

Brave

an American play

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Brave

The world premiere of *Brave* was presented by Art Street Theatre at EXIT Stage Left, San Francisco, CA, on May 7, 1998. The production was directed by the author, with the following cast and staff:

ANDREW	Mark Jackson
ANNE	Lisa Maher
ANNIE	Bricine Mitchell
ANDRE	Jordon Flato
ANA	Beth Wilmurt
ANDY	Jake Rodriguez
Sound	Jake Rodriguez
Set, lights and costumes	Ana Hashimoto
Dramaturgy	Jordon Flato and Kathryn Clark
Stage Manager	Kathryn Clark
Conceived by	Jordon Flato and Mark Jackson

Brave was subsequently presented as a part of Interplay, a festival of new plays produced by PCPA Theaterfest, Santa Maria, CA, in January, 2003, directed by Jeremy Mann, with the following cast and staff:

ANDREW	Jeff Evan Clarke
ANNE	Gillian Chadsey
ANNIE	Erin Ayala
ANDRE	Chris Leuenberger
ANA	Kathleen Mary Mulligan
ANDY	Andy Wilson
Lights	Margaret Hartmann
Stage Manager	Lisa Marie Black-Meller

Cast of Characters

- Andrew, a right wing lecturer.*
- Anne, a left wing activist.*
- Annie, a young traveler.*
- Andre, a young man with a mission.*
- Ana, a young single mom.*
- Andy, her ten-year-old son.*

Notes

A slash in the dialogue (/) indicates that the next actor should start their line, creating overlapping speech.

In the original production, Andy was played by an adult actor. Also, nobody ever left the stage. This created opportunities for further character and story development through tableaux and simple actions carried out by characters during other characters' scenes.

Time and Place

Spring, 1998. San Francisco, California, USA.

Preshow

Music of an American nature is playing.

Prologue

As "This Land Is Your Land" draws to its rousing conclusion, the stage suddenly flares up brightly like an epiphany and a group of people are all moving about quickly. The effect resembles a street swarming with people. We catch snippets of the evening to come, patterns and relationships. Then...

Scene 1 – Definition #1

...the music ends. ANDREW is for all intents and purposes alone on stage, though we can see the others only dimly in the background seated as at a lecture. ANNE had entered to speak, but stopped when she saw that ANDREW already had taken the floor. Eventually, having heard enough, she quietly sets up a bomb igniter and waits, poised to blow ANDREW's ideology to bits.

ANDREW I would like to begin this evening with some definition of who we are. I beg your pardon if that seems a bit too bookish or dry. But I think it is necessary and will eventually sound its resonance.

I offer you this definition: that we are a group of people in a particular country at a particular time, all squinting into the distance to witness that Millennium as it rolls over the horizon into the twenty-first century – our Eden or our Armageddon, depending on who you talk to.

This horizon, our future, is nothing mystical. It is nothing fated. It is ours to invent. But *we* approach the Millennium and we are interested in angels, in UFOs, horrifying natural disasters, and near-death experiences caught on tape. We have more faith in these things than we do in the Social Security System. We are afraid of what might lurk ahead. And the more we give up our power to the unknown, the more we *will be* afraid. There is ignorance in letting go of one's certainty, and that *is* something to fear.

We in America have reason to be certain, not to fear. For we have our American History. We *have* our definition:

We have been, we are, and we will always be, in deed and in spirit: Pioneers. In its two hundred twenty odd years, The United States of America has experienced the most rapid ascent to maturity of any major nation in the history of the planet. Not because we have sat about fingering our chins and pondering the possibilities. But because we have gone West. We have set out to discover. We have built. We have invented. We have stood and we have taken action. We have dared to do what no nation has done before: we have created a country where every man and woman of every race and religion is welcome to be born within our borders with equal rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Our industries and corporations web the planet. The reach of our philosophies and material achievements extends beyond our coastlines around and back again, and our strength is undeniably internationally Certain.

So, now you think I have come here to talk to you about America. Well that is partly true, and then only as a matter of context, but it is hardly my primary concern. And having said that I might assume you are wondering again as you were when I first stepped up to exercise my lips who I am and why I am up here spouting at you.

We have been coursing through troubled times. From the arrival of English speaking colonists in 1607 until 1965, there was one continuous civilization built around a set of commonly accepted legal and cultural principles. From the Pilgrims up to Norman Rockwell there was a clear sense of what it meant to be an American. The intellectual nonsense propagated since 1965 – in media, on university campuses, even amongst our religious and political leaders – now threatens our Definition of, and our ability to define, who we are.

We have split atoms. We have touched the moon. Yet our schools have decayed into corrals, we are dooming to exile a growing list of words and names branded politically incorrect rendering even basic communication more and more precarious, and we cannot get through the week without our well cared for protective shell of cynicism. We used to have friends and neighbors to tell us who we are, now we have therapists, self-help books, Hollywood, and doubt.

There is something fundamentally wrong. We risk, by our own hand, not being able to understand the world we have invented.

It is time to decide. It is time for conviction. It is time to remember our History. I am not talking about America. I am talking about you, each of you, each of us, reclaiming our Definition of who we are.

Scene 2 – The Takeover

BOOM! There is a tremendous explosion. The figures who have been in the background are suddenly thrust into disarray. ANDREW is apprehended by ANNE.

As the noise subsides we hear someone singing to a guitar, played by ANDRE. Others eventually join in. The song is “Worried Man.” Over the course of a few verses, ANDREW is placed in a chair and his hands taped behind him, his mouth taped over. His captor, ANNE, remains just out of sight so she cannot be seen clearly by him. The song is over.

Scene 3 – The Information Desks

ANNIE at an airport in Scotland. ANA at a Muni station in San Francisco. Both dealing with unhelpful Information Booth workers. ANDY at home alone.

ANNIE Excuse me?

ANA Excuse me.

ANNIE May I ask you a question?

ANA I have a question.

ANNIE Do you think I could–?

ANA I need to know–

ANNIE Could you tell me if–?

ANA If you could just tell me–

ANNIE Do you have a minute?

ANA I only need one second of your time.

ANNIE Am I in the right line?

ANA I’m not certain where to go.

ANNIE Am I okay?

ANA I’ve been waiting here forever.

ANNIE Because if–

ANA Hey–

ANNIE Sorry–?

ANA Excuse me.

ANNIE Where am I *now*?

ANA The sign *says* “Information” and I need some information from—

ANNIE Excuse me?

ANA I—I didn’t hear you, repeat that please.

ANNIE Could you say again?

ANA No I was still talking when you answered.

ANNIE Could you speak a little—?

ANA You have to speak louder.

ANNIE What did you *say*?

ANA Yes louder than silent please!

ANNIE I’m sorry?

ANA Sorry.

ANNIE Sorry?

ANA Sorry.

ANNIE Look—

ANA It’s just that—

ANNIE I just don’t want to miss my flight.

ANA I just want to get home.

ANNIE What? Pardon me what?

ANA Someone—

ANNIE Wait? For *what* announcement?

ANA Someone announced that my regular bus was cancelled and I just need to know what other bus to take.

ANNIE Can’t you just tell me now?

ANA Look if you can’t help me, then—

ANNIE I can’t miss my flight; I need to go home.

ANA Something is fundamentally wrong.

ANDY Dad?

ANNIE Who? ...Hello?...

ANA ...Never mind.

Scene 4 – Definition #2?

ANDY takes a test at school. ANDREW is still taped in place. ANNE delivers a rapid onslaught of questions, some to the audience, some to ANDREW, and all to both.

ANNE Comfy? Thank you for being patient. Now that I have your attention, I would like to ask you a few questions. I’ll give you a brief moment following each question to: select your answer in the case of a multiple choice question,

or else to respond in complete sentences. If your answer is Yes or No, please do elaborate. But remember, the time in which you complete this test does effect your over all scoring. Why is that? A, time is money. B, money is power. Or C, power is choice.

Next question.

Are you comfortable?

What makes you comfortable?

When in life are you most comfortable?

Does being comfortable make you more comfortable?

Does being comfortable make you hungry?

If asked, how would you define comfort?

Which of the following best defines *you*? A, comfy. B, uncomfy. Or C, undecided.

What is your definition of the American character? Please be brief.

What is your definition of Rebel?

What makes a Pioneer a pioneer?

When people ask you who you are, do you answer with your job description?

Let's go back a little farther, shall we, to your childhood. When the early American colonists, in protest against tax hikes, dumped British tea into the Boston Harbor were they acting out as A, pioneers. B, rebels. Or C, hoodlums.

When those same colonists dumped said tea into said Harbor did they disguise themselves as A, Indians. B, Native Americans. Or C, Indigenous persons.

Do cowboys still roam the American west?

Do you consider your country your home?

Speaking of which, did Norman Rockwell paint pictures of A, scenes from American life. B, political promises. Or C, revolution.

Which American president said that every several years the tree of Liberty must be watered with the blood of patriots and tyrants?

Have you fought in any American wars, past or present– no you haven't– in which case do you wish you had?

When the Persian Gulf War broke out were you glued to your television?

When it ended a few days later were you slightly disappointed?

Would you pin a medal on the chest of someone who looked you in the eye?

Would you ever pin a medal on your *own* chest?

What *did* Lewis and Clark discover?

Were *they* hungry?

Do questions make you angry?

Do you fight against your instincts?

Does *fear* inspire you?

Does *my* vote count?

Do *you* dump tea overboard?

Would you like to ask *me* a question?

When you were young did you resist the temptation to cry?

When do you feel most free? Alone? Or *with others*?

When did you discover that you can be the cause of an effect?

Why do I have to blow the room up to get your attention?

What *is it* you plan to *do* with your one, wild and precious life?!

ANNE touches ANDREW'S shoulder.

ANNE Time's up.

ANDREW bursts from his bonds, startling ANNE tremendously. It is a sudden and violent moment. Then...

ANNE ...What.

Scene 5 – Day After Day

ANA finally arrives home from work. ANDY is sitting alone.

ANA I'm home.

ANDY Hello.

ANA It was a struggle getting here. When you grow up, Andy, I want you to go away and become someone big enough to make our lives run smoothly.

ANDY Okay.

ANA Let that be your mark on this world.

ANDY Mom?

ANA Yes.

ANDY How was your day?

ANA Busy.

ANDY I had a test at school.

ANA That's good.

ANDY I found a book today about where we came from.

ANA And where is that?

ANDY All over the place. Different countries.

ANA The great American melting pot.

ANDY That's what my book says.

ANA I'm beat.

ANDY Are you hungry?

ANA I'll make dinner later.

ANDY Can I ask you a question?

ANA You have before.

ANDY Are you too tired to be hungry?

ANA Maybe that's it.

ANDY I'd really like to know.

ANA Well, you always have been a curious kid. I said, later.

ANDY "Curiosity killed the cat."

ANA So they say.

ANDY Who are "They?"

ANA Grown-ups.

ANDY Are "They" you?

ANA *(leaving the room)* Unfortunately.

ANDY Where are you going?

At this point they are in the same place as when the scene started, and in fact the scene does start again. The same score is repeated a second time, with ANA more frustrated but ANDY playing the scene exactly as before.

ANA I'm home.

ANDY Hello.

ANA It was a struggle getting here. When you grow up, Andy, I want you to go away and become someone big enough to make our lives run smoothly.

ANDY Okay.

ANA Let that be your mark on this world.

ANDY Mom?

ANA Yes.

ANDY How was your day?

ANA Busy.

ANDY I had a test at school.

ANA That's good.

ANDY I found a book today about where we came from.

ANA And where is that?

ANDY All over the place. Different countries.

ANA The great American melting pot.

ANDY That's what my book says.

ANA I'm beat.

ANDY Are you hungry?

ANA I'll make dinner later.

ANDY Can I ask you a question?

ANA You have before.

ANDY Are you too tired to be hungry?

ANA Maybe that's it.

ANDY I'd really like to know.

ANA Well, you always have been a curious kid. I said, later.

ANDY "Curiosity killed the cat."

ANA So they say.

ANDY Who are "They?"

ANA Grown-ups.

ANDY Are "They" you?

ANA (*leaving the room*) Unfortunately.

ANDY Where are you going?

The scene repeats a third time, but without ANA's physical score. We can hear the frustration mounting in her voice. She remains standing in the doorway. ANDY performs his score exactly as before.

ANA I'm home.

ANDY Hello.

ANA It was a struggle getting here. When you grow up, Andy, I want you to go away and become someone big enough to make our lives run smoothly.

ANDY Okay.

ANA Let that be your mark on this world.

ANDY Mom?

ANA Yes.

ANDY How was your day?

ANA Busy.

ANDY I had a test at school.

ANA That's good.

ANDY I found a book today about where we came from.

ANA And where is that?

ANDY All over the place. Different countries.

ANA The great American melting pot.

ANDY That's what my book says.

ANA I'm beat.

ANDY Are you hungry?

ANA I'll make dinner later.

ANDY Can I ask you a question?

ANA You have before.

ANDY Are you too tired to be hungry?

ANA Maybe that's it.

ANDY I'd really like to know.

ANA Well, you always have been a curious kid. I said, later.

ANDY "Curiosity killed the cat."

ANA So they say.

ANDY Who are "They?"

ANA Grown-ups.

ANDY Are "They" you?

ANA Unfortunately.

ANDY Where are you going?

And a fourth time. ANDY's score still hasn't changed one bit. ANA cuts out shortly, and her gaze eventually slips outward. She can barely stand it.

ANA I'm home.

ANDY Hello.

Okay.

Mom?

How was your day?

I had a test at school.

I found a book today about where we came from.

All over the place. Different countries.

That's what my book says.

Are you hungry?

Can I ask you a question?

Are you too tired to be hungry?

I'd really like to know.

"Curiosity killed the cat."

Who are "They?"

Are "They" you?

Where are you going?

Beat.

ANA I have to get out of here. (*she does*)

ANDY (*calling after her*) When's dinner?!

Scene 6 – Bus #1

On a bus. ANNIE enters with her suitcase. ANDRE is already there. He watches, moves from seat to seat, getting closer to her. ANDREW and ANNE are passengers; they do not appear to know each other in this instance. ANA is also a passenger. ANDY sits on the floor at home with a toy bus in his hands.

ANDRE Hey there. Hi... Hellooo, hello... Tough day behind the plow, eh? ...People sure are quiet on this bus. You know when animals notice it's quiet they get very alert as it could mean a potential for danger. Right now everybody is thinking about how I'm talking at a normal volume, saying to yourselves "that's just not done."

ANDRE finally makes it to ANNIE and notices her suitcase.

ANDRE Where yuh been?

ANNIE I'm sorry?

ANDRE You've been traveling.

ANNIE Yes.

ANDRE Where to?

ANNIE ...Scotland.

ANDRE Ooo, what'd you go there for? It's cold, isn't it?

ANNIE It's very beautiful though.

ANDRE Got any pictures?

ANNIE They're not developed yet.

ANDRE Well I bet we could find a one-hour place. They're all over.

ANNIE That's okay. But thank you.

ANDRE How did you find Scotland?

ANNIE Well, the pilot took care of that.

ANDRE No, I mean how did you like it?

ANNIE I know, I was making a joke–

ANDRE –You were making a joke! Good, Good. I get it the pilot I get it. So anyway I didn't mean to interrupt. You were saying.

ANNIE Uh I'm not sure that I was.

ANDRE You were telling me about Scotland.

ANNIE And that it was very beautiful.

ANDRE Right. Why'd you go there? Why Scotland?

ANNIE Well, I was going to stay but... I changed my mind. It wasn't what I wanted so I came back.

ANDRE You were going to move there? For good?

ANNIE Actually yes, I thought I was going to, yes. I was *going* to. But— it is very cold, as you said... Part of my family is from Scotland.

ANDRE They live there now?

ANNIE No my, my old family. Originally. On my father's side. His parents came over from Scotland. So, my ancestors are from Scotland.

ANDRE Ancestors. They sound old.

ANNIE Well, I'm sure they were. Everyone in Scotland is old. It's rough over there. And cold. Being there really made the United States clear to me.

ANDRE Oh of course. How so?

ANNIE Scottish people are cynical. But they're also very friendly. Americans are friendly but you don't always believe them; you wonder what they're selling. And we don't know anything about our country; in Scotland they're very aware of what goes on. But Scotland is small; we've got way too much space to know what's going on. ...Anyway. I met a lot of people.

ANDRE And you stayed with family while you were there?

ANNIE No, I couldn't find any, actually. They're all gone. I don't know where. I was hoping to find them, that's why I went.

ANDRE That's too bad. How long were you there?

ANNIE About a year.

ANDRE A year?! Wow. You just picked up and went? That's very gutsy.

ANNIE Well. No.

ANDRE I think so. You just picked up and *moved to Scotland*?

ANNIE I guess that is what I did, yes.

ANDRE (*to ANDREW*) You'd never do that... (*to ANNIE*) So you didn't find anyone. So, but, why didn't you stay? You know they've got those Findhorn people over there that talk to the plants and rocks, you could have stayed with them.

ANNIE That would have been interesting.

ANDRE Well I'm glad you went. Even if you don't know why now, that experience will unfold in you for the rest of your life.

ANNIE Maybe.

ANDRE Oh yeah, everyone should have that experience. It's like the tribes who send their young men out into the jungle for a week. That's the doorway to maturity. Alone in the world. But you did it without a tribe. Not everyone is willing to do that.

ANNIE Well, as it turns out, neither am I.

ANDRE What do you mean? You went!

ANNIE But I came back.

ANDRE But you went.

ANNIE True.

ANDRE And you found things you have yet to discover... Where do you live now?

ANNIE Oh, now, I can't tell you that.

ANDRE Oh I bet you could if you tried.

ANNIE Mom taught me not to talk to strangers. Sorry.

ANDRE ...There was this old guy I met once, I don't know where *he* is now either. But I met him on a bus and he kept giving me advice and saying things like "One day" or "in my day" or "young people these days" except that he wasn't like what you might think for a guy who says things like that, he actually seemed very understanding of time and change and generations, there was nothing cantankerous about him... Except he hated it when people were impolite... (*looks at Andrew*) Anyway so he talked to me the whole ride home from work. It was like he was a wrapped package unfolding. But we never asked each other's names. Didn't matter. We were just Two Guys Who Knew Each Other On The Bus. For most people on a bus the last thing they will do, the most terrifying thing they can imagine: is to even make eye contact with someone else. I mean are you kidding, come on, look someone in the eye? No, sir. Out of the corner of an eye, maybe. But if two normal people actually made eye contact, or worse, struck up a conversation about something, that'd be the end of the world. I'd look at my watch and say is this thing working? I'd swear it was the year two thousand twelve and all of theology had it wrong: Judgement Day isn't Doom's Day or Armageddon, it's two strangers in 1998 making contact on a bus over more than how irritated they are with the Bus Driver! The only thing strangers on a bus are capable of bonding over is their collective anger! That's just wrong!

ANDREW Would you please shut up!

ANDRE I feel for you man. I do. (*to ANNIE*) I'm sorry if I've embarrassed you. A person should be able to talk... Ah! Now I've ruined it. ...Well, it was nice to have met you. You've taken on one adventure so that means: you're in for more. I admire you. Good luck. But don't be scared of people who break the silence.

ANDRE gets off the bus. ANNIE exchanges a look with ANDREW, then stares out.

ANNIE Where to now?

Scene 7 – Q vs. A

We see fragments of ANA and ANDY's previous scene and something of what they think about that. We see ANNIE get off the bus and wander. We see ANDRE hopping from seat to seat. We see ANDREW and ANNE in conflict with one another. Eventually it is ANDREW and ANNE who have taken the stage. It is a wild and physically exhausting fight as they literally wrestle their arguments, each trying to gag the other from speaking or else escape the other's gagging to push their respective messages on the audience.

ANDREW I am amazed every time I hear reports of teen suicide or stories about people who despair because of boredom or because they have nothing left to look forward to. We are on the verge of enormous frontiers of knowledge and opportunity, except that our elite and entertainment cultures are so negative and cynical, and so scientifically and technologically ignorant, that you would never know it.

ANNE Why is it that artists are attacked whenever a government needs not to be questioned?

ANDREW We are on the threshold of great achievements. Our lives are going to be enriched and expanded by discoveries of which we now have only the vaguest ideas.

ANNE Who does the research? Who writes the checks? Who asks the questions? And who publishes the answers?

ANDREW On Thomas Jefferson's two hundred and fiftieth birthday not a single mention of his life was made at the Organization of American Historians. There were, however, seminars about radical history, labor history, gay and lesbian history, multicultural history, and all the other pet obsessions of contemporary academia. As a consequence, our children are being cheated. They have a legacy that comes from they know not where, paid for at a price they cannot comprehend by men whose names they scarcely know – or, if they do know them, it is as slaveholders, imperialists, Daddy Warbucks, or Doctor Strangelove. Given this academic bias, it is no wonder American civilization and its values are not being transmitted to the next generation. They must know our past if they are to be our future.

ANNE What makes a buzzword buzz the way it does?

ANDREW All this would be laughable if it weren't destructive of America's future.

ANNE Are you comfortable?

ANDREW Ideas do have consequences.

ANNE When in life are you most comfortable?

ANDREW Having a generation brainwashed with a distorted version of reality is dangerous for our civilization!

ANNE Which of the following best defines *you*? A, comfy. B, uncomfy. Or C, undecided!

ANDREW Curiosity killed the cat!

ANNE Where are you? Where did you come from? And where are you going?

Scene 8 – What about Dad?

ANDY at home. He enters the bathroom and washes his hands. Then he looks in the mirror. He does silly things in the mirror. Then...

ANDY Hi, my name is Andy. Do you reco'nize me?... ..Hello, you don't know me, but you should... ..Does the name Andy mean anything to you?... ..Hi. I'm your son. Whayuh think about that?

ANDY washes his face. Washed, he looks at his face, plays with it a bit. Then...

ANDY Why can't I ask you anything? You never– No. ...Why can't you just tell me now? We never get to "later", when is "later?" You say that all the time so I looked that word up, and it means... n–nnext. Like, it's gonna happen next. That's what I thought it meant only you keep using it like it means never. You don't know what things mean. No. You don't know what things mean. Y– You– You don't know what things mean.

ANA comes home, as usual. At first she does not appear to notice that ANDY isn't in his usual spot.

ANA I'm home.

ANDY Hello.

ANA It was a struggle getting here. When you grow up, Andy, I want you to go away and become someone big enough to make our lives run smoothly.

ANDY Okay.

ANA Let that be your mark on this world.

ANDY Mom?

ANA Yes.

ANDY Where did I come from?

ANA Busy.

ANDY Mom?

ANA That's good. –What?

ANDY Where did I come from?

ANA (*trying to get back on track*) Uh– The great American melting pot.

ANDY That's what my book says.

ANA I'm beat.

ANDY Why don't I look just like you since you're my only parent?

ANA Uh. That's a complicated question.

ANDY I'd really like to know.

ANA Well you always have been a curious kid. I said, later.

ANDY No you didn't, not yet.

ANA Now I've said later. Look it up: Later means later.

ANDY (*caught yuh*) Or *does* it!

ANA Talking back. Interesting.

ANDY Where did I come from?

ANA (*leaving the room*) Stop asking that.

ANDY Where are you going?

ANA (*reels on him*) I'm home, Andy, I'm home! You're lucky I even come home! You don't know how much I'd like to take that bus straight on to the airport, fly away and live my life somewhere else but I come home and I do what I can! Now when I get here I'm tired and I need to rest before I start answering ridiculous questions... Yes, my little latchkey child, Mommy is a person too. We're people. You like to do things by *yourself*. So does Mom... It doesn't mean that I don't– love you. Andy. I love you Andy. But when you ask a lot of questions right when I get home from work I wanna slug yuh.

ANDY You could ask me questions.

ANA I know everything about you, I'm your mother.

ANDY You don't know everything about my life.

ANA I *gave* you life, Kiddo, I'm an expert.

ANDY Then who is my Dad?

ANA ...That...

ANDY Who is he?

ANA Your Dad is... m– uh– much older than you.

ANDY Who is he?

ANA You don't even know him, Andy, it doesn't make a difference.

ANDY Why can't you just tell me?

ANA Because it doesn't matter. He's not here. He's never going to be here. He's gone.

ANDY But who is he? Where did he go so fast? Why can't I know where I came from?

ANA W– Y– ...Why are you asking me this? You've never asked this before,

why are you all of a sudden asking me this?

ANDY W'll... ..because-

ANA I'm asking about your life, now, what you wanted! Why do you need to ask me this?

ANDY Just because!

ANA Oh, just because! Just because is not a good answer, Andy!

ANDY Because you never say anything and I have a right to know!

ANA You don't have any rights until you're eighteen!

ANDY I have a right to know who I came from!

ANA You came from me!

ANDY And a Dad!

ANA ...And a Dad.

Silence. ANA puts her hand on her head, fighting off a feeling. ANDY eventually walks up to her. ANA stops him with a hand on his head. Then her hand slips over his eyes.

ANA I'll make dinner later.

ANA leaves the room.

Scene 9 – We Meet Again

ANNIE, with her suitcase, a bit frantic, wanders into a park and sits down for some peace. ANDRE enters and spots her.

ANDRE Well we meet again, / how are yuh?

ANNIE Oh hi. I'm fine.

ANDRE You're still carting around that suitcase. You're not living here in the park are you? Oh hey, did you get those pictures developed yet?

ANNIE No I, haven't had the chance.

ANDRE Well you need to take the chance.

ANNIE I haven't had the chance.

ANDRE I believe you. Why haven't you unpacked? The trip's over now, come on. No clinging to the past, you gotta move on you know. You bump into things if you're always looking over your shoulder.

ANNIE Thanks. I understand.

ANDRE ...You probably thought- well, you probably *think*- I'm wacko because I was talking to you on the bus. Right?

ANNIE No.

ANDRE Mm-hm. Most people do. Most people don't give me the time of day, so, thank you for being a surprise. You gave me hope in a dark world.

ANNIE You talk to a lot of strangers?

ANDRE I try. (*clandestinely*) It is my Mission.

ANNIE Oh really. Talking to strangers.

ANDRE Yes. It is my Mission. Public transportation is a kind of purgatory between various Hells and Heavens. People go silent and rigid, it's awful. We're all pressed up together in some humid rush hour bus, trying desperately to pretend that we're not. As if that's so terrible, really, I mean come on. Yet we stand there, ready to be annoyed at a moment's notice, desperately feigning isolation. Oh my space, my space! And then we push through the doors and just rush rush rush as quickly as possible away from the bus to wherever it is we're going, more *from* than *to*. ...It's a small example of greater things.

ANNIE I guess. But I don't think wanting to keep to yourself on a bus means the end of civilization. I think it's more a sign of a long day at work.

ANDRE What about in the morning?

ANNIE People are tired. Or they're embarrassed because their hair is still wet from the shower.

ANDRE Well who cares? Everyone's hair is still wet from the shower. So? Talk to each other. Talk about your hair. Why pretend like the person next to you doesn't exist? It is the perfect example of how individuality in this country has over the course of History rotted down to fear. Fear. We don't want to be alone in life so that we can be an individual or, free or, some cowboy great Americannn rrebellll loner. People want to be alone because they're afraid. I mean, naturally, if someone on the bus is talking out loud when everyone else is silent, well then clearly the next thing that person is going to do is pull out a knife and stab everybody. I mean obviously he's a killer. That's why I try to talk to people, and make contact. To prove that all strangers aren't out to kill you. All neighbors don't have dead bodies buried in their backyards. We can help each other with more than small talk.

ANNIE I think you're exaggerating.

ANDRE ...Only to make a point.

ANNIE I mean I agree, people are angry, people are afraid, people aren't as happy now as they used to be. Or, you know, that's not even true, we don't know that. We weren't around before we were born so how do we know how things used to be? It's like we confuse our childhood bliss with past decades. I'm sure it's been rough each and every year since the Pilgrims landed. But, people are afraid, yes, people now are afraid. Or anxious, and that makes them afraid—

ANDRE But why are they so anxious?

ANNIE ...You have an answer, right?

ANDRE Well, yes I do, but I want to hear yours too.

ANNIE Why, so you can counter with your own?

ANDRE ...Where did we go wrong? When we first met I actually thought it went pretty well. Well that is until I— got all excited. That’s usually when I lose people. It is quite frowned upon to express conviction in public these days.

ANNIE Well if you shove all your theories down people’s throats, they’re not going to want to listen to you.

ANDRE I was good, I was asking you questions about yourself.

ANNIE Yeah but I don’t know you, you could be anyone.

ANDRE See? A killer! Right?

ANNIE Nooo, not a— well yes, yes you could be a killer. Now I hate to say that because it just gives you proof for your theory about America’s collective paranoia but yes in this day and age you could very well be a killer. It is possible.

Silence. ANDRE nods a bit.

ANNIE Sorry. You’ve caught me in a bold moment. I don’t usually talk to strangers.

ANDRE Really? Too bad for you.

ANNIE ...My name is Annie.

ANDRE ...My name is Andre. “A” names. We’ve run into each other twice, we both have two-syllable “A” names.

ANNIE I wonder what it means?

ANDRE Greater things. ...So, come on, what’s with the suitcase now.

ANNIE Actually, I *don’t* have a place to live. I’m going to try to find a youth hostel, I think. I hadn’t planned on coming back from Scotland.

ANDRE You can’t crash at a friend’s place? It’s cheaper.

ANNIE Cheap would be good. But I don’t have any friends. Well, whom I would feel comfortable asking if I could crash at their place. I’m not very social, actually. That’s partly what I learned how to do by traveling *alone*, ironically. I *had* to be social in Scotland. It was survival. Otherwise I’d go crazy all by myself. I thought I didn’t need people but, I think people do.

ANDRE Come over to my house.

ANNIE I’m sorry?

ANDRE Come over to my house.

ANNIE That’s okay. But thank you.

ANDRE I think you should.

ANNIE Why?

ANDRE Two chance meetings, “A” names. —Because you don’t have a place to stay!

ANNIE I'll be okay. Thank you.

Pause. ANDRE stands and puts out his hand. Pause. ANNIE shakes it.

ANNIE It was nice to meet you.

ANDRE And perhaps we'll meet again, so, I'll see you next time.

ANNIE We'll see.

ANDRE Now come on you never know.

ANNIE Okay.

ANDRE *(goes, stops)* ...Because the coincidences, you know, small examples and all. We can't see the pattern right now but one day we'll know what it all means.

ANNIE You're probably right.

ANDRE ...*(right in her face)* Because see when I'm this far away, you can't tell who I am, I'm just blurry. *(backs up a bit)* This far away, now you can see who I am. *(etc.)* If I back up farther, then you get the whole picture. You need the distance to see what's what.

ANNIE ...Were you leaving? You were kind of behaving as if you were going to go and then— you didn't.

ANDRE Yeah I do have to go. *(doesn't go.)*

ANNIE ...So, see you next time.

ANDRE Oh sure... *(goes, stalls)* Bye Annie... *(goes, stalls again)* You can come to my house if you want, really!

ANNIE I believe you. I'm okay. Thank you.

ANDRE exits.

Scene 10 – Economics

ANDREW and ANNE leap in and stop at the sight of each other. THEY both start their respective speeches at once. THEY stop. When THEY try again, stop again, and realize no one is going to budge, they each plow ahead and deliver the following monologues simultaneously, with each paragraph coinciding with the other. THEY check in with some sort of glance between each paragraph.

As the monologues progress, the following actions develop simultaneously... ANDY and ANDRE watch Washington, D.C., on their respective television sets with no particular interest, changing channels with each new paragraph of ANDREW and ANNE'S; by the fourth set of paragraphs, ANNIE realizes she has lost something of great import and

scrambles through her stuff, frantic but trying to stay calm, eventually giving up and staring out intensely; also by the fourth set of paragraphs, and after quite a long wait at a bus stop, ANA decides to walk home but stops when she spots a small purse or envelope containing a significant amount of money. Each event manages to climax simultaneously with the end of ANDREW and ANNE'S monologues and to the swelling noise of what sounds like jet planes, music, cash registers, and other things...

ANNE... / Throughout the tumult of the last presidential election, political commentators were perplexed by a stubborn fact. The economy was performing splendidly, at least according to the standard measurements of the Gross Domestic Product. Productivity and employment were up; inflation was under control. And the World Economic Forum in Switzerland declared that the United States had regained its position as the most competitive economy on earth after years of Japanese dominance. So if the economy was up, why was America down? Voters didn't feel better even though the economists said they should. President Clinton actually sent his economic advisers on the road to persuade Americans that their experience was wrong.

Sounding much like a progressive grammar school guidance counselor, The Clinton Administration said that Americans were simply suffering the anxieties of adjusting to a wondrous new economy. Those silly people. But could it be that the nation's economic experts live in a statistical Potemkin village that hides the economy Americans are actually experiencing? Isn't it time to ask some basic questions about the gauges that inform expert opinion, and the premises on which those gauges are based? Is there a difference between mere monetary transactions and a genuine addition to a nation's wellbeing?

There have been questions regarding the accuracy of the numbers that compose the Gross Domestic Product, and some occasional tinkering at the edges. But politicians and economists have not been eager to see the system changed; that would be a lot of work. The GDP is a set of numbers that tells us next to nothing about what is actually going on. It makes no distinction whatsoever between the desirable and the undesirable.

For example, the crucial economic functions performed in the household, volunteer sectors, and in nature, go entirely unreckoned. Family, community, and the natural habitat have no market price, and so are invisible in our national accounting. Divorce adds several billion dollars a year in lawyer bills, second homes, and counseling for the kids – kids talking to their parents is of no value; they aren't adding to the economy. But watching three hours of television a day trains them to be ardent, GDP-enhancing consumers. Crime has given rise to a burgeoning security industry, adding more than \$65 billion a year to the GDP. The car-locking device called The Club adds some \$100 million a year itself, and even the Oklahoma City Bombing stirred an interest

in Security Systems that added an economic uptick to the nation. Prozac alone adds more than \$1.2 billion to the GDP as people try to feel a little better amid all this progress. Isn't something fundamentally wrong?

...**AND ANDREW** One of the great changes of the last twenty years has been the rise of the world market. We came out of World War II feeling unrealistically invulnerable; all of our major competitors had been bombed. We have had such a powerful national economy for so long that it is difficult for us to adjust to the overwhelming realities of the world market. All current economic textbooks are based on the national economy as though that were still the keystone of an understanding of how the world works. Yet the fact is that the world economy is now an interconnected system. And if we intend to give our children the best job security in the world, then we are going to have to rethink our entire approach to being competitive in the world market.

No nation can lead the world if it cannot economically sustain itself. As we enter the Information Age, there is an enormous opportunity for this country to develop the new products, the new wealth, the new jobs, and the new quality of life that will transform both the lives of Americans and those of others. If we lead the economic and technological transition, then our children will have the highest value-added jobs, with the highest productivity, the highest take-home pay, the greatest job security, and the widest choices in quality of life, offering them a strong and genuine sense of the nation's wellbeing.

There has been a general rule that each generation would live within its means so that our children would not be stuck with the task of paying off our debts. The principle was that we would pay off the mortgage and leave the farm to our children. Only in the last generation has this reversed. Now we are borrowing against the farm to pay today's living expenses and leaving our debt to the children. This is entirely undesirable.

For our future, the crucial task that we must perform is to balance the federal budget. Individuals and families must plan years ahead for retirement; the same thing is true of generations and nations. As I speak, we are paying \$250 billion in taxes just to satisfy the national debt. But that's just the beginning. By the next century, the cost of servicing the accumulated debt—rising at \$200 billion a year—will skyrocket. By 2005 we will be paying \$412 billion in interest on the debt and the cumulative interest will be more than \$3.9 trillion. That's an amount almost equal to the current national debt. It is also two and a half times the current national budget. America now owes \$5 trillion in national debt. By the end of the decade, the Clinton administration expects us to owe approximately \$6.5 trillion. By 2012 that debt will approach \$9 trillion. When your national debt is more than doubling in fifteen years, there is something fundamentally wrong!

Pause. ANNIE dashes off upstage while ANDREW and ANNE stalk

away to stand off stage left and right respectively, where they eye one another throughout the following scene.

Scene 11 – The Open Road?

ANA I'm home.

ANDY Hello.

ANDY gets up from the television, takes a chair and sits facing a wall. ANA steps forward, still looking at the money in silence, her mind turning and not fully focused on ANDY.

ANDY ...Don't you want me to go away and become someone big enough to make our lives run smoothly?

ANA hides the money.

ANA I do. Someday. Andy don't be upset about yesterday; I didn't mean to hurt your feelings. You startled me, that's all.

ANDY Are you going to tell me?

ANA I can't promise that I'll do that right now. I'm sorry. Uhm. Andy come here.

ANDY Why?

ANA Please just do it.

ANDY Why?

ANA Andy that's an annoying question now come here.

ANDY does, remaining at a distance.

ANA You feel okay by yourself when I'm not here. You feel okay with that.

ANDY Is that a question?

ANA Yes.

ANDY I guess.

ANA And you can make dinner for yourself, you have before.

ANDY Yeah, spaghetti, Campbells, fish sticks. Carrots. Why?

ANA If someone--? If you were able to live by yourself--?

ANDY Where are you going?

ANA Nowhere nowhere, I'm not going anywhere. But one day you're going to have to live alone, you're going to grow up and have to live on your own and I'm just, wondering if you've thought about that.

ANDY Well. When I grow up I'll live in a bus and drive all over the country and take pictures of people. Then I'll go to Washington D.C. and show the president all the pictures I took. And then I'll get him to help me find my Dad.

ANA Andy, he's gone. I don't want to hurt you but he's gone. You need to stop worrying about that now. One day the time will be right and you'll know. You just have to be patient and wait.

ANDY Yeah 'til I'm dead.

ANA No, Andy.

ANDY Are you going somewhere?

ANA ...No!

ANDY You can go on a trip if you want. I can make my own dinner.

ANA I know. I know you can. I wish I had an Aunt for you, or a Grandmother. Anybody. Of course you're always wondering where you came from, you only know Mom. You and I make one small family... You know in other countries people live with their parents and grandparents all their lives, in the same house. Families are big. And they do everything together. You and I are all American, Kiddo. Things aren't what they used to be, if they ever were... I'm not sure what's right, or what to do.

ANDY Why?

ANA Well if I knew the answer then I wouldn't have to ask.

ANDY I've learned everything from asking. And the dictionary. Except sometimes I disagree with the dictionary. Or people won't tell me.

ANA I heard that. ...I know you can't understand now but one day I think you will... You know they say absence makes the heart grow fonder. Sometimes it can be a blessing to be far away. Or to not know the answer. Sometimes that's the best thing. I've never had any money Andy. I can't ever get away. We became a family when Mom was still a kid. We got an early start, and we got stuck starting so we're always trying to start and we never get anywhere. It's going to take us a while to- to figure everything out. And if an opportunity comes along to make something of ourselves then we have to do that even if it's scary or wrong, right? Otherwise we'll never know, right? How do you know unless you ask... Right?

ANDY I'm confused.

ANDY palms his toy bus.

Scene 12 – The Charm

ANNIE frantically boards the bus, filled with the usual passengers, hoping she'll run into ANDRE again. ANDRE is sitting up front. ANNIE is standing in the back with her suitcase in hand. SHE spots him immediately.

ANNIE Andre!

ANDRE Oh my goodness, it's the charm!

ANNIE What?

ANDRE We're meeting for the third time. Third time is the charm.

ANNIE I was hoping to find you again. I've been riding this bus all evening.

ANDRE You have? Well. Here I am stranger.

ANNIE Something terrible has happened.

ANDRE What?

ANNIE I lost my money. All of it. I don't know what happened.

ANDRE It's not in your suitcase?

ANNIE No it's nowhere I looked everywhere, everywhere I've *been*, where I used it *last*. I called the bus people and they said they'd keep an eye out but they're not going to find it.

ANDRE That's terrible. You don't have a bank account?

ANNIE I didn't think I was coming back to America.

ANDRE Well, what are you going to do? Do you know anybody?

ANNIE Just you... I don't even want to ask but...

ANDRE Uh.

ANDRE scratches his head. HE keeps doing that. For too long a time.

ANNIE Are you alright?

ANDRE Yeah I'm fine. Uhm, yeah you can come over.

ANNIE I mean if it's not okay I understand, I know you were just trying to be nice when you offered. But. I don't know what to do. I don't know anyone in San Francisco, I just came here because I didn't want to go back home. I have to find that money. It's a lot of money. Oh! I hate this! Everything costs money, which is just a bunch of paper and numbers we decided meant something and now it means *everything!* ...Oh and I lost *all of it!* *Damn it!*

ANDRE It's okay it's okay, you can come over.

ANNIE No, I'm alright.

ANDRE Oh no don't cry, you can come over I'm just, I mean, you know. This is, sudden, but, obviously it's all meant to be.

ANNIE No: my trip was depressing, I didn't find anything I crossed an entire ocean to find, and if I'm fucking *meant* to have lost all my money *and* my ancestors then that's just fucked! ...Sorry.

ANDRE I just meant that we keep running into each other and so that must mean something.

ANNIE And we both have "A" names.

ANNIE has caught ANDRE at his own game. He can't deny it. ANDRE struggles for a moment but quickly manages to distract himself with an increasingly impassioned line of thinking. Over the course of the monologue, everyone else on the bus slowly leaves.

ANDRE We do. And I did offer you my place to crash and– now a reason hass– accidentally come along for you to– actually– need a place to crash. Accidents aren't always accidents, see? We need to invent a new word that puts accident and pattern together. Oh, well that would be synchronicity! You know, I *put* that come-over-to-my-place idea out there and now by accident it might happen. That means something. But it's not *just* synchronicity that– reveals *meaning* or, one thing causing another thing to happen, like dominoes– which are a series of *planned* accidents. It's more like a whole bunch of things simultaneously working toward similar ends – rocks, plants, people, swarms of bees, light – and the mere fact that – completely independent of one another! – they're all doing essentially the same thing, matching the same general rhythms, *that* fact reveals something about a great pattern to living we're all working away at. That's meaningful.

ANDREW leaves.

ANDRE You know like how a waterfall looks the same as a landslide. Or how a landslide started decades ago when one grain of soil slipped, that's just like water on the stove slowly coming to a boil, or a crowd of people getting more and more restless and then boom,

ANA leaves.

ANDRE mayhem– well, we call it mayhem. I mean, according to new physics theory the world is made up entirely of information; that's what matter and energy *is*. And so even something as intangible as a thought– a thought is information– that hooks up to the pattern as well. So coincidences happen that are really in a way a revelation of the big picture or– or like kids today pick up on computers faster than kids did ten and twenty years ago because now all this computer information is in the air, it's a part of the world now and kids are born into that. Oh Oh!

ANNE leaves.

ANDRE Or there's that monkey thing. The way the story goes, there were these monkeys on an island in Japan who had never seen sweet potatoes before,

and these scientists gave them sweet potatoes. But the sand from the beach made the potatoes hard to eat. But this *one* monkey learned that if it swished the potatoes around in the ocean water not only did it clean them off but it also gave them a nice salty taste. And so other monkeys picked up on this and learned it from the first monkey. And soon more and more monkeys knew how to wash potatoes in the ocean. And then eventually so *many* monkeys knew how to do this that it reached a point of critical mass, and suddenly other monkeys on other islands, who had had no contact with the first monkeys, they all just, boom,

ANDY leaves.

ANDRE knew how wash potatoes! It was suddenly a part of the culture! That could explain how wishes come true, or dreams, or how prayer works! People get together and they all pray for some terminally ill person who then ends up living another thirty years! So our thoughts are the angels! And God's not a man floating in the clouds he's just some being that is the sum total of all information of which we are one part! We can't even comprehend this God because of the limited amount of info that goes into making us what we are! And likewise, the rocks can't comprehend us because we are made up of so much more information than they are! We're just more complicated than the rock; that's the essential difference! We need to take a step back. And if we got far enough away from the pattern of the universe and could see all of that information at once, then maybe we'd be able to see God! ... That would take some time though!

ANNIE ...So can I come over?

ANDRE ...Yes. Uhm. Well. My apartment is a mess.

ANNIE My life is a mess, so- It's okay.

ANDRE Are you sure you don't feel strange, I mean, you don't know me, really.

ANNIE Look, if it makes you uncomfortable, it's okay, just say so. ...I *liked* the monkey story, it was interesting.

ANDRE Well, it's just a story, I mean, the reality of it is debatable, you know, but...

ANNIE It could be true. I'd believe it. I mean it makes sense. The world is changing. We have to learn how to- to think in new ways. ...You're interesting.

ANDRE Thank you. We should go to the beach some time.

ANNIE Okay.

ANDRE (*poorly feigned enthusiasm*) ...Well, okay, let's go to my place.

ANDRE looks out and his smile fades.

ANNIE Are you sure?

ANDRE Yeah yeah it's okay, I want you to. I want to help. We only have a few more stops actually.

ANNIE I appreciate it... ..We're the only people left on the bus.

ANDRE That's not good for my Mission. I need strangers...

ANNIE looks at ANDRE who is looking ahead at the road. SHE takes him in. ANDRE appears to be uneasy with his thoughts.

Scene 13 – The Sweep of History

ANDREW darts onto the stage–

ANDREW In 19–!

–but stops when ANNE does not. HE looks at her. ANNE gestures for him to “be my guest” and then listens carefully, taking notes like a good journalist.

ANDREW In 1936, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt told the American public, “Our generation has a rendezvous with destiny.” That generation met its challenge, and triumphed. Now it is our turn.

We must reassert the original American definition, a civilization that emphasizes personal responsibility as much as individual rights. There has been a calculated effort by cultural elites to discredit this civilization and replace it with a culture of irresponsibility that is incompatible with American freedoms as we have known them. Our first task then is to return to teaching Americans about America.

A sense of anxiety has increased in this nation.

ANDRE and ANNIE get off the bus together.

ANDREW Any reasonable person should feel anxious when twelve year olds are having babies, high school graduates cannot read their diplomas, and good workers suddenly find themselves downsized. Anxiety is a rational response to this world of rapid change.

It has been said that some people are born into greatness, while others have greatness thrust upon them. In America, we have both. But no single person needs to be a hero. Everyone needs to be a little bit heroic. Not heroic in the tradition of Jefferson, Lincoln, or Roosevelt. Quite the opposite. I believe the heroism we need today is the quiet steady work of millions. To reassert the true

American character, we simply have to convince ourselves that our country, our freedom, and our future are worth a little extra effort.

ANDRE and ANNIE enter ANDRE's apartment.

ANDREW That is the choice that each of us must make, one at a time, day by day. And at no time in the history of our great nation has the choice been clearer.

ANNE May I ask a question please?

This puts ANDREW in a position resembling a politician at a press conference, with ANNE the reporting press. ANDREW obliges her request with a gesture.

ANNE What would you say has been the role of propaganda in the process of defining American history?

Isn't it true that those who define history get their information from the Associated Press?

And doesn't the Associated Press get its information from the *New York Times*?

How does the *New York Times* arrive at our doorstep?

And in the end, who writes this "History?" A, those who live it. B, those who read it. Or C, those who purchase ad space to pay for it?

Does contradiction exist?

Are details important?

Is authority subject to change?

Which of the following is an example of a black and white issue? A, freedom of speech. B, free speech. Or C, the freedom to speak.

If you *believe* in freedom of speech then you do believe in freedom of speech precisely for the views you don't like; is that true or false?

I do admit that when the voice of the people can be heard, you have this problem, they become curious and arrogant and then things happen like the American Revolution or the Nineteen Sixties, for example. Considering that, what do you feel we can create to help avoid such events? A, propaganda. B, necessary illusions. Or C, apathy?

And finally, in reference to your comment on greatness, if some people are born into greatness while others have it thrust upon them, is there any room in that equation for a person to *choose* to be great? Or is greatness simply an accident?

And now THEY revert to wrestling.

ANDREW If my inquisitive friend will allow, I shall recapitulate the primary facts of my thesis so that she and her kind might perhaps comprehend the state of the nation.

ANNE If the public wants to hear the facts, then we must ask first: the facts according to whom?

ANDREW I would be much obliged if someone would please point out to the young lady that although she is brimming with a great many provocative questions, she herself has never provided any answers.

ANNE Could someone please ask the gentleman why he does not *ask* if answers are what he seeks?

ANDREW spouts. ANNE takes her place beside him and simultaneously does the same.

ANDREW... / We risk, by our own hand, not being able to understand the world we have invented. It is time to decide. It is time for conviction. It is time to remember our History. I am not talking about America. I am talking about you, each of you, each of us, reclaiming our Definition of who we are!

...AND ANNE When you were young did you resist the temptation to cry? When do you feel most free? Alone? Or *with others*? When did you discover that you could be the cause of an effect? Why do I have to blow the room up to get your attention? What is it you plan to do with your one, wild and precious life?!

A brief and awkward pause.

ANNE Could someone please ask this gentlemen, if he would agree that we have been– perhaps– ...running in circles?

ANDREW I would appreciate someone informing my– companion– that I do recognize a certain– ...motif.

ANNE And could you please ask him: where exactly is he– are, we– ...getting to?

ANDREW And would you please tell her... uhm...

Scene 14 – Home/Home

ANDRE plucks out “Worried Man” on his guitar. ANNIE unpacks her suitcase and sets her clothes in piles. ANA comes home only to find ANDY.

ANA Andy! What are you doing home?

ANDY School was cancelled. What are you doing home?

ANA I uh, I took a long lunch, so I came by to— get some things I forgot, for work. What are you reading?

ANDY My history book.

ANA Oh. Is that homework?

ANDY No I'm just reading it.

ANA Well, I won't disturb you. Why did school get cancelled?

ANDY Bomb threat.

ANA Bomb threat? That's crazy. ...Okay. Well. I'll just go get my things and go, so, be good.

ANDY Okay.

ANA And be careful.

ANDY About what?

ANA I don't know, people are making bomb threats.

ANNIE enters ANDRE's front room. ANA exits and hurriedly packs her suitcase with clothes, including The Money. When she is done, she stays near the suitcase contemplatively.

ANNIE Good morning.

ANDRE *(stops playing guitar)* Hey there.

ANNIE You have a pretty clean place for a boy.

ANDRE Thank you.

ANNIE You play the guitar?

ANDRE I play the guitar. *(with a fancy trill, he stops)* Did you sleep okay? I'm not exactly set up for guests.

ANNIE Oh I was fine. It's nice.

ANDRE starts playing again.

ANNIE You don't have a lot of things here.

ANDRE I try to gather only what I need. Waste not, want not, you know.

ANNIE A good philosophy.

ANDRE Good economics, really.

ANNIE Yes. ...I, I unpacked my clothes, I hope it's okay. I was thinking I should probably get to a Laundromat pretty soon.

ANDRE *(stops playing)* There's laundry in the basement downstairs. I guess I should make us something to eat, too. Are you hungry?

ANNIE Oh no, don't go to any trouble.

ANDRE Annie, you don't have any money. What are you going to eat?

ANNIE Thank you...

ANDRE starts playing again.

ANNIE Look, you're still uncomfortable with this, I can tell.

ANDRE stops playing.

ANNIE I'll just go. I can figure something out.

ANDRE No, come on now, how many times do I have to say it's okay?

ANNIE Well, you look awkward.

ANDRE Well I've got a stranger in my house.

ANNIE Then I should go.

ANDRE No, it's just, you know, I never have guests, so— *you* said you aren't very social and neither am I; I'll get over it. Go get your laundry. *(starts playing)*

ANNIE ...I don't have any quarters.

ANDRE *(stops playing)* ...I've got quarters.

ANNIE Thanks.

ANDRE starts playing again.

ANNIE Don't you have to go to work?

ANDRE Not today.

ANNIE Where *do* you work?

ANDRE The Main Library. *(stops playing)*

ANNIE Oh. Of course.

ANDRE *(a book)* What, this?

ANNIE And those. You have quite a library of your own.

ANDRE I try to keep up. Survival of the fittest, you know. *(a short loud riff, then puts the guitar away)* You know going back to this whole pattern thing, we always say that history repeats itself, which is really just a folksy way of acknowledging fractal pattern. And I'd say our short history together is a tiny example of that, having met each other three well-placed times? But the wrench is always the details. That's the chaos. I've met all kinds of people, like that old guy I told you about before. But he's never seen my place. You're the first, really.

ANNIE You never invite friends over?

ANDRE ...No it's too small here. So tell me more about Scotland and your family.

ANNIE I don't really want to. It wasn't the best experience.

ANDRE Fair enough.

ANNIE I went to Scotland to find out who I am but found nothing. I have no family in America, I have no family across the sea, I have no home anywhere. That's my story to date.

ANDRE Fair enough.

ANNIE What about you? Why do you keep to yourself here if meeting strangers is your mission?

ANDRE I meet strangers on the bus. The problem is obvious there so that's the best place to do it. I just want to meet them, I don't bring them home.

ANNIE Well that makes me feel swell.

ANDRE AH! Okay. What are we doing here?

ANNIE Please, go ahead and tell me! I don't have a home, okay? I lost all my money. So I'm a little anxious right now. I'm sorry but *this* is new for *me!*

ANDRE What *about* your folks, why don't you call them?

ANNIE If I knew where they were, I would. I know *who* they were, after much prying and many phone calls, but I've never met them, my real parents.

ANDRE So the stork brought you.

Over the course of the following, ANA stands with her suitcase, resolved, takes a long look at ANDY, and tiptoes out the door. ANNIE feels what she says deeply, but we get the sense the cork has not fully popped though it is clearly straining.

ANNIE That's one way to put it. No. I was a case of bad timing. And I hate to sound ungrateful but my *adoptive* folks were a bit over eager when they took me on. They ran out of steam. And so I was bad timing twice. I haven't seen them much since I left home and that was years ago. I don't know. I just needed to know who I was. I felt like I couldn't settle down until I knew that. And then several things happened at once: I found out my real Dad was of Scottish descent. *And* I wanted to travel. And maybe leave this fat country for good to live someplace less, I don't know, adolescent. Americans all come from somewhere else. How can a person feel rooted in a country that's not The Mother Country? America is the kid that left home. ...So I left America.

ANDRE Well. You can't just *abandon America*. Well you *can*; you can do anything you want. I mean, *you* said: people have it rough over in Scotland. People have it rough *all* over. People have it rough here. You can't escape *that*. You're American because here you are, and if you leave then you're just an American abroad. It seems more practical to deal with what you've got. So we don't get to have deep roots in America, too bad. But we do get to live comparatively well considering the rest of the world.

ANNIE So, what, I shouldn't complain? *I know* it's rough all over. And

everywhere that it's rough people still laugh. So? Do we just sit around and be grateful that at least we laugh now and then and pretend that there aren't other things happening that insult us, or hurt us-?

ANDRE -No-

ANNIE -I mean what you're saying sounds like some kind of apathy.

ANDRE Oh no no no!

ANNIE Then what are you saying? I mean you spit out all these theories at me but really, what are you talking about? Landslides? Monkeys? Where does all this stuff get you? You're out there trying to save the nation by bringing strangers together but you've *never had anyone over to your apartment?* What are you saying?

ANDRE I- ...I- ...I'm saying- ...that you are in a crappy mood- which I understand- and that I should go get us something to eat while you do your laundry.

ANNIE Sorry.

ANDRE Don't be sorry. I'll catch a bus to the grocery store and get us something to eat.

ANNIE Don't buy anything for me. I'm only going to stay long enough to get my laundry done, and then I'll- figure something out.

ANDRE Whatever. ...So, I'll be back.

ANNIE I'll be here.

ANDRE waves, leaves, and stands troubled by his thoughts. ANNIE stands troubled by her own. ANA does the same. ANDY, who has been thinking, sits up suddenly.

ANDY Mom? Mom?

ANDRE makes his way to a bus while ANDY pulls a folded piece of paper from his book and reads it.

ANDY Questions to ask Mom. One. Why are you mad when I ask you who is my Dad? Two. Why are you my only family? My friends have grandparents. Three. *(writes)* What is my history? *(reads)* Questions to ask Dad, when found. One. How are you? Two. Where have you been? Three. Mom said I was born when she was a kid but grownups have kids so when are we grownups? *(writes)* What does it mean?

Scene 15 – Last Bus

ANDY pulls out his toy bus and holds it in his lap as he thinks. ANA

*is on the bus already when ANDRE gets on and sits across from her.
ANDREW and ANNE stand to either side, justifying.*

ANDREW America is the leading country on the planet, providing the opportunity to pursue happiness to more different kinds of people from more backgrounds than any society in history.

ANNE Will historians record America as the meteor that emerged as a world power in the twentieth century, only to find itself unable to solve its own internal problems?

ANDRE Business trip or pleasure?

ANA ...Business.

ANDRE (*distractedly*) ...What is it that you, uh... What uh...

ANA ...I'm sorry?

ANDRE (*smiles disapprovingly at himself*) Uh, nothing. Sorry. Enjoy your trip.

ANNE Is it even possible for us to know whether our great strengths or our great weaknesses will prevail?

ANDREW For the past thirty years we have been influenced to abandon our culture and seem to have lost faith in the core values, traditions and hopes of our civilization.

ANA Can I talk to you about something?

ANDRE ...Sure.

ANA I'm sorry, I know we don't know each other. I'm not crazy; I don't just go around talking to strangers. But, can I talk to you for a second?

ANDRE Yeah.

ANDREW Americans need to tell themselves to wake up and remember what brought us here.

ANNE Or, rather, to ask why we chose to fall asleep in the first place?

ANA I'm on my way to the airport. I went to work this morning to quit, and I did. Now I don't have a job. I did this because yesterday I f- well, I came into some money. So I quit my job and I'm going to go to the airport and point to a map of the world and buy a ticket to wherever my finger lands and that's where I'm going to go. This is my plan. I'm doing this because: with the money I now can, I've always wanted to, and when I was seventeen I had a baby I did not want to have, the father of which- ...the father of which I did not choose, not when I came into this world, and not when I was seventeen. And because of that I have had a life I did not choose, with a little boy who every time I look at him I remember that he was forced upon me and that we live in a world where even the people we are supposed to love are capable of changing us forever in ways we would never- huh! -no one would *ever* choose themselves. And if we would all quietly go about taking control of our lives back from the people who hurt us, even if that means someone else gets hurt in the process that's *still* the

best thing to do. We have to be responsible for ourselves. It's my life that I live! We don't live other people's lives, they do! And if we each take care of ourselves then eventually one day nobody will be hurting anyone, and any pain getting to that day will have been worth it because everybody will be individually responsible!

ANDREW Where else can we glimpse our future better than in the pages of our nation's history?

ANNE Society tends to believe what it hears *repeatedly*. Repetition is persuasion's tool. Whose history is our nation's history? Mine?

ANA But I'm getting off the subject. Other people can do whatever they want. The important thing is that I take control of my life, right? We can't get through life without hurting someone once in a while. The odds are it is going to happen! But: we are separate individuals, and sometimes that means we do things that other people say are wrong. But it could be that they've just never walked in our shoes. You don't know anyone until you've walked in their shoes, isn't that how the saying goes? We could argue about these things forever, there are as many points of view as there are people and nobody has the right to say which ideas are correct for everyone; *That's* up to the individual. So I don't have to justify the choices I make in my life to everyone else because the important thing is that I am making the choice! I am making the choice! I am taking control of where my life is going after *ten years, a decade*, of being a slave to a life someone *else* chose for me! And after that many years the only thing I *can* do is to cut it off completely and just start again! I have to cut myself off!

ANDRE You can't do that.

ANA Why? According to who? *You?!*

ANDRE No it's not that it just— it can't be done.

ANA What?

ANDRE Cutting yourself off. (*beat, epiphany, gets up in a rush*) ...I'm sorry, I hope things work out for you. And they will, because— well that's just what things do. (*to bus driver:*) Back door! (*to ANA:*) Thank you!

ANDRE gets off the bus.

Scene 16 – Critical Mass

ANDRE runs back home. ANDY goes to the bathroom, washes his face and looks in the mirror. ANA remains on the bus. ANNIE writes a note on a piece of paper, leaves it to be found and goes to collect her clothes. ANDREW and ANNE continue as before.

ANDREW When I was ten years old I marched down to City Hall in my hometown to lobby for a zoo. It was a slow news day and a ten-year-old making

an appeal for a municipal zoo made a nice story. When it appeared in the paper the next day, I was impressed with the idea that you could make an impact, and I was hooked.

ANNE When I was ten years old I saw the film clip of that Buddhist monk lighting himself on fire in Vietnam. All the other monks just sat there, absolutely still, and so did he until he fell over. I cried for the rest of the night, and when I finally stopped it was because I knew what I wanted to do.

ANDREW Ha!

ANNE I was ten years old.

ANDY Hello Mister President. (*mimes handshake*) My name is Andy. I came to give you some pictures I've taken of people all over the country since I know you and your friends don't really have a chance to meet much of anyone. You're welcome. No (*take two:*) Oh you're welcome. And I was wondering if I could ask you a favor. I want you to find my dad.

ANNE I *realized* / that some people had to be willing to dedicate their lives to protecting our way of life, our freedom—

ANDREW I realized that some people had to be willing to dedicate their lives to protecting our way of life, our freedom, and our people.

ANNE (*looking at ANDREW*) ...and our people.

ANDY Mom won't tell me. So I left. I can live by myself. I can make my own dinner and read my own books. And I know everything about history. I don't look like her and I don't need her. I'm my own— uh— I'm my own self by myself! ...She's gonna to leave *me* one day anyhow.

ANDRE has entered his apartment and found ANNIE's note.

ANDRE Damn it! Damn damn damn!

ANDRE stutters in space for a moment then makes for the door. ANNIE has heard him and comes out from the other room.

ANNIE That was quick.

ANDRE I didn't go to the store, there's food in the fridge!

ANNIE Then why'd you leave?

ANDRE I just— I I needed to go! But that's not important now! What is this? Were you just going to leave?!

ANNIE I think that would be best.

ANDRE But you can't do that!

ANNIE Yes I can.

ANDRE No you can't. You don't have any money.

ANNIE Why do you care so much? If anything I should be freaked out

because you care so much. I don't know you.

ANDRE You're the first person I've ever gotten more than three meaningful words out of on a bus and I can't just ignore that!

ANNIE Andre what are you talking about?

ANDRE Why would I run into you over and over again in such a big city?

ANNIE It's an accident!

ANDRE Exactly! It means we're touching the pattern. And it all happened so fast, see? The world is speeding up and we are just rush rush rushing toward the year 2012 and all these theological and mathematical predictions that some great change is coming! We are going to be unrecognizable to ourselves! It would be idiotic to ignore any hint of what this world we've made means. We have to act on things like *this!*

ANNIE Andre, I act on things. I up and moved across the Atlantic ocean. A whole damn ocean! I can make it by myself in San Francisco.

ANDRE But *why* by yourself? It doesn't have to be that way; I can help you!

ANNIE That's very nice but I can't accept that. Beside the fact that I don't know you— *I don't know* you— you have to understand I want to figure things out by myself.

ANDRE Well, okay, now let's talk about that for a second. What are you figuring out? Where you *came* from? You *know* that! You said you know who your real parents are; so why did you run off to *Scotland* instead of straight to them? It makes no sense!

ANNIE I wanted to travel!

ANDRE You left home. You left America. You left Scotland. Now you want to leave here. You don't want to travel you want to give up.

ANNIE *That* is not true! *That* is *not* true! I went to Scotland to start over and have a life! I couldn't do that here! I had to get away!

ANDRE Ah ha ha, "get away, get away," that's it! You said it!

ANNIE Oh god you are crazy! Don't you analyze me!

ANNIE runs in the back room to pack her suitcase. At the airport, ANA, ticket in hand, has set her suitcase down and dialed up ANDY from a pay phone. The phone rings at home.

ANDRE Where are you going?

ANNIE To pack my things! Don't come in here I'm naked!

ANDY Hello?

ANA Hey, kiddo, it's mom.

ANDRE You're not naked; how did you get naked so fast?

ANDY Hi. Where are you?

ANNIE I'm changing my clothes, I'm packing and I'm leaving.

ANA I-I'm at work. I just wanted to call and say hello.

ANDY Why?

ANDRE sits down to wait by the door.

ANDRE *(to himself, triumphant)* You're running away again.

ANA Well, I- I'm going to be staying late at the office tonight, so, just make yourself some dinner and put yourself to bed okay?

ANNE Why is it that we live in a pluralistic culture with contradictory paradigms?

ANDY What's all that noise in the background?

ANA That's traffic outside the office.

ANDREW A Democracy may be a far less orderly society, but it is a vastly superior one!

ANA So, Andy, I won't be home until really late, okay, so put yourself to bed. I don't want to find you up when I get home. Okay?

ANDY What's the matter with your voice?

ANA Nothing I'm just tired.

ANDY Are you going to wake me up in the morning?

ANDREW And we need conviction, something to believe in, if we hope to succeed!

ANA Well, you know how to do that. You're a big boy, you can take care of yourself. Mommy's gonna sleep in late, okay, so just get up and go.

ANNE By a show of hands: Who is willing to believe without ever asking why?

ANDY Okay.

ANNIE emerges with her suitcase.

ANNIE I'm leaving.

ANDRE You'll have to kill me first.

ANNIE I'm not kidding. Get out of the way.

ANA Alright, well, sleep tight tonight then.

ANDY Okay.

ANA ...Okay-

ANNIE -Andre! Get out of the way!

ANDRE Please stay! Please! Just don't go! Please!

ANNIE Why is it so important to you?

ANDY Mom?

ANA Yes honey?

ANDRE Because you need to!

ANDY Should we hang up now?

ANNIE What?

ANA ...Okay.

ANNE Every belief, every answer, needs to be questioned.

ANNIE Andre, you make no sense whatsoever!

ANDY Are you really coming home?

ANDREW We do hold *some* truths to be self evident!

ANA Of course I'm coming home; you have enough books to read, right?

ANNIE You keep saying you want me to stay but you haven't acted like you really want that.

ANDRE Well, I know, I I was confused. But I'm not confused anymore; and if you leave now you won't know what it's like to stay.

ANNIE Stop it!

ANDY When are you coming home?

ANNE Is truth, then, simply a matter of enough repetition?

ANA I'm- okay, Andy, the truth is- ...I'm going on a business trip! There! I was *going* to surprise you with a postcard!

ANDY When are you coming back?

ANDRE Okay look, *I* need you to stay! Okay?

ANNIE What for?

ANDREW Self. Evident.

ANDRE Because you're the first person to respond to me!

ANNIE I'm not a guinea pig!

ANDY Mom?

ANDRE I know!

ANNIE I didn't pop into your life to be a test for your theories!

ANA It's a business trip!

ANDRE I know!

ANNIE I need to take care of myself! That's what I need!

ANDRE You should! With me!

ANNIE AAAH!

ANDY Okay.

ANA Look, I have to get off the phone Andy.

ANDRE You don't have anywhere to go and I don't have anyone to go anywhere with. I'm making an offer here! I want you to stay!

ANNIE Stop saying that! You don't know *what* you want Andre!

ANDRE Yes I do! *Yes I do!* I want us to need each other! Because *I need that!*

And you need that!

ANA (*long, silent pause*) Okay. So. Goodbye.

ANNE Where are you?

ANDREW It is time to decide.

ANDY Goodbye. Mom?

ANNIE We don't need each other.

ANDRE We could.

ANNE Where did you come from?

ANNIE You don't know me.

ANA What honey?

ANDRE Well—

ANDREW I am not *talking* about America!

ANDRE I will know you, but it takes a while!

ANDY Mom, I—

ANDRE And besides, if you leave then all of this will have meant nothing!

ANA What!

ANNIE I— I'm—

ANDY Uhm, I—

ANA Goodbye Andy.

ANNIE No, look, you're wrong, I'm going!

ANDY No, wait!

ANA Andy!

ANDRE Annie—

ANNIE Andre—!

ANNE And where are you going?

ANNIE Goodbye.

ANDREW Do you ever answer these questions yourself?

ANDRE Look!

ANNE You're hiding behind your desperate certainty!

ANDRE Just try it once in your life, please!

ANA Okay goodbye now.

ANDREW You don't know what certainty is!

ANNIE I don't need you Andre!

ANDY I don't want you to go!

ANA I can't miss my flight, Andy!

ANDRE I need something more than strangers!

ANNE Your entire life is built on lies!

ANNIE Well good for you but I don't!

ANDREW What did you say?! (*goes after her*)

ANNIE Goodbye!

ANA / Goodbye!

ANDRE You're making / a mistake!

ANDY Mom / don't leave!

ANNIE & ANA / Goodbye!

ANDREW / You are so worthless! All you want to do is destroy for the sole sake of destruction and you have *no* answers to replace what you tear apart! You have done nothing but harass me since I got up here you lousy liberal fucking shit now stop it! stop it! stop it!

ANNE You don't have the guts to question a thing you believe in! You're so desperate to protect what you have that you've gone blind! And you haven't answered a single question I've asked all evening you stupid fucking rightwing shit now answer me! answer me! answer me!

ANA, ANDY, ANDRE and ANNIE are each staring at ANDREW and ANNE. There is a stunning moment of silence. EVERYONE looks at EVERYONE for the first time. THEY look at the audience as well. Finally, ANDREW breaks the silence and addresses the audience awkwardly.

ANDREW Uh. Uh, huh, excuse me, uh, ladies and gentlemen. I apologize on behalf of both myself and my uh– uhm, opponent, for this outburst. It was a very unprofessional act on our part, and I am sure she would agree– that– we both apologize and would like to proceed. For there are issues which must be addressed and I am afraid that with all the– hoopla, if you will, we have lost sight of the central matter at hand.

We hear "This Land Is Your Land" over the loudspeakers. ANDREW is startled momentarily but continues.

ANDREW Uh. Uh, we must, as a nation, ask ourselves– Uh, I I I mean remind ourselves– that we started with nothing but hope in 1607, and have managed to arrive where we are today. And if we simply continue operating– as we once did before the advent of the Nineteen Sixties and all that that era entailed– under the clear definition of the American Civilization which our founding fathers gave to us, we will continue as a nation to succeed. I mean it's worked pretty well so far now am I right, or am I right?

ANDREW turns to the rest of the cast and looks at them. THEY look at him, then at each other. The song continues. ANDREW steps forward and attempts to secure the room's attention. Under his increasingly

desperate speech, the other characters peel off one by one, almost beyond their own will, moving around with increasing speed like atoms in an attempt to either avoid, deny, escape, review, summarize, or find their way back to certainty, each according to character. Only ANNE remains still, watching the whole thing unfold around her.

ANDREW Mm–m–m–m–m! No no no no no. If I could just return our attention please to the matter at hand, the matter of definition. If you would all– Uh. What–? Ah! We are a group of people in a particular country at a particular time, all squinting into the distance to witness that Millennium as it rolls over the horizon into the twenty-first century – our Eden or our Armageddon, depending on who you talk to!

Uh. But *we* approach the Millennium and we are interested in angels, in UFOs, horrifying natural disasters and near-death experiences caught on tape. We have more faith in these things than we do in the Social Security System. We are afraid of what might lurk ahead. And the more we give up our power to the unknown, the more we *will be* afraid. There is ignorance in letting go of one's certainty! *That* is something to fear!

We in America have reason to be certain, not to fear. For we have our American History. We *have* our definition! Not because we have sat about fingering our chins and pondering the possibilities. But because we have gone West. We have set out to discover. We have built. We have invented. We have stood and we have taken action. We have dared to do what no nation has done before: we have created a country where every man and woman of every race and religion is welcome to be born with equal rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness!

We have split atoms! We have touched the moon! We *used* to have friends and neighbors to tell us who we are, now we have is– uh, what do we have? –Doubt!

There is something fundamentally wrong! We risk, by our own hand, not being able to understand the world we have invented!

It is time to decide! It is time for conviction! It is time to remember our History. I am not talking about America. I am talking about you, each of you, each of us, reclaiming our Definition of who we are!

ALL stop. ANDREW is saluting his country.

ANDY walks to ANA and places his hand on her head. SHE cries but does not look at him.

ANDRE walks to ANNIE, takes her suitcase out of her hand and sets it down. SHE does not look at him.

ANNE walks to ANDREW and pulls his saluting hand down, which he resists at first. ANDREW looks at ANNE.

Black out, with music continuing through bows.

The end.