

# Ain't Ethiopia

by

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## BRIEF DESCRIPTION

After local whites lynch his wife as a suspected Communist, African-American Jesse Colton travels to Spain in 1937 to fight Franco. But there he finds that his real battle is with the fascists in the small Mississippi town from which he escaped and that he must return to face them down if his life, and his wife's death, is to have any meaning.

## PRIMARY MAJOR CHARACTERS

- JESSE COLTON, 21, African-American
- OLIVER LUMET, 36, African-American
- LUZ BAROJA Y NESSI, 20s, Spanish

## SECONDARY MAJOR CHARACTERS

Below are listed the roles for the UTILITY CHARACTERS. In addition to these roles are the following:

- UTILITY 1 -- AWAGU, anarchist from Ethiopia fighting in Spain
- UTILITY 2 -- JAMES, anarchist from Northern Ireland fighting in Spain
- UTILITY 3 -- DEWEY MARLOWE, journalist, Ernest Hemingway and Robert Capa wanna-be

**UTILITY CHARACTERS** -- The UTILITY CHARACTERS play the roles listed below, along with act:scene designation.

- UTILITY CHARACTER 1 (female, African American)
  - Harlem Speaker -- 1:1
  - Marley Colton (JESSE's wife) -- 1:3, 1:13, 2:16
  - Woman In Church -- 1:7, 1:8
  - Nurse -- 1:14, 1:15
- UTILITY CHARACTER 2 (male, Caucasian)
  - Policeman 1 -- 1:1
  - Red Neck -- 1:3, 2:16
  - Police Sergeant -- 1:7
  - Soldier -- 1:9, 1:10
  - Orderly -- 1:11
  - Blind Poet -- 1:13
  - Nationalist Soldier 1 -- 2:2
  - Hobo -- 2:9
- UTILITY CHARACTER 3 (male, Caucasian)

- o Tom Milocsz -- 1:4, 1:8
  - o Policeman 1 -- 1:7
  - o Captain Merriman -- 1:9, 1:14
  - o Soldier -- 1:15
- UTILITY CHARACTER 4 (male, between light- and dark-skinned)
  - o Man On Street -- 1:6
  - o Harlem Minister -- 1:7, 1:8
  - o Man Handing Out Rifles -- 1:9, 1:10
  - o Soldier -- 1:14, 1:15
  - o Sniper -- 1:15, 2:1
  - o Mayor -- 2:4
  - o Republican Soldier -- 2:7
  - o Young Boy -- 2:12
  - o Bum -- 2:17
- UTILITY 5 (female, Caucasian)
  - o Nurse -- 1:11, 1:14, 1:15
  - o Doña Ibárruri -- 1:12
  - o Isabel -- 2:4
  - o Mrs. Swanson -- 2:11
- UTILITY 6 (male, Caucasian)
  - o Policeman 2 -- 1:1
  - o Jose Luis Alonso -- 1:7
  - o Soldier -- 1:9, 1:10
  - o Doctor -- 1:11
  - o Nationalist Soldier 2 -- 2:2
  - o Largo -- 2:6
  - o Colonel -- 2:7
  - o Mayor -- 2:15, 2:16
- UTILITY 7 (male, Caucasian)
  - o Policeman 3 -- 1:1
  - o Policeman 2 -- 1:7
  - o Soldier -- 1:9, 1:10
  - o Orderly -- 1:11
  - o Waiter -- 1:12, 1:13
  - o Nationalist Soldier 3 -- 2:2
  - o Bellarmino -- 2:6
  - o Colonel's Aide -- 2:7
  - o Sheriff -- 2:15, 2:16
  - o Editor -- 2:17

#### **TIME/PLACE**

- Republican Spain and Mississippi, 1936 and 1937

#### **NOTES**

- Actors must be dialectically versatile, especially in being able to speak Spanish (or fake it well) and speak a Spanish-accented English. Also, UTILITY 2 will need to do a northern Ireland Irish accent (from near Belfast).
- To compensate for keeping the production set- and prop-light, sound design is crucial.
- Music is always good to add wherever possible.
- All items/props are mimed unless it is absolutely essential to have them on the actor's person, such as MARLOWE's bag or JESSE's photo.

Such things as guns, surgical tools, etc. are mimed and, where possible, underscored by a sound effect. Props to a minimum!

- Costumes should be kept simple and follow a pattern of either adding or subtracting small items to make the character stand out.
- The script is written for a bare stage, but director and designers are free to re-shape the space with platforms, ladders, etc. wherever it makes sense (both theatrically and budgetarily) to do so.
- Actors are on stage all the time along with props and costumes, etc. "Exit" simply means they go out of the playing area and sit.
- Scene changes must take place as seamlessly as possible -- no "dead air" between scenes.

### Act I, Scene 1

Light is tight on UTILITY 1 as a SPEAKER standing on a soapbox. She holds up pamphlets to an imaginary "crowd."

SOUND EFFECT: Crowd and street sounds.

UTILITY 2, 6, and 7 as POLICEMEN 1, 2, and 3 hang around.

SPEAKER

Brothers and sisters, we stand in Harlem, in 1936, in the modern age, but in democratic Spain the fascists under Franco want to slide back into the middle ages!

Light up on JESSE COLTON, who slinks through the "crowd." His eyes dart, his hands twitch, his clothes are disheveled -- a man at the end of his tether. A dirty gash cuts his left temple.

SPEAKER

Mussolini, who raped our people in Ethiopia -- and Hitler, with his cock-eyed ideas about the supremacy of white people --

JESSE finds OLIVER LUMET listening to the SPEAKER. JESSE sidles up to pick his pocket.

POLICEMAN 1 notices JESSE. He signals his buddies, and they drift closer.

JESSE's eyes dart right, then left. He moves his hand towards OLIVER's pocket, fingers twitching. The POLICEMEN are close.

SPEAKER

If we don't stop the fascists in Spain -- brothers, sisters -- please listen --

JESSE is just about to close in when OLIVER's hand clamps down over JESSE's hand and OLIVER turns to face JESSE.

SPEAKER

We need to fight the fascists, not among  
ourselves --

OLIVER looks at the POLICEMEN, shakes JESSE's hand with a hard  
handshake.

OLIVER

Just an old friend playing a joke, officers.

OLIVER claps JESSE on the shoulder, keeps an eye on the POLICEMEN.

SPEAKER

We need to go to Spain --

OLIVER

How are you doing, my man?

SPEAKER

-- because we could not go to Ethiopia to help  
our brothers and sisters --

OLIVER

How's tricks?

SPEAKER

-- fight the Italian fascist barbarians --

The POLICEMEN drift back toward the SPEAKER.

OLIVER

My man, you a cat that's been gone too long!

SPEAKER

As my good friend said, "Spain ain't Ethiopia,  
but it'll do."

POLICEMAN 1

All right, let's move your raggedy black asses  
outta here.

The POLICEMEN swipe the air in a stylized manner with their batons.

SOUND EFFECT: Three heavy thuds in the air.

Still holding onto JESSE, OLIVER lets out a shrill whistle. The  
SPEAKER looks toward OLIVER.

OLIVER raises his finger and circles it, points to the POLICEMEN. The  
SPEAKER takes note, gives OLIVER a thumbs-up.

SPEAKER

Watch your backs, my friends --

OLIVER  
(to JESSE)

Let's go.

OLIVER hustles JESSE along.

The POLICEMEN swipe the air again and move forward.

SOUND EFFECT: Three heavy thuds again, then crowd sounds, riot sounds.

SPEAKER  
-- we got our own fascists coming in now to take  
away our First Amendment.

The POLICEMEN come to the SPEAKER. The SPEAKER hands each of them a pamphlet.

SPEAKER  
Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Now come and  
get me, little piggies!

The SPEAKER jumps off the soap box and melts away, pursued.

OLIVER turns his attention to JESSE, whose hand is still firmly in OLIVER's grasp. OLIVER pulls him away.

OLIVER  
Let's get you to some food and a safe harbor, my  
friend.

Lights shift to a diner.

\* \* \* \* \*

### Act I, Scene 2

SOUNDS EFFECT: Morph from a riot to the inside of a diner.

Two chairs and table set with a "mimed" breakfast that JESSE tears into as they sit. OLIVER waits. JESSE finishes, mops his plate.

JESSE  
Thanks.

JESSE gets up, ready to flee.

JESSE  
Gotta go.

OLIVER  
I lied.

JESSE  
What?

OLIVER  
You are gonna have to pay me something.

JESSE  
I got no money. I got nothing.

OLIVER  
You have a name.

JESSE  
Everyone's got a name -- look, go -- I gotta [go]  
--

OLIVER  
So tell me your name.

JESSE  
Man --

OLIVER  
And I'll tell you who just fed a brother.

JESSE  
A brother -- that's what I got to pay?

OLIVER  
Sit down. Right there. Will not kill you.

JESSE sits.

OLIVER  
Now, one more time: what is your name?

JESSE  
Jesse. Colton.

OLIVER reaches into his back pocket JESSE winces at the movement. Slowly, OLIVER draws out a small blue booklet and slides it across.

JESSE picks it up, but he flings it back onto the table, his body racked with shivers.

JESSE  
That -- that --

OLIVER  
What?

JESSE  
It says Communist Party!

OLIVER  
Harlem Division.

JESSE

Shit shit shit shit --

JESSE's leg pumps hard. OLIVER lays a hand on his forearm, but JESSE snaps it away.

OLIVER

Mississippi in your voice -- right? Am I right?

JESSE

Maybe -- maybe --

OLIVER

Texas myself.

JESSE

So what?

OLIVER

Jesse Colton from Mississippi, how'd you end up trashed in New York City ready to steal from a brother?

\* \* \* \* \*

### Act I, Scene 3

Lights up on the figure of UTILITY 1 as MARLEY COLTON standing on a chair, a noose hanging around her neck, her dress torn, her body riddled with bullet wounds.

Behind her, UTILITY 2 as RED NECK holds up the end of the noose as if it were tied around a tree branch. He has a knife in his hand, ready to cut the rope.

JESSE gets up from the table, walks to the hanged figure. MARLEY looks with tenderness on JESSE.

SOUND EFFECT: A frenzied crowd at a lynching.

JESSE

"Cut that nigger Communist down! Cut her down!"  
That's one of the nicer things they screamed at my wife. At Marley Colton.

RED NECK mimes cutting the rope. MARLEY falls into JESSE's arms.

RED NECK

"Better dead than Red" --

JESSE

-- they screamed.

JESSE rolls MARLEY to the floor, stands, horrified. RED NECK spits on MARLEY's corpse, spits on JESSE, who reacts as if he'd been touched by acid. RED NECK jumps off the chair and leaves.

MARLEY kneels up and looks at him as JESSE begins to beat himself.

SOUND EFFECT: Crowd sounds increase in intensity.

JESSE

They burned the house. They burned Marley, dragged her body through the dust tied to some cracker's truck bumper. I hid -- in the kudzu, in the shit, watching, not being able to -- not being able to --

SOUND EFFECT: Crowd sounds increase to deafening, demonic.

Light grows to white-hot. MARLEY raises her hand. JESSE calms.

SOUND EFFECT: Crowd sounds die out.

Light softens.

JESSE

Not being able to do nothing for my Marley.

MARLEY stands, goes to JESSE. JESSE touches her bloody wounds.

JESSE

"Better dead than Red," they screamed. "Cut that nigger Communist down!" they barked.

(JESSE howls)

Ah-ooo! Because she wanted people to get work relief. Because she wanted to help niggers not be niggers.

MARLEY disappears. JESSE moves back to the table.

SOUND EFFECT: Diner sounds.

OLIVER and JESSE sit in silence while the banging of the diner swirls around them.

OLIVER

I am sorry for your loss, Jesse.

More silence between them.

OLIVER

If you're interested -- hey --

JESSE

Yeah.

OLIVER

If you're interested -- I can give you a chance to fight those bastards, that did that to your wife. I can. But first things first. You need a place to stay.

(pointing to temple)

That needs to be cleaned. Let's go.

OLIVER stands, but JESSE stays seated. JESSE fumbles with the salt shaker.

OLIVER

Don't play with the salt. Let's go.

JESSE

They said she was a Communist just 'cause she asked for some work relief. I didn't do nothing to stop 'em. I just ran. I just ran and ran and ran till I ended up here and --

OLIVER

At some point, first-name Jesse, last-name Colton, whether you gotta piss or they shut the door on you, you are going to have to get up from this table and do the rest of your life.

JESSE still hesitates, his hands spilling the salt. OLIVER throws a pinch of it over JESSE's left shoulder.

OLIVER

Now you're protected. Come on.

Lights out on diner. OLIVER and JESSE move to the flophouse.

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#### **Act I, Scene 4**

OLIVER mimes knocking in a secret code on a metal door.

SOUND EFFECT: Secret code on a metal door.

UTILITY 3 as TOM MILOCSZ sits at the table that had been the diner table under the brash light of a single light bulb. TOM wears a black eye-patch over his left eye. On the eye-patch he's painted a red hammer-and-sickle.

He reads the Communist Manifesto. On the back of his chair hangs a coat. A chair sits to the side. He speaks with a Polish accent.

TOM presses a "buzzer."

SOUND EFFECT: A buzzer.

OLIVER mimes opening and closing the "door."

SOUND EFFECT: An opening and a closing metal door.

OLIVER and JESSE enter.

OLIVER  
Jesse, this is Tom.

TOM  
I'm the three-headed dog around here.

JESSE  
What? What's he mean?

TOM  
Another bright fish, eh?

OLIVER  
Easy on him.

TOM looks at a "chart" on the desk.

TOM  
Fifth row, ninth one in -- 'sgot your name on it,  
chum-boy.

OLIVER  
The name is Jesse Colton.

TOM  
Chum-boy Jesse Colton, then.

OLIVER moves to the door.

JESSE  
When am I gonna see you --

OLIVER walks back to JESSE, takes out a card.

OLIVER  
Tomorrow, 10 AM, if you want.

OLIVER hands JESSE the card, turns to go.

JESSE  
Wait! Wait!

TOM and OLIVER look at JESSE.

JESSE  
None of you knows me from Adam's off ox.

OLIVER  
We already know you, Jesse.

JESSE

No you don't.

TOM

Know all about you and your kind.

OLIVER

Besides, why do we have to know you to do something for you?

JESSE

I wouldn't. I never did.

TOM

Don't'cha just love 'em when they're raw and fresh?

OLIVER, looking at TOM, points to his own left temple, nods at JESSE, then flashes a smile as he leaves.

SOUND EFFECT: Metal door opens and closes.

JESSE and TOM stare at each other in the sudden silence.

Outside, OLIVER takes out a coin, flips it, looks at the result, heads off into the darkness.

TOM holds up his book.

TOM

Ever read this? You can read, can't you?

JESSE

I can read! What is that, and I'll tell you.

TOM

The Communist Manifesto.

JESSE

No, I never --

TOM

Know what "manifesto" means?

JESSE

No.

TOM

You can read, right?

JESSE

(hesitantly)

Yeah.

TOM

Siddown.

JESSE sits. TOM hands JESSE the book, who takes it as if it were hot metal. TOM points to his missing eye.

TOM

This is what reading the Manifesto got me.

JESSE

Why would I read it, then?

TOM

What's an eye for the truth? I keep reading it to keep reminding me.

TOM reaches under the desk, pulls out "gauze" and a "bottle of alcohol," gestures for JESSE to lean in.

JESSE leans in, and TOM mimes cleaning his temple. JESSE winces but says nothing. TOM closes the "bottle" and throws away the "gauze."

TOM jerks his thumb over his shoulder.

TOM

Fifth row, ninth one in. Now leave me alone.

TOM pulls another book from his jacket pocket and reads. JESSE gets up, grabs a chair, starts to wander into the flophouse.

TOM

Wait.

JESSE stops. TOM takes the coat from off his chair, throws it to JESSE.

TOM

You stink. Peel the one you got off on your carcass and toss it over there.

JESSE takes off his old coat, takes out the envelope with the photo in it. He puts the envelope in the new coat and puts the coat on. He tosses the old coat away.

TOM

Now you can start leaving me alone.

JESSE moves into the flophouse. A dim light comes up. JESSE puts the chair in the light and sits.

SOUND EFFECT: Snores, farts, creakings, shufflings.

JESSE clutches his Manifesto, then puts it in his coat pocket. He closes his eyes.

He jerks up, sees TOM at the desk. He looks around, listens, then closes his eyes again.

Lights out.

SOUND EFFECT: A tinny radio playing "Pennies from Heaven" by Bing Crosby.

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### Act I, Scene 5

Lights up.

SOUND EFFECT: Traffic, crowd.

Somewhere on 125th Street. JESSE finds himself looking at a dark doorway. Looks at the card, looks at the doorway. JESSE opens the door, closes it.

SOUND EFFECT: Opening a door, closing it.

JESSE listens.

SOUND EFFECT: Shouts, radios, a heavy thud, crockery breaking, a slap -- a full human symphony.

JESSE looks at the card again, walks several steps, then knocks on another door.

SOUND EFFECT: Knocking on a door.

No response.

On the other side of the door sits OLIVER at the desk TOM had used. On the walls are "posters," some in Spanish, about coming to fight for Spain against Franco and for the democratically elected government. And a "coffee pot," "bag of donuts," and two bundles of pamphlets. (Posters, coffee, and doughnuts are mimed but not the pamphlets.)

JESSE knocks again.

SOUND EFFECT: Knocking on a door.

No response.

He knocks once more, using the code OLIVER had used before.

SOUND EFFECT: Knocking on a door in code.

OLIVER gets up from the desk when he hears the code.

JESSE goes to knock again when OLIVER unlocks the door and swings it open.

SOUND EFFECT: Lock unlocking, door opening.

OLIVER

He hath arrived. Welcome to the Harlem Division  
of the Communist Party. Grab a chair.

OLIVER closes the door, locks it.

SOUND EFFECT: Door closing, lock locking.

He goes to the "coffee pot" and "bag of doughnuts."

OLIVER

Coffee? All we got is black.

JESSE nods yes. OLIVER pours him a "cup."

OLIVER

Doughnuts are a day old, but I think you can  
still chew 'em.

JESSE

Yeah -- sure. Thanks.

OLIVER brings JESSE "coffee" and a "doughnut." JESSE tries not to  
wolf but he eats the entire doughnut in almost one gulp.

OLIVER

Another?

JESSE nods. OLIVER brings him a "second doughnut." This time JESSE  
eats it a bit more slowly as he sips the "coffee." OLIVER grabs a  
chair, straddles it backwards.

OLIVER

The demonstration yesterday -- remember that?  
Know what it was about?

JESSE

I don't know. Couldn't hardly hear my own  
breathing yesterday. Couldn't hardly see my own  
hands.

OLIVER gestures to the "posters" on the wall.

OLIVER

Can you see these?

JESSE

Yeah, of course --

OLIVER

Read me what they say.

JESSE

Spain. Lots of something called Spain. Espana  
[said without the "ñ"]. Where's Spain?

OLIVER

You are a delta boy.

JESSE

You don't have to rag on me.

OLIVER

You're no different than most these days.

JESSE

You still don't have to rag on me --

OLIVER

Spain could be a canned meat, for what most  
people know.

JESSE

Look, I never left Mississippi till now, never  
had to.

OLIVER

And the Mississippi's never left you, either,  
huh?

JESSE

And why don't you just quit --

OLIVER

And you're showing a little more kick today than  
you kicked yesterday.

JESSE

Got fuel in the tank -- makes a difference --

OLIVER

And I don't really care if you're full delta boy  
or not. Just listen. Yesterday, at the park, we  
were talking about Spain. We -- the "Communists"  
-- we organized that meeting, to raise support.  
That word still bother you?

JESSE

Which one?

OLIVER

Communist.

JESSE

You guys've been nice.

OLIVER gets out of his chair and starts pacing.

OLIVER

The democratic government in Spain -- that place, there -- a government elected by the people, has been attacked by an army general named Franco.

JESSE

Can I have another doughnut?

OLIVER

Third one you get on your own.

JESSE goes for a "doughnut," starts eating.

OLIVER

Franco's connected to the church and the big landowners, who want it the way it was in the middle ages.

OLIVER taps the "posters" as he talks.

OLIVER

These "middle ages" 've got everything to do with you.

JESSE

Don't know "middle ages." And I told you I don't know what Spain is, where Spain is.

OLIVER

Yes you do.

JESSE

No I don't. And anyway why would I care --

OLIVER

Franco is the "massah" -- you know that word?

JESSE

Course.

OLIVER

Franco and his fellow "massahs" want to keep the plantation just the way it's always been -- that sound familiar?

JESSE

As common as a cat.

OLIVER straddles the chair.

OLIVER

And what have you ever done about "massah"?

JESSE  
Cain't do nothing about "massah."

OLIVER  
You do, they hang you, right?

JESSE  
Beat you, burn you, cut your balls off -- kill  
your wife --

OLIVER  
Make you less than a man.

JESSE  
To them, you less than a man before you're born.

OLIVER  
You're not stupid.

JESSE  
I wasn't always like this.

OLIVER  
If you could fight back -- you'd fight back?

JESSE  
Like to think I would.

OLIVER  
Me, too. That's why I went in the Army for six  
years -- thought I could fight my way up and out  
that way. But black buck private in comes a  
black buck private out. In my dream, Jesse, I  
take all the motherfuckin' "massahs" in the  
world, man and woman and even child, and wipe the  
place clean of 'em. Give the rest of us a  
goddamn break. You want to know me in a nutshell  
-- why "Communist" -- that's what I want.

OLIVER slides back into his genial self.

OLIVER  
You up for some honest work today, now that  
you've had three of my doughnuts and coffee  
furnished by the common people?

JESSE nods yes. OLIVER picks up a bundle of pamphlets.

OLIVER  
Put the cup down.

JESSE does.

OLIVER

Finish the doughnut.

JESSE does. OLIVER tosses the bundle to JESSE. JESSE reads the cover.

JESSE

What's "fask" -- "faskism" --

OLIVER

Fascism.

JESSE

Fascism.

OLIVER picks up a bundle.

OLIVER

Just a fancy word for what happened to your wife.  
You got any lungs on you?

JESSE

For what?

OLIVER

For hog yelling. For field hollering.

JESSE

Course I got lungs.

OLIVER

Then let me hear 'em loud.

JESSE

You crazy?

OLIVER

Don't work with light-weights out there, Jesse.  
Yell it.

JESSE turns the bundle over and over.

OLIVER

Last chance.

JESSE

(not that strong)

Fascism.

OLIVER

Cat makes more spitting up a hairball.

JESSE

(a little louder)

Fascism.

OLIVER

Guy downstairs beats up his wife with more style.  
"Like to think I'd fight back," I heard you say.  
Then say the fucking word, delta boy.

JESSE

(booming)

Fascism.

Then over and over and over again -- the word opens up a floodgate in JESSE. Again and again and again until JESSE finds himself dissolved.

OLIVER comes to JESSE and simply holds him.

\* \* \* \* \*

### Act I, Scene 6

SOUND EFFECT: Busy Harlem street, busy Harlem crowd.

OLIVER and JESSE turn and face the audience, pamphlets in their hands.

OLIVER's booming voice cuts through the street noise and hustle.

OLIVER

Fight against fascism! Couldn't do it in  
Ethiopia, but we can do it in Spain. Join us in  
our fight.

OLIVER hands out pamphlets right and left, throwing out "Thank you, ma'am" and "Thank you, sir" as he does. JESSE hangs back.

OLIVER

(to JESSE)

Just jump, man!

Taking a deep breath, JESSE lets out a BELLOW that catches everyone on the street by surprise.

JESSE

Fight against fascism!

OLIVER laughs.

SOUND EFFECT: Momentary street silence.

OLIVER

Just don't break their ears off!

SOUND EFFECT: Street sounds, crowd sounds again.

JESSE, smiling, starts handing out the pamphlets and thanks people. He hands out a pamphlet to UTILITY 4 as the MAN ON STREET, who takes it and without reading it throws it away. JESSE runs up to him, another one held out to him.

JESSE

You dropped this.

MAN

Get that trash away from me.

JESSE

It's really important --

MAN

Get that trash away me, you fucking --

JESSE

Look, man, this is all about the plantation -- see, fascism, that's what it's all about -- all about the "massah" -- we know all about this, you and me --

Without warning the MAN roundhouses JESSE to the pavement. OLIVER moves toward JESSE but does not interfere. The MAN flashes OLIVER a look, then back to JESSE.

MAN

Don't be calling me a nigger!

JESSE slowly gets up from sidewalk, nursing his face.

JESSE

(without rancor)

Mister, I been told -- and I'm telling you -- we'll all stay niggers if these guys win.

The MAN gives JESSE a shove back. JESSE holds out a pamphlet. The MAN grabs it and walks away. JESSE looks at the "people" looking at him, looks at OLIVER. JESSE starts to hawk his wares again.

JESSE

Help us fight fascism, folks, just like that man's going to do. Get the "massah" off the plantation.

JESSE looks at OLIVER, who smiles at him. JESSE smiles back, wiggles his jaw back and forth to show he's okay.

Lights out.

SOUND EFFECT: Harlem street shifts into a congregation's voices ending the Lord's Prayer: "...and deliver us from evil, for thine is the power and glory, forever. Amen."

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**Act I, Scene 7**

A church basement in Harlem. In front of the table, OLIVER stands next to UTILITY 6 as JOSE LUIS ALONSO, who wears a red bandana and speaks in a Spanish accent.

UTILITY 4 as the MINISTER stands on the other side of JOSE.

Seated to one side is UTILITY 1 as the WOMAN IN THE CHURCH. Seated next to her is JESSE.

Lights flicker on the WOMAN and JESSE as if from a movie screen.

The WOMAN responds in physical discomfort from what she sees on the screen.

SOUND EFFECT: Movie projector.

JOSE LUIS

Francisco Franco rapes our country -- has taken away our government, elected by the people. People like you. And Benito Mussolini is now doing in Spain what he did to your people in Ethiopia.

WOMAN

Oh my God! Look -- they using black people!

JOSE LUIS

Yes, Franco uses Africans to kill our people, to kill freedom -- the Army of Africa, it is called.

WOMAN

My God, my God, oh my God --

Images in silence, then the film runs out. Silence. Lights come up.

WOMAN

Amen, brother.

JOSE LUIS gives a confused look to OLIVER.

OLIVER

That's a good thing.

JOSE LUIS

Ah. Amen, comrade, to you, too. I am touched you listen to what is happening to my country. We need people who love freedom to fight for us.

OLIVER

Hundreds of volunteers, folks, from the world over, have been coming to Spain to fight the plantation mentality.

JOSE LUIS

Your government will not help us --

OLIVER

Our government actually supports Hitler and  
Mussolini --

JOSE LUIS

But we know the people are not the same as the  
government. I know your hearts love freedom --  
that is why I am here -- to ask you to stand  
shoulder to shoulder with us.

The WOMAN raises her hand.

WOMAN

Brother Oliver?

OLIVER

Sister Vernon?

WOMAN

He means -- don't get me wrong about this -- but  
he means fight for white people, right?

OLIVER

He means fight for freedom -- bigger than any one  
of us, white or black.

(shaking his hand)

Thank you, Jose Luis. This man's come a long  
stretch to talk -- and his cause is good. I love  
his cause. I truly do. But what you say is  
true, Sister. Spain's a long way from 125th  
Street. Why fight there when we got our own  
battle out there?

WOMAN

That's what I was meaning, Brother Oliver.

OLIVER gestures to the MINISTER.

OLIVER

Reverend, if you don't mind, I have one more to  
testify.

UTILITY 2 as the POLICE SERGEANT steps into his own light along with  
UTILITY 3 as POLICEMAN 1 and UTILITY 7 as POLICEMAN 2.

OLIVER

(pointing)

Jesse Colton.

JESSE slowly stands, looking at the people looking at him.

OLIVER

This is Jesse Colton, newly come to us.

WOMAN

Welcome, Brother Jesse.

(to OLIVER)

He's a good-looking young brother.

OLIVER

Could always trust your eye, Sister Vernon.

MINISTER

Just make sure it don't wander from the page,  
Sister Vernon.

WOMAN

Reverend, you want to let Brother Oliver finish  
with his business and get off of my business?  
Amen.

OLIVER

Brother Jesse has a story to tell you. About his  
former life in Mississippi.

(to JESSE)

You got the lungs for this?

JESSE smiles, nods yes.

OLIVER

Any of you here from Mississippi? Alabama? From  
the dark hold of the South? Thought so. Then  
you'll know his story.

OLIVER steps back. JESSE scans the crowd. The POLICE SERGEANT and  
the two POLICEMEN pivot, face the church, pull out their batons.

MINISTER

Give him an amen.

WOMAN

Amen.

JESSE

My name is Jesse Colton. My story, plain and  
simple. They hung my wife from a streetlamp in  
front of the town hall. They shot her, dragged  
her behind a truck, threw her body into a fire --  
a fire made from our house.

He lets these images settle.

WOMAN

I know what Brother Jesse speaks of.

JESSE

Not much different than the pictures our friend  
Jose Luis brought us.

MINISTER

Amen.

WOMAN

Amen.

The POLICE SERGEANT raises his baton.

OLIVER watches JESSE closely, how his breathing races, his body  
tenses, as he leans in to connect with the people.

JESSE

Just like the way Mussolini lynched Ethiopia.  
Just like this Franco --

JESSE's right arm shoots outward in a "Heil."

JESSE

"Il Duce" and the "Generalissimo" -- they ain't  
nothing but the masters on the plantation --  
ain't they? They ain't nothing but "the boss."

WOMAN

Say it!

The POLICE SERGEANT raises the baton even higher.

JESSE

My old thinking? The white people killed my  
wife. White killed my wife. But here's my new  
thinking. I don't think it's white or black,  
white against black. I think it's about those  
that got wanting those who ain't got to never get  
anything. And how's that gonna stop? Because  
it's gotta stop.

JESSE pauses to catch his breath.

JESSE

It's gonna stop when we say it's gonna stop.  
When "we" say it --

WOMAN

Say it!

The POLICE SERGEANT bangs his baton on the church door.

SOUND EFFECT: An enormous ringing crash of doom.

Everyone freezes. The POLICE SERGEANT bangs again.

SOUND EFFECT: Another crash of doom.

MINISTER

(to OLIVER, JESSE, JOSE LUIS)

Get in the back room! Tear down the sheet. Get the projector in there.

JESSE does not move. OLIVER guides JOSE LUIS to a "small room," opens the "door."

SOUND EFFECT: Door opening.

OLIVER reassures JOSE LUIS, then steps back out.

SOUND EFFECT: Door closing.

MINISTER

(to them both)

You, too.

JESSE

I'm not sitting it out for no one.

OLIVER

Gotta protect my witness.

The POLICE SERGEANT bangs several times.

SOUND EFFECT: Several more crashes of doom.

MINISTER

(to JESSE)

Then you're my deacon. Shut up and look holy.

(to OLIVER)

Get 'em singing. "Down By The Riverside."

OLIVER, in a deep baritone, begins singing.

OLIVER

"Gonna lay down my sword and shield"

SOUND EFFECT: Congregation singing.

WOMAN & JESSE

(joining in)

"Down by the riverside"

The POLICE SERGEANT and the POLICEMEN enter. The MINISTER sings.

PEOPLE

"Down by the riverside, down by the riverside"

OLIVER

"Gonna lay down my sword and shield"

POLICEMAN 1

Everyone shut up!

But the VOICES don't shut up.

PEOPLE

"Down by the riverside"

POLICEMAN 1

I said shut up!

PEOPLE

"Ain't gonna study war no more."

The MINISTER holds up his hand, and silence falls.

MINISTER

Amen.

ALL

Amen.

MINISTER

Sergeant?

The POLICE SERGEANT surveys the "congregation."

SERGEANT

(tired)

Tell me where they are. The reds. The Communists. We know you got 'em here.

JOSE LUIS huddles, scarcely breathing.

MINISTER

In the Lord's house, nothing is hidden.

WOMAN

Let's offer up Psalm 90.

SOUND EFFECT: Congregation speaking.

PEOPLE

Who considers the power of your anger?

SERGEANT

(to MINISTER)

Tell 'em to be quiet.

The MINISTER says nothing.

PEOPLE

So teach us to count our days --

SERGEANT  
(with low menace)  
Tell them to shut up.

PEOPLE  
-- that we may gain a wise heart.

JESSE  
They just want to pray.

MINISTER  
Deacon --

PEOPLE  
Turn, O LORD!

POLICEMAN 2  
(to JESSE)  
Button it!

PEOPLE  
How long?

JESSE  
We're just praying for you!

The MINISTER puts a hand on JESSE, but JESSE leans forward.

PEOPLE  
Have compassion on your servants!

POLICEMAN 2  
Back off!

JESSE  
Just wasted on you, though --

Without hesitation POLICEMAN 2 cracks his baton against JESSE's head, and JESSE drops to the floor like a stone.

No one moves.

The POLICE SERGEANT lets out a disgusted sigh as he peers at JESSE. He nods to POLICEMAN 1 and POLICEMAN 2. They leave. The POLICE SERGEANT gives the MINISTER a sharp look, then leaves.

OLIVER goes to JESSE. The MINISTER nods, and the WOMAN opens the door to the "back room."

SOUND EFFECT: Door opening and closing.

JOSE LUIS emerges, sees everything.

WOMAN  
Welcome to America.

JOSE LUIS

Welcome to Spain.

JOSE LUIS takes off his red bandana and ties it around JESSE's neck.

JOSE LUIS

El toro, eh?

Transition.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Act I, Scene 8**

JESSE sits in a chair, eyes closed. He holds JOSE LUIS' red bandana.

SOUND EFFECT: The murmuring of voices.

The murmuring morphs into the arguing voices of the MINISTER, OLIVER, the WOMAN, and TOM gathered around the table and chairs.

JESSE's eyes open, but he doesn't move.

TOM

Oliver --

OLIVER

Tom --

TOM

Handing out the pamphlets is bullshit.

OLIVER

You have an army you aren't telling us about?  
Because if you do --

WOMAN

Just get so gosh-darn tired of --

OLIVER

We have got to keep the work going --

JESSE stands, grabs his head in pain, manages to stay up.

MINISTER

But you cannot meet anger with anger --

JESSE walks to the door, opens it.

SOUND EFFECT: Door opening.

The MINISTER, OLIVER, TOM, and the WOMAN stare at JESSE. JESSE lifts the red bandana.

OLIVER

We took him back to his group. He gave you that  
-- and an amen.

WOMAN

He called you "el toro."

TOM

Yeah, the bull in the goddamn china shop --  
leading with his head.

OLIVER

The part of him least likely to get hurt.

Laughter. JESSE tries to tie the red bandana around his neck. OLIVER  
helps him, pats it down flat. JESSE admires it around his neck.

JESSE

You told me once I had to figure out something  
good to do with my life. Jose Luis -- "el toro"  
-- Spain ain't Ethiopia -- but it'll do. Can you  
get me there?

OLIVER

Can't let you do that, Jesse.

JESSE

Why not?

OLIVER

Because with you gone I'd be stuck with the one-  
eyed jack over there.

TOM

I think I like that -- I think I'm preferring  
being called the "one-eyed jack."

OLIVER

You've wanted to run the show, right?

TOM

Yeah.

OLIVER

Yours now to run. We'll get the Committee to  
turn it over to you.

(to JESSE)

It ain't Ethiopia, like the young bull says --  
but it'll do.

MINISTER

You two are crazy --

OLIVER

That a benediction, Reverend, right? "Crazy" may not disadvantage us where we're [going] --

MINISTER

You two are still crazy --

WOMAN

Reverend --

MINISTER

I'm getting to it, I'm coming around to it. So go crazy -- with my blessing.

Lights out, then gradually up on UTILITY 2, UTILITY 6, UTILITY 7, OLIVER, and JESSE.

Table and chairs off.

MUSIC: "Llegó Con Tres Heridas," performed by Eliseo Parra

\* \* \* \* \*

### Act I, Scene 9

SOUND EFFECT: Heavy-duty diesel trucks.

Light on the upper bodies of UTILITY 2, UTILITY 6, UTILITY 7, OLIVER, and JESSE, in winter coats and boots, in a "transport truck." They shake and rattle as the truck moves over uneven ground.

UTILITY 2

Where the fuck are we again?

OLIVER

Jarama.

UTILITY 2

Jarama? [pronounced in English, with a "J" sound]

OLIVER

Jarama. [pronounced in Spanish] The valley of Jarama.

UTILITY 6

That's in Spain?

OLIVER

Just outside Madrid.

UTILITY 7

Because it still feels like we're on the fucking transport ship.

JESSE

'Cept I'm not throwing up.

UTILITY 2

Barely had time to piss. What about you?

JESSE

Pissing your pants count?

UTILITY 6

Counts for something.

JESSE

Then I had time.

UTILITY 7

Don't know what's worse -- peeing yourself or puking yourself.

OLIVER

There's four hundred of us all in the same boat -  
- so to speak.

UTILITY 2

Friend's a wise-ass.

OLIVER

As long as I ain't a dumb-ass.

SOUND EFFECT: Truck stops. Sudden silence.

OLIVER

And now, compadres, the fun begins.

Several moments of silence.

OLIVER

Let me check.

JESSE

Wait --

OLIVER

It's fine -- Franco ain't in the neighborhood.

OLIVER steps into the darkness.

JESSE

(sotto voce)

Jarama, Jarama, Jarama --

UTILITY 2

That's the only way I can remember things, too.

UTILITY 7

Christ, who'd've thought Spain'd be this fucking cold!

OLIVER reappears. He raps the flat of his hand against the side of the truck.

SOUND EFFECT: Hand against wood.

OLIVER

Afuera! Afuera! That means "Out! Out!" in Mississippian! And it means now!

JESSE, UTILITY 2, UTILITY 6, and UTILITY 7 pile out of the "truck" and follow OLIVER.

Light changes to a sky bursting with stars, but the orange/red light of the sunrise is already snuffing them out.

In the morning light JESSE sees UTILITY 3 as CAPTAIN MERRIMAN, a tall man wearing wire-rim glasses. He gestures to OLIVER.

OLIVER

Yes, Captain Merriman?

MERRIMAN

Bring 'em to the supply trucks. Make it quick -- keep 'em warm.

(to the group)

Stay quiet.

MERRIMAN passes into the darkness. OLIVER turns to his group.

UTILITY 2

Who's that?

UTILITY 6

What's that? Looks like a college boy.

OLIVER

Captain Merriman -- brigade commander, for the Americans over here. And our boss. Come on, folks --

UTILITY 7 stands for a moment.

OLIVER

Come on.

UTILITY 7

I'm trying to remember that song when we got off the train --

UTILITY 6

He's having a moment of mental bupkis. Come on -  
- my balls are churning to ice cubes.

UTILITY 7

(in very bad Spanish)

Llegó con tres heridas:...

UTILITY 2

Oh Christ!

UTILITY 7

...la del amor,  
la de la muerte,  
la de la vida.

Don't know what it means, but, man, it stuck in  
my ears.

UTILITY 6

And you're making my ears fall off.

UTILITY 2

Let's go.

OLIVER

(nudging UTILITY 7)

Let's go -- it's time to meet your date. You can  
speak Spanish to her.

JESSE, UTILITY 2, UTILITY 6, and UTILITY 7 follow OLIVER to another  
area of the stage.

Lights up on UTILITY 4 wearing a black beret. He mimes handing out  
the "guns" with a terse "aquí" to all the SOLDIERS.

SOUND EFFECT: Guns being handed out.

OLIVER gives UTILITY 4 a hand.

A "gun" appears in UTILITY 2's hands. He moves away. The same for  
UTILITY 6 and UTILITY 7. OLIVER hands a gun to JESSE.

JESSE

Ain't ever held a gun really.

OLIVER

Most here haven't. Grip it -- here, take this! -  
- like it's a very dangerous woman.

JESSE

That's crazy.

OLIVER

"Crazy's" what we need, remember?

JESSE walks away, his "gun" squeezed to his body as if embracing it.

Dawn light.

SOUND EFFECT: Murmuring of 400 men.

MERRIMAN waits. OLIVER and UTILITY 4 join them.

OLIVER

Listen to Captain Merriman. Listen up.

Everyone quiets.

MERRIMAN

Here's how it lays out. Franco's troops -- about five to six miles that way. If they move forward, they cut the Madrid-Valencia road -- and Madrid's gone. Your job? Stop Franco. That's it. That's why we're here -- as Americans, as human beings.

SOUND EFFECT: Birds singing.

MERRIMAN

I have permission from General Gal to test your guns -- five shots a man.

SOUND EFFECT: Birds singing.

MERRIMAN

No brave words. Just this: I am proud of you, very proud of this Abraham Lincoln Battalion -- I couldn't think of a better name for it.

(seems lost for words)

Group leaders -- organize your ranks.

Everyone raises a gun and fires.

SOUND EFFECT: Volleys.

Light comes down to JESSE. JESSE fires, and the recoil almost levels him. He fires again -- the recoil less violent. By shot five, he stands firm.

Light changes to overcast grey.

Sudden silence. Then all hell breaks loose.

SOUND EFFECT: Total artillery bombardment -- loud, loud, loud!

JESSE, UTILITY 2, UTILITY 6 and UTILITY 7 drop to the ground.

OLIVER scuttles up to them, carrying a "field telephone," followed by UTILITY 4 in his black beret unrolling the "wire."

OLIVER rings the phone.

OLIVER  
Captain Merriman, the 24th hasn't moved a fucking  
inch!

OLIVER listens, then jumps up, jumps back down.

OLIVER  
I don't care what General Gal said, Captain, the  
24th ain't moving up!

OLIVER listens.

OLIVER  
What about our artillery?

OLIVER listens, a troubled look on his face.

OLIVER  
And what about our planes?

Face still troubled as he hears the answer.

OLIVER  
All right, Captain -- yes. Understood. Out.

OLIVER hangs up the "phone," hands it back to UTILITY 4, who begins coiling the "wire" as he leaves.

OLIVER  
(pointing)  
That's where we're headed. Pingarrón Hill. Say  
the word -- Pingarrón. Pingarrón -- get it in  
your mouth, guys. Pingarrón.

JESSE & UTILITY CHARACTERS  
Pingarrón. Pingarrón.

UTILITY 4 scuttles back, holding his "gun," and joins the line.

JESSE & UTILITY CHARACTERS  
Pingarrón. Pingarrón.

OLIVER  
We command that, we control the road. It's that  
simple. That's the job we Americans got to do.

OLIVER checks his watch.

Overhead, the grey breaks and sun suddenly floods the land.

As if this were a sign.

OLIVER  
(shouting)

Let's go!

With a RAGGED SHOUT, OLIVER, JESSE, UTILITY 2, UTILITY 4, UTILITY 6, and UTILITY 7 rise up and take their fighting pose.

SOUND EFFECT: Four hundred untrained men pouring over the parapet into a hail of bullets until there is an ear-splitting explosion that cuts to full silence.

Lights bump to black.

\* \* \* \* \*

### Act I, Scene 10

Lights up on JESSE down center stage, alone.

[NOTE: The following in quotation marks is an account of the battle from Robert Rosenstone's Crusade of the Left. The delivery of the lines is done with passion but without histrionics.]

JESSE

"Elsewhere on the rolling hills of the battlefield, in the dips of earth and through groves of trees, the men of the Lincoln Battalion were slowly and painfully moving upon Pingarron. They were going forward into a curtain of steel as the blue sky of Spain sang with death."

Lights up on OLIVER.

OLIVER  
(pointing)

We can't bunch up. Jesse, over there. You three, over there. Move it, move it, move it, move it!

JESSE

"As they went, hidden machine guns high on the right opened with a deadly crossfire."

Lights up on UTILITY 2 pinned down, utterly terrified. He starts pounding his gun to dislodge a jammed shell. OLIVER drops down beside him. JESSE watches the scene.

UTILITY 2  
(pounding it)

Fucking thing's jammed, fucking thing's --

OLIVER goes to take the gun, but the man grabs it back.

UTILITY 2

Mine! Mine!

OLIVER

Gonna help you --

UTILITY 2

Keep away from me, nigger!

The two glare at each other. UTILITY 2, sudden realization in his face, hands OLIVER the rifle. OLIVER knocks the bolt loose and digs out the jammed shell. He hands it back.

OLIVER

There you go, cracker.

UTILITY 2, hyperventilating, takes the gun, laughs crazily at OLIVER's "cracker." OLIVER laughs, too, barely able to breathe steadily.

OLIVER

Gotta go.

MAN

Yeah, yeah --

Lights out on the scene. Back to JESSE.

JESSE

"Still they blundered on, the enemy's guns piling up a heavy toll as man after man slumped to earth, some dead before they hit the ground, some almost sliced in two by the intense fire."

Lights on UTILITY 6 miming a long howl of pain.

SOUND EFFECT: A long howl of pain.

Lights out.

JESSE

"Those with bodies shredded by machine gun bullets writhed on the ground and screamed for the first aid men who could not reach them through the barrage."

JESSE drops to the ground, now terrified and frozen.

UTILITY 7 brings a small yellow flower which he holds in front of JESSE.

JESSE

The strangest of things get noticed. Screams.  
The air cracking. My face ground into the dirt.  
And this small, withered, yet definitely yellow  
flower, no larger than a dime, swims into my eye.  
And crawling up its stem is an ant calmly going  
about its business.

JESSE touches the stem of the flower.

JESSE

(to ant and flower)

Gotta go. Sorry. Gotta go.

UTILITY 7 leaves with the flower. JESSE rises.

JESSE

"Those who were still untouched deafened their  
ears to their comrades' cries as they pressed  
forward, advancing in little rushes from mound to  
olive tree to fold of earth, moving toward the  
enemy with an audacity later called 'insane.'"

JESSE, joined by UTILITY 6 and UTILITY 7, dodge, zig-zag, roll, dive,  
fire, scuttle, scamper, fire again -- all choreographed as if there  
were art in the middle of mayhem.

At one point, pitching himself to the ground, JESSE finds that the  
only cover is a corpse -- UTILITY 2, the man whose gun had jammed.

JESSE pulls the corpse close to him, rests his gun on the unresisting  
shoulder, and fires five times.

SOUND EFFECT: Five gun shots.

JESSE kneels.

JESSE

"The bravest and luckiest of them even reached  
the naked approaches to the crest of Pingarron."

JESSE mimes slinging his gun over his shoulder, then grabs UTILITY 2  
and drags him across the stage.

JESSE

"The bravest and luckiest..."

JESSE drops UTILITY 2, who sits up, dusts himself off, and leaves.

JESSE

But we never took the hill.

SOUND EFFECT: A rain storm.

A gray pall falls over everything.

JESSE

The rain turned everything to mud. I could see the retreat. I could see Oliver leading his men back through the olive trees. So I made my way back to the trench.

JESSE drops to the floor, starts crawling. UTILITY 4, black beret still on, appeals to him.

UTILITY 4

Mi pierna. [My leg.]

JESSE

He had no fucking leg to speak of.

(to UTILITY 4)

Get on my back. Mi espalda.

JESSE indicates his back. UTILITY 4 rolls himself on top of JESSE, and JESSE dragging his gun, slithers several feet forward and then rolls him off.

JESSE

Into the hands of the medics in the trench.

UTILITY 4 sits up, brushes himself off, thanks JESSE, leaves.

MERRIMAN appears in a separate light, exhausted and dirty, his arm in a splint.

JESSE gets to his hands and knees, then rises. He pats himself all over to see that everything is intact.

He undoes his pants.

JESSE

The only thing I could think of doing to celebrate my ongoing life was to piss in the mud. But nothing came. Even that had been scared out of me.

JESSE does up his pants. Then, with slow heavy steps, he makes his way to MERRIMAN.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Act I, Scene 11**

SOUND EFFECT: Battlefield medical unit.

UTILITY 2 comes on, white apron soaked in blood, hands in rubber gloves, followed by UTILITY 5 in her nurse's uniform, blood-spattered. At an operating table, they assist UTILITY 6 as the Doctor as he mimes

"operating" with a meat cleaver, a saw, a hammer, and other "surgical tools." The body parts they cut away and sew up are mimed.

On the other side of the stage, UTILITY 4 screaming -- as if UTILITY 2, UTILITY 5, and UTILITY 6 were working on him.

JESSE sees MERRIMAN's left arm splinted, his undershirt bloody and torn. UTILITY 4 goes silent. UTILITY 2, UTILITY 5, and UTILITY 6 stop, forlorn. Lights out on them. UTILITY 4 exits.

JESSE

Sir? Sir?

MERRIMAN, his glasses fogged, turns what look like blind eyes to JESSE. JESSE takes off the glasses, and using MERRIMAN's tee-shirt, cleans them and puts them back on.

MERRIMAN

Sorry, I don't know your --

JESSE

Colton. Jesse. From Mississippi.

MERRIMAN

Mississippi to Madrid.

JESSE

Yes sir. Your arm --

MERRIMAN

Bullet in the left shoulder -- bone just pfft.  
You?

JESSE

Still one piece. Sir -- yes or no?

MERRIMAN

It's still our road, Jesse.

UTILITY 6 and UTILITY 7 walk up.

OLIVER

Let them put him in the ambulance, Jesse.

UTILITY 6 and UTILITY 7 lead MERRIMAN away. JESSE watches them leave.

JESSE walks to OLIVER.

UTILITY 5 walks up to JESSE with a cloth and a bowl of water. JESSE washes his face, leaving a smear of blood and dirt. UTILITY 5 leaves.

OLIVER fingers through the filthy ragged clothes JESSE wears and uncovers, under the tee-shirt, the red bandana stained with sweat. OLIVER laughs.

OLIVER  
Let's get you something to eat.

JESSE  
How many dead?

OLIVER  
Almost everybody's dead, Jesse. They almost  
cleaned our entire clock. Come on.

JESSE, holding his gun, simply starts to cry.

OLIVER doesn't move, doesn't touch, doesn't urge JESSE along.

SOUND EFFECT: The rain falls. Transition.

\* \* \* \* \*

Interlude

SOUND EFFECT: The rain continues to fall.

LIGHTING: Ghost light on stage that gradually brightens to a sun-filled day.

MUSIC: "Jarama Valley," adapted from "Red River Valley" by Pete Seeger, Woody Guthrie and Lee Hays, by Seeger himself and Arlo Guthrie.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Act I, Scene 12**

Lights up to sunlight filling the plaza at Albacete.

SOUND EFFECT: Water in a fountain.

JESSE, wearing clean ragged clothes, sits on a fountain, mimes soaking the red bandana, wiping his head and neck with it.

SOUND EFFECT: The bandana being dipped, wrung out.

JESSE reties the bandana around his neck, soaks in the sun.

SOUND EFFECT: Sounds of a concert, with shouts and whistles and stomping.

JESSE rises and simply turns upstage. He is now in a theatre. And on the stage he sees UTILITY 5 as DOÑA IBÁRRURI.

SOUND EFFECT: A noisy concert hall.

DOÑA IBÁRRURI sees JESSE enter and calms down the audience. She points at JESSE.

[NOTE: When characters speak in Spanish, they speak accented English.]

DOÑA IBÁRRURI

Come, friend. Come here.

At that moment, LUZ BAROJA Y NESSI walks in and puts her arm though JESSE's arm.

LUZ

Do you know what Doña Ibárruri is saying?

JESSE

No.

LUZ

Then I will translate for you.

JESSE

Am I gonna have to say her name?

LUZ

Can you roll your "r's"?

JESSE

Never rolled an "r" in my life.

LUZ

Then just hang on -- I'll roll them for you.  
Let's go.

LUZ escorts JESSE to DOÑA IBÁRRURI, who takes JESSE's other arm. As DOÑA IBÁRRURI speaks, LUZ leans in to JESSE as if she is translating.

DOÑA IBÁRRURI

Mothers! Women! Men! Children! When we have once again a present of freedom, love and well-being, felt equally by all Spaniards, then give thanks to him.

With that, she points at JESSE, and the crowd goes wild.

SOUND EFFECT: Crowd going wild.

SOUND EFFECT: Someone begins singing the following song, joined in by everyone else except JESSE. DOÑA IBÁRRURI and LUZ sing lustily.

CROWD

Si los curas y fieles supieran la paliza que van a llevar, estarían todo el día gritando:

"Libertad, libertad, libertad"

[If the priests and the faithful knew the beating they will get, they would be shouting all day long, "Freedom, freedom, freedom"]

Si los reyes de España supieran lo poquito que iban a durar, subirían al trono gritando:

"Libertad, libertad, libertad."

[If the king and queen of Spain knew how short they'd last, they would raise to the throne shouting, "Freedom, freedom, freedom"]

Yo me cago en la manzanilla que bebió Queipo de Llano.

En la madre y el hermano de Franco y en Franco mismo.

[I shit on the manzanilla that Quiapo de Llano drunk. And I shit on the mother and the brother and on Franco himself.]

Yo me cago en el reinado de Juan Carlos de Borbón, en la iglesia disoluta y en los cien mil hijos de puta que adoran la religión.

[I shit on the kingdom of Juan Carlos de Borbón, on the dissipated Church and the one hundred thousand sons of bitches that adore religion.]

Si los curas y fieles supieran la paliza que van a llevar, estarían todo el día gritando:

"Libertad, libertad, libertad"

[If the priests and the faithful knew the beating they will get, they would be shouting all day long, "Freedom, freedom, freedom"]

Si los reyes de España supieran lo poquito que iban a durar, subirían al trono gritando:

"Libertad, libertad, libertad."

[If the king and queen of Spain knew how short they'd last, they would raise to the throne shouting, "Freedom, freedom, freedom"]

SOUND EFFECT: More wild cheering.

DOÑA IBÁRRURI quiets everyone down again. When silent, she turns to JESSE and speaks to him. The crowd, as one, speaks to JESSE.

DOÑA IBÁRRURI & CROWD  
Gracias por todo.

SOUND EFFECT: Crowd saying "gracias por todo"

DOÑA IBÁRRURI

Thank you for everything.

Arm in arm, LUZ and JESSE leave the theatre and come to a café, where UTILITY 7, as a WAITER, sets the table for them.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Act I, Scene 13**

JESSE and LUZ sit. LUZ gestures to the WAITER, who leaves to get coffee.

JESSE

That song they were singing?  
(trying to pronounce)  
"Libertad, libertad" --

LUZ

"Liberty, liberty, liberty."

JESSE

I got that much -- I mean, about the other words  
--

LUZ

Something stupid about priests and shitting in  
someone's manzanilla and sons of bitches in the  
church -- like they always sing -- like they  
always sing --

LUZ trails off, stares into the distance. JESSE gives her shy glances. His leg jitters. The WAITER brings "coffee." LUZ pays him.

JESSE

Hey, I can --

LUZ waves him away. The WAITER leaves.

JESSE

Well, thank you -- that was nice -- what they did  
-- what you did --

JESSE trails off when he sees LUZ is not listening to him. Suddenly, she turns and faces him.

LUZ

What are you doing here?

JESSE

(keeping it light)  
Having cof[fee] --

LUZ  
What are you doing here? Here! In God-forsaken  
[Spain] --

JESSE  
I'm fighting to keep your government [alive] --

LUZ  
As bad as all the others. Come on. Next you  
will say "fascism." Come on.

JESSE  
I am fighting against fascism --

LUZ  
See -- I told you. Fascism -- a noun. A word.  
A gobble-gobble-gobble like a turkey. And this  
"word" -- this is why you were put on this earth?  
To come save a government full of tired depressed  
old men, like my father, the diplomat  
extraordinaire -- You will go off and be killed  
for old bones and rusted nails --

JESSE digs his Communist Party card out of his pouch, slides it across  
the table.

JESSE  
Not just your "government," Luz Baroja y Nessi --

JESSE taps the Party card. LUZ picks it up.

JESSE  
Bigger than just "government" --

LUZ  
El comunista --

LUZ tosses the card onto the table. JESSE slides it back.

JESSE  
It's about a whole world --

UTILITY 1 as MARLEY COLTON appears, noose around neck, bloody dress.  
LUZ looks at her, walks up to her.

JESSE  
That is my wife, Marley --

LUZ  
I'm sorry.

JESSE  
Murdered -- hanged --

LUZ

Jesse --

JESSE

By people where I come from --

LUZ caresses MARLEY's face.

JESSE

-- who don't have a dime's worth of difference  
between themselves and this Hitler or Mussolini -  
-

LUZ kisses MARLEY on the cheek. MARLEY exits. LUZ sits.

LUZ

Sssh.

JESSE

So I don't forget.

LUZ

Sssh. Sssh.

JESSE puts away the Party card.

JESSE

Maybe why I'm on this earth is to ask you why  
you're on this earth.

LUZ

You know what we say about Communists?

LUZ hawks up a gob of spit and expertly lobs it. This takes JESSE  
completely by surprise. She smiles.

LUZ

Spit anywhere around here, you hit a Communist.

JESSE

Glad it went over there --

LUZ

Only the anarchists ever really know what's what.

JESSE looks at the gob of spit, still fascinated. LUZ gives him a  
direct playful Cheshire Cat half-smile.

LUZ

I have many other such anarchist skills.

JESSE

And as "comunista" I'm supposed to hate  
anarchists.

LUZ

All?

JESSE

Maybe it's not a good idea to hate anarchists at all.

LUZ puts her hand on his forearm, pats it, rests her hand there. JESSE looks at the hand, then at LUZ.

LUZ gestures to him to lean towards her. Hesitantly, JESSE leans toward her. She touches his hair.

LUZ

Hair -- the mind underneath it --

LUZ winds a piece of JESSE's hair around her finger.

LUZ

It's so --

JESSE

Nappy -- it's called nappy --

LUZ

Nappy!

(softer)

Nappy.

LUZ hesitates, then strokes his cheek, his nose.

LUZ

Not only about ideals, Jesse Colton.

JESSE leans into her touch, then pulls away.

JESSE

Maybe the ideals come out as stupid to you --

LUZ

No --

JESSE

But in the time I been here -- I felt more like a man than ever. That, Luz Baroja y Nessi -- from where I come from, that is not nothing.

LUZ lays her hand on the table, wiggles her fingers to get JESSE to give her his hand -- which he does.

LUZ

When do you have to leave?

JESSE

Soon -- we start our training --

LUZ

Can I show you something?

LUZ gets up, holding on to JESSE's hand.

LUZ

(playfully)

It's not that! Come with me.

They get up from the table. Arm in arm they cross the stage. UTILITY 7 removes the table and chairs.

They come to UTILITY 2, now the BLIND OLD POET, sitting in a chair and reciting to a "gathered crowd." He speaks underneath LUZ's lines.

POET

(reciting quietly)

...así, que casi me es forzoso seguir por su camino, y por él tengo de ir a pesar de todo el mundo...

LUZ

(whispering)

They call him El Caballero -- the Knight, the Gentleman.

JESSE points to his own eyes, and LUZ nods yes.

POET

(reciting quietly)

... , y será en balde cansaros en persuadirme a que no quiera yo lo que los cielos quieren, la fortuna ordena y la razón pide, y, sobre todo, mi voluntad desea; pues con saber, como sé, los innumerables trabajos que son anejos a la andante caballería, sé también los infinitos bienes que se alcanzan con ella...

LUZ

(whispering)

He's reciting Don Quijote de la Mancha. Our Bible. By heart. When the fever comes upon him, he just has to speak it out to us -- Look around you -- isn't this beautiful? All at once listening to this beautiful old man -- all at peace -- soldiers -- peasants -- the butcher --

LUZ pulls JESSE around to face her directly.

LUZ

(whispering)

This is why I was put on this earth. This is why.

LUZ turns JESSE away, and they find themselves in a room where sunlight shines through the slatted shutters. UTILITY 2 moves the chair to the room, leaves.

LUZ slowly unties JESSE's red bandana, slides it off, lays it on the chair.

LUZ unbuttons JESSE's shirt, puts her hands on his chest. JESSE touches her face. She leans forward to kiss him, but as her lips touch his, JESSE starts crying without restraint.

She sits. JESSE kneels and lays his head in her lap.

JESSE

I'm sorry.

LUZ

Sssh.

LUZ strokes his back and lullabies him.

LUZ

Sssh. Sssh. Porque el del vicio de la virtud, angosto y trabajoso, acaba en vida, y no en vida que se acaba, sino en la que no tendrá fin...

Her voice soothing him, her hand stroking his hair.

LUZ

For the narrow and exhausting road of virtue, Jesse Colton, ends in life, and not momentary life, but in life which has no end... Sssh, El Caballero.

LUZ strokes his nappy hair.

SOUND EFFECT: A convoy truck.

Lights up on OLIVER, by the truck. JESSE stands, buttons his shirt, takes the bandana. LUZ and JESSE stand close to each other, then face the truck. OLIVER sees them.

LUZ touches his hair, then takes a book out of her own bag and gives it to him. She puts her hand on his shoulder and, with soft pressure, turns him and gently pushes him toward OLIVER. LUZ laughs.

LUZ

Your brother?

JESSE

(sheepish)

Oliver, Luz Baroja y Nessi.

OLIVER shakes LUZ's hand.

OLIVER

His Spanish is better already. But I have to steal him from you.

LUZ

Adios, Caballero.

JESSE reaches back to touch her cheek but hesitates. She grabs his hand and lays it against her face, then lets it go. She turns and leaves without looking back.

OLIVER looks at JESSE watching the figure of LUZ disappear.

OLIVER

What's the book?

JESSE

Don Quijote [pronounced "quih-hoat"].

OLIVER

(correctly)

Quijote. Wait till you get to the part about Dulcinea.

Transition to the Battalion.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### **Act I, Scene 14**

The Battalion at dinner in a barn. UTILITY 1 as NURSE; UTILITY 2 as SOLDIER; UTILITY 3 as MERRIMAN; UTILITY 4 as SOLDIER; UTILITY 5 as NURSE; UTILITY 6 and UTILITY 7 as SOLDIERS; JESSE.

OLIVER stands next to MERRIMAN, who stands on the chair. He still has his splint.

MERRIMAN

Pardon my broken wing here. And thank you very much for laughing at it. First -- and always -- I am proud of you and the Abraham Lincoln Battalion. No deep speeches -- you each know your own private devils. I am just glad I'm with you. Oliver --

OLIVER steps forward.

MERRIMAN

Tonight I'm making official what most of you already know -- I'm getting kicked upstairs as chief of staff. It bothers me to leave you, but you're going to be in good hands.

OLIVER helps him get off the chair.

MERRIMAN

See, I really am stepping down. Oliver, the command of the Abraham Lincoln Battalion is now yours.

JESSE jumps up on the chair and waves his arms for silence.

JESSE

Hold up! Hold up! Grab sumpin, y'all, and give up an "amen."

They all raise their "glasses."

JESSE

To Oliver Lumet -- not just because he's a goddamn good soldier who's saved our asses, which needed a lot of saving.

SOLDIER

The fucking truth.

JESSE

Do y'all realize what is happening here? Captain Merriman, do you know? Oliver Lumet, you are the first black man in our country's history who gets to tell white soldiers what to do -- and they gotta do it. We all gotta do it. We -- we -- are the real American army. As mongrel as mongrel can get. To Oliver. Because of you, Franco is gonna kiss our saved asses and whatever else he finds down there.

JESSE and OLIVER toast each other.

SOUND EFFECT: Intense artillery bombardment.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Act I, Scene 15**

Without hurry, the men finish the toast and move into place for the next battle. MERRIMAN takes off his splint, now becomes a SOLDIER. UTILITY 1 and UTILITY 5 as NURSES wait upstage, the MEN gather downstage.

[NOTE: All movement in this scene is stylized and choreographed.]

OLIVER scans his troops.

OLIVER

When I move, everyone moves! We do that, Brunete will be ours!

OLIVER looks at his watch. He waves his arms to the right, and then to the left.

The men grab their "guns." All eyes forward, all mouths set.

OLIVER steps out of his cover. The MEN step with him. As they do, each one takes a stylized combat pose. In slow motion they move into their next pose. And then their next. Lighting from underneath casts their faces with shadows.

SOUND EFFECT: More intense firing and artillery, screams of pain.

The MEN hold their classic fighting positions. Then a bullet slams into OLIVER's chest.

SOUND EFFECT: Complete and utter silence.

OLIVER holds his contorted position for several beats, then collapses into the arms of JESSE, UTILITY 2, and UTILITY 3. UTILITY 4 exits.

The NURSES slowly move downstage. UTILITY 6 and UTILITY 7 join JESSE, UTILITY 2, and UTILITY 3 to get OLIVER to safety. As they do, an invisible SNIPER fires on them, causing them to swerve and duck. The NURSES move without flinching.

SOUND EFFECT: Individual sniper fire.

Everyone finally meets downstage. The SOLDIERS lay OLIVER down, the NURSES kneel.

JESSE  
(indicating stretcher)  
It's the battalion commander.

UTILITY 5 reaches inside OLIVER's shirt and pulls away a bloody hand. Everyone reaches in and pulls away a bloody hand.

UTILITY 5  
We have to get back --

JESSE gets up to leave.

UTILITY 1  
We could use you here.

JESSE shakes his head no. He smears OLIVER's blood on his face, walks upstage. Lights out on everyone except JESSE.

JESSE raises his gun, aims. Changes focus with a snap. Changes focus again with a snap. Changes focus again with a snap.

Lights up downstage left. UTILITY 4, wearing the red and yellow of Franco's army pinned above his heart, stands on the chair as a SNIPER in a tree. JESSE sees him. The SNIPER does not see him. JESSE aims. Lights to black.

SOUND EFFECT: A single gunshot with echoes.

MUSIC: As lights comes up, "Himno de Riego."

Intermission

**Act II, Scene 1**

SOUND EFFECT: Insects in the hot afternoon.

SNIPER is on the ground, JESSE over him.

JESSE stares into the terrified dark sweating face of a Moor from the Army of Africa. His legs twist underneath him, his head cocked at a grotesque angle.

JESSE pulls a "knife" from the SNIPER's belt.

SNIPER  
(hoarsely)  
No, no -- mi cuello -- está roto.  
(straining)  
My neck. It broke. Broke.

JESSE touches the point of the knife to the palms of the SNIPER's hands -- no response.

SNIPER  
No, no -- por favor, no --

JESSE touches the knife to the SNIPER's neck, moves the head just slightly, lets the head roll back.

SNIPER  
Negro. Black. Black. Brother. Hermano.

JESSE places the knife tip against the colors over the SNIPER's breast.

SNIPER  
No, no, no, no --

JESSE rams the "knife" through the SNIPER's heart.

The SNIPER lets out a sharp exhale, dies.

SOUND EFFECT: A sharp exhale.

JESSE stares at the open dead eyes.

SOUND EFFECT: The woods erupt with buzzing and chirping and sawing, louder and louder and louder and louder.

JESSE  
Marley Marley Marley Marley Marley --

Until his breathing slows down, his hands stop shaking. The high-pitched sizzling fades away to the silence of the hot windless woods.

He takes the SNIPER's "knife," hooks it to his belt, walks off.

\* \* \* \* \*

## Act II, Scene 2

An enormous explosion blows him off his feet.

SOUND EFFECT: An enormous explosion.

JESSE gets to his feet, finds he's bleeding from shrapnel in his right side.

UTILITY 2, UTILITY 6, and UTILITY 7, as three of Franco's NATIONALIST SOLDIERS, step out, guns raised, and stop him. But they see his black face and lower their guns.

SOLDIER 1

A Fucking Moor.

SOLDIER 2

The fighting's that way, cobarte.

JESSE grins stupidly, shows them his bloody hand.

SOLDIER 3

I didn't know monkeys could bleed.

SOLDIER 1 comes over, looks at JESSE's side, sees the tip of the shrapnel. He reaches into his bag and comes up with a "pair of pliers." He grabs the tip of the "shrapnel" and pulls it out, then drops it into JESSE's hand.

SOLDIER 1

Hey, monkey, take it back to your filthy little village.

(to others)

Come on.

They leave JESSE and move toward the battle.

JESSE takes the bandana and stuffs it into his shirt to cover the wound, puts the "shrapnel" in his pouch, moves away from the battle.

JESSE wanders. Lights down to a bare ghost light.

In the ghost light, shadows move in closer to him.

SOUND EFFECT: Water.

JESSE finds the water, scoops some into his mouth, then falls backward, overcome. The shadows move in closer, hover over him. JESSE reaches up.

JESSE

Quijote?

\* \* \* \* \*

**Act II, Scene 3**

SOUND EFFECT: Wind.

Sitting by JESSE is UTILITY 2 as JAMES, UTILITY 1 as AWAGU.

JESSE rises, but the pain in his left side stops him. The stained red bandana hangs from his neck.

JAMES speaks in his thick Irish accent.

JAMES

Like a babe from his mama's twat.

LUZ enters.

LUZ

A niño, yes -- he wants to fight to protect the government.

JAMES

You know him?

LUZ

From Albacete.

(to JESSE)

Hey, nappy. I told you it was a new world.

(to the others)

He's American.

AWAGU spits into the dust.

AWAGU

Another American?

JAMES looks around.

JAMES

Where is our baby Hemingway?

A SHOUT. Instantly, JAMES, AWAGU, and LUZ grab their weapons.

Walking into view, a "dead rabbit" in each hand, a smile across his face is UTILITY 3 as DEWEY MARLOWE, a battered fedora on his head, kit bag slung across his shoulder. He looks completely happy.

DEWEY

Two Bugs Bunnies -- anybody for lunch?

JAMES

You're a bloody idiot.

AWAGU takes the "rabbits."

MARLOWE

But undeniably handsome.

AWAGU

I agree with James.

MARLOWE

But you'll eat my rabbits.

AWAGU

We will eat your rabbits.

MARLOWE

Then handsome is as handsome does.

AWAGU exits. MARLOWE slings his bag around, rummages through it.

MARLOWE

(to LUZ)

And what is your opinion, "luz" of my life?

LUZ

I think it's nice we have a mascot.

MARLOWE pulls a notebook and a pencil from his kit bag.

MARLOWE

He's awake, it looks like.

MARLOWE sits in front of JESSE, flips a few pages, licks his pencil tip, stares at JESSE. AWAGU enters, wiping her hands.

JAMES

Oop, here goes Hemingway again.

MARLOWE

Do not use that infidel's name in my presence --  
holed up in Madrid --

(to JESSE)

Now, tell me what happened at Brunete --

JESSE

Who are you?

(to LUZ)

Who is he?

(to MARLOWE)

And why are you asking me questions?

MARLOWE

You're American, Luz told me --

LUZ

Jesse Colton, for better or for worse, meet Dewey Marlowe.

MARLOWE

But an American from where? Inquiring minds want to [know] --

JESSE

Mississippi. And why are you fucking asking me questions?

MARLOWE

You kill -- I preserve. Now --

AWAGU

Just like I put salt on the rabbits --

MARLOWE

Awagu --

AWAGU

-- our dewy American here --

MARLOWE

Awagu --

AWAGU

-- saves the carcasses. Ain't that right, querido?

MARLOWE

I get no respect. Now --

JESSE

Awagu?

AWAGU

Ethiopian.

JESSE points at LUZ.

JESSE

You I know.

JESSE points to JAMES, taps his own ear.

JESSE

Can't hear where you're from --

JAMES

Bangor, outside of Belfast, Ireland -- and a Catholic, which makes me a nigger in the Emerald Isle.

LUZ

There are others -- around -- keeping watch.

MARLOWE

Could we, please -- I'm working -- now, we saved your bacon from the --

JAMES

This white man just called the black man a pig part.

MARLOWE

Did not.

LUZ

(to JESSE)

We took you from the Local Falange -- the Carlistos --

MARLOWE

(writing)

Falange -- right --

LUZ

Not soldiers, really -- just people who wait for Franco their Savior.

JAMES

Franco the snake.

MARLOWE

(finishing writing)

Carlistos -- great. Now, Brunete --

JESSE

Brunete.

MARLOWE

Yeah.

JESSE

My best friend Oliver -- Lumet -- L-U-M-E-T --

MARLOWE

(overlapping)

M-E-T -- okay --

JESSE

Had his heart blown open running up Mosquito Hill.

LUZ

The one I met.

JESSE

The one you met. For your government.

(to MARLOWE)

A sniper pinned us down when we took Oliver for medical help.

JESSE pauses.

SOUND EFFECT: Ravens.

Everyone looks up and around at the interruption, waits. Nothing. Everyone turns back to JESSE.

JESSE

I went back for him. The sniper. I shot him, he fell -- broke his neck. No danger to anyone. But I took a knife -- where's my knife?

LUZ

It's still on your belt.

JESSE

Where is it?

LUZ

It's there.

JESSE holds up the "knife."

JESSE

And I shoved it through a defenseless man's heart.

MARLOWE scribbles in his pad.

JAMES

He was the enemy -- the one you came to fight.

AWAGU

The thing that was the right thing to do.

JESSE

(looking at LUZ)

Then why do I feel like --

AWAGU holds up her hand, and everyone falls silent. AWAGU listens, smells the air.

AWAGU

The dead are on the march.

LUZ

Come on, comrades, let's move it.

Everyone stands. MARLOWE gives JESSE a hand up.

JAMES

Plan B, as you Yanks say.

AWAGU, JAMES, and LUZ move off.

MARLOWE

I got a million questions.

JESSE

Shut the fuck up.

(gasping)

I don't have to give you nothing.

MARLOWE

(hitching up his load)

Who said anything about "have to," man? Come on,  
at least give me your arm.

JESSE throws his arm across MARLOWE's shoulder.

MARLOWE

We're all about anarchist liberty around here --  
even if it kills us. Come on.

The two of them move off. Transition.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### **Act II, Scene 4**

Lights up on UTILITY 4 as MAYOR and UTILITY 5 as ISABEL. They have their "guns" raised.

MAYOR

Don't take another step!

SOUND EFFECT: Sniper fire throughout scene.

MAYOR and ISABEL flinch, and flinch each time the sniper fires, but they don't take their aim off LUZ, JAMES, AWAGU, MARLOWE, and JESSE.

MAYOR

Anarquista, comunista, o socialista?

LUZ approaches with hand raised, black bandana in her hand.

LUZ

Somos anarquistas.

MARLOWE

(whispering)

And the dice are rolled.

The MAYOR points at JESSE, at his bandana.

LUZ

(to JESSE)

Take it off.

She hands him her black bandana. JESSE takes off the red, stuffs it into his pocket, puts on the black. The MAYOR lowers his gun.

MAYOR

Good answer. We need your help.

LUZ

You have it, señor.

MARLOWE takes a Leica (or something that looks like a Leica) from his kit bag.

MARLOWE

(to JESSE)

Gunning for Robert Capa, too.

JAMES

His huevos are bigger than his brain -- which wouldn't be hard.

MAYOR

Sniper up in the church tower.

ISABEL

Soldiers in the oligarch's house --

(spits)

-- like they're Don Valera's fucking personal bodyguards.

MARLOWE

(whispering to JESSE)

Sniper up there -- and she hates the landowner.

MAYOR

I think it is time for a housecleaning.

AWAGU

They must've got cut off.

JAMES

And so nothing to lose. All right. Awagu, the landowner or the sniper?

JESSE

I'll get the sniper.

MAYOR

What did he say?

JESSE looks at the MAYOR, points to himself, points to the tower.

LUZ

This doesn't have to be your fight.

JESSE

Right, Dulcinea -- that's where you're wrong.

MAYOR points to JESSE, then the tower.

MAYOR

(to LUZ)

Yes or no?

JESSE

Yes. Sí.

MAYOR

That is a word I like.

JAMES

Awagu, I guess we're stuck lugging back the filthy rich. See you for dinner.

JAMES and AWAGU move out.

MAYOR

We have to go.

(to JESSE)

There's a door at the back, and windows.

JESSE

Una puerta -- door, right? Ventanas?

LUZ

Windows. At the back of the church.

The MAYOR gives JESSE an embrace, as does ISABEL, and they both move out.

LUZ turns to JESSE. JESSE gets himself ready. MARLOWE hovers around them, camera in hand, kit bag slung over his shoulder.

JESSE

I'll have to get inside.

LUZ

A door and windows. So you've been reading my book.

JESSE

Yes. And why am I gonna do this?

LUZ pulls JESSE to one side so that MARLOWE can't hear, though he desperately wants to.

LUZ

You have been re-born -- you have found me again  
-- you're fighting for something real now --  
don't let Oliver die for nothing -- your Marley -  
- how much better do you want life to be?

LUZ and JESSE share a look. Then JESSE picks up his "gun," checks himself one more time.

MARLOWE

I want in on this.

JESSE

You have a gun?

MARLOWE holds up his camera.

JESSE

That's it?

MARLOWE

I have to go with you.

JESSE

Is that all you got?

MARLOWE

Pistol in the bag.

JESSE

Then put the fucking pistol in your belt. Make  
sure you know the difference between the two if  
you have to save my ass.

(pointing to camera)

Got any dead bodies in it?

MARLOWE

Not up close.

JESSE

Christ.

(to LUZ)

Tell the Mayor -- on my signal, have everyone  
pour fire up there for cover.

LUZ touches JESSE's cheek, then leaves.

MARLOWE

Man, you are so lucky.

JESSE

Get in my way, I will shoot you.

MARLOWE

Get in my way, and I'll shoot you, too.

JESSE

I met Hemingway -- he's no great shakes.

MARLOWE

My thoughts exactly.

JESSE

And neither are you.

MARLOWE

You don't know about my "shakes" -- you don't know this yet, but you need me. You don't know it yet, but you will.

JESSE

Just stay out of my way, white boy.

MARLOWE

You're so full of shit.

JESSE raises his hand and then drops it.

SOUND EFFECT: Gunfire erupts.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Act II, Scene 5**

Time shift: JESSE has the gun pointed at the SNIPER.

SOUND EFFECT: Gunfire stops.

[NOTE: The SNIPER's presence is mimed. The audience becomes the SNIPER.]

JESSE

(to SNIPER)

No.

(to MARLOWE)

Tell him to put the gun down.

MARLOWE

Deja esa arma -- bájala.

JESSE

Good. Tell him to raise his hands.

MARLOWE

Levanta los brazos.

JESSE

Good. Bueno.

Without hesitation, JESSE shoots the SNIPER.

SOUND EFFECT: A single gunshot.

MARLOWE

No!

A frozen moment between the two of them, their eyes locked.

JESSE, hard-faced, nods toward the corpse.

MARLOWE lifts his camera, takes four shots, each from a different angle.

JESSE takes off the black bandana, steps to the parapet, waves it.

JESSE then puts his gun down, takes the SNIPER by the lapels of his uniform, and slides him up the wall.

MARLOWE

What're you doing?

JESSE now has the body almost over the parapet.

MARLOWE

You can't just dump him --

JESSE gives him a dead-eyed stare.

MARLOWE stuffs the camera into his bag. He walks over to the body and grabs it out of JESSE's hands and heaves the body over his shoulder.

MARLOWE

He was somebody's son, still goddamn it a human being.

MARLOWE settles the corpse on his shoulder.

MARLOWE

Fucking guys, their fucking ideals --

MARLOWE and the body turn upstage. The MAYOR and ISABEL appear, with LUZ. MARLOWE dumps the body, and the MAYOR and ISABEL methodically pulp the corpse with their rifle butts.

MARLOWE and LUZ move away from the mutilation. Lights out on the MAYOR and ISABEL.

JESSE joins them. JESSE lays a hand on MARLOWE's shoulder, squeezes it. MARLOWE shrugs it off.

LUZ

James and Awagu extracted the patrón and his family -- it took the people all of five minutes to put them against the wall and shoot them. Several times. Along with the priest.

MARLOWE walks off, camera in hand.

JESSE

Where are you going?

MARLOWE

Got space for more bodies.

MARLOWE leaves.

JESSE

Now what?

LUZ

As usual -- after a cleansing slaughter, being anarchists, they'll have a meeting about it.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Act II, Scene 6**

Four chairs and a table. The audience is the rest of the village. UTILITY 6 will play LARGO; UTILITY 7 will play BELLARMINO, wearing an eye patch. LUZ translates for JESSE. JAMES and AWAGU to the side.

The MAYOR bangs the table to get everyone's attention.

MAYOR

All right -- here are my words. The priest is gone, Don Valera is gone, but the land is still here. What do we do?

JESSE leans down to LUZ to listen. MARLOWE, overhearing, leans into them both.

MARLOWE

(exaggerated drawl)

They're breakin' up the plantation, boy.

JESSE looks at MARLOWE, then LUZ. LUZ nods yes. MARLOWE nods yes.

LARGO raises his hand.

MAYOR

Largo, don't hold your tongue.

LARGO

The patrón's land -- we could divide it up --

SOUND EFFECT: General murmurs of agreement.

LARGO

(encouraged)

And give a piece to Francisco over there, and  
Juan --

BELARMINO hisses in disgust.

BELARMINO

(points to patch)

I got this in Asturias, in 1934, and it gives me  
the right to call you a shit!

SOUND EFFECT: Murmur of shock and pleasure.

MAYOR

Everyone be quiet.

LARGO

(appealing to MAYOR)

Alcalde --

BELARMINO

(appealing to CROWD)

Of course Largo wants to chop it up and give it  
out to everyone who's already got land because he  
really wants to be Don Valera himself. Always  
with his airs --

ISABEL slams her hand down.

ISABEL

And always a goddamn pissing contest between you  
two.

LARGO

I have the right to keep my land and get more if  
it if I can!

ISABEL

Not any more.

(to CROWD)

And you all know it, too. Not going to do it  
that way any more.

SOUND EFFECT: Crowd murmuring.

ISABEL

The choice is as plain as the hairs in your nose.

LARGO

What choice?

ISABEL

We either do it the old way or we don't.

LARGO

I don't disagree -- new ways are good.

ISOBEL

Wipe it all away.

LARGO

But people like me, owning what we own, we can be more efficient --

ISABEL

And make more money -- that's all you and Francisco and Juan --

LARGO

What's wrong with --

ISABEL

-- and the ones like you want --

LARGO

What's wrong with making --

ISABEL

"Making more money" -- there are better things in life. There is working together for the greater [good] --

LARGO

Oop, now she's in her pulpit!

ISABEL

A nasty thing to say to an atheist!

SOUND EFFECT: Laughter.

BELARMINO

Pay attention! You think Franco's shits care about fine points? They want the old ways, and they'll kill us to bring them back. I say this: the patrón's land belongs to all of us. It has always belonged to all of us because it was our sweat that made it rich. And I say this, too --

(pointing to LARGO)

-- your land now belongs to us.

(to JUAN and FRANCISCO)

And yours, too. No more private property -- collectivize!

LARGO

That's not right!

(appealing to MAYOR)

That's not right!

SOUND EFFECT: Everyone talks at once.

LARGO appeals, ISABEL and BELLARMINO also make their points overlapping.

BELLARMINO

Collectivize or die -- that's it, that's all of it --

ISABEL

No more making some pig fatter --

LARGO

I am not a pig, and I will not put up with --

The MAYOR pounds the table again and again.

A tense silence falls.

The MAYOR turns to JESSE, LUZ, JAMES, AWAGU, and MARLOWE. He points to JESSE as he speaks to the crowd. LUZ translates for JESSE.

MAYOR

This man was a slave in his own country and he comes to fight for us. What you do think we should do?

LUZ translates the MAYOR's words. MARLOWE writes.

JESSE, sheepish, steps forward into the silence. LUZ translates.

JESSE

I don't think I have the right to say anything here.

LUZ

No creo tener derecho a decir nada en este asunto.

MAYOR

(to LUZ)

He defended us -- that makes him one of us.

LUZ

(to JESSE)

You fight -- you get to talk.

JESSE

A story, then -- un cuento. You can do what you want with it.

(to LUZ)

Tell them as I tell it. Once I had four uncles -  
- cuatro tios --

LUZ

Yo tenía cuatro tíos ---

JESSE

-- with my father they owned land together.

LUZ

Con mi padre ellos compartían la propiedad de algunos terrenos.

JESSE

They shared everything -- good, bad, money, sorrow -- everything.

LUZ

Lo compartían todo -- lo bueno, lo malo, el dinero, las tristezas --- todo.

JESSE

All I can tell you is that it was the happiest time of my life.

LUZ

Lo que puedo decirte con certeza es que fueron los tiempos más felices de mi vida.

JESSE

Not easy. They fought like dogs about everything. But nobody was at the mercy. Nobody was alone. Nobody went hungry.

LUZ

No fueron fáciles. Peleaban como perros por cualquier cosa. Pero nadie estaba sin amparo. Nadie estaba solo. Nadie sufría de hambre alguna.

BELARMINO

¿Qué les sucedió?

LUZ

What happened to them?

JESSE

Our own fascists took the land from them.

LUZ

Nuestros propios fascistas les quitaron la tierra.

JESSE

It's an old story in my country.

LUZ

Es una vieja historia en nuestro país.

The MAYOR points to the rest of the crew.

MAYOR

¿Qué va con el resto de ustedes?

JAMES, laughing, gives the anarchist salute, as does AWAGU. LUZ, looking at JESSE, also gives the salute. JESSE gives the salute. ISABEL and BELLARMINO give the salute. LARGO does not.

The MAYOR, slamming the table again, stands and gives the salute.

MAYOR

All right -- the time has come. We vote, eh?  
Land and freedom, or land and money.

LARGO

That's not fair!

MAYOR

Land and freedom?

Everybody but LARGO.

MAYOR

Land and money?

LARGO only.

MAYOR

We collectivize!

SOUND EFFECT: Applause, shouts of approval.

JESSE looks at LUZ, and she smiles as if completely satisfied.

MUSIC: The chorus of "A Las Mujeres":

Debeis las mujeres colaborar,  
en la hermosa obra de la humanidad;  
mujeres, mujeres, necesitamos vuestra unión  
el día que estalle nuestra grande revolución.

Hermanas que amais con fe la libertad  
habeis de crear la nueva sociedad...  
El sol de gloria que nos tiene que cubrir  
a todos en dulce vivir.

Transition.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Act II, Scene 7**

Campfire.

JESSE, JAMES, LUZ, AWAGU stare into the fire. MARLOWE wears his fedora, scribbles in his notebook.

Overhead, at a great height, they hear planes.

SOUND EFFECT: Planes.

JAMES

Heinkels. Not good.

(to JESSE)

So that's what your fellow communists, your comrade Stalinists, are doing.

LUZ

James -- let's let today --

JESSE

That's not true.

MARLOWE

Yes it is.

JAMES

The man does not even know himself.

LUZ

Leave him alone.

JAMES

They're killing off the anarchists, chum --

MARLOWE

It's true.

JAMES

They're cutting the balls off the socialists, and even cannibalizing themselves --

JESSE

You're wrong.

MARLOWE

It's true.

JAMES

And they're killing off the revolution.

JESSE

That can't be true.

JAMES

Then let it not be true for you.

(to MARLOWE)

Hey, Hemingway --

MARLOWE

Marlowe --

JAMES

Who in the land of pig-faced capitalism is gonna want to read about a bunch of anarchists? They shoot anarchists there, too!

An embarrassed moment. JAMES looks hard at JESSE.

JAMES

I got the wine in my tongue --

AWAGU

And your head.

JAMES

-- but it's still true. You watch -- you know we're on the chopping block. We are all alone out here. It's hard when you love something so much -- an idea you'll die for -- then to have these fucking "comrades" --

AWAGU

I just want to kill Italians for Ethiopia.

JAMES

For me -- they're all Brit wankers from northern Ireland!

(to JESSE)

And you? Who are these fuckers to you?

JESSE stares into the fire. LUZ puts a hand on his arm.

JESSE

White people hung my wife from a tree and burned her to ashes.

MARLOWE closes his notebook.

MARLOWE

And that's why they're not going to want to know about any of you suckers. A Negro whose wife was lynched fighting for freedom in a foreign land against white folks -- that is primo stuff.

JESSE gets up and walks off into the darkness.

JAMES

Your bedside manner's a fucking marvel to behold.

MARLOWE

I learned everything from you.

SOUND EFFECT: The crackling of the fire.

LUZ follows JESSE.

JESSE

Is James telling the truth?

LUZ

Yes. Jailing and killing all the anarchists they can get their hands on -- orders from Stalin -- militia units like ours either have to join the army or we get no weapons, ammunition, supplies - - I'm not supposed to even be carrying a gun -- yes, me! -- women are being turned back into maids --

JESSE

I am so far from home.

MARLOWE

Mind if I join you?

LUZ

You're already here.

MARLOWE

The world out there thinks "the war for ideals."  
"The war of poets." There's no revolution here -  
- the Communists have choked that off.

LUZ

Not all of it.

MARLOWE

That village? How long do you think they'll last, Luz? Franco could spit on us, he's so close. And the Communists? From Valencia soon enough.

JESSE

Enough!

LUZ puts a hand on him, then walks back to the fire.

MARLOWE

I wrote about a lynching once -- I am really sorry about your wife, Jesse. What a country, huh?

MARLOWE starts to walk away, then turns back.

MARLOWE

Today -- up in the tower --

But JESSE is crying.

MARLOWE comes back. He pulls down his shirt sleeve and uses the end of it to wipe JESSE's face.

JESSE moves MARLOWE's hand away.

JESSE

You write all this down. Everything. All of it.

MARLOWE

I'm gonna write the truths that people tell me. I'm hoping that covers it. Comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable -- that's me -- I hope. That's my civil war.

MARLOWE walks back to the fire.

SOUND EFFECT: A convoy of trucks grumbling along.

JESSE quickly moves back to the fire just as JAMES stamps it out.

JAMES

The fascists have arrived.

MARLOWE

But they're coming from Valencia.

JAMES

You're right. Say hello to Stalin. Say goodbye too.

SOUND EFFECT: Now gunfire and screams.

LUZ

We can't stay here.

AWAGU

There is not any place we can stay.

A flashlight catches them all in its beam. UTILITY 4, wearing the Republican uniform, a red star on his hat, "pistol" raised.

UTILITY 4

El que se mueve, muere.

JAMES

He's got the universal translator in his hands, chums.

JAMES raises his hands. Everyone raises his or her hands.

SOUND EFFECT: Trucks pull up, stop.

The scene is flooded with light from the trucks' headlights.

UTILITY 6 enters as the COLONEL, his military cap bearing a red star. He is followed by UTILITY 7 as his AIDE.

The COLONEL spits.

COLONEL  
Anarquistas.

LUZ  
(fierce whisper to MARLOWE)  
Say something or you'll die with us.

COLONEL  
(to LUZ)  
¡Cállete, puta!

LUZ steps forward.

LUZ  
¿Qué piensas hacer con nosotros?

Without hesitation, the COLONEL pulls his "pistol" and shoots LUZ through the eye. LUZ's body drops like a stone.

SOUND EFFECT: Single pistol shot.

COLONEL  
Mátalos a todos.

MARLOWE  
(shouting)  
I'm a journalist! Periodisto! I'm a journalist!  
From the United States! ¡Los Estados Unidos!

MARLOWE holds up his camera bag and notebook.

COLONEL  
(in English)  
You know Paul Robeson?

MARLOWE  
Not personally. But I've heard him sing.

COLONEL  
He sang to us -- he's a good Communist. You  
American, too?

JESSE  
Yes.

COLONEL

You look just like Jesse Owen -- a very fast man  
-- I love jazz. Harlem.

The AIDE whispers to the COLONEL, who points to MARLOWE and JESSE.

COLONEL

Put them in the truck.

UTILITY 4 prods MARLOWE and JESSE out of the light.

MARLOWE

(shouting)

Colonel, Colonel, they all work with me --  
they're my assistants --

But before MARLOWE finishes, the AIDE pulls out a pistol and executes JAMES and AWAGU.

SOUND EFFECT: Pistol shots.

MARLOWE and JESSE stare at the corpses of their friends.

COLONEL

The base for the International Brigades -- we'll  
drop you off on the road that goes there. You  
should reach it without much trouble. When you  
get there, say hello to Paul Robeson for me. Put  
them in the truck. Before I change my mind.

MARLOWE and JESSE leave, followed by UTILITY 4.

SOUND EFFECT: Trucks pulling away.

Transition.

MUSIC: Verse from "No Pasarán" by Leopoldo Gonzalez

Matan mujeres, niños y ancianos,  
que por las calles suelen andar.  
Esta es la hazaña de los fascistas,  
que allá en la historia se ha de grabar.  
Si sangre de héroes regó los campos,  
bellas simientes resurgirán.  
El cañón ruge, tiembla la tierra,  
pero a Madrid ¡No pasarán!

\* \* \* \* \*

## Act II, Scene 8

SOUND EFFECT: A ship's horn, wind and waves.

A steerage cabin, lit by a single bulb. JESSE lies on a bench.  
MARLOWE tries to write. Their knapsacks sit under the bench.

SOUND EFFECT: The ship creaking.

MARLOWE slams the notebook shut.

MARLOWE

I can't get it to work! Notes, impressions, but it's like -- Hemingway's just churning it out --

JESSE

You want a real story about Spain?

JESSE swings to a sitting position.

MARLOWE

He finally speaks!

JESSE

I asked you a question.

MARLOWE

Yeah, I could use a real story.

JESSE

I'm going back.

MARLOWE

To Spain?

JESSE

To Mississippi.

MARLOWE

No you're not. No you're not!

JESSE

I went all the way to Spain just to fight the people who live in my town.

MARLOWE

No you didn't! That's crazy! What -- bang bang? They ain't like the guy in the tower!

JESSE

No.

MARLOWE

(realizing)

No you're not.

JESSE

I'll need a friendly witness. Think about it --

MARLOWE

You're just using me.

JESSE  
-- front page -- all American --

MARLOWE  
You're just using me.

JESSE  
-- yet strange, too, you know -- love and death -  
- you got it all --

MARLOWE  
You can't -- you can't -- it'd be like --

JESSE  
They've killed, and I've killed, and it ain't  
done anything for either of us.

MARLOWE  
You could go anywhere -- Paris -- the women'll  
love your ass to death there.

JESSE  
Uh-huh.

MARLOWE  
Africa -- South America -- Caribbean --

JESSE  
But I want to go home. I want to go home to  
Marley. You said, afflict the comfortable,  
comfort the afflicted, not me --

MARLOWE  
I didn't say yes. I didn't say yes!

MARLOWE tries to write but can't.

Transition.

\* \* \* \* \*

### Act II, Scene 9

SOUND EFFECT: Train with occasional whistle.

JESSE and MARLOWE, wearing knapsacks, standing. UTILITY 2 as HOBO  
sitting on the bench.

JESSE  
Bulls been here?

HOBO  
Just kicked a nigger off.

JESSE

I'm his replacement.

HOBO

Dining car's closed for the night.

JESSE and MARLOWE sit down. They all pitch back and forth as the train plows through the night.

Transition.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Act II, Scene 10**

SOUND EFFECT: Summer buzzing of insects.

JESSE and MARLOWE sit facing each other on the bench.

JESSE

There's a boarding house near the town hall -- you can get a room there. Woman named Swanson runs it -- her son is the Mayor.

MARLOWE

And I'm just a young writer on a journey through the South.

JESSE

Wouldn't want to lie, would you?

JESSE reaches into his knapsack and pulls out a leather pouch that he opens. Inside is papers, clippings, and LUZ's copy of Don Quixote. He hands it all to MARLOWE. MARLOWE puts them away.

Then he pulls out the black bandana, unties it -- it's full of dirt. MARLOWE touches the dirt.

MARLOWE

From Spain.

JESSE

I'm keeping this with me for now. Make sure you get it -- Ten o'clock.

MARLOWE

And I don't know who you are.

JESSE wraps up the bandana, puts it away, gets up.

JESSE

Okay.

MARLOWE gets up.

MARLOWE

This man of words ain't got any words.

JESSE walks away from MARLOWE, then turns and comes back. He holds out his hand. MARLOWE shakes it. Then JESSE leaves.

Transition.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Act II, Scene 11**

UTILITY 5 as MRS. SWANSON.

MARLOWE

(with great charm)

Good day.

SWANSON

Yeah?

MARLOWE

Mrs. Swanson?

SWANSON

You ain't got a voice from around here.

MARLOWE

Which is why I need a room. I was told you have the nicest rooms in town.

SWANSON

That may be true.

MARLOWE

I'd like a chance to find out.

SWANSON

Northern?

MARLOWE

North of here, anyway.

SWANSON

You a communist? You a "nigger-ist"?

MARLOWE

I'm not any kind of "ist." Just a writer. Working on a book. A "writer-ist," I guess.

MARLOWE flashes SWANSON his biggest falsest smile.

SWANSON

I got a nice room for a writer.

Transition.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Act II, Scene 12**

JESSE's camp.

SOUND EFFECT: Insects on a hot summer day.

JESSE sits. UTILITY 4, as a YOUNG BOY, looks at JESSE. JESSE gestures for him to come over. The BOY comes over.

JESSE

You have a name?

The BOY shakes his head no, then yes.

JESSE

I know your name -- you're Miz Riley's "slow" boy, ain't ya?

The BOY nods yes. JESSE pulls the black bandana from his knapsack and opens it, picks a rock from the dirt.

JESSE

But I am going to call you a special name. I am going to call you Oliver.

(hands him the rock)

And this is a magic rock. It's got a name, too -  
- Spain. Can you say Spain?

The BOY shakes his head no. Then he speaks.

BOY

Spain.

JESSE puts his hand tenderly on the BOY's head.

JESSE

Go home now.

The BOY runs away. JESSE adds a handful of Mississippi dirt to the pile, re-ties the bandana, puts it away.

Transition.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Act II, Scene 13**

MARLOWE sitting on the edge of the bench.

SOUND EFFECT: A clanking fan.

MARLOWE has his notebook open. Beside him is his camera and lenses, with a cleaning cloth and brushes and rolls of film. He cleans the lenses. He writes a line.

Transition.

\* \* \* \* \*

## Act II, Scene 14

A small fire. JESSE stares. Partway through the scene MARLOWE turns and listens, as if he were there with the group. As he listens, he puts away his equipment.

SOUND EFFECT: The barest breeze. The small fire crackling.

Suddenly, JESSE sits bolt upright -- all the UTILITY CHARACTERS plus OLIVER and LUZ move out of the darkness and sit at the edge of the fire's glow.

UTILITY 1

Really you, Jesse Colton?

UTILITY 2

You really back?

UTILITY 3

Where you been?

OLIVER

You been a dead man, we heard.

UTILITY 4 as the BOY sits next to JESSE.

JESSE

I been dead, yeah. I also come a long way back to being alive.

LUZ

But you a dead man here again if they see you.

JESSE

You all think that's so?

UTILITY 5

Yeah.

SEVERAL VOICES

Yeah.

UTILITY 6

They got a hate longer than God's tapeworm.

JESSE

Where is my Marley?

The BOY lays down next to JESSE and closes his eyes.

UTILITY 7

We don't know.

OLIVER

No one knows.

JESSE rests his hand on the BOY's shoulder.

JESSE

Doesn't matter.

LUZ

Jesse, we couldn't've --

JESSE

Doesn't matter, I said. I wanta tell you a story about "stopping."

UTILITY 5

Nothing's stopped --

JESSE

Anybody know where Spain is?

They think.

UTILITY 7

Near Biloxi, maybe?

OLIVER

Ain't no Spain near Biloxi, knucklehead.

JESSE

Not so hard -- he ain't that far off. It's a country, not a county -- let me tell you all a story -- Spain --

Transition.

\* \* \* \* \*

### Act II, Scene 15

JESSE stands at the foot of the town hall steps, keeping vigil.

MARLOWE watches JESSE. SWANSON stands behind him.

SWANSON

You gonna need the room another night?

MARLOWE

I don't know just yet. Who's that?

SWANSON

He's supposed to be a dead man.

MARLOWE moves to JESSE's side. UTILITY 6 as MAYOR and UTILITY 7 as SHERIFF comes out, stand on the bench. SWANSON leaves.

SOUND EFFECT: Crowd milling.

MAYOR

What the f[uck] --

He catches himself.

MAYOR

What are you doing here?

JESSE

I live here.

MAYOR

You lived here. Now get the f[uck] --  
(catches himself again)  
Just get out of here.

JESSE

I come to see my wife's grave. Where'd you bury her, Mayor? Sheriff? That's all right -- I'll save you the trouble of lying. I'll bet her bones've been buried by every dog in town. That's okay, too -- don't blame dogs for being dogs. But I won't be leaving until I find every bone.

JESSE reaches into his back pocket. SHERIFF reaches for his gun.

JESSE

One more thing.

He pulls out his blue Communist Party membership card. He gestures to MARLOWE.

JESSE

Sir -- help me out?

MARLOWE steps forward. JESSE hands him the card.

JESSE

Would you take that up so as the Mayor can read it?

MARLOWE hands the MAYOR the card. The MAYOR reads it, hands it to the SHERIFF, who reads it, then tosses it. MARLOWE picks it up.

JESSE

Just so you know you have a real one this time.

JESSE leaves and begins SINGING the Internationale. As he does so, he does a little cake-walk dance, his smile wide and taunting.

JESSE

Arise ye workers from your slumbers  
Arise ye prisoners of want  
For reason in revolt now thunders  
And at last ends the age of cant.

Yowser, yowser, yowser, yowser!

JESSE leaves. Everyone else leaves.

Transition.

\* \* \* \* \*

### Act II, Scene 16

Headlights. UTILITY 2 as RED NECK drops a noose on the bench.  
UTILITY 6 as MAYOR and UTILITY 7 as SHERIFF follow RED NECK.

MARLOWE stands to one side.

UTILITY 1 as MARLEY, LUZ, and OLIVER enter and stand upstage. JESSE downstage, bathed in headlights.

MARLOWE

A lasso snaps out of the darkness, tightens  
around Jesse's throat, pulling him to his knees.

JESSE falls to his knees, hands around his throat, choking.

MARLOWE

A man behind Jesse plants a foot on his back and  
jams Jesse forward.

RED NECK plants a foot in JESSE's back, and JESSE falls forward. At the same moment, the SHERIFF takes JESSE's hands off the rope around his neck and pulls them behind JESSE's back.

RED NECK hands MARLOWE a short length of "rope" for hog-typing, pulls him to JESSE.

RED NECK

(to MARLOWE)

Loop the hogtie around his wrist -- be good for  
that book of yours.

MARLOWE loops it around one wrist, his face a mask of fear. He fumbles so badly that RED NECK takes it out of his hands.

RED NECK  
(to others)

S'got the twitches.

RED NECK wraps JESSE's hands in a quick tight figure-eight.

RED NECK  
(to MARLOWE)

Proper way to tie a hog. You write that down.

RED NECK and SHERIFF stand JESSE up next to the bench. MARLOWE retreats, pulls out his camera. The MAYOR stands on the bench with the noose in his hand, which he loops around JESSE's throat.

MARLOWE

Jesse was dead by the time they hung him because they had dragged him a mile along the dirt road from the rope they lasso'd around his neck.

RED NECK, the SHERIFF, and the MAYOR smile for MARLOWE. He snaps their picture, and the stage dissolves into several blinding flashes of light.

In the flashes, JESSE falls into the arms of MARLEY, OLIVER, and LUZ -  
- a pieta.

SOUND EFFECT: An enormous storm that washes the earth clean.

Transition.

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## Act II, Scene 17

An office -- table, two chairs. UTILITY 2 as the EDITOR leafs through MARLOWE's manuscript, with pictures. MARLOWE, seated by the desk, fidgets as he waits. His knapsack rests against the chair.

SOUND EFFECT: Street noise through an open window. A clanging fan.

EDITOR

And you took these yourself?

MARLOWE

And developed them myself. It's been rejected by some of the best. Polite, you know, but --

EDITOR

Because you're pissing uphill on this one. Gavagan's anti-lynching bill's going nowhere -- Roosevelt needs the Southern Senators for his Court scheme, so --

MARLOWE

So?

EDITOR

So -- I guess I don't mind a piss or two uphill.  
It's what we do around here -- our --

(wryly)

raison d'être -- the reasoning behind our piss-soaked shoes. It's well written, and God knows it happens. I can't pay you -- much at least.

MARLOWE

Doesn't matter.

EDITOR

Words my bookkeeper loves. And we ain't among "some of the best."

MARLOWE

Doesn't matter.

EDITOR

Then we have a deal.

MARLOWE

Great.

(to audience)

I start to get out of the chair.

EDITOR

You mind if I ask you something?

MARLOWE

Ask me anything you want.

EDITOR

The man in the photos --

MARLOWE

Yeah?

EDITOR

Did you know him well?

MARLOWE

(to himself)

Did I know him well?

EDITOR

Look, I'm sorry -- you don't [have to] --

MARLOWE

I can say this: Jesse Colton and I had -- no, made -- a -- pact -- a covenant -- better word -- a better word -- a covenant about that -- about what happened --

EDITOR

God, that must've not been easy --

MARLOWE

It was the easiest and the hardest thing I've ever done -- can you understand that? I can't understand that -- yet -- but it's true --

EDITOR

And you agreed -- God, to watch and not --

MARLOWE

The kind of thing you do for a friend --

EDITOR

You have your work cut out for you.

MARLOWE

I can say this: we both held up our ends of the bargain. It's made a difference.

EDITOR

We'll see what we can do.

MARLOWE moves to the bench with his knapsack. EDITOR leaves.

MARLOWE opens his knapsack and takes out JESSE's black bandana and unties it. He empties the dirt in it, spreads it around with his foot, then dusts it off and gets ready to put it away.

UTILITY 4 as a BUM comes up behind him. wearing a worn-out suit and vest.

BUM

Gonna use that?

MARLOWE turns and catches the eyes of the BUM.

BUM

You gonna use that?

He slips his fingers in and out of the breast pocket.

BUM

Could use a handkerchief to complete my ensemble. What say?

MARLOWE

You take this, you're going to have to fight for justice, you know.

BUM

Mister, just as soon as I get a meal I'll fight for justice.

MARLOWE hands him the bandana. While the BUM folds it neatly and puts it in his breast pocket, MARLOWE digs out two dollar bills. He holds up one.

MARLOWE

Your meal.

The BUM goes to take it, but MARLOWE pulls it away. He holds up the other dollar bill.

MARLOWE

Find someone as bad off or worse than you.

BUM

And give it away?

MARLOWE

Give it away. Free and clear. Both or none.

The BUM holds out his two hands. MARLOWE hands the bills over.

MARLOWE

Don't mess with your promise.

BUM

I wasn't always like this, mister. I was not always like this.

The BUM leaves.

MARLOWE stares into the middle distance. Perhaps he cries. Perhaps not.

Blackout