kennedy's tour of eastern Kentucky in 1968.)

ROBERT F. KENNEDY (ON TV)

"It is a revolutionary world we live in. Governments repress their people; and millions are trapped in poverty while the nation grows rich; and wealth is lavished on armaments.

The future does not belong to those who are content with today, apathetic toward common problems and their fellow man alike. Rather it will belong to those who can blend vision, reason and courage in a personal commitment to the ideals and great enterprises of American society."

(Center stage, bathed in a pool of light, is the chair and table. On the table sits a manual typewriter, facing the audience. Left center is the bed, unmade, and the side table, cluttered.

The television monitor goes dark.

The song stops.

A spot comes up on Doctor Guitar leaning against the closed bathroom

door, right center.)

DOCTOR GUITAR

Hope and optimism and change can be a strange and lethal brew. You can die from it. Especially when it threatens the big dogs. We set up this government to protect us, not attack us. Good leaders shouldn't lead from fear or lies. But, they do. Too often.

When the government is worried, afraid of looking bad or losing control, it can get very dangerous. Particularly if what it's based on, what it was founded upon - say a little idea like freedom - starts getting in the way.

Can it happen again? You bet. Can you say Katrina? How 'bout Guantanamo? I knew you could.

(The Doctor exits, singing "I Will Not Go Quietly" by Don Henley.

Prokes enters. He shoulders the worn Sierra Club backpack. He crosses to the table. He drops the backpack on the table to the right of the typewriter. He opens the backpack. He takes out some papers and manila file folders. He stacks them on the table next to the backpack. He pulls the gun from his waistband and places it on the table to the left of the typewriter.

He sits. He feeds a sheet of blank paper into the typewriter. He opens one of the manila folders, withdraws a document, scans it, and starts typing.

He suddenly stops. A horrified look spreads across his face. He lifts his two hands. He stares at them. He slowly turns them toward the audience. Blood drips from his fingertips.

He jumps to his feet, kicking the chair away behind him. He hurries to the bathroom door, slams open the door with his shoulder, flips the light switch with his elbow, and staggers to the sink. He turns on the faucet and

plunges his hands beneath the water.)

PROKES

A little water. That's all. Just a little water.

(He turns off the water and towels off his hands. He walks back to the table. He stops. There is more blood on his hands. It drips from the towel.

Lights dim.)

ACT II

Scene 9

(Black.

Doctor Guitar sings "Be True to Your School" by the Beach Boys low off-stage.

Teenage voices laugh and chatter. Stockinged feet dance on a wooden floor. A clock ticks.

Lights up. Limbo set. Night. A high school gym in Modesto.

Up right, the television monitor plays images of high school dances. Intercut with clips of "American Bandstand."

Center stage, bathed in a pool of light, is a small set of wooden bleachers. Above the bleachers is a butcher paper banner that reads: "Welcome Grace M. Davis High School, 1964 - 1967. The First Four." Next to that hangs a cardboard cutout of the Spartan mascot. Left center, a table. On it is a punch bowl surrounded by paper cups. Right center, a backdrop for reunion photos. It features the pock-marked concrete walls of Davis High School and a lettered caption that reads, "Reelin' in the Years".

The television monitor goes dark.

The song stops.

"Green Onions" by Booker T. and the MGs plays low under the dialogue.

A spot comes up on Prokes and The Friend, standing behind the punch bowl. Prokes is still wearing the suit, all soiled and skanky. The Friend is dressed in the height of late 70s style.

Prokes pulls a bottle of Southern Comfort from his coat pocket. He pours all of it into the punch.)

PROKES  
(off The Friend's  
look)

Ice-breaker.

(Prokes slides the empty bottle under the bleachers.)

THE FRIEND  
Everybody looks pretty good.

PROKES  
Some more than others.

(The Friend looks where Prokes is looking.)

THE FRIEND  
Susie, Susie. Yes, indeed.  
(sings)

"Oh, Susie Q,  
Oh, Susie Q,  
Oh, Suzie Q,  
Baby, I love you,  
Susie Q."

(stops singing)

Let's see ...

(The Friend points.)

THE FRIEND (CONT'D)

Married, married, divorced, married, divorced, on her second marriage, separated, traded in his wife for a Porsche, looking, diseased, confused.

PROKES

Ah, high school. Does it ever end?

THE FRIEND

Never.

(The Old Flame sashays up.)

PROKES

You made it.

THE OLD FLAME

I wanted to see you. One last time.

(She takes Prokes's hand.)

THE FRIEND

Hello, darlin'.

THE OLD FLAME

Roll that tongue back in your mouth, lover boy. Your affection is all too evident.

(She looks down at his crotch.)

THE FRIEND

Can't help myself, Sugar-Pie, Honey-Butt. You know that I love you.

THE OLD FLAME

(to Prokes)

See you later?

PROKES

Maybe.

(Prokes reluctantly lets go of her hand.)

The Old Flame takes a cup of punch and leaves.)

THE FRIEND  
What a waste of sin.

PROKES  
She's pregnant.

THE FRIEND  
Serious?

PROKES  
Serious.

(The Teacher strides up to the table.)

THE TEACHER  
Gentlemen.

THE FRIEND/PROKES  
(as one)  
Sir.

THE TEACHER  
You see, Mr. Prokes, there is life after high school.

PROKES  
Is there?

(The Teacher picks up a cup, smells the punch, looks at the two men, now suddenly grinning like high schoolers, puts the cup down and leaves.)

THE FRIEND  
That's one intense guy.

PROKES  
Out to change the world.

THE FRIEND  
Right. Can't even change a tire.

(Doctor Guitar shambles in from the side.)

DOCTOR GUITAR  
Dudes.

THE FRIEND/PROKES

(as one)

Jorge/George.

PROKES

Decided to check it out after all?

DOCTOR GUITAR

Too weird.

(The Friend dips a cup into the bowl.)

THE FRIEND

Try a little tenderness. It'll adjust your attitude.

(The Doctor gulps down the cup, smiles, and holds out the cup for a refill. The Friend fills it again, the Doctor chugs it again, and crushes the paper cup.)

DOCTOR GUITAR

Now that tastes like truth. Maybe I will just go jam with the band.

PROKES

They need a doctor. A good one.

THE FRIEND

Your sister would have dug this scene, man.

(The Doctor stares at the Friend for a moment, then smiles.)

DOCTOR GUITAR

Yes, she would have bopped 'til she dropped.

(The Doctor looks at Prokes and touches the brim of his cap in salute.)

DOCTOR GUITAR (CONT'D)

Don't do anything I wouldn't do.

PROKES

Narrows the opportunities.

(The Doctor exits.)

THE FRIEND

What a waste of talent.

PROKES

When he wants to.

THE FRIEND

Needs a good manager.

PROKES

Who? You? Can't even manage a bank account.

(The Friend scowls at Prokes, then turns to gaze upon the crowd.)

THE FRIEND

Ah, the wonder and horror of it all. Rob just got out of jail. Again. Ken's studying Buddhism in Japan. Joe's in a band. Mitch's dealing drugs in the City. Bob got all fucked up in 'Nam. John still drives that piss yellow Deuce coupe.

PROKES

What happened to all that promise? All that potential.

THE FRIEND

Not one lived up to their press.

PROKES

I know about that.

THE FRIEND

Most of the most likely to ...

(He points his finger like he's picking off squirrels on a canal bank.)

THE FRIEND (CONT'D)

Didn't ... couldn't ... can't ... won't ... shouldn't.

(He cocks his hand up in front of his face and blows on the tip of his finger.)

THE FRIEND (CONT'D)

Speaking of which.

(THE PUNK, 31, enters. He's a short, smart-ass with a Napoleon complex. His

brightly-colored shirt is open almost to his navel. His neck is swathed in gold chains, his hair all permed out. He wears pointy-toed Beatle boots.)

THE PUNK

Ladies.

THE FRIEND/PROKES

(as one)

Big man.

(The Punk takes a paper cup. He pauses before dipping his cup into the punch bowl.)

THE PUNK

Anything in there I should worry about?

THE FRIEND

Only if you're allergic to good times.

THE PUNK

I just don't get it, Prokes. How could all those people turn off their minds and just drink the Kool-aid. Bunch of sheep.

(As The Punk dips his cup into the punch, Prokes quietly steps forward and punches him. The Punk drops like a rock. Prokes straddles him.)

PROKES

They weren't Moonies, numb nuts. They weren't freaks. They were good people that just wanted a better life. That's all.

(Prokes leans down until they're face to face.)

PROKES (CONT'D)

That's all.

(Slam to black.)

ACT II

Scene 10

(Black.

Doctor Guitar plays the piano instrumental "Last Date" by Floyd Cramer on his guitar low off-stage.

Lights up. Limbo set.

Center stage, FIVE PEOPLE stand in a row, heads down. They're all dressed in identical white suits and carrying canes, like the Beatles in "Magical Mystery Tour."

They lift their heads one at a time. From left to right, we see The Friend, The Old Flame, The Teacher, Thomas Prokes, and The Blind Beggar. They all wear blackface makeup. All but The Blind Beggar, who wears whiteface. They begin an exaggerated Buck and Wing dance routine.)

THE FRIEND

(sings)

"People try to put us down  
Just because we get around  
Things they do look awful cold  
Yeah, I hope I die before I get old."

THE OLD FLAME

(sings)

"But while we're apart  
Don't give your heart to anyone  
But don't forget who's taking you home  
And in whose arms you're gonna be  
So darlin', save the last dance for me."

THE TEACHER

(sings)

"Don't stop, thinking about tomorrow,  
Don't stop, it'll soon be here,  
It'll be, better than before,

Yesterday's gone, yesterday's gone."

THOMAS

(sings)

"He's a real nowhere Man,  
Sitting in his Nowhere Land,  
Making all his nowhere plans  
for nobody."

THE BLIND BEGGAR

(sings)

"I've got many rivers to cross,  
But I can't seem to find my way over.  
Many rivers to cross but just where to begin  
I'm playing for time  
There'll be times I find myself thinking  
Of committing some dreadful crime."

(Slam to black.)

ACT II

Scene 11

(Black.)

Doctor Guitar sings "I Am a Child" by  
Neil Young low off-stage.

A clock strikes midnight. An owl  
hoots. Children scream. Mothers wail.

Lights up. Limbo set. Night. The  
motel room in Modesto.

Up right, the television monitor plays  
images of Prokes as a child. Intercut  
with images of his stepson, Kimo.

Center stage, piled high with papers,  
is the table.

The unmade bed and cluttered side table  
sit left center.

The television monitor goes dark.

The song stops.

A spot comes up on Doctor Guitar standing center stage beside the table.)

DOCTOR GUITAR

Kids. They count on us. Man, how they count on us. They trust us to take care of them until they're old enough to take care of themselves. Sometimes it doesn't work out that way.

One of the toughest things a parent will ever live through is losing a child. You try to protect them, but you can't. It's like teaching them to ride a bike. You can explain. You can show them. You can run alongside and steady them as they go. As they wobble along, they need you and they don't. And as they ride away, you realize it will always be that way. The question is, "Do you cage the bird, or fly with it?"

(The Doctor exits, singing "Teach Your Children" by Crosby, Stills & Nash.

A spot comes up on the bed. Prokes sits bolt upright. He shakes his head, rubs his eyes, and looks around to get his bearings. He's not sure if everything up to now has been a bad dream.

A child hums to himself. A spot comes up on KIMO, 4, sitting cross-legged on the floor. He flips through the pages of a comic classic of *Huckleberry Finn*. He lays the comic book down. He picks up a red crayon and scrawls on a piece of paper lying at his feet.)

PROKES

What you working on?

KIMO

Nothing. Just drawing.

PROKES

Do you know who I am?

KIMO

Yes.

PROKES

Do you remember that day?

KIMO

No.

PROKES

What do you remember?

KIMO

Mom squirted something icky in my mouth. It didn't taste very good. And then I guess I went to sleep.

PROKES

We prayed the Lord your soul would keep.

KIMO

I never woke up.

PROKES

We hoped you'd gone to a better place.

KIMO

Don't know nobody there.

PROKES

Does it look like here?

KIMO

No.

PROKES

Does it look like anything you've ever seen?

KIMO

Sort of. A little, maybe. Not really. Nope. No. It don't feel or look like anything.

(Kimo looks up at Prokes.)

KIMO (CONT'D)

Why didn't you come back?

PROKES

I couldn't.

KIMO

I miss my mommy. I miss you. I miss my friends. Can I come home?

(Prokes chokes back a sob.)

PROKES

I don't think so.

KIMO

Will you come see me?

PROKES

I can't. Not just yet. One day. Maybe, yes, maybe one day.

KIMO

We'll get together then, Dad.

(Kimo holds up the drawing. It's the drawing of the skull and flames Prokes found at Peoples Temple.

The spot on Kimo snaps off.

Kimo's last words segue into the same words in the song "Cat's in the Cradle" by Harry Chapin, sung off-stage by the Doctor.

The song stops.

Lights dim.)

ACT II

Scene 12

(Black.

Doctor Guitar sings "Lawyers, Guns, and Money" by Warren Zevon low off-stage.

Children's voices shriek as they play on park toys. An ice cream truck plays a mind-numbing melody. A basketball thumps against pavement.

Lights up. Limbo set. Day. A park in Modesto.

Up right, the television monitor plays images of the NCAA basketball

championship. Michigan State versus Indiana State, Bird versus Magic.

Center stage, bathed in a pool of light, is a basketball half-court. Left center, a park bench. Right center, a drinking fountain.

The television monitor goes dark.

The song stops.

A spot comes up on Doctor Guitar standing down right. He mimes spinning a basketball on his index finger.)

DOCTOR GUITAR

It's still the same old story.

(sings)

"A fight for love and glory. A case of do or die."

It's my story. It's your story. It's the story of every Baby Boomer who grew up wanting to do something good. And, thanks to our parents, we were convinced we could do anything. Anything. We had it easy. And we made it hard. Some coped. Some didn't.

It's a funny thing. All animals kill. Without exception. Only one kills for fun. Only one kills for revenge. Only one kills to get even. Man is the only animal that understands the concept of payback.

Trust me. I'm a doctor.

(The Doctor simulates setting the basketball down and rolling it up-stage. He exits, singing "Running on Empty" by Jackson Browne.

Prokes enters stage right. The Vietnam Vet enters stage left.

The Vietnam Vet mimics picking up the basketball and dribbling. He turns and effortlessly sinks the shot. Nothing but net. The ball bounces against the park bench.)

PROKES

Nice shot. Guess that's why nobody in Georgetown ever beat us.

THE VIETNAM VET

That and a seven-foot center with a sky hook.

(Prokes sheds his coat and vest and places them on the bench.)

PROKES

How'd you find me?

THE VIETNAM VET

It's a small town.

PROKES

Not that small.

THE VIETNAM VET

Your parents are in the book. Your dad said you might be here. Working on your game. It needs it.

PROKES

He say that?

THE VIETNAM VET

He doesn't say much.

(Prokes smiles.)

PROKES

Need every advantage you can get when you're short, a whiter shade of pale, and a bad dancer.

THE VIETNAM VET

Just sharpen your elbows.

PROKES

What's so urgent?

THE VIETNAM VET

They're looking for you.

(Prokes removes the gun from his pants pocket and buries it under the coat.)

PROKES

Got it covered.

THE VIETNAM VET

They know what you've got.

PROKES

That's their problem.

THE VIETNAM VET

They intend to quarantine the disease. Complete the mission Jones gave them.

(Prokes walks to the park bench, picks up the phantom ball, dribbles, spins, and jumps. The ball slices through the hoop and thumps into the pole.)

PROKES

How about a little game of H-O-R-S-E?

THE VIETNAM VET

Your town, your game.

PROKES

Hundred bucks says it is.

THE VIETNAM VET

Normal isn't good enough for you, is it? Always got to add a little extra.

PROKES

Guests go first.

(The Vietnam Vet retrieves the ball, dribbles to the foul line and sinks a left-handed hook shot. Swish

Prokes follows suit. He misses. Clang.)

THE VIETNAM VET

That's an "H".

PROKES

I can spell, friend.

THE VIETNAM VET

You've got it, too.

PROKES

What's that?

THE VIETNAM VET

The thousand-yard stare.

PROKES

Like you and Carter and all the other guys that survived 'Nam?

THE VIETNAM VET

Yeah, like us. Like Wilson and Kice and Touchette when they came back from the airstrip.

PROKES

I'm not anything like them.

THE VIETNAM VET

None of us were.

(The Vietnam Vet scoops up the imaginary ball, walks to the foul line, turns around, leans back, and heaves a shot backward. It bounces off the backboard and into the hoop.

Prokes follows suit. He grabs the ball and strides to the line. When he turns and leans back, he loses his balance and falls over. The ball bounces away.)

THE VIETNAM VET (CONT'D)

You're not worth a shit today.

PROKES

Just being a good host.

THE VIETNAM VET

Always your way. Even that day.

PROKES

It was one weird day.

THE VIETNAM VET

Once Ryan left, the weather got all supernatural-like. Remember? We all knew something bad was going to go down. Felt like evil itself had flown into Jonestown.

PROKES

We survived, though, didn't we.

THE VIETNAM VET

In a fashion.

(The Vietnam Vet scoops up the ball, dribbles away from the hoop, turns, and drives toward the basket. He stops, pops, and drops. The ball slithers through the net, hits the ground, rolls, and thumps against the fountain.

Prokes finds the ball. He dribbles in a slow circle out to the half-court line. He drives and tosses up a brick. It ricochets off the rim.)

THE VIETNAM VET (CONT'D)

What's the plan, man?

PROKES

Still working that out.

THE VIETNAM VET

It's up to us, you know. To tell the whole truth. And nothing but.

PROKES

I swear.

THE VIETNAM VET

You should write a novel.

PROKES

Or a screenplay.

THE VIETNAM VET

Something about change.

PROKES

Or vigilance.

THE VIETNAM VET

Or tolerance.

(The Vietnam Vet retrieves the invisible ball and walks behind the hoop. He tosses the ball over the backboard. Whoosh.)

PROKES

Just give me the goddamn "S."

THE VIETNAM VET

I will never forgive them for what they made us do. What you and me and the others had to do. ID all those people. All bloated and twisted like question marks. My wife. My kid. Dead. For no good reason. I will never forget that.

PROKES

What they did was beautiful. In its own way.

THE VIETNAM VET

Beautiful! That's fucking sick. How can you say that?

PROKES

Their suicide was an opportunity to make their life more significant. To make a statement. To prove them wrong and prove us right.

THE VIETNAM VET

You're the last true believer.

PROKES

Jonestown was our last shot, you know. He was our best chance. Too bad he got lost because we had nothing else. America had turned its back on us. It didn't care.

THE VIETNAM VET

Nobody cared.

PROKES

We almost did it. If we'd pulled it off, they'd still be alive. And we'd still be there.

THE VIETNAM VET

He was a liar, man. You can believe in the cause, but not him.

PROKES

I can chew gum and walk.

THE VIETNAM VET

The devil you know is better than the devil you don't.

PROKES

Something like that.

(The Vietnam Vet dribbles to the edge of the stage, slaps the ball, eyes the hoop, and slams the ball hard against the floor. It bounces and soars high, floating through the hoop.)

THE VIETNAM VET

Don't let them win again.

PROKES

Don't plan to.

THE VIETNAM VET

Truth has few friends, Mike. And those are suicides.

(Prokes retrieves the ball. Eyes the hoop. He flings the phantom ball against the ground. It bounces and soars over the basket.)

PROKES

"E."

(And out.

Lights dim.)

ACT III

Scene 1

(Black.

Doctor Guitar sings "Hello/Goodbye" by Tim Buckley low off-stage.

Up right, the television monitor plays live images of FACES IN THE AUDIENCE.

The television monitor goes dark.

The song stops.

A spot comes up on Doctor Guitar down right, sitting in his lawn chair.)

DOCTOR GUITAR

I remember being down by the river one winter. The Tuolumne. Along Legion Park. Some asshole had dumped a

gunny sack full of kittens in the water. This one little black dude was clinging to a log. Shivering and yowling. I waded in, figuring I could save its sorry ass. Damn that water was cold. Every time I'd get close, that dumb shit would let go and float down to the next bit of driftwood. And he'd keep mewling like he was gonna die if I didn't hurry up and do something. I'd get a little deeper, inch a little closer, and he'd let go again. Almost like he was enjoying it. We did this a few times before I finally figured out, he really wasn't interested. Then he floated away. I guess that's just the way it is with some things.

(The Doctor stands and exits, singing "Fool on the Hill" by the Beatles.

Lights up. Limbo set. Evening. The motel room in Modesto.

Prokes stands at the table. He stares at The Vietnam Vet, seated with the rest of the witnesses in the two rows of chairs. He continues reading his statement.)

PROKES

"The people of Jonestown died - as one suicide note said - because they weren't allowed to live in peace. They died because they didn't want to be left with no choice but to come back to live in the rat-infested ghettos of America. They died for all those who suffer oppression. I refuse to let my black brothers and sisters and others in Jonestown, die in vain."

(Prokes neatly stacks the pages of the statement and carefully slides them back inside the manila folder. He looks up and stares at The Mentor.

Lights dim.)

ACT III

Scene 2

(Black.

Doctor Guitar sings "Born Under a Bad Sign" by Albert King low off-stage.

Off-stage, a stage manager counts down to air. A videotape whirs. A TV commercial plays.

Lights up. Limbo set. Day. A TV studio in Sacramento.

Up right, the television monitor plays the Channel 10 News.

Center stage, bathed in a pool of light, is a TV camera. Hanging above it is the KXTV logo. Left center, an anchor desk. Right center, a rolling cart filled with videotapes and audiotapes.

The television monitor goes dark.

The song stops.

A spot comes up on Doctor Guitar down right, sitting in a director's chair.)

DOCTOR GUITAR

Mike was always a bit of a chameleon. The dude was many things to many people. Sort of like that foreign film where the story is told by different people, from different viewpoints. They all see the same thing differently. Mike was like that. Sort of a living Picasso painting. Just shows to go, you never can know a person entirely.

(The Doctor stands and exits, singing "You Can't Always Get What You Want" by the Rolling Stones.

A spot comes up on the anchor desk. THE MENTOR, 43, leans against the desk, editing news copy. Prokes enters stage right. He crosses and extends his hand. The Mentor crosses to embrace him. Prokes holds the embrace for a moment.)

THE MENTOR

What a surprise, Mike. What a very nice surprise. What brings you back?

PROKES

Just tying up some loose ends.

THE MENTOR

You don't look so good.

PROKES

It's been a rough few months.

THE MENTOR

I'm really sorry.

PROKES

Up close and personal doesn't begin to capture it.

THE MENTOR

How'd something like that happen?

(Prokes shoots him a look.)

THE MENTOR (CONT'D)

I'm still a reporter, Mike.

PROKES

Everyone wanted to believe. Mayor Moscone, Charles Garry, Willie Brown, Mark Lane, Herb Caen. All of us. Even Leo Ryan. We just didn't pay close enough attention.

THE MENTOR

Vigilance really is the cornerstone of freedom.

PROKES

I guess we tried to do too much.

THE MENTOR

Sometimes I think we all try to do something when we should really be something. Being instead of doing. We don't need to always be doing things to prove we matter.

PROKES

I know one thing.

THE MENTOR

What's that?

PROKES

It pissed me off.

THE MENTOR

I can understand why you'd feel that way, Mike, but life's too short for anger.

PROKES

We'll see.

THE MENTOR

That was a powerful letter you wrote Herb Caen.

PROKES

It was good of him to print it.

THE MENTOR

Very memorable.

PROKES

It's burned in here.

(Prokes taps his forehead.)

PROKES (CONT'D)

(recites)

"The 'total dedication' you once observed of me was not to Jim Jones - it was to an organization of people who had nothing left to lose. No matter what view one takes of the Temple, perhaps the most relevant truth is that it was filled with outcasts and the poor who were looking for something they could not find in our society.

And, sadly enough, there are millions more out there with all kinds of different, but desperate needs whose lives will end tragically, as happens every day. No matter how you cut it, you just can't separate Jonestown from America, because the Peoples Temple was not born in a vacuum, and despite the attempt to isolate it, neither did it end in one."

THE MENTOR

What is it about crowds? There's something comforting. And sinister. Whether it's the flock, nations, armies, or religions.

PROKES

I felt it.

THE MENTOR

There's nothing that man fears more than the unknown. It's only in a crowd that we're free of that fear.

PROKES

The herd mentality can be soothing.

THE MENTOR

You know anything about Hopi culture, Mike?

PROKES

I spent a little time in the Southwest. In another lifetime.

THE MENTOR

Koyaanisqatsi is a Hopi word. It means "life out of balance." I'm afraid there's a lot out of whack in the world these days. It's time to re-align things. One act at a time.

PROKES

I believed that. Once upon a time.

THE MENTOR

One person really can make a difference. And we all should try. Your hero John Kennedy said that.

PROKES

I'm just too tired.

THE MENTOR

Don't give up.

PROKES

They're getting away with it. And I can't do anything about it.

THE MENTOR

Are you sure? You're a newsman. Finish the story. Find the truth.

PROKES

There is one card left to play. Some information no one knows. Yet. I got it from a low-level U.S. embassy official. It'll be a bombshell.

THE MENTOR

Did you fact-check it?

PROKES

As best I could. With a Guyanese law enforcement guy. I couldn't confirm it. I had to get out of there.

THE MENTOR

I hope it's right.

PROKES

Me, too. It will all be pointless if it's not.

THE MENTOR

Would you ever consider coming back to do the news? You were good.

PROKES

I don't think anyone would believe me. Got a little compromised. The old fruit of the poisonous tree.

THE MENTOR

The public has a short memory.

PROKES

Not short enough.

THE MENTOR

You know, Mike, we're a pretty forgiving society. When someone stands up and says, "I was wrong. I'm sorry," we tend to let them move on.

PROKES

Wish it would rub off on my father.

THE MENTOR

Sorry to hear that.

PROKES

He's an old man. He just doesn't get it.

THE MENTOR

Old men don't grow wise, Mike. They grow careful.

PROKES

Dad ... I mean, uh, sorry. My father ... We're just not that close.

THE MENTOR

I'm sure he cares. Men of his generation just don't know how to say it or show it. He'll come around. Just give him a chance.

PROKES

Why's it always so damned hard?

(Prokes stops a moment, fighting to control what he's feeling.)

THE MENTOR

It's okay, son.

PROKES

No, it's not.

THE MENTOR

When you find your father, you find yourself.

PROKES

Then I'm really lost.

THE MENTOR

You can't go back, Mike. But, you can make it work. From here on out.

(Lights dim.)

ACT III

Scene 3

(Black.)

Doctor Guitar sings the spiritual "Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child" low off-stage.

A washing machine churns. A dog barks. A canary warbles.

Lights up. Limbo set. Afternoon. The living room of the Prokes's home.

Up right, the television monitor plays reruns of "All in the Family." Up center, bathed in a pool of light, hangs the painting of Jesus Christ.

The television monitor goes dark.

The song stops.

A spot comes up left center on Doctor Guitar, standing next to the TV console.)

DOCTOR GUITAR

There have been times when I've been in a room full of people and never felt more alone. As Lily Tomlin once said, "We are all in this together ... by ourselves." I think that's where Mike's head was at most of his life. No matter where he was. Growing up in Modesto. Working in **Stockton**. Helping people in the City. Trying to succeed in Guyana. And returning full circle back home. He was always alone together. Especially when it came to his family. He never let them in and never asked to be let in.

I remember reading something once. Probably *Reader's Digest* in a waiting room somewhere. "The Eskimos had fifty-two names for snow because it was important to them: there ought to be as many for love." Never forget that.

(sings)

"The greatest thing you'll ever learn, is just to love and be loved in return."

(stops singing)

I wish I could talk to my little sister right about now. I'd hug her and never let her go.

(The Doctor exits, singing "The Loner" by Neil Young.)

A spot comes up left center on the recliner. It's empty.

A spot comes up right center on the couch. Prokes and his mother sit at opposite ends.)

PROKES

Why's he such a jerk?

MARY

He's your father.

PROKES

Part-time.

MARY

He wants to help. In his own way.

PROKES

Nice way of showing it.

MARY

He'll always be there for you.

PROKES

No, he won't, but you will be. No strings attached. Like always.

MARY

A family can be the closest of strangers.

(Prokes rubs his hands, as if trying to wipe something away.)

PROKES

I keep seeing Kimo's face. Their faces.

(She gazes up at her Lord and Savior, then back at her son.)

MARY

How do you sleep, Michael?

PROKES

It's not easy.

MARY

We're all a mix of good and evil, Michael. But, we have been given a choice. The free will to choose one or the other. And we have to live with our choices. I'm afraid you chose the wrong side.

PROKES

I don't agree.

MARY

Christ made the supreme sacrifice. He gave his love and life away for free. He died for you. Out of love for us all. He did not fear death. Sacrificing oneself for love of others, with no hope of survival. That is a powerful thing.

PROKES

I know it is.

(Mary removes the cross from the pocket of her apron.)

MARY

I've made a decision, Michael.

(He looks at her, hopeful.)

MARY (CONT'D)

In all good conscience, I can't give this cross to you. I hope you understand.

(Prokes lifts his eyes to the image of Christ the Redeemer, then stares at his mother.)

PROKES

It's your call. It's wrong, but it's yours.

(Prokes stands. He removes the picture of Kimo from his inside coat pocket. He offers the picture to his mother. She takes it.)

MARY

Michael, I need to know. How could you do such a thing?

PROKES

I wanted it.

MARY

But did you need it?

PROKES

We'll soon find out.

(Prokes turns to go. He stops and turns back.)

PROKES (CONT'D)

Mom, there are a lot of things being said out there about me.

MARY

I haven't heard anything.

PROKES

They're saying I'm trying to manipulate the media again. That I've done nothing but lie from the beginning.

MARY

You're not a liar, Michael.

(Prokes nearly breaks down. He takes a deep breath and keeps it together.)

PROKES

If you read or hear that I'm meeting with the media, don't trust it. It's not true.

MARY

I believe you. I always have. I always will. You're my bright, shining angel.

(The spot on the couch snaps off.

Lights dim.)

ACT III

Scene 4

(Black.

Doctor Guitar sings "My Father's House" by Bruce Springsteen low off-stage.

Sounds of a midway. A carnival calliope whines. Maniacal voices laugh.

Lights up. Limbo set. Night. A carnival funhouse. Five funhouse mirrors are arranged in a half-circle, arcing from right center to left center.

Up right, the television monitor plays documentary footage of The Right Reverend Jim Jones and Peoples Temple congregants living and working in Indiana, San Francisco, and Guyana.

The television monitor goes dark.

The song stops.

A spot comes up on Doctor Guitar down right, standing next to the first mirror.)

## DOCTOR GUITAR

Fathers and sons have always had issues. Those rivalries are as old as time. Stretching back to BC and the Bible, before and beyond. Abraham and Isaac. The Prodigal Son. The Good Book is full of stories about battles between men and their boys. It's really nothing new. It's always been like some kind of Greek tragedy. Hell, it's all Greek to me.

"In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you."  
John 14:2

In Mike's case, it was a haunted house. A mad house.  
Enough said.

(The Doctor exits, singing "Sympathy for the Devil" by The Rolling Stones.

Up right, the television monitor comes to life, playing documentary footage of Jones preaching and healing in Indiana, San Francisco, and Guyana.

A spot comes up in front of the two mirrors right center and the two mirrors left center as four men step out from behind their mirrors and into the spotlight. From right center to left center, we see Mike Prokes, Thomas Prokes, The Teacher, and The Mentor. Each one wears oversized, shaded sunglasses.

A spot pops up in front of the center mirror. A thumping, white-hot version of Elvis's "Burning Love" rolls thunder across the stage.

All the mirrors start strobing and flashing in time to the music.

REVEREND JIM JONES, 47, eases on out from behind the mirror and into the spotlight. He reaches back behind the mirror and drags out a raised, throne-like swivel chair. He rolls it ahead

of him. He stops.

Everyone is reflected in their mirror.  
All but Jones.

He is looking good. His hair, black as a raven, is slicked down. Long Elvis-sideburns penciled sharp. Sunglasses masking his eyes. A white, sequined, Hawaiian Elvis cape shrouds him from head to toe. Jones unhooks the cape, twirls it around him like a matador, and lets it fly. He's dressed in a red clerical robe. He sits. He turns to look up at the TV monitor. He watches in rapt attention.

The song stops.

The television monitor goes dark.)

JONES

Damn, I was a stud. The Devil has all the good tunes. And he don't play rhythm.

(The other four men remove their sunglasses, drop them to the floor, and stomp on them.)

THE FOUR MEN

(as one)

*Mazel tov!*

THE TEACHER

"If you Jim Jones, you a skunk."

JONES

I am the Walrus.

THOMAS

You were a demagogue.

THE MENTOR

A dark angel.

THE TEACHER

The silver-tongued devil.

JONES

God chose me. God worked through me. Look at all the people I saved.

THE MENTOR

It was a show. Better than big-time wrestling.

JONES

The whole world was my stage.

THE TEACHER

Smoke and mirrors.

PROKES

It was all fake.

JONES

And how would you know?

PROKES

I enabled. I helped spread the gospel.

JONES

You didn't know everything. Those without faith always see the wires.

THOMAS

Everyone could see right through you.

THE MENTOR

(sings)

"I'm looking through you, and you're nowhere."

JONES

Nothing wrong with transparency.

THE TEACHER

Only fools believed.

THOMAS

(sings)

"Wise men say, only fools rush in."

(Jones stands.)

JONES

I, James Warren Jones, was the Oracle of the Temple. The Prince of Omega. The Demonic Almighty. The Bishop of

Paranoia. The Caesar Godhead. The Monkey Preacher.

THE MENTOR

(sings)

"Just call him Lucifer, he's in need of some restraint."

JONES

No, sir. They all called me Father or Dad. The children.  
The adults. Everyone. Because I was ...

"Our Father, Who art in heaven,  
Hallowed be Thy Name.  
Thy Kingdom come.  
Thy Will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil. Amen."

THE TEACHER

Our Father who art in hell.

JONES

Be a good boy now, Michael. Obey your Father.

(Prokes faces his mirror. We see a  
reflection of him as a child.)

PROKES

(sings)

"I am a child. I'll last a while."

THOMAS

He is a good boy ... man. And you're not his Father. I  
am.

JONES

I replaced you.

(Jones removes a voodoo doll from  
inside his robe. He sticks it with a  
pin.

Prokes doubles-up, grabbing his  
crotch.)

THOMAS

He was born my son.

JONES

He was re-born mine.

THOMAS

"If a child lives with acceptance and friendship, he learns to find love in the world."

JONES

Not really. "Children," Paul told the Colossians, "obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing unto the Lord."

THE TEACHER

Stop hiding behind scripture.

JONES

You could learn a few things about children and child-rearing from the scriptures ... and the socialists. Socialist children hate their parents for bringing them into this corrupt world. You fathers should beg forgiveness of your sons each and every day for having conceived them. That's the righteous socialist way.

THE MENTOR

The sins of the fathers shall be visited upon the son.

PROKES

A thousand times.

THE TEACHER

As the old Yiddish proverb says, "When a father gives to his son, they both laugh. When a son gives to his father, they both cry."

THOMAS

Who do you think you are telling me how to raise my boy?

JONES

I am little Jimmie Jones. I was born on the wrong side of the tracks in Crete, Indiana. I had me some problems growing up. They say I was a strange child. I was obsessed with God and death. Karl Marx and Jesus reached in for my soul and saved me. I joined the American Communist Party and the Methodist Church. The church

fathers saw something in me because they gave me a church.

CONGREGANTS (OFF-STAGE)

Hallelujah!

JONES

Imagine that. They appointed me, a fucking Communist, to a goddamn church. A Communist who believed in nothing. That's how religious I was, and still am. I took the church. I remember I thought I was going to die a thousand deaths when I got up in that pulpit. But, I didn't. Oh, no, I did not.

CONGREGANTS (OFF-STAGE)

Praise Karl Marx and Jesus, the party and the prophet!

JONES

Back then, Indiana was a state where the KKK still ruled. I adopted a multiracial family. I had black, Korean, and Chinese children. With that rainbow family I said, "Fuck you, whitey." I left the Methodists because they wouldn't allow blacks. And started Peoples Temple Christian Church Full Gospel. Can I get an Amen?

CONGREGANTS (OFF-STAGE)

Amen!

JONES

I set me up quite a church. A dash of the old, a dab of the new. We mixed it up. Lord, did we mix it up.

We needed to grow. So I learned to preach the way they were used to hearing. I quoted scripture one moment and socialism the next. I watched other healers. They were a bunch of assholes. They weren't doing any healing. But, they attracted people and money like moths to a flame. So, I figured, there must be some way you can do this for good. That you can get the crowd, get the money, and do some good. All at once.

CONGREGANTS (OFF-STAGE)

(sing)

"Money, that's what I want.  
Give me money, that's what I want.

JONES

The Cold War was upon us. And I knew the holocaust was right on its heels. Either through racial Armageddon or

nuclear annihilation. I had been called upon to create a congregation that denounced racism and then find a refuge where it would thrive and survive the bomb. I was seeking a garden - the New Eden - in the waste land.

THOMAS

Paradise can be a place of salvation and it can be a place of damnation.

JONES

Not mine, brother. My Eden was a sanctuary for the old, the poor, and the black. It offered safety from racists like my father.

(Jones turns to face his mirror. We see a reflection of his father dressed as a Klan member.)

JONES (CONT'D)

If you were born in this church, if you were part of this socialist revolution, you were not born in sin. Apostolic socialism. That's what I believed in. I didn't deify a higher power, I deified social justice. I didn't worship a nameless God, I worshipped the salvific power of good deeds. Many came to be healed, they went away enlightened. I saw myself as one of those Buddhist monks in Vietnam. I was ready to set myself on fire to get people's attention, to rouse the nerve, to change the world.

CONGREGANTS (OFF-STAGE)

Shock and awe!

THOMAS

My generation was raised differently. Forget about changing the world, we just wanted to survive. We saved it so you could change it.

JONES

We lived by our Savior's words at the Last Supper. We gave food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, clothes to the naked, and love to the prisoner. "For inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Matthew 25:31-46. The reward for this righteous behavior was eternal life.

CONGREGANTS (OFF-STAGE)

We were going to live forever and ever, Amen.

THE TEACHER

There were two sides to that story, pastor. Funny how you only remember the one.

JONES

Righteous survivors have selective memory.

THE TEACHER

The blessed who looked after their brethren were rewarded with eternal life. The cursed who did not were damned to eternal fire. You embodied this living contradiction. Good and evil. Heaven and hell. A merciful and vengeful God.

JONES

It's the company I keep.

THOMAS

Really bad company.

JONES

"We who are nobody are now God's people." Hey, my man, Huey Long. I see you and I raise you. Every man is no longer a King, but a God. And he will wear a crown.

THE MENTOR

Satan's Jewel Crown.

(Each man's mirror flashes images of Christ and Lenin, Hitler and Stalin. Jones's reflects a bloated, Elvis-in-his-final-days image of Jones.)

JONES

Make no mistake, my friends. It was a dictatorship. And I was, God damn it, very much in control.

THE TEACHER

Mystic theology combining Christianity and communism. Interesting mix of ingredients.

JONES

In my church, people know there is no God but what is in us. The only thing that brings perfect justice, freedom, quality, and love in its beauty and holiness is socialism. I love socialism, and I'd be willing to die to bring it about, but if I did, I'd take a thousand with me.

(Jones grabs a Bible from behind his swivel chair. He throws it down. He spits on it. He kicks it. He shakes his fist at the heavens.)

JONES (CONT'D)

If there is a God in the sky, I say, fuck you!

(Jones crosses his arms and waits, smug. A Mussolini pose. He is not vaporized. The earth does not swallow him up.)

JONES (CONT'D)

You just can't trust that Sky God, or that fly away religion. 'Cause you never knew what to expect. You can't pin it down. It's always changing. But, if you trust me, if you believe in Jim Jones, the great motivator, duplicator, reproducer, dynamo, and generator, you will sit at the right hand of God.

CONGREGANTS (OFF-STAGE)

Not the left, but the right.

(Jones snaps his finger and a handwritten letter appears center stage.

Thomas walks over and picks it up.

Jones motions for him to read.)

JONES

Grandma wrote that. A seventy-three-year-old black woman.

THOMAS

(reads)

"Dad, you are the savior of the world. ... What more can one man do? I saw so much honest principle, fairness with us all, I saw God in you. You turned water into wine. Dad has keep me alive more times than I have fingers and toes. You saw that the U.S.A. was falling, hating black, middle class whites, Mexicans, Indians. Many years ago, you decided that we should leave that mean U.S.A. You were going to find a place for us, and you saw Guyana was that place. Dad, you are our God. I will never turn back. No matter what the cost, I am going all the way with you."

THE MENTOR

(sings)

"The wheel in the sky keeps on turning."

(Jones rolls the chair ahead of him and disappears behind the mirror. A photo of Peoples Temple in San Francisco descends from above.)

Jones re-emerges in his San Francisco incarnation. A creamy-white, Goodwill-bin, ice-cream suit. Beneath a white satin canonical robe. He rolls out the oak pulpit we saw earlier in the sanctuary of Peoples Temple. He stops and carefully positions it. He dry-humps it, then mounts it from behind.)

JONES

We Grapes-of-Wrathed it out to California because everyone does. Eventually. After a brief pilgrimage to Redwood Valley, we settled in the hippie-dippie, flowers-in-your-hair, city-state of San Francisco. Christened Baghdad by the Bay by my good friend and supporter, Herb Caen.

(The TV monitor flashes documentary footage of Jones healing people in San Francisco.)

From the pulpit, Jones grabs a Pinocchio marionette. He dances it across the top of the pulpit.)

JONES (CONT'D)

I could heal the sick and help the blind see and raise the dead. I'd lay my hands on and those tumors would just pop right out.

PROKES

They were chicken gizzards.

JONES

Small detail to the true believers. To those with faith.

THE MENTOR

Faith in what?

JONES

God and then some. God with a little vigorish. A little extra juice.

THOMAS

I'm not a gambling man.

JONES

Willie Brown, da Whip, referred to me as a combination of Martin King, Angela Davis, Albert Einstein, and Chairman Mao. More stellar company. When Mervyn Dymally visited, he said, "This is what church ought to be about. Community and a concern for social justice. Peoples Temple is a real church."

CONGREGANTS (OFF-STAGE)

Amen, Brother Dymally. We had it going on.

PROKES

You had way too much control and power over people. You locked the doors during services. Guards patrolled the aisles. People couldn't just drop in on Sunday mornings. You compromised people. You went through their garbage to find things you could use to fool them.

JONES

I never.

PROKES

Maybe you didn't, but you ordered it. The day after my brother visited for the first time, he caught someone sniffing through his garbage.

JONES

I liked your brother. He was the only one I let visit unannounced. He was studying psychology, I believe. Good discipline. Very useful.

PROKES

He wasn't the only one and it wasn't just garbage. Court records, phone bills, home visits. Patty Cartmell was the best at digging up the dirt.

JONES

She saved my life. All those healings were killing me. I needed a little help from my friends.

PROKES

A lot of the first-time visitors to the church were black. When Patty went to their homes in the slums, she painted her face black and wore a drag-queen wig and hand-me-downs. Trying to blend in.

CONGREGANTS (OFF-STAGE)

All the better to fool you with, my dear.

JONES

Worked every time. They were so naïve, so gullible.

PROKES

She'd note anything and everything she saw. From that, she'd write up the "healing notes" you used to con them the next time they came to church.

JONES

Ah, yes, the revelations. Cues for the catalysts we planted as bystanders in the church. Very helpful. Got me the numbers I needed to get noticed at City Hall.

THE MENTOR

And get some political appointments.

JONES

Chairman, SF Housing Authority. Un-huh.

PROKES

They all believed you. Trusted you. So did we. When we were in Redwood Valley, we had a very small vineyard on the ranch. We made wine. When it was done, you invited us to have some. So each one of us got this Styrofoam cup about three quarters full of wine. We drank the wine. Five minutes later, you say, "You've all just been poisoned. You have an hour to live."

(Jones cackles.)

JONES

It wasn't poison. It was a test. I wanted to see who was willing to die. Who among you was ready to use the ultimate means to achieve the ultimate ends.

THE MENTOR

But, wait, there's more.

(Jones stuffs the marionette back in the pulpit.)

PROKES

Yes, trust wasn't enough to sustain the cause. You needed something more primal. And so was born, the maestro of revolutionary sex.

JONES

Paul said you should present your whole body as a living sacrifice, wholly and acceptable to your God. And what is your God: Communism! When they couldn't get males into the Party, white women had to go out and find black males and fuck 'em into the Party. That's principled. If you don't understand that as principled, you don't know anything about revolution. Got good black leadership in the Party now, and they were fucked in by white women who chose to give their bodies. So, if it would save you or promote a revolutionary cause or this movement, you should give your vagina, your penis, your asshole, if it's called for, and if you can't, then you're not a dedicated Communist.

PROKES

You used sex to make us better socialists.

JONES

I fucked you to keep you from leaving me.

(In his mirror, we see a serpent.

Jones slithers out of his canonical robes, like a snake shedding its skin. He pulls an apple out his pocket. He holds it out.)

JONES (CONT'D)

Care for a bite?

THE MENTOR

We but turn the page.

(Jones dismounts the pulpit, rolls it in front of him, and disappears behind the mirror. A sign descends from above. It reads: "Those who do not remember the past are condemned to

repeat it."

Jones returns in his Guyana persona. He wears greasy blue jeans and a cheap red shirt. Blood drips down the right side of his neck. He rolls out the azure, wooden chair. He ascends the throne. He touches a burned spot behind his left ear.)

JONES

That's going to leave a scar.

THOMAS

Self-inflicted, my ass.

THE TEACHER

A lot of people would've paid to pull the trigger.

JONES

Well, now, children. Come on up and sit on Santa's lap.

(Jones does a slight of hand, producing a promotional poster. He hands it to The Mentor and motions for him to read it.)

THE MENTOR

(reads)

"Tonight, for one night only, a healing service by the great Jim Jones, the greatest humanitarian in the world, the wonder-worker from California. This modern-day Prophet manifests all 9 gifts of the Holy Spirit: Wisdom, World of Knowledge, Faith, Gifts of Healing, Discerning of Spirits, Prophecy, Working of Miracles, Tongues, Interpretation of Tongues. The Blind See! The Deaf Hear! Cripples Walk! See the SIGNS, MIRACLES and WONDERS that God is MANIFESTING through PASTOR JONES!"

PROKES

Your flock was a lot like the rest of Guyana. Black, Protestant, and poor.

JONES

It was a ferfect pit.

THE TEACHER

One the Guyanese liked, too. And they liked the money you brought. That's why they looked the other way for so long.

JONES

We offered hope to those who lived each day with misery and oppression. What the U. S. of A. could not offer, we could. Willingly and freely and from the heart. Freedom and equality were not on the table for the people who came to me. So we went where we could find it. The jungles of a Marxist country. How ironic. And threatening. To the great democratic nation of "In God We Trust."

CONGREGANTS (OFF-STAGE)

*E Pluribus Unum.*

(The TV monitor springs to life. It shows footage of a home-made film used to recruit new members to the agricultural cooperative in Guyana.)

PROKES

Once upon a time, you were a worthy man doing worthy things. A selfless Christian. When you were good, you were good. When you were bad, you were very bad. You demanded absolute loyalty. You craved constant adulation. Then the delusions of grandeur and paranoia kicked in. Thanks to being in the middle of nowhere, being stoned, and being the King Rat.

JONES

They were very good drugs.

THE MENTOR

There was no "happily ever after."

THE TEACHER

Abject aloneness, limitless pharmaceuticals, and absolute power. You mix that all together, it will scramble your brains. And you will explode.

JONES

I couldn't tell.

(sings)

"'Cause I'm too far gone."

PROKES

But not out of control. All the checks and balances were in place and on auto-pilot.

JONES

We had a full spectrum of "counseling" and "therapy" options for the recalcitrants.

PROKES

The Department of Diversions for one.

JONES

Ah, yes, better than Nixon's dirty tricks.

PROKES

Catharsis. The learning crew. The box. Big Foot.

JONES

I can still hear the little boys and girls screaming as we lowered them into the dark well and they could hear the beast splashing in the water below them. Sweeeet.

(The mirrors all flash images of the children of Jonestown.)

PROKES

We did all that. For you.

THE TEACHER

Unbelievable.

THE MENTOR

Incredible.

THOMAS

Unimaginable.

PROKES

Unforgiveable.

JONES

Please allow me to be the teacher for a moment. Henry David Thoreau wrote, "Most men lead lives of quiet desperation and go to the grave with the song still in them." I did something. I helped people. I made a difference. Can any of you say that? Will history remember you? Any of you? I think not. I sang my song. Will you?

PROKES/THOMAS

(as one)

I haven't/I didn't.

JONES

I was wrestling the Devil for the soul of your son, sir.

THOMAS

He doesn't need you. He needs his family.

THE TEACHER

His teacher.

THE MENTOR

His mentor.

(The Old Flame and the Friend  
materialize in Prokes's mirror.)

THE OLD FLAME/BEST FRIEND (OFF-STAGE)

(as one)

His lovers/His friends.

CONGREGANTS (OFF-STAGE)

His faith.

JONES

His Father.

PROKES

Enough! You're tearing me apart! I can't be what you want me to be. Any of you. I've tried. Lord knows, I've tried.

(Each of the mirrors flashes images of  
Prokes's various incarnations.)

THOMAS

You got to do what you wanted to do, son. You got to be who you wanted to be. I admired and envied you. But, we made it possible for you to do that. Your mother and me.

THE TEACHER/MENTOR/BEST FRIEND/OLD  
FLAME/CONGREGANTS/JONES

(as one)

And me.

PROKES

I know, I know. Thank you for that. Thank you for that.

JONES

We all want our Father's acceptance before we die.

THE TEACHER/MENTOR/BEST FRIEND/OLD  
FLAME/CONGREGANTS/JONES

(as one)

Don't we all.

THOMAS

No matter what you say, Michael, you will always be my son.  
No conditions. No reservations. No matter who you listen  
to. No matter where you go. No matter who you follow. No  
matter who you believe. No matter what you do, I will  
always love you.

(Jones howls in pain and despair.)

JONES

I had the world by the curly ones.

THE MENTOR

How far the mighty have fallen.

CONGREGANTS (OFF-STAGE)

It's a good day. A beautiful day.

(Jones removes his glasses. His eyes  
are black and empty. There is no there  
... there.)

Jones lifts his sightless eyes to stare  
at the audience.

Eerie background music plays low off-  
stage.)

JONES

Paul said there is a man born out of this season. I've  
been born out of this season just like all of my children,  
and the best testimony we can make is to leave this goddamn  
world. How very much I loved you. How very much I've  
tried my best to give you the good life.

CONGREGANTS (OFF-STAGE)

Thank you, Father.

JONES

Some people have an unlimited capacity for evil, my  
darlings. I tried America, from one coast to the other. I

took you around and saw that every city was the same. If I could have found one better than San Francisco, I would have taken you to it. I'd have liked to fight, but we didn't have a chance to win a revolution there. All we had was a chance to see old people and children tortured. Here we can die on our own terms. They're coming, my sweets. Believe it.

CONGREGANTS (OFF-STAGE)

Just because you're paranoid doesn't mean the bastards aren't out to get you. Amen.

JONES

I'd just as soon bring it all to a gallant, a glorious screaming end. Bring it to a screeching stop in one glorious moment of triumph than to endure the attacks of my enemies. Leo Ryan made me do it. Yes, he did. I want a White Night to come and not pass. We will be like the valiant heroes of the Warsaw ghettos. The only fuck I want now is the orgasm of the grave. It's best to just lay down our lives. And what's that called, congregation?

CONGREGANTS (OFF-STAGE)

Revolutionary suicide.

(Jones slips into his sing-song-y, Aunt Jemima-y, "Miss Scarlet, I don't know noth'n 'bout birth'n no babies" voice.)

JONES

How do you feel, honey? You may die tonight.

ELDERLY WOMAN'S VOICE (OFF-STAGE)

I'm a fighter, Father, you know that.

JONES

Yes, darlin'. I remember your song, because it used to keep me going.

ELDERLY WOMAN'S VOICE (OFF-STAGE)

When I came out of the States, I meditated so hard about people trying to hurt you. When they hurt you, they hurt me. You're the only father I have. This is the only family I have. I love you, Father.

JONES

Sing your song for us now. Sing it, sister. That might just carry us through.

ELDERLY WOMAN'S VOICE (OFF-STAGE)

(sings)

"All the days of my life, ever since I've been born,  
I never heard a man speak like this man before.  
All the days of my life, ever since I've been born,  
I came to Father as I was.  
He give me a resting place, and he have made me glad,  
I never heard a man speak like this man before."

(Jones sways and claps and sings along.  
Back in church once more.)

JONES

(sings)

"I never heard a man speak like this socialist man before."

(Jones holds up his hands. They are  
suddenly, absurdly swollen. They look  
like Mickey Mouse's hands.)

JONES (CONT'D)

Hold it. Everybody hold it. Not much longer. Lay down  
your burdens. I'm going to lay my burden down by the  
riverside. When they start parachuting out of the air,  
they will shoot some of the innocent babies. Can you let  
them take your babies? If you're not prepared to die for  
your children, you will not stand up for your children.

FEMALE VOICE (OFF-STAGE)

Father, what about your son, John Victor?

MALE VOICE (OFF-STAGE)

Don't you dare dispute Dad in a White Night, woman!

SECOND FEMALE VOICE (OFF-STAGE)

I'm not ready to die.

JONES

I don't think you are.

SECOND FEMALE VOICE (OFF-STAGE)

I look at all the babies and I think they deserve to live.

JONES

But, don't they deserve more? They deserve peace.

SECOND FEMALE VOICE (OFF-STAGE)

We all came here for peace.

JONES

And have we had it?

SECOND FEMALE VOICE (OFF-STAGE)

No, but when we destroy ourselves, we're defeated. In the end, we let them defeat us.

JONES

You'll never feel so good, family. I tell you, you'll never feel so good as how that feels. To let it all go. We have had as much of this world as you're gonna get. Let's just be done with it. Let's be done with the agony of it.

PROKES

It took three hours to be done with it.

THOMAS

Three hours to cross the River Styx.

(Jones puts the glasses back on.)

JONES

I don't want to see you go through this hell anymore. No more, no more, no more.

THIRD FEMALE VOICE (OFF-STAGE)

We are doing this for you.

JONES

Are we black, proud, and socialists?

CONGREGANTS (OFF-STAGE)

We are. Praise our Father!

JONES

Then let's have no sorrow that it's all over.

(From beneath the chair, Jones grabs a crown of thorns. He puts it on his head. He stands. He stretches out his arms to form a crucifix. The four other men grab spears from behind their mirrors and rush toward Jones. They begin stabbing him.

Prokes points his spear at Jones's groin. Jones removes the crown of thorns from his head and covers his

private parts.

Off-stage, a banjo and guitar exchange riffs. It's dueling scriptures.)

JONES (CONT'D)

"The wicked have drawn their swords  
And strung their bows  
To bring low the poor and the needy  
And to slaughter honest people.  
Their swords shall pierce their own hearts  
And their bows shall be broken."  
Psalm 37: 14, 15

THOMAS

"Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they?

So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit.

Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. So then, you will know them by their fruits."

Matthew 7:15-20

JONES

"I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

You shall have no other gods before me.

You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments."

Exodus 20:1-6

THE MENTOR

"Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you."

Matthew 7:6

JONES

"And Jesus said, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And parting his garments among them, they cast lots."

Luke 23:34

(The four men lay down their spears, kneel down below the throne, and begin throwing dice.)

THOMAS

"And thus I clothe my naked villainy  
With odd old ends stol'n out of holy writ,  
And seem a saint, when most I play the devil."

THE MENTOR

Scriptures?

THOMAS

Shakespeare. Richard the Third.

THE TEACHER

Very nice. I wish I'd said that.

(Jones Frisbees the crown toward the audience. He turns and farts in the general direction of the four men. They stand and stagger away from the blast, grimacing from the smell.)

JONES

(sings)

"Beans, beans the musical fruit  
The more you eat, the more you toot  
The more you toot the happier you feel  
Beans, beans, they're good for your heart  
The more you eat, the more you fart."

(Jones farts along in tune with the song.)

JONES (CONT'D)

Beans were good for my heart. I had a heart attack and the doctor said I was dead for three minutes. But, I came back. It was a miracle. I survived. I was Lazarus and I was raised from the dead. To search out my enemies and kill them. "Whoever believes in me, Jesus Christ, receives

spiritual life that even physical death can never take away."

PROKES

According to the autopsy, you would have died from natural causes within ten days.

JONES

How ironic is that?

THOMAS

Not ironic enough.

THE MENTOR

Reminds me of the scorpion who rides the back of a toad to get across the river. It's in the scorpion's nature to sting, even though it means it will drown.

THE TEACHER

We begin life with the world presenting itself to us as it is. Someone - our parents, teachers, analysts, friends - hypnotizes us into "seeing" the world and construing it in the "right" way. Be careful in your choice of hypnotists.

(Children wail off-stage.)

JONES

You're all so naive. You don't even know what Jim Jones is all about. You can't even follow him. You haven't even smelled where he's at yet, much less follow him. I've made some big plans, honey, both here and there and everywhere. Lots of plans. Un-huh. Un-huh. I just have to gargle over that radio and all hell breaks loose. Just one word to one person, another word to another person, and it sounds like aimless little talk about the sun shining. If I start that conversation, the whole world's going to know we came along. So watch it. I can get anything I want to buy, and I know how to buy it.

CONGREGANTS (OFF-STAGE)

Just one word will set the world on fire.

JONES

You gonna commit treason? You better know who you're dealing with! It don't pay to mess with someone's got a live wire. Because after we're all dead over here, you might go to a social party, after you got your little thirty pieces of silver, for selling out the greatest

people on earth. You might walk in with the Judas tribe, and wife of Judas might be one of the ladies I'd laid to make a socialist. She might give you slow poison in your champagne. You fuckers, I like to look at you now, because you don't know how clever I am.

CONGREGANTS (OFF-STAGE)

Walk a mile in Judas's shoes.

JONES

I made plans for your treason long ago, because I knew I couldn't trust nothing, only Communism, and the principle that is in me. I knew I couldn't depend on the arm and the leg, so, honey, I never put all my eggs in one basket. I've rolled my balls in many places. Right. You figure that out if you can.

CONGREGANTS (OFF-STAGE)

Big wheel keeps on rollin'.

JONES

So think about it, honey, when you think about selling out. You go back to New York, you won't be safe. Go to Pennsylvania, to California, to Miami, you won't be safe. You say, our enemies are getting by. But all I have to do is go ...

(clicks his tongue  
three times)

I've made long, long plans to take care of these enemies. You better hope I keep talking to you, because when I stop talking to you, when I start calling up my aces in the hole, it'll be dangerous business then.

CONGREGANTS (OFF-STAGE)

Aces and eights.

JONES

I'm a Man of Steel, though I feel every ache and pain. I didn't waste my life down through all these years to see it come to nothing at the graveyard. Oh no, you're not going to just put a little shrine out there for me next to my name. I didn't sweat and bleed to see this movement come to nothing. This is part of the historical procedure, part of the historical change. So you can't park me out there next to my beloved mother, and think you can get away from me. I've got lots and lots of tricks up my sleeve, honey, and it won't make any difference if we all lay down our mantle. That old song used to be a lie.

CONGREGANTS (OFF-STAGE)

(sing)

"Low in the grave he lay  
But up from the grave he arose  
With a Mighty Triumph o'er- his Foes."

JONES

No, no. Look out, because I got weapons you can't see. I've gone through hell and high water. I've sacrificed. You think I'm going to let somebody betray that? Mum huh. I ain't gonna forget. No, sir. Anybody got a question about that policy? It's a fair policy. Everybody understand it? Then be careful. Because Santa Claus is checking his list, going over it twice, seeing who's naughty and who's nice.

THE MENTOR

Be careful who you pretend to be.

JONES

We used to sing: "this world, this world's not our home." Well, it sure isn't. ... take our life from us, we laid it down, we got tired. We didn't commit suicide. We committed an act of revolutionary suicide protesting the conditions of an inhumane world. ..."

THE MENTOR

One last lie taped for posterity.

THE TEACHER

Will no one rid me of this meddlesome priest?

(Thomas grabs the gun from the waistband of his son's pants. He shoots Jones.)

Jones slumps into his chair beneath the sign. Dead again.

Thomas hands the gun back to his son.)

THOMAS

The only safe emotion is hate.

PROKES

Whoever said time heals all wounds didn't know what they were talking about.

(Off-stage, Doctor Guitar sings  
"Brother Jonesie" by The Tradewinds or  
"Jim Jones" by Jem Warren.

Lights dim.)

ACT III

Scene 5

(Black.

The evening news broadcasts. A  
grandfather clock ticks. A raven caws.

Lights up. Limbo set. Evening. The  
living room of the Prokes's home.

Up right, the television monitor plays  
reruns of Disney's "Spin and Marty."  
Up center, bathed in a pool of light,  
hangs the painting of Jesus Christ.

The television monitor goes dark.

A spot comes up on the couch. Thomas  
and Mary sit side-by-side, facing The  
Friend.)

MARY

We miss having all you boys around. The house is so empty.

THE FRIEND

We miss it, too.

THOMAS

How's he doing? It wasn't so good the last time. We left  
things badly.

THE FRIEND

Same old Mike. Making jokes and making fun of people.

MARY

He seemed very sad. More sad than I've ever seen him.

THE FRIEND

He is. All that other stuff can't mask it.

THOMAS

What can we do?

THE FRIEND

He needs someone who matters to tell him that he matters. That it's okay and it will get better. Someone needs to throw him a life preserver before he sinks.

THOMAS

What about you and the rest of his buddies?

THE FRIEND

It's not the same.

MARY

He's not the same.

THOMAS

What he's been through is mind-numbing. I've gone to battle and seen people die. But, not like that.

THE FRIEND

There's a press conference tonight -

MARY

He said to pay no attention to that. He said there wasn't going to be one.

THE FRIEND

He lied.

THOMAS

Why would he lie to his mother?

THE FRIEND

Doesn't want her there. Doesn't want any of us there.

MARY

I don't understand.

THE FRIEND

He wants to protect us. You, especially.

(He looks at Mary.)

THE FRIEND (CONT'D)

We never want to hurt our mothers.

MARY

From what?

THE FRIEND

The truth. What really happened down there.

THOMAS

Are you going?

THE FRIEND

Yes.

MARY

Should we?

THE FRIEND

I think so.

MARY

Why?

THE FRIEND

He needs to know he's not alone. That there's a reason to live. To go on. You're that reason.

THOMAS

What good will that do?

THE FRIEND

All the good in the world.

### ACT III

#### Scene 6

(Black.

Doctor Guitar sings "There But for Fortune" by Phil Ochs low off-stage.

Thunder rolls. Raindrops splatter. Voices murmur. Chairs scrape.

Lights up. Limbo set. Evening. The motel room in Modesto. It's set up the same as Act I, Scene 3.

Up right, the television monitor plays live images of FACES IN THE AUDIENCE.

The bed, now meticulously made, sits left center. So, too, the side table. Right center, the door separating the main room from the unlit bathroom is ajar. Center stage, bathed in a pool of light, is the round table. The desk podium has replaced the typewriter. Next to the podium lies the worn Sierra Club backpack. Several radio and TV microphones are perched on the podium. Two portable audiotape recorders are set up on the table in front of the podium. A camera light casts a bright light on the podium. Its power cable runs into the bathroom.

The television monitor goes dark.

The song stops.

A spot comes up on Doctor Guitar down right, sitting in his lawn chair.)

DOCTOR GUITAR

(recites)

"This valley after the storms can be beautiful beyond the telling,  
Though our cityfolk scorn it, cursing heat in the summer  
and drabness in winter,  
And flee it: Yosemite and the sea.  
They seek splendor; who would touch them must stun them;  
The nerve that is dying needs thunder to rouse it.

I in the vineyard, in green-time and dead-time, come to  
it dearly,  
And take nature neither freaked nor amazing,  
But the secret shining, the soft indeterminate wonder.  
I watch it morning and noon, the unutterable sundowns,  
And love as the leaf does the bough."

(stops reciting)

That's by poet William Everson, the Beat Friar. Another valley refugee. He loved this valley. Mike had lost touch with it. With what made him who he was. His roots. This place. In all its kaleidoscopic beauty. The familiar sight of the sun low on the flat horizon. The soft sound of rustling grape vines. The cool touch of flowing rivers. The sweet taste of a fresh peach. The memory-etching smell of irrigated soil.

Here in this part of the planet, we're all linked by the land and this place we call home. Mike had to get back to the garden. He almost made it. For what it's worth.

(The Doctor stands and exits, singing "Rock and a Hard Place" by The Rolling Stones. "Hallelujah" by Leonard Cohen.)

A spot comes up on Prokes standing at the table. He continues to stare at his mother, seated with the rest of the witnesses in the two rows of chairs. He finishes reading his statement.)

PROKES

"It is sadness beyond tears to think of my brothers and sisters from Jonestown, hundreds of them, in their final resting place. They are back in their homeland, but they have no home. Peoples Temple was their only home, their only family, their only life. Though I'm white, when I die, I belong with them, for their struggle was mine also."

(Prokes carefully stacks the typewritten pages. He looks up at the witnesses, then looks past them and addresses the audience directly.)

PROKES (CONT'D)

Remembering Jonestown is hard, but forgetting is not an option. The dead can't talk. We're the only people left to speak for them. We thought we could change the world with words like peace and freedom. We did. For a moment. At least in here.

(Prokes touches his heart.)

PROKES (CONT'D)

We did nothing wrong. We did what anyone would do. We only ask for your understanding, your love, your forgiveness.

(Prokes scans the silent audience.)

PROKES (CONT'D)

That's what I get for asking. Doesn't matter. We were right.

THE NEWSPAPER REPORTER

Did Jones order the killing of Leo Ryan?

(Without answering, Prokes crosses and goes through the door into the dark bathroom. He tries to close the door, but the power cable for a TV light blocks it. Prokes unplugs the cable, plunging everyone into total darkness.)

PROKES

Sorry to leave you guys in the dark.

(The Blind Beggar feels her way over to the side table and snaps on the lamp.

Prokes tosses the cable out and closes the door. It doesn't latch. It's still damaged from being forced open. A faucet is turned on. Water runs. A voice hums.

A GUNSHOT AND MUZZLE FLASH.)

VOICES OF THE WITNESSES

Oh, my God! What happened? He shot himself. Oh, no. What in hell!

(The Newspaper Reporter leaps from his seat and runs to the bathroom door. He shoves it open. Prokes spills out, blood pouring from a gaping hole in his head. The Newspaper Reporter grabs face cloths from the towel rack and presses them against Prokes's left temple, trying to stop the bleeding.

THE NEWSPAPER REPORTER

Call the police! Call an ambulance! Call someone! Why, Mike, why?

(The Mentor jumps to his feet and hurries to the phone on the bedside table. The Teacher and The Friend stand and cross to the table. The Teacher opens the backpack. The Friend removes an audiotape.

The others crowd around the body.

Thomas and Mary Prokes slowly walk toward where their son lays dying. The Newspaper Reporter gently sets Prokes's head down. Mary kneels beside her son. She places her mother's cross and the photo of Kimo on her son's chest.)

MARY

My grievous, lost angel.

(Slam to black.)

ACT III

Epilogue

(Black.

Doctor Guitar sings "'Til I Gain Control Again" by Rodney Crowell low off-stage.

Lights up. Limbo set. The motel room, moments later.

Up right, the television monitor plays news footage of Mike Prokes's suicide.

The television monitor goes dark.

The song stops.

A spot comes up on The Newspaper Reporter standing center stage in front of the table and podium. He holds a copy of the book *The Strongest Poison* by Mark Lane.)

THE NEWSPAPER REPORTER

(reads)

"Among those Mike mailed his final statement to were: *The New York Times*, *Newsweek*, and *Time*. They, however, did not print a word from the statement. Not a single national daily in the United States, not a single magazine, radio or television company, not a single news agency made public what Mike Prokes had written in the last minutes of his life." Mark Lane, *The Strongest Poison*.

(The Newspaper Reporter exits.)

The Teacher steps into the spotlight.  
He holds a letter.)

THE TEACHER

(reads)

"To whomever finds this note: Collect all the tapes, all the writing, all the history. The story of this moment, of this action, must be examined over and over. It must be understood in all of its incredible dimensions. Let all the story of this Peoples Temple be told. Let all the books be opened. If nobody understands, it matters not. I am ready to die now. Darkness settles over Jonestown on our last day on earth." From a handwritten letter found in the Peoples Temple FBI files at the California Historical Society.

(The Teacher exits.)

Thomas Prokes steps into the  
spotlight.)

THOMAS

"Congress remains unwilling to conduct any meaningful, systematic study of how the U.S. government treated U.S. citizens before and after they died. The Jonestown tragedy continues because the government will not examine its role in the affair, beginning in the 1970s in San Francisco, and continuing into the 1980s in Guyana. Over 900 American citizens, including members of the press and a U.S. Congressman, died in Jonestown. No matter how horrible their deaths, they deserved some measure of justice. They still do." Rebecca Moore, sister of Carolyn Moore Layton and founder of the website, "Alternative Considerations of Jonestown & Peoples Temple."

(Thomas exits.)

Mary steps into the spotlight.)

MARY

"No one should be so arrogant as to believe it couldn't happen again." Jackie Speier, legislative council to Leo Ryan, who survived the Jonestown massacre, and currently serves in Congress representing California's 12th District.

(Mary exits.)

The Friend steps into the spotlight.)

THE FRIEND

My friend Mike was a victim. Of expectations. Was it better to live or die? That was his dilemma. Was it better to survive with the heartache and loss of a failed Utopia, or simply escape the bitterness of this life? Because in death, in sleeping, he could dream of a better world. What was the point? Why put up with all the bullshit when he could end it so easily. But, the fear of the unknown makes cowards of us all. Because no one has come back from the other side to tell us what dreams are out there. Mike was more brave than most of us. He gladly stepped over to join his brothers and sisters. Death would end the haunting nightmares. Death would carry him home. But, in the end, it was all just a game. A game of chance. He gambled and lost. Such a waste.

(Lights dim.

An image appears on the television monitor. We see a photograph of a green wooden cabana chair perched atop a white platform. Above it hangs a sign that reads: "Those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

It dissolves into a photo of a lone palm tree growing where the platform once stood. The pavilion has all but disappeared. Swallowed up by the jungle, taking back its own.

It dissolves into a photo of the real Mike Prokes and a photo of his suicide note.)

MIKE PROKES (OFF-STAGE)

Don't accept anyone's analysis or hypothesis that this was the result of despondency over Jonestown. I could live and cope with despondency. Nor was it an act of a "disturbed" or "programmed" mind - in case anyone tries to pass it off as that. The fact is that a person can rationally choose to die for reasons that are just, and that's just what I did. If my death doesn't prompt another look at what brought about the end of Jonestown, then life wasn't worth living anyway.

(Doctor Guitar sings "Round and Round" by Neil Young low off-stage.)

The television monitor goes dark.

The song stops.

A spot comes up on Doctor Guitar down right, sitting in his lawn chair.)

#### DOCTOR GUITAR

The very next day, NBC television played the tape. If Mike had waited just one day, he might have done it differently. Maybe, maybe not.

I don't know why Mike did what he did. Nobody does. But him. I wish I did. I might have done something. To help him. Or, even stop him.

People say I don't get it. That I really didn't know the Mike they knew. Well, maybe I did and didn't. I guess we can never really know everything about anybody.

Was Mike a true believer, or just putting on a show? Was he being honest, or playing a role for the camera and the historians? Did he do it for the truth, or the headlines?

It's a tragedy. But, so was Hamlet. We're supposed to learn from tragedy. I hope we did. I guess for Mike, the real tragedy was that the dream got derailed and they got away with it.

All I know is a friend of mine died trying to change things. Trying to do what he thought was right.

The truly sad thing is, it was all in vain. What he hated ... what he fought against ... is still going on. Some things just never really change. But, I guess as long as there's a safety net and corporations are people and old white guys are still running things, all those poor souls that get lost in the shuffle don't have a thing to worry about. Because it will all work out, right?

(The Doctor smiles a knowing smile.)

Mike's heart was in the right place, but he made some mistakes. Don't we all. We are only human, after all. We all fuck up. Everybody does. But, being able to forgive

is what separates us from the rest of the animals.  
Forgiveness is hard, but it's one of the easiest things we  
can ever do.

"Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn,  
and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be  
forgiven."  
Luke 6:37

I forgave Mike a long time ago. My sister died at  
Jonestown.

(The spot snaps off. It snaps back on.  
The Doctor has disappeared.

Off-stage, Doctor Guitar sings "You Can  
Close Your Eyes" by James Taylor.

The photo of Mike Prokes dissolves into  
a montage of group shots of those who  
called Jonestown home.

Lights dim.)

THE END