

BIG SUR

A PLAY

BY FRANK GAGLIANO

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[BIG SUR was originally commissioned by NBC for its Experiment In Television Series and was presented on the NBC Network. The television program included James Coco as The Policeman, Gene Troobnick as Jeremy Chester, Danny Sullivan as The Indian, Susan Tyrell as The Girl and Billy Dee Williams as The Black Graduate, The television show was produced and directed by Peter Goldfarb.

The first stage production of BIG SUR featured Richard Simmons as Big Arnie.]

(BIG SUR was produced at The Beijing Institute of World Theatre and Film in the spring of 2007—starring Joe Graves and Li Shi. And co-directed by Mr. Graves and Xiaoqing Hu)

(BIG SUR is performed without an intermission and has a running time of about one hour, twenty minutes)

Characters

(a number of the characters can be doubled)

The Balladeer

Jeremy Chester

Policeman

American Indian

Woman-Dressed-Like-A-Hippie

Big Arnie

Tour Guide

Black Graduate

Old Lady

Jackie, her son

Priest

Time

1968

Place

USA/A car headed West to BIG SUR.

BIG SUR/The Story

Forty-Five year old church organist Jeremy Chester, having won a car in the church raffle (“the first thing I ever won in my life”), decides to take to the road and head west. “—Straight across this great country I’ve never seen.

JEREMY: . . . In the past few years I’ve become itchy. Have wanted to talk to people— not past them. Open up to them—have them open up to me. Have wanted to start a—and this is one of my favorite words—“dialogue.” Isn’t that beautiful? . . . “Dialogue.” . . . —And besides that, I’ve had this urge to get to see Big Sur . . .”

Jeremy Chester’s journey becomes a tragic-comic American odyssey as, along the way, he picks up nine passengers, including: A hold-up person who steals his car; a frustrated big city policeman, now relegated to the sticks; an aging, now ineffective hippie on her way to an anti-war rally; a flamboyant rock star who owns the world; an African-American law student (who really wants to act), and is on his way to a new job as a “token black,” in a law firm; an eccentric old mother, being taken to “an old lady’s home” by her son; a priest, who listens to Jeremy’s confession and who turns out to be deaf; —and, as his constant companion on the trip, a Native American who comes on as a cigar-store, Tonto-like, stereotype, but who ends as a tragic, hip American, looking for his roots “in a dunghill.” And throughout the journey, Jeremy is pursued by a mysterious, black sedan.

Using a guitar-strumming balladeer to frame the journey, and with Gagliano’s noted quirky humor and compassion for all his characters, in BIG SUR we come to understand that the incongruities and anachronisms of contemporary life are more than merely annoying or depressing—they are lethal.

Yet the journey goes on, heading for Big Sur, and the redeeming state of naturalness—which may already have escaped us forever.

A Car, in front of a
Cyclorama.

The car is actually four
chairs on two platforms.
The rear platform higher
than the front platform.

Also, a steering wheel.

BEFORE CURTAIN: Live guitar
chords being strummed.

LIGHTS UP on Jeremy
Chester in the driver's seat.
Also, a passenger is there,
dimly seen in the rear seat.

Strumming a guitar and
humming, is THE BALLADEER,
off to the side.

BALLADEER

(Stops strumming and humming. ANNOUNCES)

Here begin, the nine pickups of Jeremy Chester!

Prelude: *The First Pickup!*

(MUSIC: Overpowering measures of Bach's
Tocatta and Fugue in D Minor. Immediately
brought under)

JEREMY

(Happily driving; projects the speech
back over his shoulder to the passenger)

I hope you don't mind sitting back there!

(MUSIC: UP then quickly brought DOWN)

But you hear so much about the dangers of picking up strangers--and putting you back
there is my one concession to safety!

(MUSIC: UP then quickly brought DOWN)

And I hope you don't mind the music!

(MUSIC: Up then quickly brought down)

Johann Sebastian Bach!

(MUSIC: Up then quickly OUT)

JEREMY

(Continued)

You would think I'd get tired of it —the music, I mean. But, the fact is, I'm an organist by profession. At the Roman Catholic Church. In Bodoni County. I've been in that position ever since the war. The Second World War, I mean. You know; the one we were all in favor of? And I've never left it, Bodoni County. Would you believe it—in this year of nineteen hundred, six and eight? — in this good old U. S. of A? Oh! — don't get me wrong; it's a nice enough place, Bodoni County. Tree lined streets —wake up with the lark, that sort of— . . .

(Discovery; more to himself)

Just a wee bit boring, however. . .

(Then back over his shoulder, to the passenger again)

I guess you're wondering, "Why didn't you take a trip sooner?"

(Gets no reply; answers the question)

Weeeel, my salary has always been low— and I've been sort of plagued with a few— oh — ailments; high blood pressure, a touch of diabetes, psoriasis. — Things like that tend to stop you from moving about much. Anyway, there just never seemed to be any reason to go anywhere. — *But*, in the past few years, I've become antsy—have wanted to talk to people—not past them—open up to them— have them open up to me—have wanted to start a — and this is one of my favorite words —"dialogue." Isn't that beautiful. "Dialogue." . . .And besides that, I've had this urge to get to see— Big Sur!

(Light change. Balladeer strums and hums under following. Light change— as Jeremy, in a kind of happy, lyrical fog, leaves the car and seems to be pulled toward some overpowering distant image)

That's way out in California, you know. Some parishioners were there and never stopped talking about it. Like being out on the edge of the world, they said. The cliffs going right down to the Pacific. The Pacific smashing against the big rocks there. And the spray, the ocean spray; they'd talk about the force of that spray and how it would reach up the side of the cliffs. . .like fingers, trying to clutch on. . . .Big Sur.

(Light change. BALLADEER stops strumming, and humming. JEREMY gets back into the car, behind the wheel, driving again. Excited—over his shoulder, at the passenger again)

That's where I'm headed now! —straight across this great country I've never seen! — *and* it happened in the most incredible way! "*Guess how?*" . . .

(No response)

JEREMY

(Continued)

I WON THIS CAR IN A RAFFLE, THAT'S HOW! At my church. In Bodoni County!
—Isn't that something? First time I ever won anything. —So I took it as a sign. God was giving me the wheels and he was saying: "*You're forty five years old. Twenty years of staying put in one place is enough. —Take off!*" Why not? It's never too late to start, eh? I want to "*dialogue*" all over this country. And then, when I get to Big Sur, I want to rest; just rest and think about it all.

(He thinks about it all)

By the way, my name is Jeremy, Jeremy Chester. And yours?

(Instead of a reply, the passenger puts a gun to Jeremy's head)

BLACKOUT. Spot light on Balladeer)

BALLADEER

(Strums and sings)

RIDE, OH RIDE, JEREMY CHESTER:
TRYING TO FIND YOUR WAY.
RIDE, OH RIDE, JEREMY CHESTER.
THE ROAD MAY NOT BE ALL THIS GRAY.
THE ROAD MAY NOT BE ALL THIS GRAY.

(LIGHTS UP on the car.
Speaks:)

The Second Pickup!

(POLICEMAN now at the wheel.
JEREMY, with a blanket around his
shoulders, sitting next to him)

POLICEM

Say! If I come across as being a little hard of hearing, it's because I'm a little hard of hearing! So you'll take no offense if I speak a little loud! Right?!

JEREMY

(Abstractedly)

loudly.

POLICEMAN

WHAT WAS THAT?!

JEREMY

I said “LOUDLY,” Officer.

POLICEMAN

Oh. Right! Another thing! When we get to headquarters and make out the report, do me a favor, *will you?* Really pour it on— *really make me look good.* I could use the publicity OUT HERE IN THE STICKS!

JEREMY

Why me?

POLICEMAN

What was that?

JEREMY

Why me?

POLICEMAN

WHO ELSE, IF NOT YOU? It’s your car! I did get it back for you! I mean, you *are* safe in it—heading to headquarters to make a nice report— back in your *own* car! —with yours truly, driving—while you—nice and cozy—get over your shock! *I could have been killed!* I clocked that guy at ninety! Okay—so he got away—beat it into the woods— but I did get this car back! *And with nary a scratch on it!* So, *when we get to headquarters,* it wouldn’t hurt you to—

JEREMY

I don’t mean that, Officer! I mean that—out of a turnpike of thousands of men, women, teenagers and truck drivers—why did that car thief have to single out Jeremy Chester? —to take *my* new car and leave me stranded in *my* underwear?

POLICEMAN

What was that last part?

JEREMY

My under —!

(Discovery)

Thank heaven they were clean and not ripped! My mother always used to say, make sure your underwear are clean and not ripped! In case of an accident.

POLICEMAN

(Slow burn)

I had an aunt who always used to tell me that! I mean, *she’d say it all of the time!*
(Remembrance makes him want to barf)

POLICEMAN

(Continued)

One day! while I was working as a store detective? —in the Five and Dime? —a shoplifter I was after tripped me! *I broke my kneecaps!* —All the way over to the hospital, all I kept worrying about—*thanks to my aunt!* — was whether my underwear was clean and not ripped! Oh, the underwear was clean, *thank God!* But then—I saw a big rip on the T shirt— right under the armpit! *I nearly had a heart attack!* I was so anxious to get that T-shirt off that I fell out of bed and that put me in traction *for a month!* —That’s justice for you, huh? Did that shoplifter bust *his* kneecaps? —wrench *his* back! —No.

(Beat. discovery)

And I bet *his* underwear was *dirty!*

JEREMY

No no, no! I will not give in to this little—detour. I am still Jeremy Chester; still in one piece; still rolling on toward Big Sur.

(Balladeer strums Big Sur chords)

POLICEMAN

Big—what?

JEREMY

Sur. It’s a magnificent spot on the Pacific!

POLICEMAN

Couldn’t take it. Ocean climate. Sinus trouble.

JEREMY

I never thought of that. I have a sinus problem, too. When they get infected, they infect my tonsils. And adenoids.

POLICEMAN

—You sure are lucky. I tell you, if it was my car, it would have been smashed to bits. That’s the kind of luck I have. —*Anyway,* I was *glad to help you* and I hope you see fit to put in a couple of extra good words for me.

JEREMY

(Bright)

I am lucky. That’s true. That’s really true.

(Glum)

Of course, that valise he took contained a jewelry case. And five hundred dollars in loose bills.

POLICEMAN

Did I hear five hundred dollars?

JEREMY

But the real loss is my journal. . . a diary. . . I've kept it all these years. Just one legal-sized pad, actually.

(sad discovery)

. . . a whole lifetime on one pad.

(Justifying)

—Well, I have a tiny handwriting. Infinitesimal. . . Like the scratching of an ant, my mother used to say.

POLICEMAN

Five hundred dollars, huh!

JEREMY

Like twinkling stars, my grandmother would say. —She was more fanciful than my mother.

POLICEMAN

Five hundred is just the amount for one of those contour chairs— that vibrate; you know? Good for a bum back. . . Had a pianist living below me when I lived in the city.

(With evil relish)

That vibrator would have shaken the fingers right out of the sockets of his hand.

JEREMY

I'd write down the thoughts of my Bodoni County inner life—since I didn't have much of an outer. I had hoped to notate this trip as well and—Oh! —say! — this is awful: It's happening again. We really haven't been "dialoguing" at all. We've been talking past each other. Must stop this or it will be Bodoni County all over again.

(Sound: Knocking in rear.

Continues under)

What's that knocking?

POLICEMAN

What!?

JEREMY

THAT KNOCKING!?

POLICEMAN

Could be my knees. I tend to knock them together since I got steel plates put in. If I work them right they sound like castanets and —

JEREMY

IT'S NOT COMING FROM YOUR KNEES! It's coming from the trunk. Please stop!

(The Policeman puts on the brakes.
Jeremy and the Policeman look back
over their shoulders to the rear of the car.

The Balladeer enters; beats on his guitar
like a tom-tom.

In the rear of the car an American Indian slowly
rises. Jeremy and Policeman follow him up.
then look at one another, then look out to
the audience. Freeze)

THE BALLADEER

(Stops playing tom-tom on his guitar.
Announcing)

The Third pickup!

(All unfreeze. Indian sits in the rear seat.
Policeman starts driving again.

Beat)

POLICEMAN

(More to himself. But with maniacal intensity)
I feel funny with an Indian in the car.

(Beat)

JEREMY

How do you dialogue with an Indian?

POLICEMAN

I know they don't scalp people anymore. Still. . .

JEREMY

He's a young Indian. . . — say — Young Indian — that's a smart blanket you're wearing.

(Indian pulls out a neatly folded blanket
from within his own blanket.
Offers it to Jeremy)

POLICEMAN

(Ducks)

WATCH IT!

JEREMY

(Reading the price tag attached to the blanket)
No, thank you. Five dollars is a good price. But I don't need a blanket.

(Indian throws the blanket away.
The Balladeer catches it and throws it off stage.
Indian pulls out an electric blanket.
He mimes plugging it in)

No. No thanks. I've no need for an electric blanket either.

(Indian throws electric blanket away.
Balladeer catches it, throws it off stage)

He must make his living selling blankets.

(To the Indian)

Is that it? Do you make your living selling blankets?

(Indian pulls out a book)

POLICEMAN

(Ducks)

WATCH IT!

JEREMY

(Reading title of book cover)
"Custer's Last Stand: An Indian Perspective. Five dollars, cheap."
(Jeremy hands back book)

No, thanks.

(Indian throws book away.
Balladeer catches it, throws it off stage)

I wonder why he doesn't talk?

(Indian takes out a throat atomizer.
Sprays his own throat.)

JEREMY

(Continued)

He must have laryngitis.

(Indian takes out a wooden flute)

Ah, look, he's going to play.

POLICEMAN

Play? Play what?!

JEREMY

Some sort of flute.

POLICEMAN

DON'T LET HIM! IF IT'S GOT A PIERCING SOUND, IT'LL DESTROY MY
EARDRUMS! STOP HIM! —OR I WON'T BE RESPONSIBLE!

JEREMY

(To Indian)

You'd better put that away.

(Indian covers his head with a blanket)

You've hurt his feelings. Now, how will I dialogue with him?

POLICEMAN

(More to himself. But with maniacal intensity)

No Indian is gonna blow his flute in *my* ear!

JEREMY

Music! That's one way. If he plays the flute, he's musical. Maybe we'll be able to
dialogue with Bach.

POLICEMAN

(Slow burn)

Bach. Did you say Bach?

JEREMY

Yes. Bach. I'm an organist and I play Bach a lot now, and—

POLICEMAN

(Sings wildly: Opening theme from Bach's
Piano Concerto No. 1 in D Minor)

Is that what you play?

(Sings again)

—over and over; UP THROUGH THE FLOOR?!

(The Policeman jumps from the car
and into the limbo space. Intense spot on him)

—I'm living in the apartment five years, see. Nice apartment. Quiet neighborhood. Then this Bach nut moves downstairs and starts practicing. Why do you think I'm out here in the sticks? — *THEY BUSTED ME BECAUSE OF HIM AND HIS PLAYING!* — At first I'm civilized and I send neat notes.

(The Balladeer reaches into
the intense light and hands Policeman
a paper airplane.
Policeman mimes writing a note on the
paper airplane. In a civilized manner))

“You're interfering with my watching the television,” I write.

(With delicacy, he sails the paper airplane off stage)

He ignores the note. I send another one. “I'm a cop. You're disturbing the piece. I'll run you in!” — Ah! *That* one he answers

(A paper airplane comes flying
into the Policeman's Limbo area.

The policeman picks it up and reads:)

“The law is on my side. I can make noise until 11 P.M.”

(The Policeman bites off and spits out
pieces of the paper plane, as he paces)

—I check at headquarters. —Nobody knows nothing. —I'm shuffled from one department to the next. No satisfaction. — I should have known: My apartment was robbed once when I was new on the force; — the boys who came up told me there was nothing I could do! — “But there are fingerprints all over the place!” I said! — Nothing! No satisfaction! No justice! — Finally, some little clerk gets off his ass— tells me that pianist is right— the law is on his side! — “What do I do?” I say. “Make noise back,” he says!
SO I START MAKING NOISE BACK!

(Stomps on floor; beats floor with his fists)

—He keeps playing! I'm off my nut! and I *run!* down to his apartment! — *POUND* on the door— “It's the cop upstairs! —with a GUN permit! — I just want to have A CIVILIZED TALK *WITH YOU!* . . . Then everything stops!

. . . “I'm coming,” he sweetly says, through the door. . . . He opens the door. He's got all the speakers of his stereo aimed at me. He turns up the volume *AND HE BLASTS ME WITH BACH!*

(Bach Piano Concerto crashes in,
PAINFULLY LOUD)

For a minute I lose my hearing completely!

(Covers his ears with his hands.
Music: OUT.

POLICEMAN

(Continued)

(Removes his hands from his ears)

THEN IT COMES BACK AGAIN!

(MUSIC: IN. EAR-DESTROYING LOUD!

I go off my nut and *START SMASHING* those speakers.

(Flails away with his nightstick
Limbo spot--out!)

JEREMY

Stop pounding on that Indian!

POLICEMAN

There. There! THERE!

JEREMY

The window! — You'll smash—

(The Policeman strikes out with a sweeping
gesture at the imaginary window)

POLICEMAN

THERE!

(The Balladeer makes mouth noises and
stamps feet, simulating crash of window.
Bach MUSIC: OUT!
Policeman, defeated, slumps onto car seat.
Balladeer hums and strums under following)

JEREMY

(After a pause. Perplexed. Quietly)

I don't live in an apartment house. I rent a small house on a tree-lined street in Bodoni County. I never had neighbor problems. And as for the policeman in my neighborhood, I never had any contact with him. I remember him, of course. He looks like the policeman in my coloring book when I was a child. The chunky, smiling one, stopping all the cars and waving the little boy on to cross the street.

(Beat)

You know; you colored him blue.

POLICEMAN

(Rises)

Look. I'm sorry. I'll pay for the window. Only—when we get to headquarters, don't say anything. About all this. Huh? If they bust me again—well—being a cop is all I know . . . even if it is out here in the sticks.

(Exits. As Indian stands.

The Balladeer plays tom-tom on guitar.

The Indian shoots a toy arrow with rubber tip after the exiting Policeman.

The Balladeer strums a chord, as The Woman-Dressed-As-Hippie rushes on. She carries a large carry-all full of posters. She also has a rubber-tipped arrow sticking out of her forehead)

WOMAN-DRESSED-AS-HIPPIE

Say, mister, what happened to your window?

(She pulls arrow from her head; hands it to the Balladeer. He tosses it offstage)

JEREMY

(Examining smashed window)

A police officer smashed it.

BALLADEER

(ANNOUNCING)

The fourth pickup!

WOMAN-DRESSED-AS-HIPPIE

Police brutality?

JEREMY

No.

WOMAN-DRESSED-AS-HIPPIE

What do you mean, no? Did he or did he not smash your window?

JEREMY

Well—yes—but he felt frustrated—impotent about—

WOMAN-DRESSED-AS-HIPPIE

And he roughed you up a bit—right?

JEREMY

Not at all. —Oh, he did hit the Indian a couple of times, but he was lost in his—

WOMAN-DRESSED-AS-A-HIPPIE

(To the Indian)

What did he do? Bust a few of your teeth?

(Indian picks up his dark glasses)

A black eye! —That does it! I'm making a sign.

(The Woman-Dressed-As-A-Hippie
takes out poster paper and poster-making
materials)

JEREMY

Listen—can't we just dialogue without—?

WOMAN-DRESSED-AS-A-HIPPIE

Do you know the cop's name? It's better when you know his name.

JEREMY

No, I don't. But I wouldn't use it if I did. I felt sorry for the—.

WOMAN-DRESSED-AS-A-HIPPIE

The day-glo! Oh, no, I forgot the day-glo!

(Indian hands Woman-Dressed-As-A-Hippie
a jar)

War paint! Say, thanks.

(Dips her finger in the jar)

How about this? "Let the fuzz bust your glass—the next thing he'll bust is your ass!
Down with police brutality."

(Indian shakes his head, "No.")

WOMAN-DRESSED-AS-A-HIPPIE

No. — *Crush* police brutality!"

(Indian shakes head again)

No, I don't like "crush" either.

JEREMY

How about "squash?"

(She looks to Indian: He nods, yes!)

WOMAN-DRESSED-AS-A-HIPPIE
 “Squash.” That *is* better. Say, I’ll bet you’re good at this.

JEREMY
 Well, I was quite good at making up headlines for the church newsletter and—

WOMAN-DRESSED-AS-A-HIPPIE
 We marched against police brutality last week. I was hoping they’d hit me. I dared them—what with the cameras and all. But all I got was a little poke in the ribs. What about where you’re headed? Is there much PB there?

JEREMY
 PB?

WOMAN-DRESSED-AS-A-HIPPIE
 Police—

JEREMY
 —brutality. I see. In Big Sur? I would doubt it.

WOMAN-DRESSED-AS-A-HIPPIE
 Hey! C’mon! There’s PB everywhere. —I’ll bet there’s PB in the Vatican. There must be PB in Big Sur. I’ll ask Big Arnie.

JEREMY
 Big Arnie?

WOMAN-DRESSED-AS-A-HIPPIE
 He’s in charge of our thing. I’m on my way to meet Big Arnie right now, as a matter of fact. Don’t know where we’re supposed to be picketing today, so I brought a variety of signs and—

JEREMY
 Look! The Indian made a sign.
 (Indian holds up sign)
 What does it say?

WOMAN-DRESSED-AS-A-HIPPIE
 (Taking sign from Indian. Reading)
 “Old Squaw, who pretend to be young Squaw, and insist on hunting with young braves, soon left alone on the plains—laughed at by the spirits and the hyenas.”
 (She rips up sign. Pause)

WOMAN-DRESSED-AS-HIPPIE

(Continued)

Yes. It's true. I am over thirty.

(Music: "Apple Blossom Time."

The Andrew Sisters version)

The Woman-Dressed-As-A-Hippie moves into the limbo space. Intense spot on her)

WOMAN-DRESSED-AS-A-HIPPIE

(Continued)

You know, I can remember the Second World War. Food rationing. Those stamps.

(Music: Abruptly out!)

My father owned a grocery store then. Made a fortune overcharging people for things like sugar, butter and salami. —Don't misunderstand! —He was patriotic! Had a huge roll of honor in the store; a day-glo chart of the neighborhood boys off fighting. When one died, my father gave the family a free salami. He really did think this was the humane thing to do. It turned out to be good business, too. My mother, in the meantime, worked in the store, rolled bandages for the Red Cross and lit candles for my brother who was in the Army. She needn't have worried. My brother bribed some superior with a never-ending supply of sugar, butter and salami; promoted a cushy deal for himself near home. . .I even passed a Math course I was failing; failing, that is, until my father had a little business talk with the teacher. Again—sugar, butter, salami. . .After the war a supermarket chain put my father out of business. He went to work for it and got even. Began cheating them out of SBS—sugar, butter and salami. My father died a bitter man. He loved me--but the love was always tainted with SBS. He never knew that, of course. SBS was simply the way of the world. I don't know when I really realized that. I think it was when I was on that Fulbright overseas. Over there, it was SBS all over again. They really had to make up for lost time. Had to fill those bomb craters with SBS. And later all the young men I'd meet—there, here—out killing themselves in the rat race for SBS. —But not in the new movement . Free, open. Out of sight. They dug the evil of sugar, butter, salami; and were so hip to that corrupt trinity that they took the sugar bit and added acid to burn through the SBS lies.

(Beat. Discovery!)

But you know something. . .Big Arnie is beginning to make a fortune on the lecture circuit; where people pay a lot of bread to hear him spit in their faces. He gets big money for his interviews. And he has a best-selling record out. I even hear he's going to make a film. Is it sugar, butter and salami all over again?

(Desperate)

—No! It's different! It has got to be! Because I've got to stay in the Movement.

(Limbo spot--out!)

JEREMY

Why?

WOMAN-DRESSED-AS-A-HIPPIE

What?

JEREMY

Why must you stay in the Movement?

WOMAN-DRESSED-AS-A-HIPPIE

Where else can I go?

JEREMY

I don't know. Other movements?

WOMAN-DRESSED-AS-A-HIPPIE

What other Movements? There are no other Movements?

JEREMY

I would doubt that.

WOMAN-DRESSED-AS-A-HIPPIE

Doubt not, buddy! I mean, I know my Movements!

JEREMY

Well, if there are no other movements—and you have doubts about this one—

WOMAN-DRESSED-AS-A-HIPPIE

Doubts?

JEREMY

—why don't you get out of the movement altogether?

(The Indian stands and holds up a sign.

It reads: "BIG SUR."

The Balladeer strums chord)

JEREMY

Right! Why not go out to Big Sur? Find yourself; find out who you are, then—

WOMAN-DRESSED-AS-HIPPIE

(Yanking sign from the Indian)

I have no doubts about the Movement. It's pure. It fights evil; the power structure; the SBS hypocrisy; corruption—

JEREMY

And that's marvelous. Those things should be fought. But you just indicated that Big Arnie might be corrupt now, so—

WOMAN-DRESSED-AS-HIPPIE

(Rolls up Big Sur sign)

Will you shut up!

(Hits Jeremy with rolled-up sign)

(Pause)

I'm sorry.

(Pause)

JEREMY

(Slowly moving back into the driver's seat)

All I wanted to do was dialogue with you.

WOMAN-DRESSED-AS-A-HIPPIE

(Moving into car, next to Jeremy)

Listen, mister, when we pick up Big Arnie—please, please don't tell him about that “old squaw” thing.

(Indian blows whistle.

Points out over the audience)

That's him! *THAT'S BIG ARNIE!!!!*

BALLADEER

The fifth pickup.

(MUSIC: 60's hard rock.

LIGHTING: Rock show)

(Big Arnie, with Mick Jagger-swagger, enters through audience.

John Lennon granny sun glasses.

Bell bottoms that tent out over his shoes.

Bloused shirt open to the navel.

Bare chest.

When Big Arnie gets on stage
he Jagger-swaggers to and fro,
hither and yon;

Follow spots Jagger-swagger with him.

Big Arnie “conducts” the music OUT)

(Beat)

JEREMY

(From the driver’s seat)

So you’re Big Arnie.

BIG ARNIE

(Always playing the audience as he struts)

Big Arnie *C*.

JEREMY

(From the car)

What does the “C” stand for?

BIG ARNIE

CHARISMA!

(Conducts. MUSIC: Punctuates)

WOMAN-DRESSED-AS-A-HIPPIE

Yeah! I told him all about you; what a big man you are in the movement.

BIG ARNIE

Check!

(Conducts. MUSIC: Punctuates)

JEREMY

Why? I mean—how do you do it?

BIG ARNIE

I groove. With The universe.

JEREMY

Grove? — Ah! You mean in the sense of “dialoguing!”

(Big Arnie moves to car,
snaps his fingers.
Woman-Dressed-As-A-Hippie
quickly moves into back seat,
next to the Indian

Standing next to car)

BIG ARNIE

I mean, like, it’s all a sponge. Right? I mean everything; Space, spiders, you—Indians.
And I soak it all up. Dig?

JEREMY

Wait a minute! — maybe that’s what I’m after—to “groove” with. . . —Do you know Big Sur?

(Balladeer strums one BIG SUR chord)

BIG ARNIE

(Swings up to seat next to Jeremy)

Negative.

JEREMY

(Starting car. Drives)

Well, I’m headed out there.

BIG ARNIE

(After quick yawn)

oh?

JEREMY

A professor from my parish—now, why do I remember this? — this professor had been out to Big Sur—

BIG ARNIE

groovy.

JEREMY

—He said Big Sur was the perfect place to be if you were tired of words. Like he was.

WOMAN-DRESSED-LIKE-HIPPIE

(Leaning in from back seat)

What are we picketing against this time, Big Arnie?

BIG ARNIE

Words. Words. WORDS!

WOMAN-DRESSED-LIKE-HIPPIE

Groovy!

JEREMY

How can you dialogue without words?

BIG ARNIE

Like this, Man!

(Sings Rock)

JEREMY

Oh, you mean like this?

(Sings Bach)

BIG ARNIE

No! I mean like this—

(Sings Rock.

They Rock/Bach battle.

On Cyclorama, upstage, two large moving headlights.

Indian blows whistle, points into imaginary rear view mirror)

BIG ARNIE

Something's following. Has been for the last five minutes. Gas it!

JEREMY

What?

WOMAN-DRESSED-AS-HIPPIE

He means, step on the gas!

JEREMY

I will not! I'm not about to speed!

WOMAN-DRESSED-AS-A-HIPPIE

(Looking back at lights)

It's one of those big black cars the gangsters used to use.

BIG ARNIE

(Stepping on Jeremy's accelerator foot)

Gas it!

JEREMY

Cut it out, kid!

BIG ARNIE

O-wow! It's like the whole universe is high for a chase and I'm groovin' with it. Gas it!

JEREMY

Please! Please let up! It's my car!

BIG ARNIE

IT'S MY UNIVERSE!

WOMAN-DRESSED-AS-HIPPIE

LOOK OUT!

(The Indian blows his whistle.

Sound: Crash.

Blackout.

Lights up.

The Tour Guide enters,
possibly played by The Balladeer,
and holding a hand mike)

TOUR GUIDE

INTERLUDE: A CROSS COUNTRY BUS TOUR.

(Tour Guide jumps onto the car's running board.

All in the car sit bolt upright.
They now wear gas masks.

Throughout the Tour Guide's speech,
all in unison follow directions,
looking right and left, as automatons)

TOUR GUIDE

(Continued)

Now if you'll all look to the right and left, you'll notice that a kind of defoliation of the land begins to take place. Few trees. . . then fewer. . . now no trees at all. . . only shrubs . . . dried shrubs for a bit, as we move along. And now, as we approach the hill—that's right, look up ahead and you can see a steep hill. . . —as we approach it, you'll notice some dried grass to the left and right—just patches of the yellow grass—and finally dirt . . . very, very dry, cracked earth, the result of this drought year. — Now. As we strain up this steep hill, I would suggest we all put on the green-tinted sun glasses passed out to you before. Because, when we caterpillar over the top, we'll be blinded by the setting sun

(All hold up green-tinted glasses,
Balladeer pulls down tinted goggles)

whose rays, unblocked by buildings, trees, shrubs or grass, will blind the naked eye directly and, indirectly, by bouncing off the earth, which will resemble burning clay . . . and by something else on that other, mysterious side of the hill.

(MUSIC: Opening, "Thus Spake Zarathustra")

Glasses on?

(The Automatons place sun glasses
over their gas masks)

Good. Because here we go— OVER THE TOP!

(A crimson explosion!
Smoke pots!
The Apocalypse!)

Surprised, eh? You didn't expect to see this; did you? . . . Holes

(MUSIC: OUT)

TOUR GUIDE

(Continued)

Large holes. . . Huge holes as far as the eye can see. With flames shooting out of each hole, . . . Look like the mouths of midget volcanoes; do they not? — *Uh, uh!* Don't look directly into them; shades or no shades. Those fires are too bright! —What's that, son? —No, no! This is not the moon. This is the Nation's New Central Dump! —As you know, they took over these thousands of what were once forests—well, the air pollution had done the trees in anyway; and what the pollution missed, that chemical warfare chemical— that the Army accidentally let loose? —you recall — did in the rest. So they hired the depressed area people from around here to make the mile-deep potholes and “tend to furnace”, as it were. So what you're seeing are last year's automobiles—that hole over there— . . .no return plastic bottles, over there—and it's a big one! — . . .and, ah yes— the one they call the billion dollar hole — last year's military hardware, including the famous F-111's!

(All stand)

Burning, all burning, everything burning, burning, burning up!

(All sit and look sharply right)

HEY! You! Stop running alongside this ve-hi-cle! Do you want to get killed?! —Crazy kid! — I think it was a kid. Funny what happens to their eyes and ears out here. — I know. We'll play THE GAME! —How many of you think that that bald creature running alongside with the puffed-out stomach and puffed-up, colorless eyes and that strange skin—is a child? . . .I see. —How many of you think it was a grownup? . . . Other? . . .HA! —Just like all my tours! —Most of you think it was an “Other.”

(All look sharply left and down)

What? That hole? That's a strange one all right. Filled with water. Very clear, clean water, too. —No! It's not man-made like the rest! It sort of just happened. A freak of nature, I would guess. They're working hard to get rid of the water. . . . —I mean, they need the hole. Right!

(MUSIC: “STARS AND STRIPES FOREVER.”)

Tour Guide marches away from the car
and continues to march in place on stage.
Two of the car passengers
march off passed the Tour Guide.

The Tour Guide removes gas mask)

TOUR GUIDE

The sixth pickup!

(In the car, the Indian, in the back seat,
is playing the flute.
Jeremy in the driver's seat, driving.
The Black Graduate sits next to Jeremy)

BLACK GRADUATE

—and I missed my ride from the college. Unluckily, you came along and—

JEREMY

Unluckily? I don't under—

BLACK GRADUATE

I mean luckily--no! I don't! I mean *unluckily*. You see—oh—I've got to tell somebody. . . I purposely missed my ride. And I was hoping no one would come along and pick me up. And yet, I knew it was inevitable. I mean, I *did* graduate. And I *had* to leave, but—

JEREMY

Actually, I almost didn't stop for you. I had pretty much decided not to pick up any more riders. That last batch nearly caused us to be killed. But I still have a long trip ahead of me and I—

BLACK GRADUATE

—*because* I think anyone would be upset. —And I mean I'm almost physically upset. By the way, do you think you could ride more smoothly? You have a tendency to jerk and it's making my stomach a bit—

JEREMY

It's the car. I'm a good driver. My instructor back at Bodoni County told me—

BLACK GRADUATE

—It's my father, frankly. He's a famous judge. So I've got to be a famous lawyer. Right? He got me this job with a WASP law firm.

JEREMY

That's wonderful.

BLACK GRADUATE

That's terrible. They've set me up as their token Negro—whoops! I mean, their token Black—I'm supposed to say “Black.” That law firm is tripping over themselves to find me

BLACK GRADUATE

(Continued)

a special slot. And I just know I'll do no wrong in their eyes. Ever. —Not that I'd expect to. I am qualified. But the real point is—I HATE LAW—and when they start killing me with kindness, that will just—oh, well. . .

JEREMY

(Joking)

Why don't you march?

BLACK GRADUATE

You mean—as in protest?

JEREMY

Yes.

BLACK GRADUATE

Oh, I couldn't. I can't stand standing on my feet for more than twenty minutes at a time. Flat feet. Anyway, I'd always be out of step. Have no sense of rhythm.

JEREMY

I was joking.

BLACK GRADUATE

No. It's all set up. They want me as their resident Black—

INDIAN

(Stands)

—Like you Jeremy Chester's "resident Black." For this trip.

(Sits)

JEREMY

He talks!

BLACK GRADUATE

He sure does. But I don't like what he says.

JEREMY

But those are the first words he's said all trip!

BLACK GRADUATE

Probably using that Puerto Rican trick. They know how to speak English when they want to, all right.

JEREMY

But this is wonderful! Now we'll be able to dialogue.

(Back over his shoulder, while he drives)

Oh, Young Indian, say something else.

INDIAN

(Stands)

Until Redskin want anyone know business in teepee—him keepum flap shut!

(Sits)

BLACK GRADUATE

Say, what did he mean—I'm your resident Black on this trip?

JEREMY

Well, yes. In a way it's true. Back home in Bodoni County I never knew any Negroes—I mean, *Blacks*. And I felt it would be necessary to dialogue with—

BLACK GRADUATE

(Stands. Recites)

“Oh, God! Oh, God! How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable seem to me all the uses of this world.” That's from *Hamlet*.

(Sits)

Not bad, huh? That's what I really want to be—an actor. Ever since I played Topsy in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* when I was a kid—ever since then I've wanted to act.

(Stands. Recites again)

“These late eclipses in the sun and moon portend no good to us. Love—” ah “—Love—”

(Sits)

I can't remember the rest.

JEREMY

From *King Lear*: “Love cools, friendship falls off, brother's divide. In cities, mutinies; in countries, discord; in palaces, treason; and the bond cracked twixt son and father.”

BLACK GRADUATE

(Annoyed at Jeremy's recitation)

That's how it goes all right. So you see, I have this one burning ambition within me: To Act! —Yet, I'm sentenced to be drowned in a sea of well-meaning WASPS! And my own bourgeois father's hand is holding me under. And that's not all. The other side— the militants—they already damn my father as an Uncle Tom. He doesn't care. But I do. They'll get after me now. And that law firm. I just don't believe in what I'm going to be doing. You see why I'm sick?

JEREMY

Ah! I remember now! “We have seen the best of our time. Machinations, hollowness, treachery, and all ruinous disorders follow us disquietly to our graves.”

BLACK GRADUATE

Yeah, well, you’d better keep your mind on the road. —Getting back to **my** problem—there’s also the competition. I’ve heard about the meanness and savagery that goes on when you’re being forced to get to the top. And I’m really frightened.

JEREMY

I’m really delighted—that he talks, I mean.

(Back to Indian)

And you play that flute thing nicely.

BLACK GRADUATE

He’s giving me a headache.

JEREMY

That melody; it sounds familiar. I know this is crazy, but it sounds like, “Yes, we have no bananas” played backwards. What is it?

INDIAN

(Stands)

It “*Yes, we have no bananas*” played backwards.

(Sits)

BLACK GRADUATE

Now I’m really getting nauseous—and to the marrow of my soul. —That’s it! Jean Paul Sartre said it. “The no-exit absurdity of life makes you want to retch.”

INDIAN

(Stands)

Indian proverb better: “Wretched absurdity of life, make you want to exit.” —Whatever that mean.

(Sits)

BLACK GRADUATE

On the other hand, this firm will keep me out of the Army. They have high government connections. Oh, they believe in the war and all; but they’ll do anything to keep their sons or partners out. So that’s good. But that’s it—that’s the end of my acting career.

JEREMY

Perhaps they’ll have an amateur theatrical group. Our church had one.

BLACK GRADUATE

Look, don't insult me! I have professional stuff in me! But anyway, I couldn't do both. I mean, that's being "uppity." Oh, no, they wouldn't allow their "Black" that, too. So there I'll be; smiled at. Promoted, even. But always frustrated.

INDIAN

(Stands)

What this second rate Sidney Poitier need is his own "Black"

BLACK GRADUATE

Very funny!

(Stands and grabs Indian's arm)

JEREMY

Please calm down! We haven't begun to dialogue yet.

(Black Graduate twists Indian around so that the Indian is now bent back over the front seat)

BLACK GRADUATE

Hey, wait a minute! I've got it! You can be my token *Indian!* That's right! You're the lowest man on the totem pole in the good old U.S. of A. What do you say?

(Indian hands him a small totem pole. Black Graduate throws it out of the car. The Balladeer catches it and throws it offstage)

And even if I kick you once in awhile, it won't hurt, because I'll be wearing moccasins.

(Indian takes off moccasins from his own feet and hands them back to Black Graduate. Black Graduate throws them out of car. Balladeer retrieves them and throws them offstage)

Right. Moccasins *you'll* make for *me*. . .

(Releases the Indian)

BLACK GRADUATE

I'm sorry. . .Oh, stop the car. . .please. . .I'm going to be sick...

JEREMY

(Stopping car)

No! Not in the new car! Don't get sick in the new car!

(The Black Graduate stumbles out of car.

Pursuing lights on Cyclorama appear)

INDIAN

(Blows whistle; points back)

Mafia black sedan again! *Coming on like cavalry!*

JEREMY

Oh, no you don't, whoever you are!

(SOUND: Car revving up)

You're not going to catch me!

BLACK GRADUATE

(Backing offstage)

Hey! Hey! I'm sorry—please—please wait for me!

(Exits)

(Lights down on car.

Lights up on Balladeer)

BALLADEER

(Sings and plays guitar)

DON'T LOOK BACK, JEREMY CHESTER;
PHANTOMS OF FEAR ARE THERE.
TALK, OH TALK, JEREMY CHESTER;
PERHAPS ONE PASSENGER WILL HEAR.
PERHAPS ONE PASSENGER WILL HEAR.

(Lights up on car.

Two men's' jackets are draped on car

Indian still in the back seat. Jeremy, not on stage.

Jackie comes on with his Old Mother.
Jackie's sleeves are rolled up.
His Old Mother, walking with a cane,
is holding onto his other arm
(with her free hand)

BALLADEER

The Seventh and eighth Pickup!

JACKIE

(Stops walking.
Over his shoulder to someone offstage)
Two blowouts! Bang, bang! Right in a row! Hard to believe, Mister!

OLD MOTHER

I believe it, Jackie. God was trying to tell you something.

JACKIE

Now, mother.
(Over his shoulder; shouting offstage, to Jeremy))
You're a real life saver, Mister!

OLD MOTHER

Life saver. Sure. Saving my life to prepare me for death.

JACKIE

Mother.

JEREMY

(Offstage. Shouting to those on stage)
Tow truck's gone! —But don't you worry! We'll get you to where you're going!

OLD MOTHER

(Over her shoulder; Shouting to the offstage Jeremy)
I don't *want* to get to where I'm going! —and what're you doing out there?! Peeing?!

JACKIE

Mother!

JEREMY

(Offstage; shouting to Old Mother onstage)

That's right! Nature calls!

(Jackie and Old Mother have reached the car)

OLD MOTHER

(To Indian, in rear seat. *SWEETLY*)

Jackie's taking me to an old lady's home to die.

(Indian plays his flute)

JACKIE

(Helping her into the car)

Mother, no one is interested in—

OLD LADY

(From seat; shouting offstage, to Jeremy)

Hey! You! Voiding your bladder out there! What's your savage doing?! —just sitting and playing! Gives me the creeps!

JACKIE

Mother! Please!

(Picking up his jacket)

JEREMY

(Offstage; shouting to Old Lady onstage)

That's not nice! — calling him a savage!

OLD LADY

(Over her shoulder)

What's your name, son?

INDIAN

(Standing)

Savage!

(sits)

OLD LADY

(To Jackie)

See?

JACKIE

(Putting on his jacket)

And it's not "*an old lady's home*." You know that, Mother! It's a Senior Rest Lodge. Like a hotel.

(Shouting offstage. To Jeremy)

I'm not a rich man, Mister! Heaven knows! I've got a family, a house, lots of expenses! Still, I plan to do the best by my mother. I'm told this is a good Rest Lodge and—

OLD LADY

(From seat; shouting offstage. To Jeremy)

Where're you headed, Mister-tinkling-in-the-woods!?

JEREMY

(Offstage; shouting to Old Lady, seated in car)

Out to Big Sur!

(Balladeer appears and plays
the Big Sur chord on the guitar.
Exits)

OLD LADY

(Shouts out to Jeremy)

That's California, isn't it! I've heard of it! Next stop—the Pacific ocean. Right?

JEREMY

(From Offstage; shouting to Old Lady, seated in car)

That's right!

OLD LADY

Hear that, Jackie? Your good-for-nothing, used up, 86-year-old mother knows her geography. She's not so dumb.

INDIAN

(stands)

Agèd bark make best canoe!

(sits)

OLD LADY

You tell him, Tonto! —Do you hear that, Jackie?

JACKIE

I know you're not dumb, Mother. And I wish you'd stop saying "used up" and "good for nothing."

OLD LADY

Why not? That's what your "better half" used to call me. And what about what Mr. Savage said—about the old canoe? I notice you ignoring that pretty good.

JACKIE

All right, tell me this: Could you have gotten along with Hannah?

OLD LADY

Never!

(Jeremy Chester enters. Is stopped by
the Mother/Son confrontation)

OLD LADY

(Continued)

She's a terrible housekeeper! She doesn't know how to bring up kids! And she makes *you* miserable!

JACKIE

That's not true!

OLD LADY

—*And* she hates me!

JACKIE

Hannah doesn't hate you!

OLD LADY

She loves me?

JACKIE

No. She doesn't love you, but—

OLD LADY

She tolerates me. That's worse.

JACKIE

Then what I'm doing is best for you.

OLD LADY

Sending me to an old lady's home—best for me?!

JACKIE

It's not an "*old lady's home?!*"

OLD LADY

What's the difference whether I die in an "old lady's home" or—or a fancy "lodge?!"

JACKIE

(Trying hard to avoid looking her in the eyes)

There IS a difference.

OLD LADY

What?! What?!

JACKIE

(In her face)

—*YOU DIE BETTER IN A FANCY LODGE!*

(Pause)

JEREMY

Now, I really think I can put your mind at ease in this situation. There's a rest home where I come from in Bodoni County.

(Moves to the car, puts on his jacket
while he talks.)

Light change. Those in the car don't move)

I played the little organ there once. The one in the Rumpus Room. For a wedding party, believe it or not. Two of the inmates—sorry, guests, I mean—were getting married. It turned out to be quite a party.

(MUSIC: Bach's TWO-PART INVENTION
IN B-FLAT MAJOR--Switched-On Bach version,
if possible)

After they wheeled in the bride and groom, the attendants helped everyone put on funny hats. The hat kept slipping off the groom's head. Because he shook so much. But all the rest—those that could hold them, had little horns and noise-makers and bells. All the nurses and attendants were marvelously patient in showing everyone how to use them. Oh, once in awhile an attendant would get annoyed and maybe blow a toy bugle into a patient's ear. But generally things went well. And the room was so nicely decorated. There were blue balloons all around. But, for some reason, they weren't fully blown up. Anyway, the party was supposed to be non-alcoholic. But someone--they never found

JEREMY

(Continued)

out who--had spiked the punch. Oh, it was really quite a sight. Those old coots whooped it up and those who could, danced and had a devil of a time. Then, suddenly,

(MUSIC: Out)

the caterer came in with a tray of food. And he was all decked out in a fine, elegant frock coat. For some reason, the guests became terrified when they saw him. Began trying to get out. It really was quite funny. Finally, they were quieted down and the party went on and everybody had a great time. So you see

(Light change. Normal)

those places aren't bad. Your son's right. You'll have lots of laughs yet.

(Beat)

OLD LADY

Oh, Jackie. . .

(Sobs)

JACKIE

It'll be all right mother.

(Jackie lifts his mother out of the car.

They exit, slowly. . .very slowly. . .

as the lights begin to fade to night)

JEREMY

I dialogued wrong again, didn't I?

(The Priest enters and moves into the car.
The Priest sits in the rear seat,
next to the Indian. It is now night)

Didn't I, Father?

BALLADEER

The ninth pickup.

(Jeremy gets behind the wheel;

begins to drive.
 On occasion, lights of oncoming vehicles
 pass across Jeremy)

JEREMY

I'm glad you're waking up, Father.

(Beat)

One of the young priests who got you settled in the car said you'd probably sleep straight through; until I left you off at the Bishop's Parish. I gather you're a wandering priest of some sort. A missionary? I also gather you haven't been well.

(Priest sneezes)

Bless you.

(Priest blows his nose)

I hope this new job you're getting will be an easier one. Traveling is, after all, exhausting. . .And. . .often. . .dissatisfying. You know, those young priests seemed to hope you would sleep. I hoped you wouldn't because—

(beat: DISCOVERY!)

It just occurred to me; those young priests acted like they were ashamed of you when they lifted you into the car.

(Beat)

Ah, I'm being unfair. Reading into the situation. —Well, to be perfectly honest, I didn't like them. The "new breed," Father McGuire called them back in Bodoni County. "They're taking over," he used to say. Anyway, I'm glad you're awake because I'd like you to—well, in point of fact, I stopped at your parish—actually—to go to confession. And when I was asked to take you to the Bishop's Parish—well, I thought—well, will you? I know it's unorthodox but—will you hear my confession? Here? Now?

(Priest clears his throat)

Good.

(Jeremy leaves the car
 and moves into the Limbo Space.)

MUSIC: Any Bach organ piece.

Jeremy kneels)

JEREMY

(Continued)

Bless me, Father, for I have sinned, it's been. . . I can't remember how long it's been since my last confession. —Come to think of it, how long have I been out on the road? You see, I'm headed for. . . Big Sur. . . —Would you believe it, for a second there, I almost drew a blank. Anyway, I'm afraid this will be a strange confession because—well—I really have nothing to confess; and yet. . . —You see, I've wanted to open up— meet and understand people on this trip. But I haven't been able to touch them—and they couldn't care less about me. I know that's not a sin and yet—. . . ah! —Is this it? Somewhere, Father, deep down. . . yes. . . I've begun to despair.

(beat)

And isn't to despair to despair of God?

But why should I despair? All that's failed to happen is that the dialogue hasn't happened; but then, it never has for me. I just don't understand. . . That's not true. I understand something; that throughout this entire, absurd trip, they've all been in —what. . . a kind of pain. And I couldn't do anything about it. And if they're in pain, then I'm in pain. . . and I can't do anything about that and—. . . But at least I can talk about it—to you. And you—even though it's not clear how I've sinned—can forgive me.

(Priest makes sounds;
begins to sign

Limbo Space light--OUT)

What's the matter, Father? What are you doing? And why haven't you said a word? You're not getting sick?

INDIAN

White father's father deaf. Him use sign language. Him say, old friend on trail!

(Priest leaves the car. Exits)

JEREMY

Deaf! Oh, my God!

INDIAN

Keemosabie better gas it!

(Light Out on car;

up on Balladeer)

BALLADEER

(Sings and plays guitar)

ENGINE'S HOT, JEREMY CHESTER;
TIRES ARE WEARING THIN.
BUT KEEP ON, JEREMY CHESTER.
BIG SUR IS WHERE LIFE MAY BEGIN.
BIG SUR IS WHERE LIFE MAY BEGIN

(Lights up on car.
Dots of light shooting across Cyclorama)

INDIAN

(In back seat, wrapped in Jeremy's blanket)

This plenty big snow storm to hinder journey of Bodoni County Road Runner. And his Redskin pickup.

(Blows a note on his flute)

JEREMY

I wasn't expecting snow. I would have bought snow tires.

INDIAN

Great White Weatherman, on White Father's squawk box, all full of it: Him say fair weather in Nevada. Him meant foul weather.

(Blows a note)

JEREMY

Would you mind not playing that anymore? I have a headache as it is. With this snow, it's very hard to concentrate on the road.

INDIAN

Happily obedient Redman-Orphan-Child oblige Great White Road Runner.

(Blows a note)

Last toot for trip. Instead,

(stands)

Obedient Red Stepchild recite Redman's poem to pass the time of trip. This poem called, "Song of a Child's Spirit."

INDIAN

(Continued)

(Balladeer beats on the guitar
as if it were a tom-tom.

The Indian, in the rear seat,
makes large gestures)

“I am on the way,
traveling the road to where spirits live,
at Shipap.
I look at the road, far ahead,
down that way.
Nothing happens to me, as I am a spirit.
I am a spirit, of course I am,
as I go on the nice clean road to Shipap.
It is true that my spirit meets the others
who come toward me.
I am glad to see them and be with them.
I have a right to be there”

(Tom-tom OUT)

JEREMY

That’s a very depressing poem. Don’t go on with it.

INDIAN

Great White Father right—

JEREMY

Please stop calling me “Great White Father.”

INDIAN

Small White Brother right not want face poem of death. Redskin always face death and
see where that’s got him: Him dying out.

JEREMY

Why is it so cold in here?

INDIAN

(With no trace of accent now)

That’s because your radiator conked out.

JEREMY

What happened to your accent?

INDIAN

Tired of it. However, if you're uncomfortable unless an Indian does the Big Chief Geronimo bit—me try to keep-um up charade.

JEREMY

No, we've come too far for that. Be yourself.

INDIAN

Say, that's very white of you. —Would you mind my moving up front? What little heat remains is all up there.

JEREMY

No.

INDIAN

I can scalp you better from back here.

JEREMY

It's not that. I just don't want anyone too close to me now. Anyway, I'm sure the radiator will work again. This is the first time—

INDIAN

Take it from an old mechanic; you got a lemon in this car.

JEREMY

But I won it in a raffle.

INDIAN

Really? The only thing I ever won was a cigar-store Indian. No kidding. In a "Save-the-Indian-Nation" bazaar once. Run by some "well-meaning people."

JEREMY

I don't think it's a lemon at all.

INDIAN

Just like this Japanese-American friend of mine. He and his family—*they* won a "prize" in a raffle; while they were in an American concentration camp. During the Second World War. Right out here somewhere, I think. Some well-meaning organization held a raffle for them; and he—my friend—and his family—won a little statue of the baby Jesus. But this one had—guess what?—slanty eyes. And right on the little statue was stamped—"The Jap Jesus."

INDIAN

(Continued)

My friend's wife got very upset. She was a Christian. Kept saying, "Everyone knows the baby Jesus was Jewish." *Well-meaning-people*. Sure.

JEREMY

Just because the heater isn't working doesn't mean the car is a lemon?

INDIAN

Paint job's bad. And listen to that motor. I'm not sure it'll make it to—to—

JEREMY

Big. . .Big Sur.

(Balladeer strums chord)

Say, do you suppose Big Sur is an Indian name?

INDIAN

Probably.

JEREMY

Then we probably stole it from you.

INDIAN

Of course.

(The Balladeer beats Tom-tom on the guitar.)

The Indian stands.

Recites. In his own voice.

No gesturing.

No trace of the mock-Indian now.

Real)

INDIAN

"I cannot help it; I must leave,
because the spirit has called me back.
So I am going direct to my spirit.

INDIAN

(Continued)

There are places down there where
all the people
live whom you have seen.
They have gone, when the time has come.”

(Tom-tom out)

JEREMY

I told you that poem depresses me!

INDIAN

(Sits)

Sorry.

(Pause)

Are you sure I can't move up front?

(Pause)

I'm beginning to see my breath.

JEREMY

NO!

(The Balladeer hits his guitar box once.

The Indian jumps out of the car
and into the Limbo Space;
in his own special light)

INDIAN

My name is Savage. My first name is Noble. That's right. Noble Savage. My first name was taken from that old radio soap opera: "*Mary Noble, Backstage Wife.*" We often didn't have food, but we had a radio. My father thought we couldn't have a more American name than that—Noble; after Mary Noble. . . Following that kind of logic, he should have called me *Mary*.

(The Balladeer hits guitar once.

Light change)

From San Francisco, I'm taking a boat out to the Pacific. They're building a bridge out there. Indians, you know, are used for building skyscrapers and bridges. They're sure-footed on heights. Those who work at it make heap big money. —Also, it's supposed to

INDIAN

(Continued)

be great up there on the cable. With the clean sea wind whipping all around you. Many brave Braves have told me that you go into a better high than with any drug you could take. But I checked around and I found that no big bridges are being built in this country at the moment. But this one out in the Pacific—ah—it will connect a couple of Islands to the mainland of Asia. That's for me. It will take years to finish.

(The Indian reaches out of light.

The Balladeer hands the Indian a jar.

The Balladeer then plays Tom-toms,

as Indian does an authentic dance.

Tom-Tom out as

the Indian falls to his knees.

Applies stuff from the jar)

—for one thing, putting on war paint keeps my face warm. And I also feel—and this might be the main reason—I feel that I need to dig back to my roots. Does this surprise you, Jeremy Chester? My being serious, I mean? That's how we Indians are: Manic Depressives.

(Tom-toms again

as Indian resumes his dance.

Tom-toms out

as Indian falls to his knees again.

Applies more war paint)

INDIAN

(Continued)

—I managed to educate myself, but it didn't help. They would never let me make more than a hundred dollars a week. At that I feel superior. Most Indian families live on thirty dollars a week.

(Tom-toms.

Dance.

Tom-toms out.

The Indian falls to knees

in profile to the audience;

he turns his face slowly to the audience)

INDIAN

(Continued)

I'm thirty years old. The average Indian dies at forty-three. I have thirteen more years to live. Comforting.

(Pause.

The Indian stands.

suddenly begins moving in his

Limbo Space, like a caged animal)

So I've been hitting one Reservation after the other—like a pinball weaving in and out of the Great White Father's pinball machine. *GREAT TOTEM POLES AND TINY BREASTED SQUAWS!*—those Reservations are depressing! Filthy! Full of disease! I visited my relatives on one of them. Some of the kids had trachoma. You know what that is? That's an eye disease that can lead to blindness—a disease that hardly anybody but Indians get anymore. The others had middle ear infections and were on their way to becoming deaf. —And this last visit? —One of my teenage nieces had killed herself. And most of the kids, *and* their friends, were sniffing glue. And that's common, common among my clan. . . .why, Why, WHY, Jeremy Chester, did I make this trip?! *I'M DIGGING FOR ROOTS IN A DUNG HILL!* —Jeremy, they won't let me belong on my land. And when I get to that bridge, it won't be anything near what I expected. —I'll bet all those Braves walking on air up there—hoping for their highs—really get nothing but spectacular earaches! Anyway—anyway, I get dizzy on heights; and the great Moccasin Maker in the sky made me all left feet. Jeremy. . . I feel so half an Indian! And that means I'm less than half a man! So what do I do?

(Falls to his knees. Sobs)

(Limbo Space light--Out!

Pause)

JEREMY

(Leaning toward the Indian,

as if he wants to touch him,

comfort him. Instead, he says:)

It stopped snowing. And look—look, Noble. We've reached California

(Projected: Following headlights on Cyclorama)

INDIAN

Yeah, and so has our friend.

JEREMY

Noble, I don't think I can shake him. And I've got to. I've got to.

INDIAN

(Jumping onto running board)

Jeremy Chester; let me drive! I'll lose him! I know this country, every inch of it. Hell, it's my land, isn't it?

JEREMY

(Standing, relinquishing the wheel
to the Indian, and taking the Indian's seat
in the rear of the car)

Yes, Noble, you drive. Lose it! Lose it!

(Balladeer uses the guitar as a tom-tom)

INDIAN

(Behind wheel)

In the name of all my ancestors, crushed under the weight of the White Man's broken treaties—

JEREMY

—and in the name of all my desperate pickups seeking a bit of silence or just a place to die—

INDIAN

—in the name of all of them, I use all my skill to out-fly that pursuing spirit.

“Now I cannot say what they will make of me.

I may take the form of a cloud.

I take the chance of whatever's offered me.

When a cloud comes this way, you will say,

‘That is he!’ “

(The Balladeer increases tempo of tom-tom)

INDIAN

Hold on, Jeremy! We're flying through my country.

(Lights: White dots spiraling around
the stage and theatre)

INDIAN

(Continued)

“When I get to the place of my spirits,
I will hear everything you ask.
You must always remember me,
And in Shipap I can hear everything you say.”

(Tom-tom--out!

Projected lights on Cyclorama--Out)

JEREMY

Noble, I think we've lost it.

INDIAN

Let's make sure.

(SOUND: CAR SPEEDING UP)

JEREMY

(Moving into front seat next to Indian)

Noble, what are you doing? Isn't that the Bay up ahead?

INDIAN

Right! Monterey Bay!

JEREMY

(Half out of his seat)

Noble! We're going off the edge!

(SOUND: Car Screech—A Heavy Splash!
LIGHTS TO BLACK.

SOUND: Bubbles.

LIGHTS: Slow build of blue-green, on stage
and throughout the auditorium.)

(Additional light up on Jeremy
the Indian.

The Indian floats up to a standing position. Jeremy floats up next to him.

They bob a bit in place.

And when they speak, their rhythm is slower; amplified, if possible)

JEREMY

Noble. . .are we. . .all . . .right?

INDIAN

Yes. . .We're safe. . .On the bottom. . .of the Bay.

JEREMY

Oh.

INDIAN

"I am a spirit. . .and I bless you.
I thank you. . .for all you have done. . .in the past years.
I hope to see you. . .someday.
We send you. . .many good wishes. . .many good things.
Thank you. . .

(Pause)

JEREMY

Noble. . .

INDIAN

. . .yes. . .

JEREMY

. . .will we be able. . .to move on. . soon. . .to. . .to. . .to

INDIAN

. . .Big Sur? . . .I guess. . . . As soon as the garbage boats pass over us. . .and dump their garbage out to sea.

(Pause)

(The Balladeer strums guitar.)

Sings:)

BALLADEER

(Sings)

ROADS OF SAND DOWN AT THE BOTTOM;
SEA SHELLS AND RAINBOW FISH;
SPEAK TO YOU DOWN AT THE BOTTOM.
THE SEA MAY GIVE YOU ALL YOU WISH.

THE SEA MAY GIVE YOU ALL YOU WISH.

(The Balladeer stops strumming
and singing.

Pause. Speaks:)

The play ends.

CURTAIN

(MUSIC: Bach's Brandenburg Concerto#3,
in C Major)

