

A Car in front of a Cyclorama.

The car is actually four chairs on two platforms; the rear platform being 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 Toccata 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)

Weeeeel, 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)

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.