

5-15-2009

Dreams of the Road

Roy Keith Trawick
University of New Orleans

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.uno.edu/td>

Recommended Citation

Trawick, Roy Keith, "Dreams of the Road" (2009). *University of New Orleans Theses and Dissertations*. 930.

<https://scholarworks.uno.edu/td/930>

This Thesis is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It has been brought to you by ScholarWorks@UNO with permission from the rights-holder(s). You are free to use this Thesis in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/or on the work itself.

This Thesis has been accepted for inclusion in University of New Orleans Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@UNO. For more information, please contact scholarworks@uno.edu.

Dreams of the Road

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts
in
Film, Theatre and Communication Arts
Creative Writing: Playwriting

by

Roy Keith Trawick

B.S.S.W., University of Alabama, 1972

M.Ed., University of Montevallo, 1979

May, 2009

Copyright, 2009, Roy Keith Trawick

Dedication

Dedicated to my parents, Mary Eden Minor, Everette Maddox,
William Lavender, Constance Congdon, Jim Grimsley and
James Winter with gratitude for the lessons you have taught me.

DREAMS OF THE ROAD

by

Roy Keith Trawick

Cast of Characters

(in order of appearance)

<u>Charlie:</u>	A country storekeeper and polio victim, 55.
<u>Becky:</u>	Allie's daughter, 22.
<u>Jesse:</u>	Becky's married lover, 35.
<u>Doch:</u>	A tramp from the highway, 42.
<u>Allie:</u>	A country mother, 40.

Scene

All the scenes of the play take place on the front porch of a country store at Alameda Junction in Southwest Alabama.

Time

Spring and summer, 1958.

ACT I

Scene 1

Setting:

The front porch of an old country store. There is a bench on the stage right side of a screen door, which is center stage and an old rocking chair on the stage left side. Just inside the screen door there is an ancient “wet box” with a Royal Crown Cola emblem on it. There are gasoline pumps just offstage. It is two o’clock on a sunny afternoon in early April.

At Rise:

CHARLIE, 55, the storekeeper and resident sage is dressed in overalls and a plaid shirt. He sits in an old wheelchair downstage left, playing an autoharp and trying to write a song in an old notebook.

CHARLIE

(singing)

Driving from coast to coast,
 Seeing the sights along the way,
You’re the one I love the most,
 Riding with you all day,
And into the night,
 Makes everything feel so right.

(CHARLIE plays the autoharp in ham-handed fashion. He has trouble changing the chords. BECKY, 22, a beautiful young woman in pedal pushers, ballet shoes and a sleeveless blouse walks onto the store porch.)

BECKY

That sounds pretty good!

CHARLIE

You don’t have to lie.

BECKY

Well it will as soon as you learn to play that thing. What is that? Is it a zither?

CHARLIE

It's called an autoharp. It's supposed to be easy to play.

BECKY

Why don't you just get your guitar? You already know how to play that.

CHARLIE

It hurts my fingers. I've got some kind of rheumatism or arthritis or something.

BECKY

Why don't you go to the doctor?

CHARLIE

I did but I'm not sure I understood exactly what he said to me. He gave me a shot of penicillin and sent me home.

BECKY

That's Dr. Jack. The man is a genius.

CHARLIE

He's good in a crisis. He can save your life. Well—most of the time.

BECKY

Seen Alton today?

CHARLIE

Yep. He left here hitchhiking north with some clothes in a knapsack.

BECKY

I reckon he did what he said he was gonna do. He's run away from home.

CHARLIE

What happened?

BECKY

I think one of the teachers at school said something to him. He's been criticized a lot for being in the band and not playing football.

CHARLIE

That don't seem too bad but then you never know what a kid is gonna take to heart.

BECKY

I hate to say it but I'm glad he's gone. He's been so nasty the last few months. Nothing we did made him happy. He'd pitch a fit at the drop of a hat.

CHARLIE

He'll learn. Nobody but your family will put up with that. Is this your day off?

BECKY

Yep. Did he say where he was going?

CHARLIE

He said something about going to Memphis and taking Elvis's place while he's in the Army.

BECKY

I could see him trying to do that. I bet they have to tell him "no" more than once.

CHARLIE

I bet they will, but what if they say "yes?"

BECKY

It won't matter. He'll be an orphan and an only child long before then.

CHARLIE

Aw, he ain't that selfish. He's a good kid.

BECKY

You don't have to live with him!

CHARLIE

We spent a lot of time together. I taught him how to play guitar.

BECKY

It ain't the same.

CHARLIE

Well, how are you doing? How's the Hill Top Café?

BECKY

It's a job. It's better than the Pan Am. Ain't no rats in the kitchen.

CHARLIE

Make the best of it till something better comes along.

BECKY

I'm still trying to get a secretarial job at Bedsole's.

CHARLIE

What are the chances?

BECKY

I don't know. It'll take months.

CHARLIE

I had hoped you'd be able to go on to college.

BECKY

Me too, but it didn't work out that way. I'm going for an interview with Dr. Atkinson next week.

CHARLIE

Receptionist?

BECKY

No—dental assistant. He said that if I get the job he'll train me.

CHARLIE

Looking in people's mouths all day. I don't know if I could take it.

BECKY

I probably won't have to worry about it. Catherine's probably gonna get the job.

CHARLIE

Well, she does have some experience. Found a boyfriend yet?

BECKY

Not me. I can't remember the last date I had.

CHARLIE

With all the men that come in that café you'd think you'd like one or two of 'em.

BECKY

I do. I like 'em all. I just haven't found the one I can fall in love with yet.

CHARLIE

Are you even looking? I know your mama wants you to get married.

BECKY

Yeah, she wants me to marry somebody rich and respectable.

CHARLIE

Is there even anybody like that in Thomasville?

BECKY

(laughing)

Not that I can think of. I'm taking my time.

CHARLIE

There's no need to rush it. You're still young.

BECKY

Then why do I feel so old? I need a vacation!

CHARLIE

Just take one. Go on down there to Gulf Shores and feed the seagulls.

BECKY

Peace and quiet—that's what I need. Wish I could afford it.

CHARLIE

Becky, would you do me a big favor? Could you watch the store for a little while? I need to take a nap. I ain't felt well all day. I'll pay you.

BECKY

Sure. I'd be happy to.

(CHARLIE gives BECKY a cigar box.)

CHARLIE

Here's the moneybox with change and so forth. There's a price list in there of the things you're likely to sell. If you sell any gas write it down separate.

BECKY

I think I can handle that.

CHARLIE

I'll see you in an hour or two.

BECKY

Take some aspirin and drink some hot tea.

CHARLIE

Exactly what I was gonna do.

(CHARLIE wheels himself into the store. BECKY holds the screen door for him. She closes the door behind CHARLIE and sits on the old bench. We hear the sound of a log truck coming to a stop as she looks inside the cigar box. JESSE, 35, a very handsome man dressed in work clothes comes on to the store porch. He sits on the bench beside BECKY.)

BECKY

Hey, baby.

(JESSE moves to kiss BECKY.)

Not here! You never know who's watching.

JESSE

I'm sorry. I just can't keep my mouth off you.

(They giggle.)

I saw you sitting here by yourself. Where's Charlie?

BECKY

He's taking a nap. Says he doesn't feel well.

JESSE

I hope it's nothing serious. I really wanted to talk to you.

BECKY

I want to talk to you, too. I noticed that you didn't say hello to me at church last Sunday.

JESSE

I didn't?

BECKY

You wouldn't even look at me.

JESSE

Why didn't you just say hello to me?

BECKY

Now how would that look?

JESSE

I don't think anybody knows about us but us.

BECKY

Let's keep it that way.

JESSE

I'll make sure I say hello next time.

BECKY

Don't over do it! We don't need to look like we're up to something.

JESSE

You are the best thing that's happened to me in a long time!

BECKY

And you're the best thing that's happened to me but I hate having to slip around.

JESSE

You ain't gettin' cold feet are you?

BECKY

No, I'm still excited. How about you?

JESSE

I want to be with you all the time.

BECKY

You know what that would take.

JESSE

Yeah, I do. We'd need to move—maybe a bigger town where nobody knows us.

BECKY

I'm not gonna harp on it but you need to start making plans to get a divorce.

JESSE

I'm working on it, baby.

BECKY

I know it's going to be expensive but we can do it if we work together. I'd like to start a family before I get too old.

JESSE

Baby, we've got plenty of time! Right now let's just have some fun and see each other every chance we get.

BECKY

I'm okay with that for now.

(JESSE goes to grab BECKY'S thigh but she quickly stands up.)

I told you we gotta be careful!

JESSE

I'm doing the best I can!

BECKY

(retaking her seat)

Let me ask you. Do you think you could get away one weekend and meet me down at the beach at some little out of the way place?

JESSE

Sure we can do that. Maybe a Monday and Tuesday would be better. I can say that I have to go see my granddaddy down there. Peggy hates him.

BECKY

We'll work out the details tonight.

(JESSE tries to kiss BECKY. She jumps up again.)

BECKY

Jesse, did you want to buy anything?

JESSE

Not right now. I just stopped to see you.

BECKY

Well get out of here! I'll see you tonight—same place, same time.

JESSE

I think I can get out of the house about eight thirty.

BECKY

That late?

JESSE

I gotta do some work before I leave. The back porch is about to fall in and I've got to fix the kitchen sink.

BECKY

Well, don't make Peggy suspicious and I'll see you tonight. Kiss kiss.

JESSE

See you tonight!

(JESSE leaves the store porch. We hear a log truck pulling away. BECKY sits on the bench. CHARLIE wheels himself through the screen door.)

BECKY

That nap wasn't nearly long enough!

CHARLIE

I couldn't get to sleep but I did take some aspirin and had some cold chicken soup.

BECKY

Go back and try to doze off.

CHARLIE

It wouldn't do any good. I guess I'll just have to tough it out.

BECKY

I hope you're not coming down with something.

CHARLIE

It's probably just the change in the weather. Becky, I've got to ask you a question. Are you messing around with Jesse?

BECKY

No. Why do you ask?

CHARLIE

I couldn't help overhearing what y'all said to each other. Sounded like you were making a date.

BECKY

No, it wasn't anything like that.

CHARLIE

Jesse is 35 years old, has a wife and three children. Leave him alone!

BECKY

I'm not bothering Jesse! I don't know what you heard but there ain't nuthin' to it!

CHARLIE

Okay, I believe you. I like you a lot, Becky. I remember when you was born and I've watched you grow up. I just want the best for you.

BECKY

You ain't got a thing to worry about.

CHARLIE

I'll take your word for it.

(BLACK OUT)

(END OF SCENE)

ACT I

Scene 2

Setting: The scene is the same, the front porch of a country store. The time is three o'clock in the afternoon on a sunny day in April, two weeks after the previous scene.

At Rise: CHARLIE sits in his wheelchair downstage left trying to write what he thinks of as a rock 'n' roll song. He is singing and playing his autoharp a little better.

CHARLIE

(singing)

Have you ever seen,
 A girl so mean,
So long and lean,
 A real teenage queen,
Don't know why I want her,
 Don't know what it means,
But I love her more than a can of baked beans!

(CHARLIE stops singing as BECKY comes onto the porch. She is now wearing a blue blouse and sandals. It is obvious that she is upset.)

BECKY

Charlie, I've got something to tell you.

CHARLIE

Okay.

BECKY

You were right.

CHARLIE

About what?

BECKY

Two weeks ago you asked me if I was making a date with Jesse. I denied it but that's exactly what I was doing.

CHARLIE

You didn't have to lie to me.

BECKY

If I hadn't lied you'd have figured a way to stop me.

CHARLIE

I'd have done my best. What's happened now?

BECKY

Peggy caught us. Me and Jesse are moving in together.

CHARLIE

You can't get away with that around here.

BECKY

I don't have a choice. He's left home and I'm not going to turn my back on him.

CHARLIE

Shackin' up ain't no good, Becky!

BECKY

I know. People are talking already.

CHARLIE

How did Peggy find out about you?

BECKY

He'd come see me three or four nights a week. She started following him.

CHARLIE

Peggy's got three young 'uns. Who kept them while she was out?

BECKY

She took 'em with her.

CHARLIE

That ain't right. What did she use for transportation?

BECKY

Her sister Jenny's got a car. We were parked just off the road to the Shoals and had no idea we'd been followed. She ranted and raved and hit him two or three times.

CHARLIE

Did she jump on you?

BECKY

She tried to but Jesse wouldn't let her hit me. After that big scene, he dropped me off and went home. This morning we moved into the old Harper place together.

CHARLIE

He rented the Harper Place?

BECKY

No. He's been looking after it for Old Man Harper so it's rent-free.

CHARLIE

Don't count on staying there too long. Ocie Harper is bound to find out what's going on.

BECKY

Home wrecker. That's what they're calling me and I guess it's true.

CHARLIE

I don't suppose any of it is Jesse's fault. Does your mama know?

BECKY

I hope not.

CHARLIE

She'll find out today and she ain't gonna like this one little bit. She has great hopes for you and I don't think Jesse Pernell is part of the picture.

BECKY

I hate having to face her.

CHARLIE

Well, don't lose your courage now! What made you do this?

BECKY

I don't know, Charlie. I just fell in love. I didn't mean for it to happen. One thing led to another, he kissed me and I liked it.

CHARLIE

I suppose it was a big accident that you found yourselves alone?

BECKY

He told me later that he tricked me.

CHARLIE

And you didn't trick him?

BECKY

It don't matter now. We're gonna be moving to another town as soon as we can.

CHARLIE

With three chirren to support, it'll be twenty years before you have any money if you stay together.

BECKY

I'm gonna work, Charlie.

CHARLIE

I know you will. Let me say this. I know it won't do any good but I've just got to try. Please don't do this, Becky!

BECKY

Charlie, Jesse is depending on me. I can't let him down.

CHARLIE

Your mother's been depending on you too. The little money you give her really helps out.

BECKY

I'll still send her what I can. It might take awhile though. Neither one of us was prepared for this.

CHARLIE

You mean that y'all never thought you'd ever get caught?

BECKY

Yeah. Stupid ain't it.

CHARLIE

Well you're gonna have to start thinking now that's for sure!

BECKY

It's gonna be fine, Charlie. I just know it is!

CHARLIE

You don't want to know my opinion about that.

BECKY

You've always been my best friend. I've always told you everything...

CHARLIE

Until now. Well, we'll just have to do the best we can.

(BECKY'S mother, ALLIE, a woman in her early forties who retains a remnant of her former beauty despite her frayed housedress and worn-out shoes, walks onto the store porch and angrily approaches BECKY. CHARLIE makes himself scarce by wheeling himself inside the store.)

ALLIE

Have you lost your mind?

BECKY

No, Mama.

ALLIE

You're as crazy as a cross-eyed guinea hen!

BECKY

It'll work out. You'll see!

ALLIE

I already see how it's going to work out! Shacking up with a man twice your age!

BECKY

He's younger than that!

ALLIE

He's closer to my age than yours! I remember him in school. He wasn't that far behind me!

BECKY

Age doesn't matter.

ALLIE

Are you really that dumb?

BECKY

I want to come to the house and get some of my things.

ALLIE

Come get everything you own and then don't ever come back!

BECKY

Mama, don't be mad!

ALLIE

Don't be mad? Don't be mad? I'm out of my mind worrying about you! I don't understand how you could do this to me! To yourself!

BECKY

I'm in love!

ALLIE

You don't have one single working brain cell in your head! I'm disgusted with you!

(ALLIE slaps BECKY about the head and shoulders. BECKY puts up her hands to shield the blows but ALLIE continues to pummel BECKY with her open hand.)

BECKY

Mama, please quit!

(ALLIE does not quit. She continues to flail at BECKY who does not attempt to hit her back. Suddenly, JESSE runs onto the store porch and inserts himself between the two women. ALLIE blindly strikes him several times before she realizes she is not hitting BECKY. When she sees that she is hitting JESSE she turns away. JESSE consoles BECKY.)

JESSE

I'm sorry Mrs. Murdoch. I couldn't let you keep hitting Becky.

ALLIE

Becky is none of your business, Jesse!

BECKY

Yes, I am, Mama! We're going to be living together.

ALLIE

I'll never accept this! After today I don't ever want to see you again!

BECKY

Mama, don't say that! This is the best thing that could have happened. You'll see!

JESSE

Mrs. Murdoch, I'm sorry for all that's happened.

ALLIE
Why Becky? Why did you have to pick her?

JESSE
I'm in love with Becky, Mrs. Murdoch.

ALLIE
That's not love!

JESSE
I'm sorry that we hurt you.

ALLIE
It goes further than me. Becky's future is out the window! Her reputation is gone. She has two brothers in school who won't be able to hold their heads up.

JESSE
Becky and I are going to move. All this will be forgotten.

ALLIE
Nobody I know will ever forget this! Becky, are you pregnant?

BECKY
No, Mama.

ALLIE
Then come home!

BECKY
I can't!

ALLIE
Your daddy ran off and Alton is gone but I never thought you could betray me like this!

BECKY
I haven't betrayed you!

ALLIE
Then what would you call it? I wanted you to marry somebody respectable. Have some money and not have to suffer like I did—make something you could be proud of. But somehow you just can't do it. I just wonder where you get it. I wonder what made you turn out to be trash!

JESSE

Mrs. Murdoch, I can't let you insult Becky that way!

ALLIE

Then let me insult you! You're triple trash and old enough to know better! Becky come home with me now!

BECKY

No, Mama. I'm going with Jesse.

ALLIE

Then go with Jesse!

(ALLIE strides off the store porch. CHARLIE returns to the porch.)

BECKY

I'm sorry, Charlie.

CHARLIE

(with dry humor)

She'll get over it in ten or twenty years. If y'all stay together Allie will come around.

JESSE

We'll be together from now on.

(JESSE puts his arm around BECKY.)

BECKY

Yes, we will.

CHARLIE

Well, let me know how things go.

BECKY

I'll write you a letter when we get settled in.

CHARLIE

Please do.

(BLACK OUT)

(END OF SCENE)

ACT I

Scene 3

Setting: The same old store porch. It's four o'clock in the afternoon on a sunny spring day a week after the previous scene.

At Rise: CHARLIE sits in his wheelchair down stage left working on writing a new song. As he finishes, BECKY comes on the porch of the store. She wears a skirt, penny loafers, bobby sox and a light sweater. She carries a cheap suitcase and crosses to the bench where she sets her suitcase down. BECKY is upset.

CHARLIE

(singing)

If you want to catch a fish you got to learn to wait,
If you want to catch a fish you got to learn to wait,
If you want to get your wish you got to use some bait.

Patience is a virtue all the people say,
Patience is a virtue all the people say,
But the sun is shining baby, we got to make some hay!

(CHARLIE sees BECKY and quits singing.)

BECKY

(blowing her nose in a handkerchief)

You won't believe what's happened now.

CHARLIE

What?

BECKY

The worst thing that could've happened!

CHARLIE

He committed suicide?

BECKY

Naw. He went back to his wife.

CHARLIE:

Well—he'll have a hell of a time staying around here. Won't nobody speak to him.

BECKY

That ain't so.

CHARLIE

Why not?

BECKY

Guess what the son of a bitch did!

CHARLIE

I don't reckon I know darlin'.

BECKY

He did the only thing he could've done that lets him off scot-free.

CHARLIE

He's movin'?

BECKY

Naw. He went to prayer meeting last night and got saved. Now, all is forgiven. He's a good Christian family man again—just like that.

CHARLIE

That don't seem right.

BECKY

I don't think it *is* right.

CHARLIE

You could do that too, Becky. You could do it Sunday. Just ask the preacher to have an altar call.

BECKY

I can't do it, Charlie.

CHARLIE

Sure you can!

BECKY

Naw, I can't. When you repent you gotta mean it and I ain't sorry for anything we did. I'm just sorry we got caught and the whole thing blew up.

CHARLIE

I reckon it's better not to add bein' a hypocrite on to ever'thang else.

BECKY

I loved him, Charlie. I thought he loved me, too. I was such a fool!

CHARLIE

I don't guess it would help much to know that you ain't the first one this has ever happened to.

BECKY

It's the first time it's happened to me.

CHARLIE

Your mama know you're leaving?

BECKY

She knows and I think she's glad.

CHARLIE

Well, keep in touch. I know she loves you.

BECKY

Charlie—I've done everything wrong! You tried to warn me but I wouldn't listen! Now, I've just gotta get away from here.

CHARLIE

I can't blame you for that. Where you headed?

BECKY

Anywhere as long as it's far enough! What time does that bus come by?

CHARLIE

Southbound bus is due about thirty minutes from now. You gotta get out there and flag it down though. It won't stop unless you do.

BECKY

What if I wanted to go north?

CHARLIE

You've missed it for today. It'll come by tomorrow morning though.

BECKY

I ain't waitin' that long. I guess it's Mobile then. Don't tell anybody which way I went.

CHARLIE

I won't say a word. You gonna stay in Mobile?

BECKY

I don't know. I might go on to New Orleans or Pensacola. I don't know anybody in either place—but that's what I'm looking for—right?

CHARLIE

Just remember, when you get where you're going you can tell 'em anything you want to. You can be exactly the kind of person you want to be.

BECKY

(with sarcasm)

I know. I can start a whole new life.

CHARLIE

I'm just saying—your life ain't nobody else's business.

BECKY

I wanted to spend the rest of my life with him. I loved that man.

CHARLIE

Time will cure that.

BECKY

I hope you're right, Charlie. Right now, I feel like the greenest young 'un in school.

CHARLIE

(chuckling)

Did you learn anything?

BECKY

Oh yeah.

CHARLIE

What do you reckon made him go home?

BECKY

He missed the kids. That's what he told me anyway. I had this idea that we could eventually get custody of 'em if we got married, but I was just dreaming.

CHARLIE

That'd be a tall order—to get the kids from Peggy—she'd just about have to be on dope or sumpin'.

BECKY

He knew that was never gonna happen so he went home. Or maybe he just didn't love me enough to stay. I don't know.

CHARLIE

You still love him?

BECKY

I don't think so but I still think about him too much.

CHARLIE

Time'll fix that, too.

BECKY

Charlie—I'm gonna go out and wait for the bus. I don't want to miss it.

(CHARLIE takes the cigar box from the back of the wheelchair, opens it and takes out five twenty-dollar bills. He hands them to BECKY.)

CHARLIE

Here. You gonna need this.

BECKY

I can't take this, Charlie. It's too much!

CHARLIE

You'll find it ain't nearly enough. You can send it back to me when you get on your feet.

BECKY

(taking the money)

Thank you, Charlie. I won't forget this.

CHARLIE

Just go make sumpthin' of yourself. Write me a letter every once in a while. Let me know how you're doin'.

BECKY

I'll do my best.

CHARLIE

And lay off them married men. They ain't worth it.

BECKY

(smiling)

That's the one thing you can count on. I think I'll go to night school—be a nurse or something.

CHARLIE

There you go! Marry a doctor! I'm gonna miss you, girl.

BECKY

I'm gonna miss you, too.

(BECKY hugs CHARLIE, takes her suitcase and heads toward the highway, stage right. CHARLIE is left alone on stage.)

CHARLIE

(to himself)

Damn! I wish I was goin' with her!

(CHARLIE turns his wheelchair in the opposite direction, counts his money in the cigar box and makes a note on a slip of paper. He puts the box away. A man with a scruffy beard, dressed as a tramp, but very handsome in a rough-hewn way and carrying an elaborate backpack comes on the store porch from stage right. We will discover that his name is DOCH, 42. He spots the wet box through the screen door, opens the door and gets a small Coca Cola out of the box. He opens it on the opener on the side of the box and comes back onto the store porch. CHARLIE turns his wheelchair.)

You got money to pay for that?

DOCH

Sure, I got a nickel.

CHARLIE

It's six cents now. Price went up last week.

DOCH

I reckon I can still afford it.

(DOCH pays CHARLIE the six cents.)

What's the name of this place? Where are we?

CHARLIE

Nowhere really. It's called Alameda Junction. There ain't no Alameda any more. It used to be a sawmill town across the highway beyond the swamp but the sawmill moved out years ago. Moved to Fulton about five miles down that way. Sorry about that. Telling you more than you wanted to know.

DOCH

That's all right. It don't never hurt to learn a little history.

CHARLIE

I didn't see you walk up. Which way did you come from?

DOCH

(pointing)

That way. I spent last night in Mobile.

CHARLIE

So, I reckon you're headed north. Hitchhiked all the way?

DOCH

Yep. I was lucky—had three rides—the last one put me out about a mile down the road. I saw this girl headed towards the highway. She looked familiar.

CHARLIE

That's Becky. She's decided to leave home.

DOCH

Do her folks know she's leaving?

CHARLIE

It's just her mama and she knows. Her daddy ran off when she was a child. Haven't seen him since.

DOCH

That's awful. Is her mama doing okay?

CHARLIE

She manages. She got married again but he died.

DOCH

(looking in BECKY'S direction)

That's a shame. Well, good luck to the girl. I was hoping to find a place to stay around here tonight. Any chance I can camp out down there in them woods?

CHARLIE

I think I can do a little better than that. You can sleep in the side room right around there. It's supposed to rain tonight.

DOCH

I really appreciate that.

CHARLIE

I sleep in the back myself. It's convenient. Don't have to drive to work.

DOCH

Do you drive?

CHARLIE

Oh yeah. Got an old car with hand brakes and accelerator. Don't have to do nothin' with my feet.

DOCH

I'd like to see that—see how it's hooked up.

CHARLIE

I bought a pickup the other day but I don't have it fixed up yet so I can't drive it. How did you get started traveling?

DOCH

Well—I've been on the road for about twelve or thirteen years now. Drifting is a habit I just can't seem to break. The truth is that when I came home from World War Two, I found out I had three young 'uns that I didn't have when I left home.

CHARLIE

Goodness! What did you do?

DOCH

Well, it took some getting used to. I tried to accept it and make the best of it. Lots of guys did that. Me—after a couple years I just had to hit the road. I mean—one or two maybe—but three?

CHARLIE

Amazing!

DOCH

I never looked back.

CHARLIE

Where'd you start out from?

DOCH

I grew up in Florida.

CHARLIE

I hear it's nice down there.

DOCH

I reckon so. People just keep moving in. I hate them air conditioners. They've ruined everything.

CHARLIE

I might as well hate 'em. I can't afford to buy one.

DOCH

What do folks do to make a living around here?

CHARLIE

They log and work at the sawmill and the shirt factory. Some are in construction. Those are the good jobs. If you want to hang around a few days I can give you enough to get you to your next destination for helping me out around here.

DOCH

I'd like that. Let me introduce myself. I'm Doch Wade.

CHARLIE

Charlie Kelley—proud to know you.

(They shake hands.)

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Of course, if you're interested in public work, you can probably find a job around here. Have you ever done construction?

DOCH

Sure. I'm probably better at plumbing than anything else.

CHARLIE

There you go. A good plumber is always in demand.

DOCH

I doubt I'll be around long enough to take on any big projects. Is there a toilet in the side room?

CHARLIE

Oh yeah. It's even got a sink. We're up to date around here!

DOCH

Let me go put my stuff away. I'll be right back.

CHARLIE

(pointing)

Right around the corner there, first door you come to.

(As DOCH takes his backpack around the store stage left, ALLIE, comes on to the store porch from stage right, carrying BECKY'S suitcase. As she comes onstage, BECKY calls to her.)

BECKY (O.S.)

Mama, you're gonna make me miss my bus!

ALLIE

Why didn't you stop her, Charlie?

CHARLIE

What could I do?

(BECKY comes on to the store porch and tries to grab her suitcase away from her mother. ALLIE refuses to let the suitcase out of her grasp.)

BECKY

I'm leavin', Mama! If not today then tomorrow—I can't stay here!

ALLIE

Becky, what will I do without you?

BECKY

Turn my suitcase loose!

ALLIE

No! You ain't gettin' this suitcase back!

BECKY

Mama, I'm gonna catch that bus with or without that suitcase.

ALLIE

You can't afford new clothes.

BECKY

I'll go to the Salvation Army.

ALLIE

Mobile ain't the place for you, Becky. What would you do down there?

BECKY

Who said I was going to Mobile?

ALLIE

That's where that bus goes.

BECKY

And plenty of other places!

ALLIE

(beginning to sob)

Becky, I just don't want you to go. There are so many ways to get in trouble down there. You're not used to a big town.

BECKY

And I never will get used to it if I stay here. Give me my suitcase!

(ALLIE dodges away again as BECKY reaches for the suitcase.)

ALLIE

You've got two teenage brothers at home still in school. They need you too.

BECKY

Give me my suitcase!

CHARLIE

Give it to her, Allie!

ALLIE

Shut up, Charlie! This ain't none of your business!

(DOCH comes back to the store porch. When he sees ALLIE and BECKY he tries to retreat but ALLIE sees him first and speaks.)

What are you doing back here, Harry Murdoch?

CHARLIE

I knew it was him!

DOCH

Just passing through.

ALLIE

That figures!

(ALLIE walks toward DOCH.)

Well, let me have a look at you. You look older than you are. Smoking and drinking will do that to you.

DOCH

Yeah, I suppose so.

ALLIE

Harry, you are the last person I expected to see. Let me introduce you to your daughter, Becky.

DOCH

Hello, Becky. Good to see you.

BECKY

It's been a long time, Daddy. Good to see you, too.

DOCH

You're looking good. Healthy.

BECKY

You're looking pretty good yourself. I can see that life on the road agrees with you.

DOCH

Well—I ain't gettin' fat—that's for sure.

BECKY

It's a shame we won't have time to catch up. I'm leaving as soon as the bus comes.

DOCH

We'll have time to talk when you come back.

BECKY

I don't know about that. I might be gone a pretty good while.

DOCH

At least I got to see you for a little bit.

BECKY

I wish you had been here when I needed you.

DOCH

I don't know that I could have been much help.

BECKY

You're more than likely right about that.

DOCH

Give your daddy a hug.

BECKY

No!

DOCH

Come on. It won't hurt you.

BECKY

It might! I bet you ain't had a bath in two weeks or three weeks.

DOCH

I had one yesterday. Come on, it don't have to last that long.

(BECKY stiffly embraces her father.)

BECKY

I really missed you for a long time. I think I might have even cried when they told me you weren't coming back.

DOCH

I missed you too, Susie.

BECKY

Don't start that pet name stuff! I'd almost forgotten what you used to call me!

(BECKY pounds DOCH'S chest with both fists
then turns away, wiping her eyes.)

Mama, give me my suitcase I've got to go.

ALLIE

Please, Becky—just don't leave! We can work through these problems!

BECKY

You work through 'em, Mama. I don't want to! Give me my suitcase!

ALLIE

No, you can't have it!

BECKY

I'm going down there and get on the bus without it then.

(BECKY starts to leave the store porch.)

ALLIE

Wait a minute, Becky!

(BECKY stops and turns toward ALLIE.)

BECKY

What Mama?

(ALLIE walks to BECKY.)

ALLIE

Here's your suitcase. If you're that determined I know I can't stop you.

BECKY

Thank you, Mama. I'll write you when I can.

(ALLIE hands the suitcase to BECKY. BECKY hugs and kisses her mother and heads for the highway. ALLIE starts to sob.)

CHARLIE

It's for the best. She'll be fine.

ALLIE

What do you know about it, Charlie? You ain't got no children!

CHARLIE

I know you, Allie. You raised her.

ALLIE

I done the best I could. Just don't count the last six months.

DOCH

What do you mean by that, Allie?

ALLIE

It's none of your business, Harry!

DOCH

Okay. I'll have to ask somebody else.

ALLIE

I ought not even be talking to you! She's been dating a married man. The whole community knows about it.

DOCH

It's probably better that she get a fresh start somewhere else. These people around here will never let her live it down.

ALLIE

What do you care? You don't even know her!

DOCH

I reckon not.

ALLIE

You deserted us twelve years ago. We've had a hell of a time without a man around.

DOCH

I hear you got married again.

ALLIE

Lasted six months and he up and died with a stroke.

DOCH

I'm sorry to hear that.

(The sound of a bus stopping and a door opening and closing is heard. ALLIE, DOCH and CHARLIE look toward the bus. ALLIE waves.)

ALLIE

Well, that's that. I'm gonna worry myself to death over that girl.

CHARLIE

She'll be all right. Just pretend she got married and moved to Detroit with her husband.

ALLIE

You are so silly! I ain't pretendin' nuthin'! This is real life!

CHARLIE

Well, she's gone and I wouldn't be surprised if she don't never come back. That's real life too!

ALLIE

That's mean, Charlie!

CHARLIE

I know it is, but that girl needs a chance and she won't get it here.

ALLIE

Looks like I'm outnumbered. Well—two young 'uns down and two to go. (to DOCH) I hope you ain't planning to stay around here long.

DOCH

Oh no. Just a few days, that's all.

ALLIE

You ought to come by and see your two sons before you leave.

DOCH

I don't have any sons.

ALLIE

Yes, you do.

DOCH

They were already born when I got back from World War Two. They couldn't be mine.

ALLIE

You didn't go to any World War Two, Harry.

DOCH

Yes, I did! I was in the Battle of the Bulge!

ALLIE

You worked at the Mobile shipyard when you weren't layin' out drunk.

DOCH

You're lying!

ALLIE

I wish I was!

DOCH

Your three boys belong to somebody else.

ALLIE

They're all yours. They're all just like you, especially Alton. He's cut right out of your butt! Quit school at sixteen and we haven't seen much of him since. Becky's the one that's probably not yours. Till here lately she's always had good sense.

DOCH

Becky's mine from before the war! She remembers me!

ALLIE

Just drop by to see your boys before you leave. Clean yourself up before you come!

(ALLIE leaves the store porch, stage right.)

DOCH

(sitting on the bench)

I just don't understand it. Why is she lying about me that way?

CHARLIE

I think she was just trying to get your goat when she said that about Becky.

DOCH

I don't mean that. I mean about me going to war. I was there! All the way through to VE Day! You know that's right, Charlie!

CHARLIE

Doch, you've got to leave me out your fight with Allie.

DOCH

Are you taking her side?

CHARLIE

No, I'm not, Doch. I'm trying to be on your side but you won't let me. I know you think you were there, but you didn't ever leave Mobile to my knowledge—except to come up here.

DOCH

That's a lie! Charlie, you know it's a lie!

CHARLIE

Doch—I don't know it's a lie! We ain't gonna have no fight about this!

DOCH

I'm going in there to get my things and get back on the road.

CHARLIE

Don't do that, Doch. You might not catch a ride all night.

DOCH

I ain't worried about that. I just can't stay here with everybody against me.

CHARLIE

I'm all for you, Doch. I just can't say you went overseas during World War Two.

DOCH

How do you know? You weren't there!

CHARLIE

Yeah, I was, Doch. You was Harry back then. Y'all were living in a little two-room house in Alabama Village. I was playing banjo in a Dixieland band all around Mobile at the time. I spent the night on your couch ten or fifteen times.

(DOCH puts his head in his hands.)

DOCH

I can't be this wrong. You got anything to drink, Charlie?

CHARLIE

This is still a dry county, Doch, but if you go in the side room and look under the air compressor you'll find a bottle with about a half-inch of scuppernong brandy in it. You're welcome to it but there ain't no more where that came from.

DOCH

I won't take the last you got.

CHARLIE

I know you ain't asked me for any advice but I'm gonna give you some. If I was you I'd think whatever I wanted to and just keep it to myself.

DOCH

I'm telling the truth!

CHARLIE

Don't matter. Anybody who knows you will think you're crazy.

DOCH

Do you think I'm crazy?

CHARLIE

I don't know what to think but I do know that nothing I say is going to change your mind.

DOCH

(rising)

I'll get my stuff.

CHARLIE

Sit down, Doch! You can leave tomorrow morning.

DOCH

I don't need this. I'm gonna hit the road.

CHARLIE

Doch, don't tell me I'm the only one who ever disagreed with you! You ever been to a hospital or anything like that?

DOCH

Not lately.

CHARLIE

Stay around here for a while—get some good food and rest. Who knows what might happen? Allie seems to have some feeling for you—I mean she didn't throw rocks at you when she saw you coming. That's a good thing.

DOCH

I don't have any feelings for her. She's just like a stranger.

CHARLIE

That's good too. You can start fresh.

DOCH

Let me think about it. I'm gonna go try to clean up.

CHARLIE

Can I ask you a question, Doch? Did you come back here on purpose, or was it just accidental?

DOCH

I didn't have any idea where I was at first.

(DOCH quits speaking as JESSE comes on to the porch.)

I'll be back in a little bit.

(DOCH heads toward the side room.)

CHARLIE

Wait a minute, Doch.

(DOCH stops and turns back to CHARLIE.)

Jesse, this is my new handyman, Doch Wade. Doch, this is Jesse Pernell. He drives a log truck for McGillberry.

JESSE

Hey, Doch. Good to meet you.

(They shake hands.)

DOCH

Good to meet you too, Jesse. I'll be right back, Charlie.

(DOCH again heads toward the side room.)

CHARLIE

What can I do for you, Jesse?

JESSE

Just looking for a cold drink and a pack of cigarettes.

CHARLIE

You can get 'em yourself—right inside there.

JESSE

Sure.

(JESSE goes inside the store briefly and brings back a pack of Pall Mall unfiltered cigarettes. He then gets a small soda from the wet box.)

How much I owe you?

CHARLIE

Thirty-one cents on the nose!

(JESSE gives CHARLIE the money and sits on the bench.)

JESSE

Charlie, have you seen Becky today?

CHARLIE

Jesse, Jesse, Jesse—you need to leave that girl alone.

JESSE

I just wanted to apologize to her, Charlie. I never intended for things to work out like they did.

CHARLIE

How did you figure they would work out?

JESSE

I thought we might get married someday.

CHARLIE

How did you figure that?

JESSE

I was going to get a divorce and we were going to move to some bigger town.

CHARLIE

What about family, Jesse?

JESSE

I don't have any family around here, Charlie. Mama and Daddy are dead. I'm an only child.

CHARLIE

I mean your family! Them three young 'uns!

JESSE

I was gonna work out something with Peggy so we could visit together. But none of that matters now. I'm home to stay. Charlie, please tell me where Becky is!

CHARLIE

That makes no sense whatsoever, Jesse. What do you want with Becky now?

JESSE

I just wanted to plead for her forgiveness.

CHARLIE

I think she knows you're sorry, Jesse. Becky took the Birmingham bus this morning. She said something about a job in Atlanta.

JESSE

I'm glad to hear that. Glad she's making a new start. I found Jesus, Charlie. I feel like a whole new man.

CHARLIE

That's wonderful, becoming a good Christian won't do you a bit of harm.

JESSE

Oh, I know. I'm learning to enjoy going to church. I used to lay out about every other Sunday but now Peggy's got me on a strict schedule.

CHARLIE

Schedule?

JESSE

Yeah. If they're having services, I'm there.

CHARLIE

That's good. Get started on the right foot. Pretty soon you'll be teaching Sunday school.

JESSE

They've already asked me.

CHARLIE

Are you ready for that?

JESSE

I don't know a lot about the Bible but they got literature you can study.

CHARLIE

You'll get the hang of it in no time.

JESSE

I'm going to miss Becky, Charlie. I really liked talking to her and being around her.

CHARLIE

Jesse, don't backslide this soon!

JESSE

I'm not backsliding! I'm just talking about friendship.

CHARLIE

Just get Becky out of your mind, go home and look after Peggy and them three chirren. They need you.

JESSE

That's where I'm headed right now. I appreciate your understanding, Charlie.

CHARLIE

Jesse, here's something you may not know. The feller I just introduced you to—Doch—is actually Becky's daddy. His real name is Harry Murdoch.

JESSE

He left this country long ago.

CHARLIE

Well, he's back now. He don't know who you are and I'd advise you to keep it that way.

JESSE

I don't know why I'd need to be scared of him. Becky told me all about him. He's just a bum who deserted his family.

CHARLIE

I'm just saying I wouldn't mess around with his daughter if I was you.

JESSE

Don't worry, Charlie. Now that I'm saved I've been delivered from that kind of temptation.

CHARLIE

I don't know but I don't think Doch is much of a Christian. Just steer clear of him.

JESSE

Thanks, Charlie. I'll keep that in mind.

(JESSE leaves the store porch. We hear the sound of JESSE'S car burning rubber as he pulls away. CHARLIE mumbles to himself.)

CHARLIE

Thank God for the little things He does. If that idiot had been single Becky would have married him. That is truly a blessing.

(DOCH returns to the store porch. He is shaved, with three patches of toilet tissue covering dots of blood where he has cut himself. He wears dress pants, a nylon shirt and carries a panama fedora in his hand. His hair is combed and soaked in brilliantine.)

DOCH

Charlie, I think I'm going to go over to Allie's, see the kids and come on back. That way, I can be ready to leave in the morning.

CHARLIE

You're welcome to stay here. I won't let you starve.

DOCH

I think maybe I'm happier on the road.

CHARLIE

Just don't ever say that I run you off.

DOCH

I know you're trying to look out for me, Charlie. I'll be back in a couple hours if it don't rain.

(BLACK OUT)

(END OF SCENE)

ACT I

Scene 4

Setting: The scene remains the same, the porch of the store. It is nine o'clock on a sunny morning two weeks after the previous scene.

At Rise: CHARLIE is writing a song with his notebook and autoharp at hand. Without CHARLIE knowing ALLIE enters and listens as CHARLIE sings. His autoharp playing has improved and his voice is serviceable.

CHARLIE

(singing)

It was Friday night and I went to pick you up for the dance,
Under the front porch light your mother told me you weren't at home,
I thought we had a date but by some chance,
I guess I was wrong.

I didn't know what to do,
So I went to a café that I knew,
I had a burger and some fries,
I couldn't believe my eyes,
When I saw you walk in,
With another guy.

ALLIE

What kind of song is that?

CHARLIE

A teen-age love ballad—speed it up and it's rock 'n' roll.

ALLIE

Are you still trying to sell your songs?

CHARLIE

Not really. I write 'em just for me.

ALLIE

Is Harry still here?

CHARLIE

He's still here. It's been two weeks.

ALLIE

A miracle!

CHARLIE

I think he might be here for a while. I hope you don't mind me letting him stay here.

ALLIE

I don't care. Actually, I'm kind of glad to know where he is.

CHARLIE

I sent him to town to get a few things this morning. I'm gonna have him rebuild my chicken pen.

ALLIE

That ought to keep him out of trouble for a while.

CHARLIE

I doubt it. There's fourteen bootleggers in Thomasville and I bet he knows 'em all.

ALLIE

I bet you're right—even after twelve years.

CHARLIE

You know what he told me a few days ago?

ALLIE

What?

CHARLIE

He said he thought I was Alton's daddy because Alton's got some musical talent and I used to take up so much time with him.

ALLIE

What did you say?

CHARLIE

I told him it was impossible.

ALLIE

Good answer.

CHARLIE

I told him I'd never been able to have sex with a woman.

ALLIE

But you didn't say that a woman may have had sex with you once or twice.

CHARLIE

I left that part out. It's nobody's business.

ALLIE

I agree with that.

CHARLIE

You know I'm not Alton's father.

ALLIE

No, I don't know that. It was real close.

CHARLIE

Not that close! You didn't feel sorry for me that often.

ALLIE

Don't get upset. It ain't ever gonna matter. I'll tell you a secret. Harry is the only one besides you I've ever slept with.

CHARLIE

That's seems hard to believe—all them young boys sniffing around you all the time during the war. Damn you was good looking back then—and Doch gone so much of the time.

ALLIE

Are you calling me a liar?

CHARLIE

I wouldn't dare!

ALLIE

Well, it's true.

CHARLIE

How about your second husband?

ALLIE

He don't count.

CHARLIE

But you did have a little something going!

ALLIE

Are you saying that I'm the one who gave him that stroke?

CHARLIE

Not me.

ALLIE

Remember that!

CHARLIE

I'm glad we got our stories straight.

ALLIE

Before I forget—I heard from Becky. Got a letter yesterday.

CHARLIE

Where is she? What did she say?

ALLIE

Just as I predicted she's in Mobile. She got a job as a waitress at the Azalea Grill but she got fired. The bartender didn't like her.

CHARLIE

That means she didn't like him. What else?

ALLIE

She got another waitress job at Constantine's and she's trying to get into nursing school.

CHARLIE

That's great! Maybe something good will come out of this mess.

ALLIE

It's been my dream that at least one of my young 'uns would become successful at something.

CHARLIE

They'll all do well. Just be patient. What's the deal on Doch thinking he went to war?

ALLIE

I don't know. He just woke up one morning and started talking about it. He was sober too.

CHARLIE

Did Doch—I hope you don't mind me calling him that but he don't like Harry any more—volunteer for the service?

ALLIE

Oh yeah, he tried to get in but he had flat feet and vital skills. They needed him at the shipyard.

CHARLIE

He ought to understand that.

ALLIE

I think we're making a mistake here. We're trying to make craziness sound sane. It just don't add up no matter how many numbers you use.

CHARLIE

He really ain't that crazy. Just don't mention World War Two.

ALLIE

I wish he'd just snap out of it.

CHARLIE

Well, here he comes now. He's about to turn off the highway.

ALLIE

Good, I want to talk to him.

CHARLIE

One more stupid question—do you still love him?

ALLIE

Oh hell yeah! But don't tell him that.

(BLACK OUT)

(END OF ACT)

ACT II

Scene 1

Setting: The front porch of the old country store two months after the previous scene. It is a hot Thursday afternoon in July.

At Rise: CHARLIE sits in his wheelchair. He responds to the heat of high summer by fanning himself with a paper fan from the local funeral home. DOCH sits on the bench. They are playing checkers.

CHARLIE

I don't reckon it could get much hotter if it tried.

DOCH

You want me to bring that electric fan out here?

CHARLIE

Naw. It wouldn't do any good. What we need is a thundershower and a breeze. What are you gonna do tomorrow?

DOCH

King me! I've got a plumbing job with Ed Knight.

CHARLIE

(crowning DOCH's checker)

Are you going back to Allie's this evening?

DOCH

I thought I would. It's a little cooler sleeping on her back porch than it is in the side room here.

(DOCH has a triple jump and wins the game.)

Sorry, Charlie. I seen it and I just had to take it.

CHARLIE

That's okay. I'll get you next time. How are you and Allie getting along?

DOCH

Just fine.

CHARLIE

How are the kids?

DOCH

Just fine.

CHARLIE

That's what I like about you, Doch. You're so talkative I don't have to carry the conversation.

DOCH

(laughing)

I don't want to start no gossip. Well, if I'm gonna get there in time for supper I reckon I'd better start walking.

CHARLIE

You can take the pickup if you want to.

DOCH

Thanks Charlie! I'll bring it back in the morning. Ed's gonna pick me up here.

CHARLIE

He's always here by six thirty so set the alarm.

DOCH

That old rooster does a fine job. I'll see you in the morning.

(DOCH leaves the porch and we hear the sound of the old pickup starting up and driving away. As we listen, BECKY tiptoes on the porch without CHARLIE seeing her. He is occupied watching DOCH drive the truck away and then rummaging in his old cigar box. She sets her suitcase down and approaches the back of CHARLIE'S wheelchair.)

BECKY

Boo!

(CHARLIE quickly wheels his chair around and grabs his chest as he sees BECKY.)

CHARLIE

(yelling)

What is the matter with you? You almost gave me a heart attack!

BECKY

You knew it was me!

CHARLIE

No, I didn't either! You almost scared me to death! It's a shame you didn't come a few seconds earlier, you could have caught a ride home with your daddy.

BECKY

Was that him in the truck? Where did he get a truck?

CHARLIE

I bought it from Rufus Wilson.

BECKY

I thought he'd be gone by now.

CHARLIE

I did too but he's been working a little and seems to be doing okay. This is a big surprise. It ain't time for the bus.

BECKY

(putting her suitcase on the bench)

I caught a ride up here with a friend of mine and I asked her to drop me here. She'll be picking me up Sunday afternoon.

CHARLIE

You're looking good. What've you been doing? Where you been?

BECKY

Well, I took your advice. I got into nursing school at St. Margaret's Hospital. I wrote Mama about it.

CHARLIE

I believe she did mention it. That's Catholic, ain't it?

BECKY

Oh yeah.

(BECKY sits on the bench next to her suitcase.)

CHARLIE

You didn't have to tell 'em you was Catholic to get in did you?

BECKY

No. They know I'm a heathen.

CHARLIE

I was wondering about that. When I first come down with polio I went to a Catholic hospital. Stayed there for a pretty good while but it didn't do much good. It seemed like the Catholics was the only ones that cared. The Baptists did bring me some macaroni and cheese one time though. Are you in school now?

BECKY

Not yet. I have to wait till the fall to start but they gave me a job in the kitchen and let me stay in the nurses' dorm.

CHARLIE

That was nice of them.

BECKY

It's the right thing to do in the long run. They don't let you date and you can't get married and stay there.

CHARLIE

You ain't a nun are you?

BECKY

Not exactly—they just have some strict rules for students. The nuns in charge are the Little Sisters of Perpetual Grace but the people who work there call 'em—Little Sisters of Percolated Grapes.

CHARLIE

What does that mean?

BECKY

I don't know but when somebody says it everybody laughs.

CHARLIE

That can't be right! What's the world coming to?

BECKY

They ain't the easiest people in the world to work for.

CHARLIE

I'm sure they mean well. You find a doctor yet?

BECKY

Naw. Doctors don't look at dishwashers.

CHARLIE

You won't be washing dishes long.

BECKY

Sister Mary Dellaruth likes me. She's the dean of the nursing school. She comes by to check on me. She even gave me a list of books I need to read.

CHARLIE

That was nice of her.

BECKY

Yeah, I take the bus to the library downtown once a week. I do a little shopping if I've got any money.

CHARLIE

(grimacing)

Becky, can you hold the fort for me. I got some business to take care of. I won't be gone but just a few minutes.

BECKY

Sure. I'll be here when you get back.

(BECKY holds the door for CHARLIE then relaxes on the old bench and takes a magazine out of her suitcase. CHARLIE wheels himself through the store to the residential area in the back. As she turns the pages we hear a car come to a stop. JESSE jauntily walks onto the store porch.)

JESSE

I thought that was you!

BECKY

Yep. It's me.

JESSE

Are you back to stay?

BECKY

No just a visit. Can I help you with something?

JESSE

I wanted to get some cigarettes and a drink. I'll get 'em myself.

(JESSE goes inside, gets his merchandise and returns to the porch.)

Thirty-one cents—that's what I owe you.

BECKY

Thank you.

(JESSE sits on the bench. The suitcase is between the two.)

JESSE

How's Atlanta?

BECKY

Wonderful.

JESSE

I still love you, baby. I've missed you bad.

BECKY

I'm sorry, Jesse. I'm not really interested.

JESSE

I thought I meant more to you than that.

BECKY

People change, Jesse. I've started a new life. I'm going to school, working and I have a new boyfriend. Are you still married?

JESSE

Just barely.

BECKY

Work at it. It'll get better. How are things at the church? Have they made you a deacon yet?

JESSE

We don't have deacons in our church.

BECKY

I knew that—I just wanted to see if you did.

JESSE

I have taught Sunday School though.

BECKY

Well, keep up the good work. Where'd you get that car?

JESSE

That's the same old car—just a new paint job and I've done a little work on the engine. It's looking good and running smooth. There ain't no chance of us getting back together?

BECKY

Sure there is! Get yourself single, move to Atlanta, get a better job and I'll consider it.

JESSE

Quit making fun of me.

BECKY

You got that wrong, Jesse! You're the one who's been making fun of me!

JESSE

I've never done anything but love you!

BECKY

And make me your backseat whore!

JESSE

Things are gonna change, baby!

BECKY

Yes, they are! I'm going to forget all about you! The next time I see you I won't even know your name!

(CHARLIE wheels himself through the screen door.)

CHARLIE

What's going on out here?

BECKY

Nothing Charlie. This gentleman was just leaving.

(JESSE stands and starts to say something but thinks better of it and leaves the store porch.)

CHARLIE

You ain't getting back with him, are you?

BECKY

Never in a million years!

CHARLIE

Just keep thinking like that! I'm depending on you to go out there and do great things. Jesse—look at him now—that's the best he'll ever be. He ain't goin' nowhere and he ain't doin' nuthin' except drive a log truck. You're gonna do so much better!

BECKY

I won't let you down, Charlie.

CHARLIE

I know you won't darlin'. So, tell me about this girl who brought you up here.

BECKY

Her name is Tina. She's my roommate. We worked at Constantine's together. She applied to St. Margaret's so I did too. Her mama and daddy live up in Selma. Her daddy owns the Silver Moon Café.

CHARLIE

I've been there! Used to have the best hamburgers during the war. Nobody knows where they got the meat though. Some people said they was killin' cats but I don't believe that.

BECKY

She's in the same boat I'm in. Just waiting to start nursing school in September. She's Greek and sometimes I go to church with her.

CHARLIE

You don't worship none of them idols, do you?

BECKY

Charlie! Greeks don't worship idols! Those funny pictures are usually just saints or Jesus.

CHARLIE

I'd always wondered about that.

BECKY

Tell you what I have done though. I've lit a few candles. They cost a nickel a piece and you light one if you want a special blessing for somebody. I've even lit one or two for you.

CHARLIE

I hope it works cause I need all the help I can get.

BECKY

Charlie! It's already worked.

CHARLIE

I know, darlin'. I really do. It's good that you've already made a friend. Looks like things are gonna work out.

BECKY

I hope so. I'm gonna walk on up to the house. I'll see you Sunday if not before.

CHARLIE

See you then. Say hello to your mama for me.

(CHARLIE starts picking up checkers and putting them in the cigar box. JESSE sneaks back on the porch and sits on the bench without CHARLIE noticing him. Finally, CHARLIE closes the box, lifts his head and sees JESSE.)

CHARLIE

What can I do for you, Jesse?

JESSE

You got to help me, Charlie. You got to help me get Becky back. She'll listen to you.

CHARLIE

Jesse, I'll do anything I can for you except that. You got to go home and get hold of yourself.

JESSE

It just drives me crazy, Charlie. Every time I see her.

CHARLIE

Well then—don't look at her!

JESSE

I can't help it.

CHARLIE

Yes, you can! You had Becky and you threw her away. Now, you want her again. If you get her you're just gonna throw her away again!

JESSE

I won't—I swear! What if I got a divorce?

CHARLIE

Please don't do that! Jesse—Becky's got a new life. You're damn near fifteen years older than she is. You've had your shot—now please just step aside and let her have her chance!

JESSE

You ain't gonna help me?

CHARLIE

Jesse—how many times do I have to say “no?”

(BLACK OUT)

(END OF SCENE)

ACT II

Scene 2

Setting: The scene remains the same, the old store porch. It is nine o'clock on a rainy Friday morning, the day after the previous scene.

At Rise: CHARLIE sits in his wheelchair. He is writing a song with a pencil in an old notebook.

CHARLIE

(singing)

It's so good to feel,
My hands on the wheel,
Of an automobile,
Headed down the highway,
Headed anywhere but home.

(As CHARLIE writes some changes to the song
ALLIE walks on the store porch.)

ALLIE

That ain't bad.

CHARLIE

Well, it ain't good yet. That's for sure.

ALLIE

Did Doch get off on time this morning?

CHARLIE

Oh, yeah. No problems. Even this rain won't stop him today. All his work is on the inside. Did you walk down here in the rain?

ALLIE

It didn't rain a drop. I was hoping it would just to cool things off. Well, I might as well pay my bill as long as I'm here.

CHARLIE

That's an admirable thing to do. I got it right here.

(CHARLIE rummages in his cigar box and comes up with a charge pad.)

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Let's see—six dollars and seventy-five cents.

ALLIE

Are you sure? That seems like a lot.

CHARLIE

Well, in addition to groceries, Gene and Tommy have come to see me two or three times.

ALLIE

You should've stopped them from getting all that junk!

CHARLIE

I tried to but they out-run me. That's why I only charged you for half of what they got.

ALLIE

Oh. Well that sounds about right then.

(ALLIE gives CHARLIE the money for the bill.)

CHARLIE

How are you and Doch getting along?

ALLIE

Okay I reckon. He seemed glad to see Becky. Gene and Tommy are doing a lot better since Harry jerked a knot in them.

CHARLIE

Really? What did he do?

ALLIE

He caught 'em cussing me when I was trying to make them do their chores. He grabbed 'em both by the collar and jammed 'em up against the wall. He told 'em they had a right to hate him all they wanted to but they didn't have a right to talk nasty to me. He gave 'em a little lecture while they were up on their tiptoes and scared to death about how things are gonna be. They've been good as gold ever since.

CHARLIE

He told me he wasn't gonna do that—but I'm glad he did.

ALLIE

Me too. It's made my life a lot easier. Last night, Harry went out on the back porch early and went to sleep. He's got a hammock rigged up out there. It's comfortable.

CHARLIE

I tried a hammock one time. Damn near broke my neck.

ALLIE

Charlie, can I borrow your pickup?

CHARLIE

Sure. What do you need it for?

ALLIE

I wish you hadn't asked me that.

CHARLIE

What's going on?

ALLIE

Becky left the house early this morning and ain't been back. I ain't sure but I think I saw her getting into Jesse Pernel's car down by the crossroads.

CHARLIE

Don't chase her, Allie. We've done all we can.

ALLIE

I've got to, Charlie! She's my only daughter and she's about three seconds from ruining her entire life.

CHARLIE

She's grown. I love her as much as you do but she's got a mind of her own.

ALLIE

She ain't using it.

CHARLIE

What are you going to do when you find her?

ALLIE

I don't know. I'll think about that later.

CHARLIE

I think you just might make a bad situation worse if you catch up with her.

ALLIE

What should I do? Nothing?

CHARLIE

Exactly.

ALLIE

I can't do that, Charlie! Look, if you don't want to lend me your truck that's fine I'll find some other way.

CHARLIE

It ain't that. You know I'll do anything I can to help you.

ALLIE

And I'm grateful.

CHARLIE

I can't talk you out of doing this?

ALLIE

Nope. I've got to try.

CHARLIE

(giving ALLIE the key)

Take the truck and bring it back when you need gas.

ALLIE

Thank you, Charlie.

(ALLIE kisses CHARLIE on the cheek and quickly leaves the store porch. We hear the old truck crank up and pull away.

CHARLIE returns to his song.)

CHARLIE

(singing)

Country boy, country girl,

Never seen much of the world,

It's so easy to catch a ride,

And see the other side of the hill,

But still I just sit here with my lonesome dreams of the road.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

(talking)

Well, where's the hook?

(BLACK OUT)

(END OF SCENE)

ACT II

Scene 3

Setting: The scene remains the same, the old store porch. It is eight forty-five in the evening on the same rainy Friday. BECKY walks on to the store porch.

At Rise: CHARLIE sits in his wheelchair. He is working on the accounts in his old cigar box.

CHARLIE

If you're looking for Jesse, he just passed by going home.

BECKY

I know where he is.

CHARLIE

I figured you did.

BECKY

Charlie, I know you think I'm crazy. I know you're mad at me.

CHARLIE

I ain't mad at you, honey. It just makes me sick to see how things are going.

BECKY

I ain't too happy myself.

CHARLIE

If I could walk I'd take a fan belt and whale the livin' tar out of you!

BECKY

And I deserve it.

CHARLIE

Why did you have to get in the car with him?

BECKY

I saw him waiting down by the crossroads where we used to meet. I walked down there to ask him to leave but he was just so pitiful I had to talk to him.

CHARLIE

If being pitiful buys a ticket to get into your britches I can introduce you to two or three dozen and you can do 'em all!

BECKY

Charlie! We didn't do nuthin' like that!

CHARLIE

Don't tell that lie!

BECKY

I swear, Charlie! We just rode around and talked. He let me out up the hill. Instead of going home, I walked here to try to square things with you.

CHARLIE

That's easy to do. Just tell me you'll never see him again.

BECKY

I can't do that, Charlie.

CHARLIE

That kind of changes our relationship then. From now on I don't want nuthin' from you and I don't expect nuthin' from you. We'll just be friends—more like casual acquaintances. You can charge your groceries here if you want to.

BECKY

Charlie, don't be that way!

CHARLIE

I can't go on letting you break my heart every time you get a twitch!

BECKY

It ain't that simple, Charlie. He told me that Peggy is probably gonna kick him out.

CHARLIE

I wouldn't be surprised. He don't hardly spend any time with her. That's what you got to look forward to.

BECKY

If that happens he's probably gonna get fired because Peggy's uncle is one of his bosses.

CHARLIE

What's all this leading to?

BECKY

Nuthin'. I was just telling you what we talked about today.

CHARLIE

Becky, can't you see what's happening here? He will treat you just like he treats Peggy.

BECKY

No, he won't. He told me he never loved Peggy.

CHARLIE

And that probably means he don't really love you.

BECKY

He loves me, Charlie!

CHARLIE

Are you going back to St. Margaret's?

BECKY

Yes. I'm going back with Tina Sunday afternoon.

CHARLIE

Did you tell him where you're really staying?

BECKY

Yeah, I did.

CHARLIE

You might as well go somewhere else. Sooner or later he'll ruin that for you.

BECKY

He promised he wouldn't. Well, I just wanted to try to explain things to you.

CHARLIE

I'm glad you stopped by. Drop by again, the next time you're in the neighborhood.

BECKY

No, Charlie! Don't be like that! You know I need you now more than ever!

CHARLIE

It'll take me a while to get over this snit.

BECKY

Let's just leave it like that then. Sometimes my heart just won't let me do what my mind tells me to.

CHARLIE

I know, darlin'.

(We hear the sound of a car stopping. A car door opens and closes. The car drives away. DOCH staggers on to the store porch and sits on the bench. He is intoxicated.)

BECKY

Well, hey Daddy! Looks like you stopped somewhere on your way home from work!

DOCH

Well, yes I did! I had to see a man about a horse. Turned out to be a one-eyed mule!

BECKY

I reckon that means you got paid today. How much you got left?

DOCH

About half of it.

BECKY

You couldn't possibly drink that much!

DOCH

I played a few cards. Very few! Every time I had two of a kind somebody else had a full house!

(DOCH laughs at his own joke.)

BECKY

I'm gonna tell Mama to steal the rest of it.

DOCH

I wish she would! It'd save me a lot of trouble!

(DOCH searches all his pockets and finds nothing.)

Damn, damn, damn! I had a pint of Old Frog Fart but it's gone! I must have left it in that feller's car.

BECKY

Come on, Daddy. Let's get you to bed.

DOCH

I ain't going to Allie's house tonight. I don't want her to see me drinking. I'll sleep in the side room here.

BECKY

You don't need to do that. You'll burn up in there.

DOCH

I don't care if I do. Besides I ain't ready to go to bed.

BECKY

Well, suit yourself.

DOCH

Susie, I haven't had a chance to talk to you since you've been home. Do you like where you're staying now?

BECKY

I love it!

DOCH

I've always liked the Gulf Coast. We lived in Mobile a few years. It's a lot different down there—all kinds of people.

BECKY

A lot more people—that's for sure. I remember going to grammar school in Satsuma when I was a kid.

DOCH

(seeing ALLIE)

Oh no—here she comes! You know I really love your mama but I just can't live with her very long at a time.

BECKY

Why not?

DOCH

Damned if I know. After a while we just rub each other the wrong way.

(ALLIE walks on to the store porch.)

ALLIE

Hey Harry! I see you didn't let me down. I predicted you'd be drunk before Saturday night.

DOCH

You make that prediction every week!

ALLIE

And this week it came true. Becky, I'm glad to see you too. I've been looking for you all day.

BECKY

You didn't need to do that.

ALLIE

Oh yeah—I had to. You can come get your clothes and move in with Jesse. Maybe you and Peggy can become good friends while you both wait around for him to come home.

BECKY

I'm going back to St. Margaret's.

ALLIE

Why bother? I already know the end of that story. (pointing to DOCH) Look what happened to me.

DOCH

Allie, why don't you just go back home?

ALLIE

Directly.

DOCH

And leave Susie alone. She ain't bothered you.

ALLIE

Oh yes she has. She's been out all day with her married boyfriend!

DOCH

Susie!

BECKY

I don't want to talk about it!

ALLIE

Me neither—I just want you to come to your senses!

BECKY

I'm leaving Sunday so you won't have to worry about it!

ALLIE

I just don't understand you, Becky! You'd throw your whole life away on a man who ain't worth a mess of moldy mustard greens!

BECKY

It's love, Mama! You ought to know all about that!

ALLIE

It's crazy! You ought to be in Bryce's Hospital!

BECKY

And you can be my roommate!

DOCH

Susie, your mama's right about this.

ALLIE

Harry, I don't need no help from you at this late date! Charlie, can I borrow your truck a little while longer?

CHARLIE

Keep it as long as you need it.

ALLIE

Becky, get in the truck. (to DOCH) Are you coming with us?

(BECKY starts for the truck.)

DOCH

I'm gonna stay here. You're right, Allie, I don't really have a place in all this.

ALLIE

You've got a place, Harry. You just need to take it. We'll go on then. Come home when you get ready.

(ALLIE leaves for the truck. DOCH sits on the bench.)

DOCH

What can I do, Charlie?

CHARLIE

Sleep it off and see what happens tomorrow.

DOCH

I really love Susie, Charlie. What can I do to help her?

CHARLIE

Blamed if I know, Doch.

(BLACK OUT)

(END OF SCENE)

ACT II

Scene 4

Setting: The scene remains the same, the old store porch.
It's eight o'clock on the following night, which is Saturday.

At Rise: CHARLIE sits in his wheelchair playing his autoharp and writing a song.

CHARLIE

(singing)

Living by the side of the road,
Watching the cars drive on past,
Truckers with a heavy load,
Everything seems to move so fast.

It's so good to feel,
My hands on the wheel,
Of an automobile,
Headed down the highway,
Headed anywhere but home.
Living out my silly dreams of the road.

(As CHARLIE finishes the song, ALLIE walks onto the store porch.)

ALLIE

Charlie, I brought your truck back. Have you seen Becky tonight?

CHARLIE

I haven't seen her tonight but sit around here a while and she'll probably come by.

ALLIE

I think I'll do that.

CHARLIE

Good. I need some company.

ALLIE

Is Harry here?

CHARLIE

He's around here somewhere. He ain't been feeling too good today.

ALLIE

I can imagine. This is the first time he's come home drinking since he's been back. I'm amazed he lasted this long.

CHARLIE

I guess everything just came together right—or wrong. He had the money and he was probably close to a bootlegger's house when the mood struck him.

ALLIE

Not necessarily. I've seen him walk eight or ten miles for a drink. Is he drinking today?

CHARLIE

I don't think so. He lost his bottle.

ALLIE

We'll see if it lasts. Now, if I can just get Becky straightened out I'll be okay.

CHARLIE

Good luck. I've said everything I can think of to say.

ALLIE

Did she listen?

CHARLIE

She always listens. Will she change? No. You think everybody's heard they're back together?

ALLIE

How could they not hear? Half of them probably saw them riding around yesterday.

CHARLIE

I talked to her about that.

ALLIE

Please don't let her be pregnant! It'll ruin everything with them Catholics if she is!

CHARLIE

She swears nothing happened.

ALLIE

And you believe her?

CHARLIE

Oh hell no!

(DOCH walks on the store porch.)

DOCH

Hey Allie.

ALLIE

Hey Harry. I hope your hangover's not too bad.

DOCH

I'll live I reckon. How's Susie?

ALLIE

She's okay I guess. I'm looking for her right now.

DOCH

You don't know where she is?

ALLIE

She left me a note saying she was going down to her friend Louise's house but she wasn't there when I dropped by.

DOCH

We know what that means. I bet she's with Jesse parked in one of these lovers' lanes around here.

CHARLIE

I wouldn't be surprised.

ALLIE

When she comes back I'm not gonna let her out of my sight until we put her in that car headed for St. Margaret's tomorrow.

(DOCH chuckles under his breath.)

What are you laughing about?

DOCH

I was just thinking about when Susie left the first time. You didn't want her to go then but now you do.

ALLIE

I thought she'd be safe here then. I thought Jesse would leave her alone.

CHARLIE

It's a shame his religion didn't take. At least one of 'em would be able to resist temptation.

DOCH

If she can keep her nose clean she can have a free education and a good life. I just hope he don't go down there and start nuthin'.

CHARLIE

Well, it's up to her. She don't have to pay no attention to him.

(We hear the sound of a car door open and close.
The car burns rubber as it pulls away.)

DOCH

Who could that be?

(BECKY walks onto the store porch.)

Hey, Susie. Who just let you out?

BECKY

A friend of mine.

DOCH

We seen who it was.

BECKY

Well, if you knew why'd you ask?

DOCH

Just picking at you.

ALLIE

Have your plans changed, Becky?

BECKY

Not at all—I'm going with Tina tomorrow like I planned.

ALLIE

I'll be so glad when school starts and you have something to keep your mind occupied.

BECKY

I'm looking forward to it.

CHARLIE

Well, sit down and join us for a while, Becky. We're enjoying the summer breeze and watching the cars go by.

BECKY

I think I will.

(DOCH is sitting in the rocking chair. BECKY sits with ALLIE on the old bench,)

CHARLIE

When does school start, Becky?

BECKY

The first week in September—just after Labor Day.

CHARLIE

Does it take two years or four?

BECKY

Actually, it takes three years straight.

CHARLIE

Well, you have my admiration. I couldn't stand all the blood and guts. I got a weak stomach. That's why I didn't become a doctor.

(They laugh. A car is heard "scratching off" entering the highway.)

ALLIE

Did you see who that was?

CHARLIE

I believe it was Paul Jackson, Don Drinkard and Earl Stephens.

BECKY

(laughing)

Local playboys.

CHARLIE

To be a playboy you got to be good with women. I don't think any of them three have even had a date.

ALLIE

They're good boys but they're gonna get drafted. The local board ain't wild about scratching off, drag racing and drinking beer.

CHARLIE

They've all got jobs. That'll keep 'em out—if they live. What they do for fun is pretty near as dangerous as going in the service.

DOCH

Peacetime army is a gravy train. It'll do 'em good.

(A car comes to a screeching halt and the door slams. JESSE walks up on the store porch.)

JESSE

Becky, can I talk to you for a minute?

ALLIE

Are you totally nuts? Of course you can't!

BECKY

Sure. Mama, I'll be right back. I promise.

(BECKY tries to get up but ALLIE holds her down on the bench.)

ALLIE

No!

JESSE

When I got home tonight I found the doors locked and my key wouldn't work. I broke a window and got a few of my things. I want you to leave with me right now!

ALLIE

No!

DOCH

(standing)

Now, hold on a minute! Susie, you ain't goin' nowhere!

(BECKY continues to struggle.)

BECKY

Let me go, Mama!

JESSE

Becky, I've given up everything for you!

ALLIE

You can't blame Becky for this! All you had to do was leave her alone!

DOCH

Jesse, I reckon you better get out of here!

JESSE

Not without Becky!

DOCH

Susie ain't going with you. If you want to live you'd better leave.

(DOCH squares off and starts slowly walking toward JESSE.)

Okay, you can leave peaceably or not. It don't matter to me.

(DOCH walks toward JESSE until they are nose to nose but neither of them makes a move against the other. Suddenly, BECKY escapes ALLIE'S grasp. She quickly pushes DOCH off balance, grabs JESSE by the arm and drags him away from the store porch. BECKY and JESSE run downstage right, toward JESSE'S car.)

BECKY

Let's go talk, Jesse!

CHARLIE

Well damn, Doch! You scared me!

DOCH

I thought I might try to bluff him.

ALLIE

Go after 'em, Harry!

DOCH

You go, Allie. I can't run that fast.

ALLIE

Now, she's gonna leave with him! She's gonna ruin everything!

DOCH

Allie, there ain't nuthin' we can do. If she wants to be with him she's gonna be with him.

(Downstage right, the lights go up on BECKY and JESSE as the lights go down on the store porch. JESSE kisses BECKY hard on the mouth.)

BECKY

I'm sorry Peggy locked you out, I really am.

JESSE

Get in the car, baby. This is our chance!

BECKY

I can't. I've got to go back and get ready for school.

JESSE

That's fine. We'll go to Mobile.

BECKY

We can't do that, baby. They won't let me be married and they won't let me date.

JESSE

We can keep it a secret.

BECKY

No, baby. They'll find out.

JESSE

You don't have to go to school. We can do something else.

BECKY

No, baby. I want to go to school. It won't take that long. We can be together after I finish.

JESSE

What am I gonna do? I can't stay here!

BECKY

You'll find something—I know you will!

JESSE

I guess I'll have to move into the White Hotel until I get fired.

BECKY

You'll get another job, baby.

JESSE

Not around here. I know I'm gonna lose you and I know I'll never find you again!

BECKY

You won't lose me! I'll come to where you are when I can.

JESSE

No! I can't stand to be away from you that long!

BECKY

Yes you can, baby. If you really love me you can.

JESSE

If you leave me I'll lose my mind—Peggy has changed everything!

BECKY

That's not my fault, Jesse. You promised to wait for me to finish school. I expect you to do exactly that.

JESSE

That deal's off! You gotta come with me now!

(JESSE grabs BECKY and tries to force her toward the car.)

BECKY

No, Jesse! I can't!

JESSE

Baby, please!

BECKY

Let me go, Jesse!

JESSE

Get in the car, baby!

BECKY

No, Jesse! You wanted to talk and we've talked. I've gotta go back with my family. You'll be fine.

(BECKY twists away. JESSE tries to recapture her but she twists away again. As she heads toward the store porch, JESSE grabs an arm and pulls her toward him.)

JESSE

You're going with me! Come on!

(BECKY resists him. JESSE slaps her. She slaps him back and he drops his hold on her.)

BECKY

Jesse, if you ever hit me again I'm gonna borrow my daddy's pocket knife and carve your gizzard into a zillion pieces. Now, get in your car and go. I'm pretty much sure I don't ever want to see you again!

JESSE

No, baby! I didn't mean it!

BECKY

Get away from me!

(Lights go down on JESSE and BECKY and up on the old storefront.)

ALLIE

This is going on too long! I can't stand it!

CHARLIE

At least it ain't over yet.

DOCH

Charlie's right. At least they're still talking.

(We hear the sound of JESSE'S car burning rubber as he drives away.)

ALLIE

Well, there they go!

DOCH

Wish 'em well!

ALLIE

I can't do that.

DOCH

We might as well be nice to 'em—being nasty won't help nuthin'.

ALLIE

You don't know that!

(BECKY slowly walks back on to the store porch.
ALLIE, DOCH and CHARLIE look at her in amazement.)

Becky!

DOCH

Well, Susie, you fooled us all!

BECKY

I told you I'd be right back.

(BLACK OUT)

(END OF PLAY)

VITA

Roy Keith Trawick was born in Uniontown, Alabama. He grew up near Thomasville, Alabama and graduated from high school at Marion Military Institute in 1967. He received his bachelor's degree from the University of Alabama in 1972 and received a master's degree in counseling from the University of Montevallo in 1979. After a career in mental health, he is now retired and lives in Savannah, Georgia, where he has resided for the last 25 years.