

BLUE HIGHWAY

the play

By David Marlett

V1.9

BlueRun Media

WRITER/DIRECTOR'S NOTES:

This play is dedicated to the memory of my friend, and the film script's co-writer, Nick Kharabadze, who was, ironically, murdered during our work on this story.

David Marlett

ACT ISCENE 1

Curtain lifts, revealing an empty two lane road, grass lined, stage center, running from DC to UC. UC cyclorama has video of sea of wind generators turning slowly, at night, with their red warning lights glowing.

Far L is an old truck, facing C. Far R is a new convertible, facing C. The convertible's running lights are on, including headlights, though they are not illuminating the truck. The truck is not occupied and is not 'running'. We hear the smooth drone of the car's engine and tires on the road. NICOLE (25) is behind the wheel of the car. Her long blond hair blows back. We understand the car is moving. She is texting, furiously. We hear her music blaring.

NICOLE

(to herself)

Bitch!

PORTER(55) enters from DL, drunk, staggers toward driver's door of truck. He pulls his wedding ring from his pocket and starts to put it on, but drops it. He finds it, then aims carefully, putting it on, then gets into the truck.

When Nicole's phone rings, she mutes her music and reluctantly answers.

NICOLE

What?

(listens)

I'm *not* sorry! Whatever.

(listens)

It's just what I say when you say *whaaat*? So...

(MORE)

NICOLE (CONT'D)

(listens)

Melanie? You want to bring her up? She's also pissed at you!

Porter starts his truck's rumbling diesel engine and turns on its lights. Its headlights do not illuminate the car. We hear the sound of the engine and big tires swerving onto the road. He turns on music.

NICOLE

But you're married again! Already!

(listens)

I don't care. And Daddy? How is that fair?

Porter is falling asleep behind the wheel, but recovers.

NICOLE

You can't take away my car!

(listens)

You know what? Whatever.

She hangs up on her mother, wipes away tears, and turns her music back on. It is a conflicting beat to Porter's.

NICOLE

(to herself)

Fuck you!

Porter swerves to keep his truck on the road.

PORTER

(to himself)

Fuck me!

There is a moment where they are each alone in their thoughts. Soon each of their headlights start to illuminate the other car, until finally both drivers are squinting against the other's light. It gets brighter and brighter for each of them, with the road in the middle now brightly lit.

The clashing music also gets louder and louder. Both can't see and are alarmed.

We hear the Doppler Effect of the the cars passing each other, and suddenly the headlights that were shining on each other and the bright center light, disappear. Both drivers seem to calm. And now the beats of each song in each vehicle align, almost like (but not quite) they are the same song.

Suddenly the stage is flooded with red/blue strobe lights coming from behind each vehicle. We hear the sound of a single siren from a single highway patrol car.

PORTER

(to himself)

Again? Aww damnit!

NICOLE

(to herself)

Shit. Fuck. Shit. Fuck. Shit.

The siren stops and we hear the sound of the vehicles coming to a stop. The sounds of the engines fade out, and the music is turned off. Silence. Two strong patrol car search lights come from DR and DL respectively, illuminating each car. We hear the sound of a patrol car door opening and the sound of boot-steps approaching.

Two officers simultaneously enter from DR and DL respectively, walking upstage, in their search light beams, their shadows on the vehicles they are approaching. LT. PEARSON (35) approaches Porter. LT. ANSON (35) approaches Nicole.

PORTER

(to himself, with a flourish)

To submit, or not submit. That is the...

Lt. Pearson is now at Porter's driver's window, which is on the downstage side of the truck. Pearson shines his flashlight around inside Porter's truck.

Lt. Anson is behind Nicole's car, writing something on a clipboard form, flashlight on her rear license plate, motions to be talking into his shoulder-mounted radio mic.

LT. PEARSON

(to Porter)

Having a good time tonight?

PORTER

It's *alll* right!

LT. PEARSON

(sniffs)

You got a brewery in there?

PORTER

(turns expectantly)

Where?

LT. PEARSON

Driver's license and insurance please.

PORTER

Let me see.

Lt. Pearson steps back and puts hand on his gun as Porter seems to reach below his seat.

PORTER

Wait. Don't leave!

Lt. Pearson unsnaps his weapon. Porter now disappears as he leans over. Lt. Pearson draws pistol and steps further back.

LT. PEARSON

Hey, hands where I can see them! Step out of the vehicle!

PORTER

(pops up, grinning,
wallet in hand)

Here we go!

(sees the gun)

Un-fuckin-believable.

Nicole is mustering up tears
and fake sniffs as Lt. Anson
goes around on her side of the
convertible.

NICOLE

I wasn't speeding.

LT. ANSON

I see.

NICOLE

My father is *sick*. I mean 'not well'. Not like he's *sick*.
(meaning hip)

I've gotta get home. Gotta take him his prescriptions. Can
we make this quick?

LT. ANSON

That it? That as good as this act gets?

She starts a fake cry.

LT. ANSON

Oh she's got tears, ladies and gents! Let me guess, you
think you're an actress? Trust me, you need more practice.

NICOLE

Do you want my license?

She is still tearful as she
attempts to hand it to him.
He doesn't reach for it.

LT. ANSON

Ok superstar, step out of your car.

She freezes.

NICOLE

(tearfully)

Are you--? I go this way all the time.

LT. ANSON

Hiptydo. End of the line.

NICOLE
But it's my mom's car.

LT. ANSON
Fine. Out.

NICOLE
(doesn't move)
Alright.

LT. ANSON
Now.

NICOLE
I mean it's supposed to be mine. If she'd just get out of my life.

LT. ANSON
Step out. Hands in sight.

NICOLE
Why?

LT. ANSON
Ma'am, I'm done being polite. If I have to ask you again, you'll be taken in.

NICOLE
Is this some kind of stupid test?

LT. ANSON
Are you refusing my request?

NICOLE
(beat)
You know, you're like...obsessed.

She stares at him, then breaks it with a insolent *what?* look.

LT. ANSON
Ok. Be my guest.

NICOLE
This is really messed--

She opens the door and stands, he turns her around and handcuffs her.

NICOLE
What are you doing? I'm out!

LT. ANSON

You were warned. Your choice. Your route.

NICOLE

No! I did what you asked! This is crap. What's this about?

Lt. Anson starts walking Nicole toward his car and into the search light coming from DR. They exit DR.

Center stage, Porter is out of the car, attempting to walk a line along the shoulder of the roadway dividing the stage. He can't. His voice is slurred.

PORTER

This is freaking me out. How 'bout I just *crawl* into the backseat of your car?

(looks up)

Shhhh. I'm wishing on a star.

(re-balances slightly)

Well, would you lookie-here. I'm walking... Walk, walk, walk.

LT. PEARSON

I'm shocked. How much have you had to drink tonight...

(looks at his watch)

...by eleven o'clock?

PORTER

How much have *you* had to drink this eve?

(it's not funny)

Oh, me? Nothing really. Just a little. Nothing coffee couldn't settle. How's the coffee at your station? I'll want *good* coffee! Just a little sugar. No milk!

(beat)

And none of that sow shit. Ha! I meant soy shit but I said sow shit, like pig...

(looks at the cop)

Ah, I didn't mean pig--

LT. PEARSON

I'm placing you under arrest. Driving with impaired competency. Turn around. Hands behind your head.

PORTER

(complies)

Know the drill. Don't grab my nads.

LT. PEARSON

(handcuffing him)

You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say or do can and will--

PORTER

Oh! And a pillow! I hope your jail's got a good pillow. Last time, over in Montague, nothing but fucking concrete and a sheet.

Lt. Pearson now ushers Porter toward DL, into the light from his offstage search light.

PORTER

You got me then too, last winter? Yeah, I think it was you. I ain't bitter.

LT. PEARSON

Aren't you a winner.

They exit DL.

SCENE 2

While the set is changed, the stage is dark. We hear the sound of one patrol car doors opening, Lt. Anson putting Nicole in the back seat, him walking around and getting in, and starting the car. The following dialogue is heard over the sound of the patrol car driving. At some point the sound changes from paved road to gravel road.

NICOLE (O.S.)

Do you know my father, John Scone? County Commissioner?

LT. ANSON (O.S.)

The *sick* one? Different county. Different zone.

NICOLE (O.S.)

Just so you know. Are you writing me a ticket?

LT. ANSON (O.S.)

Just a minute.

NICOLE (O.S.)

I don't get it. Let me go! You can't hold-- Daddy is so--
(under her breath)
Asshole.

LT. ANSON (O.S.)

Self-control?

NICOLE (O.S.)

You can't do this! What did I do?

LT. ANSON (O.S.)

Inspector Miller has some questions for you.

NICOLE (O.S.)

Why? Wait, who? About what? Listen, you're just doing your job, but this time...

LT. ANSON (O.S.)

It'll be fine.

NICOLE (O.S.)

I know my rights. Maybe you're not a cop, but some creepball slime.

LT. ANSON (O.S.)

You are certainly determined to get on my good side.

We hear the sound of the car stopping, and the engine turned off. Now rises the sound of the wind through grass.

SCENE 3

It is nighttime. We see the front and inside of a desolate police station, almost reminiscent of a old depot, with a dim porch light. The front faces the audience. (A semitransparent fly-in wall with the front door and porch light is suggested.) The main door looks as old as the small porch covering it.

A sign reading STATION hangs on the front. The wind is strong, flapping the sign. Downstage (on the Apron?) From the porch is grass, moving in the wind.

The basic layout of the interior: Three rooms, with downstage 'hallway' accessing each: office (R), holding room (C) and kitchen (L). There are two doors leading in/out of the station: the front door (when the front wall is in place), and the kitchen exit door, for an exit L. There are three internal doors: office door, kitchen door, and hall door (leads to what we can presume are other offices). There is also a "second hall" that disappears around a corner, outside the kitchen. The holding room doesn't have a door on it.

Long wooden planks run the length of the wood floor, which is clean but not polished. There are no rugs. On one wall is a painting of a German Shepherd.

Porter is seen asleep on a bench in the holding room. He appears to be laying on a nice, white pillow.

The kitchen and office doors are closed. The wind is making the shutters in the office tap lightly. Music is softly coming from a radio in the kitchen where three people (whom we will meet later) are playing dominoes at the kitchen table.

Lt. Anson and Nicole enter from DR. She is in handcuffs. He ushers her across the porch and through the front door. She is as frightened as she is pissed.

Inside, Nicole glances around. (Front wall and door are removed.)

LT. ANSON

It'll just be a minute. Stay near.

He uncuffs her, she continues her surveillance of the wood-panelled hallway and offices.

Lt. Anson exits to the kitchen. She continues to look around. We see that Lt. Anson is pouring himself some coffee.

Lt. Anson returns to Nicole. At first we, and she, think the coffee is for her, but then Lt. Anson sips from it.

LT. ANSON

You'll start in here.

He ushers her to the other bench in the holding room, just across from the bench where Porter is still apparently asleep. Lt. Anson now exits back to the kitchen.

Above Porter are two paintings, one of a bird dog and one of a tabby cat, painted in a similar style as the painting of the German Shepherd.

She sits, watching Porter. He remains motionless. Above her is a painting of a pair of Jack Russell Terriers. Beside the paintings is a analog clock, ticking, the second hand moving, the minute and hour hands pointing straight up.

She rubs her wrists where the handcuffs had been, then pulls out her cell phone and clicks on her texts. She types a text, and tries to send it, but can't get any signal.

The voices of the men in the kitchen becomes clear.

OFFICER SAMUELS

They're in there?

LT. ANSON

Where else?

OFFICER SAMUELS (26), a slender young man in an ill-fitting police uniform gets up from the domino game, picks up two blankets, and comes to opening of holding room. He smiles at Nicole and places one blanket on Porter's bench and hands the other to her.

NICOLE

Thank you.

(notes Porter)

Is he gonna be...

OFFICER SAMUELS

Yes. Are you Nicole Skene?

NICOLE

Scone. Like what you eat.

OFFICER SAMUELS

I'm Officer Samuels.

(points to badge)

That's me.

NICOLE

I see.

OFFICER SAMUELS

I need to take your phone, please.

(beat)

I like that cover, those jewel things.

NICOLE

I'm allowed one call...at *least*.

OFFICER SAMUELS

Only in movies, I believe.

NICOLE

You think I'm naive.

OFFICER SAMUELS

By no means.

NICOLE

You'd better give it back when I leave.

She hands it over.

OFFICER SAMUELS

(nervously)

If you want it then, *it* you will receive.

Though she thinks he is weird, there's something charming about him. When Officer Samuels exits back to the kitchen, he leaves the kitchen door open. She stands, clutching the blanket.

From the opening of the holding room, she looks into the kitchen. In the kitchen, Lt. Pearson is now cooking at a stove. Though the fixtures and appliances are not new, they appear clean and tidy.

Lt. Anson suddenly appears at the kitchen door and Nicole jumps, and returns swiftly to her bench.

NICOLE

(to herself)

No. No. No.

This commotion has stirred Porter, now watching her sit.

PORTER

(more sober now)

Whoa! Who are you? Nice show.

From his low angle he glimpses up her short skirt. She quickly adjusts to fix it. He sits up a little. Offers his hand.

PORTER

I'm Frank. Everyone calls me Porter.

She turns, looking away.

PORTER

Been out partying tonight? Snorter? Bet it don't take much.

NICOLE

You better not touch--

PORTER

Hey don't jump. You got no reason. We ain't children. I'm just a man admiring. We're grown.

NICOLE

Leave me alone.

PORTER

So what'd you do to get thrown in the clink?

(no response)

Ok, my turn then. I had me just a tiny bit to drink. But don't tell them. None of 'em know.

(motions toward kitchen)

Whole cop committee.

(sits back)

You're sure pretty.

He takes off his wedding band, sliding it into his pocket. He doesn't notice that she sees him do it.

Officer Samuels walks from the kitchen to the office, going right past the holding room. Both Porter and Nicole take notice. Trailing after Samuels is a older man, not in uniform but dressed neatly, CHARLES (80). Charles pauses and gives them both a gentle smile.

He is carrying a small jar of water and some paint brushes. He moves on, joining Officer Samuels in the office.

PORTER

(back to her)

So what's your name?

(no reply)

Gertrude? That's a shame.

(no reply)

You sleeping here, with me?

(nothing)

I'll keep you company. Yeah, you'll see.

NICOLE

Gross. Please.

PORTER

Come on, baby. Don't be a tease.

Charles appears in the doorway. He is no longer carrying anything. He is a gentle soul, warm eyes, gray hair, dressed in an inexpensive sack-coat and wide tie. As he has heard some of this, he now squints at Porter.

PORTER

Can we help you, old timer?

CHARLES

No, my journey is mine. But thank you kindly.

PORTER

Then go on by. Me and her were talking in private.

He leans over and pats her bare knee and she stands abruptly.

NICOLE

Do you work here?

CHARLES

Yes dear. Very near.

NICOLE

I want to talk with who's in charge. The sheriff or judge or--

CHARLES

The Inspector. Soon. He will be coming through that door.
(beat)
As for the judge, I'd suggest you wait. Speak first with
Inspector Miller about your...fate.

NICOLE

My fate? Whatever. Are you a deputy or policeman? Cause--

PORTER

Yeah, you a cop pops? Pop the Cop!

CHARLES

No. I'm not a guard. I'm just here to help. While I wait.
While I untie a few knots.
(to Nicole)
Miss Scone, may I bring you some milk? Cold or hot?

NICOLE

Is that all you've
got?

PORTER

Did you say milk?

CHARLES

Yes. Cold or steamed in a pot.

PORTER

Hell with that. How about some shots?

CHARLES

No, guess not.

PORTER

Gotta admit, it's a good thought, Pop the Cop.

CHARLES

A pleasant evening to you both.

Charles goes to kitchen.

PORTER

That was as weird as it goes.

NICOLE

Pop the Cop? Do you know how that sounded? Like you're
gonna 'pop' a cop. Idiot.
(beat)
Whatever. Still, you didn't need to be so mean to him.

PORTER

Oh, I see. I see.

NICOLE

Geez.

PORTER

You like 'em really old. A little grey mold? Guess I'm "too young" for you. I'm just a colt.

(laughs)

I got cock-blocked by Coppo the ghost.

Nicole recoils in disgust, then glances up at the clock. The minute and hour hands still point straight up. A long silence ensues as the second hand still TICKS around and around. She stares at it, and Porter stares at her.

INSPECTOR MILLER (60) enters from DL, onto porch and through front door, with an old black lab following along. Inspector Miller has a serious, weathered face that is as stern as it is warm. Across his cheek is a long scar. His quick hands unzip his jacket to reveal a crisp black suit and white shirt underneath, though no tie. He hangs his coat and hat by the door before turning to look into the open holding room, and at Nicole and Porter. Lt. Pearson approaches from the kitchen and pets the dog.

LT. PEARSON

Evening, Inspector Miller. You've returned.

INSPECTOR MILLER

Evening Bill. Smells superb.

LT. PEARSON

Stew. Ready soon. Perfect. Didn't burn.

Officer Samuels comes from office, and Charles steps from the kitchen.

INSPECTOR MILLER

(warmly)

I wasn't concerned.

As the following conversation between Inspector Miller and Officer Samuels occurs, in the B.G. Lt. Pearson kneels to talk to the dog:

LT. PEARSON
(B.G., to dog)
You want some stew too? Ok. Made some just for you.

INSPECTOR MILLER
(to Officer Samuels)
Everything ready for an inspection?

OFFICER SAMUELS
Yes, sir. As you requested.

INSPECTOR MILLER
(to Porter)
And perhaps a resurrection.

Inspector Miller heads toward his office with Officer Samuels close behind. Nicole looks around the corner from the holding room, watching Inspector Miller walk away.

PORTER
And he's gone.

NICOLE
Who?

PORTER
Who you're waiting on.

NICOLE
You have to talk to him too.

PORTER
(shakes head)
Na, judge will free me in the mornin'.

NICOLE
The old man said you--

PORTER
Your boyfriend?

NICOLE
We have to talk to that other man who just came in.

PORTER

You like following rules? Yeah, you're one of them girls who likes to be told what to do.

(winks)

You can call me Daddy.

NICOLE

You're just a stupid redneck, actually. Move your boots.

He pauses dramatically, then slowly moves his feet. When he is clear, she sits.

PORTER

What'd you do? Why do you need the judge?

NICOLE

Maybe he'll release me. He'd better, the fucker. This is crap-ass.

PORTER

Set you free? Good luck. If you were in my jail I'd never let you go.

She flips him the finger.

PORTER

Oh, don't get pissy. I'm all fire and show.

NICOLE

That work for you? Hires you some skank-ass coot?

PORTER

(laughs)

Well, guess so. Sometimes.

(beat)

So, what's your crime? I'm thinking something bad. You killed somebody. Yeah, killer eyes. But who? Your boyfriend? Your dad?

NICOLE

Yeah, you guessed it asshole. And now it's you whose making me mad!

He freezes, studying her glaring eyes, then laughs.

In the office, Inspector Miller is softly humming a tune while talking with Officer Samuels. The wind is blowing strongly, causing a loud wooden tap, tap, tap noise.

INSPECTOR MILLER

Those two settling in?

OFFICER SAMUELS

Waiting on your 'when'.

INSPECTOR MILLER

Tough situation.

OFFICER SAMUELS

Yes sir. It's at Mr. Wilson.

Inspector Miller nods knowingly. The room is an eclectic blend of time and technology, from a fax machine to an old Royal typewriter, from a quill pen in a empty ink well with the feather flickering in the air that whips through the room.

Other items adorn the room, from a wooden duck to a few candles, a polished hunting knife on the desk, a collection of artist paint brushes, paint splattered floor and easel, paints, a rotary phone, a metal toy car, a painting of a Chinese Crested dog, a collection of writing pens, and on the floor, sleeping, is the black lab.

INSPECTOR MILLER

And Mrs. Wilson? Any word?

OFFICER SAMUELS

Not that I've heard. No sir.

INSPECTOR MILLER

You handle her transfer. Lt. Narova will go get her.

OFFICER SAMUELS

Yes sir.

Inspector Miller uses a shim to try to make a shutter stop tapping. He is calm though the shim keeps slipping. Finally he gives up and turns back his desk where Officer Samuels is sorting some papers.

I'll miss him.

INSPECTOR MILLER

A few papers catch the wind and flutter off. Officer Samuels gathers them, stacking them once again neatly.

I'm glad I won't remember.

OFFICER SAMUELS

Back in the holding room, Porter is snoring. Nicole is staring at him, in deep thought. Suddenly Charles appears from the kitchen and at the holding room doorway again.

Good evening Nicole.

CHARLES

Oh!

NICOLE
(jumps)

Charles stands silently, watching her. She hates it.

Is there something you need?

CHARLES

Yeah, I need to go home! Please!

NICOLE

It is up to you.

CHARLES

Then let's do it! Let's go! Let's go!

NICOLE

When the time comes, you'll know.

CHARLES

You can't keep me here. Give me my phone.

NICOLE

Those who never learn to be still are lost when they roam.
(beat)
Would you like some milk to drink?

CHARLES

Jesus! No! What are you thinking?

NICOLE

Very well. I'll go.

CHARLES

Charles returns to the kitchen and Nicole sits again. Silence, cut only by the sound of Porter's snoring, the clock ticking, and the distant clatter of wooden shutters in the wind. She nudges Porter. He doesn't wake so she nudges him harder. He still doesn't wake. She thumps his forehead and now he stirs.

You said you'd keep me company.

NICOLE

Uh huh.

PORTER

(smacks his forehead)
But stop hitting on me, perv!

NICOLE

(sits up)
Calling you out as a murderer? That's hittin'?

PORTER

He offered us milk again.

NICOLE

Whole or thin?
What's your name?

PORTER

(sees her smile)

Nicky. Nicole.

NICOLE

Porter.

PORTER

(to herself, focused elsewhere)
He's already told her.

NICOLE

What are you looking at?

PORTER

NICOLE

The front door. Look at that. It's unlocked. I could just walk out.

PORTER

What, you? But it's against the rules Nicky-Nicole! Not *allowed*.

NICOLE

Who said? We're not locked up in some tower.

Charles returns yet again from the kitchen.

NICOLE

Let me guess, *Got milk?*

CHARLES

(smiles warmly)

Would either of you like some milk to drink?

PORTER

To drink? You keep asking that. You gotta think. What else we gonna do with it? Pour it on our head? Planning to baptize us with it? How about we pour it on your head? Why don't you sit--

NICOLE

Shit! Fine! I'll have some!
(to Porter)

Don't be dumb.

CHARLES

Would you like that warm?

PORTER

Ha! Warm! What is she, a cat?

NICOLE

No not warm. Not like that.

CHARLES

Then I'll be right back.

PORTER

Pussy cat. Pussy cat.

CHARLES

(to Porter)

Aren't you a grown man, Swifty?

Charles leaves for kitchen.

PORTER

(yelling to hall)

Here kitty, kitty!

(to her)

Thirsty?

NICOLE

You're the worst. He seems so kind.

(beat)

Why do you have to slam--

PORTER

Hey, I yam what I fuckin yam!

NICOLE

He looks like a good man.

PORTER

Reminds me of a bird dog I once had. Sorta like that one.

(indicates the
painting over his
head)

End of last season she was done. Done. Had to put her down.
Sad. She couldn't hunt. Wouldn't take her food. Gotta do
whatcha gotta do.

NICOLE

I'm sorry. It's hard to lose--

Charles returns with a simple
mug with milk in it. He gives
it to Nicole and watches her
reluctantly take a sip.

PORTER

Hope you put chocolate in mine.

CHARLES

(to her)

It's time. Inspector Miller would like to speak with you.

PORTER

Now?

NICOLE

That true?

PORTER

Just her, or me too?

NICOLE

(standing)

Will he let me go?

Charles smiles gently at her.

NICOLE

Yeah, yeah. Whatever. I'll know when I know.

She leaves toward office, with Charles following.

CHARLES

This way, Miss. Time to turn a new leaf.

PORTER

Give that bastard a big kiss! Tell him it's from me!

Nicole enters Inspector Miller's office and at first begins to take it in, then focuses on Inspector Miller who is again attempting to manage the shutters. Charles doesn't cross the threshold to the office, but stays in the doorway. Officer Samuels approaches Nicole and ushers her in to a chair in front of Inspector Miller's big wooden desk. Nicole notes that her cell phone is on Inspector Miller's well-worn desk and it appears to be turned off. Then her attention goes to the shiny hunting knife beside her phone.

INSPECTOR MILLER

(noting her)

Our bird. My gratitude Charles.

CHARLES

Any word?

INSPECTOR MILLER

Soon, I am assured.

CHARLES

I feel her.

INSPECTOR MILLER

Big transfer.

CHARLES

Thank you sir.

Charles leaves, returning yet again to the kitchen, and Inspector Miller turns his attention squarely on Nicole. She shifts uncomfortably. She notes that Officer Samuels has come behind her and has taken a seat at the old Royal typewriter. He inserts a piece of paper and awaits Inspector Miller's nod. Inspector Miller is finishing a bowl of stew.

INSPECTOR MILLER

Would you like some?

NICOLE

No thank you. Vegetarian.

INSPECTOR MILLER

Of course. That's why I offered. There's no meat in this.
(leans down)

Here boy. Come.

He leans over and carefully empties the remaining contents of his bowl into the dog's bowl. The dog, which was curled in the corner, now approaches to eat. As he does, Inspector Miller pets him.

It is awkwardly silent, with Nicole watching and Officer Samuels awaiting the signal to begin typing. Finally Inspector Miller is done and sets his bowl toward Officer Samuels.

INSPECTOR MILLER

(to Officer Samuels)

Will you please take this to the kitchen?

Officer Samuels jumps up and complies. Both Inspector Miller and Nicole watch him go. Outside the office, Officer Samuels heads to the kitchen.

Up to this point Inspector Miller's voice has been soft, but when he turns to Nicole, it has an icy, piercing tone.

INSPECTOR MILLER

It's good to meet you Miss Scone. Nicky. No?

NICOLE

Nicole. Can I go?

INSPECTOR MILLER

Your family has lived near here for many years.

NICOLE

Yes, my dad is the County Commissioner.

Long pause as Inspector Miller watches her.

INSPECTOR MILLER

He was, not is, it would appear.

NICOLE

It's been a year.

INSPECTOR MILLER

And not over this territory.

NICOLE

I heard this story.

There is a long, uncomfortable pause, as if Inspector Miller is waiting on something.

Then it happens: Officer Samuels returns from the kitchen. Inspector Miller, and to a lesser extent Nicole, watches Officer Samuels as he resumes his seat at the Royal.

During the following, Officer Samuels can be heard and seen typing in the B.G.. He appears to be writing what they are saying.

INSPECTOR MILLER

Who are you Nicole?

NICOLE

Right now? A girl in a hole. I don't know.

Inspector Miller sighs at that, then gets up to fix yet another set of shutters blown open by the wind.

INSPECTOR MILLER

Maybe. Maybe so. But you see, little is beyond your control.
(beat)
Almost twenty. A daughter, who's...free. Sister to Melanie.

NICOLE

Ok...that's not creepy. What did I do? You have to charge me with a crime. You can't keep me here, right?

INSPECTOR MILLER

That is a good question. I might.

He returns to his seat.

NICOLE

I know you can't keep me tonight. I didn't surrender--

INSPECTOR MILLER

There's a good word to remember. You certainly did not surrender. No one asked you to. True?
(sees her shake her head)

Good. And I agree. I can't keep you.
(beat)

But we are waiting.

NICOLE

On what? It's so late.

INSPECTOR MILLER

Patience with the pace. Cogs will fall into place. Stars will align. We'll wait.

NICOLE

You're saying--

INSPECTOR MILLER

You asked me if you did something wrong. That is a good question. You are a smart girl. *That* is something I can depend on.

(sees her eyes roll)

Let's be friends. Let's choose. You're present here, in this moment. I am too. We are here. There is no harm in being friendly here, under this roof. Nothing is lost. There's no ruse.

(no response)

Friends?

NICOLE

(stymied)

This is ridiculous. I have no clue.

INSPECTOR MILLER

But you do.

(beat)

There are times we are not so friendly with others. Especially with parents, sisters, brothers. Agree?

NICOLE

Jesus. I'm not going to sit here and be mothered.

(stands, angry)

I know my rights! If I was speeding, give me a ticket and I'll fight it. If I had a broken brake light you'd have to let me go fix it. You can't keep me here tonight. I know you know I'm right. If I was smoking pot or ran a red light, then...

(holds back tears)

You have to tell me what it is. I'm not trying to be impolite.

INSPECTOR MILLER

Were you smoking pot?

NICOLE

What?

INSPECTOR MILLER

You mentioned marijuana.

NICOLE

I'm not gonna...say.

INSPECTOR MILLER

Is that why your mother was so upset today?

NICOLE

(freezes)

No. How did you know--

INSPECTOR MILLER

Let's don't go too far afield. Please sit back down. Let's be real.

(she doesn't)

Please. We decided to be friends. We had a deal.

(she sits)

Thank you.

(muses)

"Did I do something wrong?" "What did I do?" "Is it ok if I hurt someone?" "How about just a few?"

He pauses to carefully align a collection of handsome writing pens on his desk. The barrels roll on the oak with a deep resonance. She watches.

INSPECTOR MILLER

Ready to tell me about you?

NICOLE

(squirms)

I just want this to be through.

INSPECTOR MILLER

I understand. I do too.

(beat)

If you were shown facts that made you realize some things, that you had done some bad acts...would you want to fix them? Maybe adjust your path?

NICOLE

Bad acts? What is that? Like a sin?

INSPECTOR MILLER

Perhaps you'd want to be forgiven?

NICOLE

If it was bad then, sure. Everybody would.

INSPECTOR MILLER

If they could. I think you are right. Everyone wants forgiveness. All so suddenly contrite. But the tough bit, a harder fit, is do they deserve it?

(beat)

Ok. Tell you what, let's talk again, a little later, on that thought.

NICOLE

About *what*?

Inspector Miller indicates toward the door.

NICOLE

So I can go?

INSPECTOR MILLER

Leave? No. Don't be upset but, in truth, you haven't arrived yet.

She stands.

INSPECTOR MILLER

I'll call for you after you've eaten. Excellent vegetarian stew!

NICOLE

Yeah, you told me.

(softer)

Thank you.

Officer Samuels has stood and now opens the door to the hallway area. She notes that and starts to leave.

INSPECTOR MILLER

Nicole?

(she turns)

I wish I didn't to have to say this, but tonight...tonight there was a murder, I'm told, out by the road.

NICOLE

Whoa...

INSPECTOR MILLER

Yes, if only. Whoa, indeed.

Nicole is stunned and slowly leaves. Officer Samuels and Nicole walk back toward the holding room.

OFFICER SAMUELS

We'll bring you supper.

INSPECTOR MILLER

(from the office)

Please send Charles back for a word.

OFFICER SAMUELS

Yes sir.

(to Nicole)

So now you've heard.

She nods silently. She enters the holding room and takes a seat on her bench. She stares ahead, then grabs her blanket and curls up as tight as she can get. Porter is watching.

Out in the hall, Officer Samuels talks with Charles, who then goes the Inspector's office.

PORTER

You ok? They letting you zip?
(sees her shake her
head)
It's alright. You'll be home quick. You'll see.
(leans back, watching
her)
So what'd he--

NICOLE

Nothing.

PORTER

He said something, m'dear. Let's hear it.

NICOLE

Somebody killed someone, near here.

PORTER

No. Damn.

NICOLE

Murdered. Some man.

PORTER

No shit?

NICOLE

Yes shit.

PORTER

When?

NICOLE

Tonight. Told me at the end.

PORTER

What brought it up?

NICOLE

I don't know. Just my luck.

PORTER

What were you talking about?

NICOLE

He was bitching me out. Kept asking me if I'd done something wrong.

PORTER

You're a suspect! Oh my god!

NICOLE

No! I don't think so. He better not think that. I was just...out.

Charles is at the doorway.

CHARLES

(to her)

Out and about.

(to Porter)

Would you like some milk to... Would you like some milk?

PORTER

I'd rather have a big fat ass meal. But if it means I can meet Big Chief Miller, then sure, milk me baby! I'll take my fill!

NICOLE

Milk you?

CHARLES

So you will. Would you like that warm?

PORTER

What the hell! Sure, warm that baby up. Throw in coffee and Johnny Walker and you've gotta deal!

CHARLES

I'll bring your milk.

Charles leaves for kitchen.
Porter sees Nicole's grimace.

PORTER

I was nice!

NICOLE

Right. Milk you?

PORTER

Hey, whatever. You're the man-killer on site.

NICOLE

No. Only spiders and flies.

PORTER

I'm not sure I'm safe in here. They frisk you?

(she shakes her
head)

Maybe they'll deputize me or some shit and I can properly frisk-frisky you.

(beat)

So what do you use on those defenseless spiders and flies? A knife, a gun, lead pipe, or do you like to bite?

(MORE)

PORTER (CONT'D)

(sees her smile)

Hey, you can smile!

Charles returns with a mug filled with steaming milk. Porter stands to take it, but as it's hot, he fumbles his grip on the mug, dumping it, with most landing on Charles's arm and pants. The mug shatters on the floor, warm milk spattering the front of the benches.

PORTER

(laughing)

Wow, that fuckin' blew up!

Nicole helps Charles pick up the pieces.

CHARLES

(to Porter)

I'll return with another cup.

Porter laughs as Charles leaves for the kitchen. Nicole ignores him and busies herself picking up the shards. This takes a bit. There is silence with only the sound of her picking up pieces. His only effort to help is to lift his boots so she can get all the pieces near him. She leaves the holding room and turns toward the kitchen.

Nicole enters the kitchen, a bit hesitantly, sees Charles who is at the trash, dumping his mug pieces. In the kitchen is a long table, and at it are Lt. Anson, Lt. Pearson, Officer Samuels and an Hispanic female officer, LT. NAROVA (40). The kitchen is orderly, clean, but not new. On the wall are several paintings of dogs and cats. All of the people at the table are playing dominos, and now look up at Nicole.

NICOLE

I'm just helping. Sorry to interfere.

CHARLES

Please. Bring those here.

She dumps her hand full of mug pieces in the same trash can. She turns to go.

CHARLES

Wait if you would. I'll skim.

Charles opens a small pot on the stove and steam rises. Using a ladle, he skims the top foamy milk and pours it into another mug.

CHARLES

This will be good for him.

He leaves the kitchen and she begins to follow.

LT. ANSON

(to her, sarcastic)

Princess. Are you comfortable in there?

NICOLE

No. This is really not fair.

LT. ANSON

(to the others)

She got very upset. All snot and blubber.

NICOLE

I thought you were an abductor! You didn't say anything about investigating a murder.

LT. ANSON

That's what you conjured. You were transferred when you weren't humbler, didn't obey my order to step from your vehicle earlier. Let's not forget that either! I won't--

LT. NAROVA

John! She's right there.

(to her)

You can go on.

Nicole is perplexed, and returns to the holding room.

In the holding room, Charles is already there, sitting on her bench. Porter is sitting on his bench, mug in hand. She sits by Charles.

CHARLES

(referring to Porter)

Stubborn as a mule.

PORTER

Just waiting for it to cool.

She takes the mug from him, takes a drink and hands it back.

NICOLE

Just follow the stupid rules. Do what he says.

CHARLES

Just do your best.

NICOLE

Then you can go see the inspector...police guy. I've got that figured out at least.

PORTER

The powers that be.

(long pause)

What the hell.

(takes mug and drinks)

Plug me sideways. That's better'n I'm used to.

Charles stands and moves toward the hall. He sees Porter stand, leaving the mug on the bench.

CHARLES

You can bring it with you.

Charles ushers Porter to the office, and Porter goes in alone. In the office, Porter sits in the same chair where Nicole had been, and sets the mug is on the desk. All the while Inspector Miller just watches Porter, and says nothing. Officer Samuels is standing on a chair, attempting to latch closed some shutters...though the latch is just too old to work.

Inspector Miller uses the knife as an additional paper weight on some papers as the breeze seems to be winning. Porter eyes the knife. The dog is chewing on an old shoe. Inspector Miller patiently looks up at Officer Samuels.

INSPECTOR MILLER

(to Officer Samuels)

That'll be fine. We won't blow away.

(glances at Porter)

Nothing to fear. Right?

PORTER

Gonna have to play *that* by ear.

INSPECTOR MILLER

(catches something blowing on his desk)

I'm trying to keep everything here, if I can. For now.

PORTER

I've done some carpentry work in my years. Case, you know, you need me to fix those shutters and sills.

INSPECTOR MILLER

You're a carpenter? Still?

PORTER

Sure. Some.

INSPECTOR MILLER

Measure twice, cut once?

PORTER

True to the mill. Don't have to adjust.

INSPECTOR MILLER

It's a kind offer to help us. If you were to stay, I am sure you'd repair a whole host of decay.

Officer Samuels returns to his Royal typewriter. Inspector Miller gives him a nod, and Officer Samuels begins typing as the two other men speak.

INSPECTOR MILLER

Porter. Not Frank, correct? You prefer the respect of your surname, your sect?

PORTER

I'm not following you. Porter will do.

INSPECTOR MILLER

Then, Porter, let's begin. Tonight. You were in route--

PORTER

My wife and I stopped by some friends. We had a beer, then--

INSPECTOR MILLER

Your wife and you... Tonight?

PORTER

That's right.

INSPECTOR MILLER

Your wife? Your *wife*. True?

PORTER

Dude, that's no concern of yours. If you wanna book me for a DWI or whateverthehell, then sure, fine. But let me get some sleep.

INSPECTOR MILLER

In time. So, you and your wife were enjoying some drinks.

PORTER

Sure.

INSPECTOR MILLER

Where is she now?

PORTER

Home. What's this about?

INSPECTOR MILLER

And she got there...how?

PORTER

She takes a bus to the house, when I ain't around.

INSPECTOR MILLER

Like tonight, when you were out?

(sees Porter wince)

So that's why she wasn't with you, when...

(he looks at a paper)

When Lt. Pearson pulled you over?

PORTER

What the flyin shit balls is this? I told you!

INSPECTOR MILLER

What you've *told* me is you're comfortable lying.

Porter is set back with that,
and an uncomfortably long
silence ensues.

PORTER

You gonna book me or keep prying?

INSPECTOR MILLER

Chips fall where they may.

PORTER

That's like what, a threat? Ok.

INSPECTOR MILLER

You ask a lot of questions, for a man with a lot to say.

PORTER

You're talking riddles.

(rises)

Book me or free me. Either way.

INSPECTOR MILLER

(angrily)

Sit down!

Porter tenses up and doesn't
sit.

INSPECTOR MILLER

(collects himself)

Sit down please.

Porter complies. Inspector
Miller leans to pet the dog.

INSPECTOR MILLER

So. Out on the highway. You were picked up alone. You
were not with your wife...as you say.

(sees Porter's
reaction)

You lied, from one thing to another. On the very evening,
and in the very area of a horrific murder.

PORTER

I heard about that, from the girl. I don't know nothing about
it.

INSPECTOR MILLER

First things first.

PORTER

You shouldn't have scared that girl.

INSPECTOR MILLER

Her? Kill someone? I doubt she's the kind. Though perhaps if you give her more reasons and time.

(beat)

I wonder why that word 'scared' came to your mind.

PORTER

Yeah right. She's as innocent as the sky's dead blue.

INSPECTOR MILLER

She is as innocent as anyone. And you?

PORTER

Hey, we're all just trying to get through. Trying to climb the greased-up flagpole of life.

INSPECTOR MILLER

Are you an innocent man? By your view?

PORTER

Compared to who? Who knows? Are you?

(sees the stare)

What do you mean by innocent?

INSPECTOR MILLER

Another good question, isn't it?

(writes with one of
his pens)

Miss Scone also asked a good question. Wondered what she might have done wrong, worth sanction.

(writes)

What is it to be innocent? What you asked, only more, shall we say, ascendant.

(sees the shrug)

Questions reveal struggle. Struggle is normal. A man struggles with his origins. He wants to know where he was to know whom he'll become. What is his distinction? Why others are given exemptions? Is his spirit divine or misshapen? Is he to be a footman, huntsman, oarsman or hangman?

Inspector Miller lets his thoughts wander a moment as Porter stares, lost. Finally Inspector Miller resumes his focus on Porter and leans close.

INSPECTOR MILLER

But not here. Here your struggle is within, with your end, and the cause of your new beginning.

Long pause as Inspector Miller locks eye contact with Porter.

PORTER

Are you stoned? You high?

INSPECTOR MILLER

Another good question.

PORTER

If so, you really oughta share.

(beat)

Hell, I'm just trying to lay low, go with the flow. Middle of the road. You know? Each to his own. Lord knows I ain't smelling like a rose, but it ain't as though--

INSPECTOR MILLER

No! You're being held as a *suspect sans parole* in a violent murder that happened a short time ago, near here. Just's a stone's throw.

Porter is stunned.

INSPECTOR MILLER

Would you like to change any aspect of your story, your testimony?

PORTER

No.

INSPECTOR MILLER

I've never known a person who wasn't prone to change their story, when the light comes on and a chance is given. So, no?

PORTER

No.

INSPECTOR MILLER

You're going to push for the end zone?

PORTER

More of a Hail Mary.

INSPECTOR MILLER

If you say so. You can go.

Officer Samuels is at the door,
and now ushers Porter away.

INSPECTOR MILLER

Porter.

(sees Porter turn)

What will be will be.

PORTER

(walks on)

What the hell does that mean?

ACT IISCENE 1

Later that night, both Porter and Nicole appear asleep on their benches. From DR, Lt. Narova enters and comes to the center of the porch. She turns back expectantly.

LT. NAROVA

Come on in. It's alright.

Now from DR enters a YOUNG BOY (8). He is carrying a baby carrier, in which is a BABY (6 mo). The Young Boy joins Lt. Narova in coming inside the station.

LT. NAROVA

Might I help you with her?

YOUNG BOY

We're fine.

LT. NAROVA

You can sit in here a time.

She ushers him (still carrying the baby in the carrier) into the holding room. There Nicole is stirred from her curled state. She sits up, taking in the boy and the baby, and makes room on her bench. Porter sits up and scans Lt. Narova.

PORTER

Hello Officer. Aren't you a sight.

Lt. Narova ignores him.

NICOLE

(to boy)

Hi.

The boy smiles, sets the carrier on the floor and sits himself up on her bench.

NICOLE

(to boy)

You can put her up here awhile.

Lt. Narova lifts the carrier up to Nicole's bench, to now be between the Young Boy and Nicole.

YOUNG BOY

(to Nicole)

You are nice.

Lt. Narova leans and kisses the boy on the head, then leaves. Nicole watches the boy as he attends to the blanket around the baby.

NICOLE

Is this your sister with you?

YOUNG BOY

Yes.

NICOLE

That policewoman, who--

YOUNG BOY

Thank you.

Confused, Nicole sits back, observes the elegance in the boy's face as he and the baby make eye contact. She looks up at Porter who is staring at the opposite wall.

NICOLE

Anything new?

Porter slowly looks at her, then past her to the front door. He is cooking up an idea.

Charles appears in the holding room's doorway, blanket in hand.

CHARLES

(to boy)

Here you are.

Good heart.

YOUNG BOY

The boy takes the blanket,
then looks up to Charles.

YOUNG BOY

May I have warm milk for her?

CHARLES

Certainly. If you prefer.

Charles leaves and Nicole
studies the boy.

NICOLE

How did you know they were...

She lets it go. Soon Charles
returns and hands a bottle
wrapped in a cloth to the Young
Boy, who in turn begins to
feed the baby.

Suddenly Porter jumps up and
rushes out of the holding room,
into the hall area, heading
toward the front door. In
doing so, he violently crashes
an elbow into Charles's face
and the old man falls, busting
his lip. Porter is to the
front door now and throws it
open. The officers in the
kitchen are now on their feet
scrambling toward Porter.

Porter rushes out the door,
down the porch and into the
grass and stares out into the
vast space in front of him. In
that pause Lt. Pearson and Lt.
Anson are already running out
behind him. They see him, and
stop on the porch, knowingly.

Porter moves to go one way,
stops, then moves to go another,
and stops.

The two officers now walk up
behind him and grab his arms.

He is a storm of confusion, anger, panic and fear, still staring into the dark. Finally he succumbs and turns. He shakes off their grip and goes back inside.

By this time, Inspector Miller and Officer Samuels are in the front entry area. Lt. Narova is attending to Charles, who now moves to the kitchen with her help. His nose and mouth are bloody and there is a cut over his right eye.

LT. ANSON

(shoves Porter around)

Stand here. Give me your hands!

Lt. Anson handcuffs Porter, then he and Lt. Pearson plop Porter back onto his bench.

Nicole is attending to the Young Boy and the baby, attempting to wipe off a little bit of Charles's blood on him by wetting a corner of her blanket with her spit. The boy lets her.

Both officers leave the holding room, and now Inspector Miller enters. He first touches the boy's head, then smiles at Nicole, then turns to Porter.

INSPECTOR MILLER

Your flesh is willing, but your spirit is weak.

(no response)

So, not talking?

(beat)

No matter. Your actions speak.

PORTER

Just 'cause I don't wanna stay around to drink milk with that old...antique--

INSPECTOR MILLER

No.

PORTER

He gives her the creeps.

NICOLE
He does not.

PORTER
And I didn't kill no one
and you can't keep--

INSPECTOR MILLER
Hush!

Porter stops abruptly, shocked
at his own compliance, angry
at the humiliation.

INSPECTOR MILLER
(perhaps indicating
the boy and Nicole)
Short and sweet.

Nicole is taken aback by it
all. She has a comforting arm
extended over to the boy. She
looks at the baby.

NICOLE
How did she not cry in all that?

YOUNG BOY
(staring at Porter)
You should sleep.

INSPECTOR MILLER
(indicating baby)
She is hungry.

YOUNG BOY
(indicating Porter)
So is he.

Nicole and Inspector Miller
watch as the Young Boy holds
the bottle for the baby girl.
The only sound is the baby
slurping the milk, till finally
she is finished. The boy hands
the empty bottle to Nicole.

YOUNG BOY
I hope we meet again.

NICOLE
(confused)
Ok. Maybe we will, when...

The boy then stands, picking
up the baby carrier.

YOUNG BOY
(to Nicole)

Now and then.

Inspector Miller steps aside as the boy heads to the front door.

At the door, Lt. Narova is on her knees, hugging the boy, then rises as the boy and his baby sister exit. Lt. Narova closes the door behind them, then returns to the kitchen. Behind her, others, including Nicole (but not Porter) are watching.

Inspector Miller walks into the kitchen, but stops at Lt. Anson.

INSPECTOR MILLER
The cuffs aren't necessary. He needs to get his sleep.

A knowing look passes between the men.

LT. ANSON
I see.

SCENE 2

In the kitchen, Inspector Miller approaches Charles who is sitting. Charles's face seems better: a cut on his lip, and a Band-Aid over his right eye.

CHARLES

She's seen me worse.

INSPECTOR MILLER

(laughs)

What? This not the first?

Inspector Miller pulls a chair near Charles and sits.

CHARLES

Yeah, it's a bit of a blur. Once I had my nose broken in two places. I was a young hot-head with a lot of nerve. Fifty-five years since her...well, her father didn't like me much, that's for sure. We came to terms. Such a pretty girl. But, fifty-five years, that's good. Stem to stern.

INSPECTOR MILLER

Joy well earned.

CHARLES

She's a good woman. Deserved a better turn. And now, she wished it'd been the reverse.

INSPECTOR MILLER

Well, first come, first served. Besides, you gave her your word.

CHARLES

For better or for worse. I'm a lucky Chubb.

INSPECTOR MILLER

Not luck my friend. It's love.

CHARLES

And then some.

INSPECTOR MILLER

Just a hop, skip and a jump.

Inspector Miller pats Charles's knee then stands.

INSPECTOR MILLER

I see you at sun up.

(MORE)

INSPECTOR MILLER (CONT'D)

(beat)

Charley. Trust.

Charles nods, his thoughts far
away.

SCENE 3

In the Inspector's office, the morning light filters through the now motionless window shutters. Golden light flooding in. Shafts bathe the Royal typewriter, the pen collection, the paper weights, paints and brushes, reflect off the knife, etc. In the distance, sounds are coming from the kitchen.

The hall is quiet, light streaming and the black lab sleeping by the front door.

In the kitchen Lt. Pearson is making pancakes, and Officer Samuels and Lt. Anson are at the table talking quietly. Lt. Narova comes enters through the kitchen door, knocks the dirt from her boots, and lays a rolled newspaper on the table. Lt. Pearson opens it, thanking her. There is light chatter among them. Now Charles enters from the hallway. He still has the same bandage over his eye.

LT. PEARSON

Good morning.

CHARLES

Yes! I feel reborn.

Charles approaches the table.

LT. NAROVA

I see your knock on the head hasn't slowed you down.

CHARLES

Nope. No fouls, no frowns.

SCENE 4

In the holding room, Porter rouses, wiping his eyes and sits up. He watches Nicole sleeping for awhile. Then he stands and, staying in the holding room, looks out into the hall, noting the sunlight. From the kitchen comes the sounds of plates and friendly chatter.

Porter continues his examination of the hall. Though he can't quite see outside from his vantage point, he can see the shutters are open such that if he were to walk into the hall, he could get a clear view out the front window. But a quick check toward the kitchen reminds him that he doesn't dare.

He turns and again sees Nicole is asleep. He kneels near her. He can't help but to take in her long bare legs. He is almost close enough to kiss her. But then he stands up and steps back.

PORTER

Do...not...touch.

(she rouses)

Hey. Time to get up.

(she sits up)

It's morning. Early bird gets the perv!

NICOLE

It is?

PORTER

Yeah, look out front.

NICOLE

Gonna burst. Need the bathroom.

PORTER

Me first. Just kidding.

(loudly toward
kitchen)

Hey, clerk, got girls bathroom in this here church?

NICOLE

(embarrassed)

Thanks a lot.

PORTER

(still loud)

Or is she supposed to pee out there in the dirt?

NICOLE

I think they heard.

OFFICER SAMUELS

(coming from kitchen)

Yes, yes. What on earth?

Porter returns to his bench just in time for Officer Samuels to appear. At first Officer Samuels appears annoyed, then abruptly switches to an attentive smile, the facial equivalent of a tail wag.

OFFICER SAMUELS

Ok. Just this way.

She stands to follow, then sees the clock is still as it was, high noon, but ticking. Porter catches her arm.

PORTER

Hey! Look out that window will you? See what they-- See what you can see, outside this place.

Nicole follows after Officer Samuels.

SCENE 5

As she passes through the hallway area, she looks out front (toward the audience). She is seeing an open expanse of nothing but rolling grassy hills. Then she sees something, then does a double take and stops. Officer Samuels comes back to see what has her attention. She points toward a point that would be to the back left of the audience, or house-left.

NICOLE

That's my car over there!

OFFICER SAMUELS

I was not aware--

NICOLE

It is!

Officer Samuels looks from his vantage point.

OFFICER SAMUELS

Yes, I guess that is your car. Doesn't look worse for the wear.

Porter, who was watching from the doorway of the holding room, now comes to the window. He surveys outside, then looks off toward house-right.

From his POV we see his old truck far off, the front bumper against the bent yield sign. There are no other cars seen along that road.

PORTER

And there's my truck, clear over there. Right in the open.

At that moment Inspector Miller approaches from DL, across the porch and enters through the front door. Lt. Anson is now in the doorway of the kitchen, watching Porter.

Porter strolls back into the holding room. Meanwhile Inspector Miller has hung up his coat and hat.

INSPECTOR MILLER

What's going on here?

OFFICER SAMUELS

She needs to use the *facilities*...and we're--

INSPECTOR MILLER

(to her)

Good morning dear.

(a wave of his hand)

By all means.

NICOLE

My car is out there.

INSPECTOR MILLER

So it would appear.

(back to her)

Do you like omelets?

NICOLE

I hope you get--

INSPECTOR MILLER

(off to his office)

Good. I love omelets.

Nicole and Officer Samuels turn from the hall, and Porter is still standing there, with Lt. Anson watching him.

PORTER

I love omelets too!

LT. ANSON

We'll see about you.

SCENE 6

Now in his office, Inspector Miller takes a seat on an old leather couch, and starts reading the paper. There is cup of coffee near him and he takes a sip. The dog enters and plops down near him.

Officer Samuels enters (having come from the kitchen) carrying a tray with plates on it.

INSPECTOR MILLER

Oh boy! Good. On my desk please.

Officer Samuels puts two plates with omelets, etc. on the desk, with one set for the Inspector, and the other in front of the guest chair.

Inspector Miller has stood and now approaches the desk. Behind Officer Samuels, Charles is now at the office door, ushering Porter in, though again Charles stops short of the threshold.

Inspector Miller motions Porter to sit. As Porter does, Inspector Miller indicates the food.

INSPECTOR MILLER

Enjoy what you love. Love what you enjoy.

Porter at first hesitates, then takes a bite, then another.

INSPECTOR MILLER

All right, please tell me: why did you attempt to escape last night?

(sees Porter has a mouthful)

When you finish that bite.

He waits patiently for Porter to finish, though Porter slows his chewing, clearly buying time. Finally he answers.

PORTER

Fright or fight! What can I say?

INSPECTOR MILLER

I don't think that's quite right. You mean *flight* or fight?

PORTER

Yeah. Figured sense I couldn't fight, I'd...*flight*.

Inspector Miller studies him, perhaps a bit too much like a cat studies a lizard under its paw.

INSPECTOR MILLER

Let's bring to light some other things...in your life. More pleasant things. Like your evening last night...with your *wife*.

(waits for a response)

PORTER

(shrugs)

Fine.

INSPECTOR MILLER

Well we could try, I suppose, to oblige that scenario, but the truth is that you weren't with your wife last night.

PORTER

Come on!

INSPECTOR MILLER

(long beat)

So you just happened upon--

SCENE 7

Suddenly there is an eruption of voices in the hall, mainly Nicole's. Porter and Inspector Miller look toward the door.

In the hallway Nicole has been watching toward her car, but now something has changed.

NICOLE

It's gone!

LT. PEARSON

No need for alarm.

NICOLE

But you promised! You agreed that you-- You agreed!

As Lt. Pearson seeks to calm her, Nicole shoves away from him, and now glares at the slowly advancing Inspector Miller.

NICOLE

Did you have my car towed?

INSPECTOR MILLER

No.

NICOLE

So what the hell? It's just gone, as though-- Where did it go?

Lt. Narova is there now, and her hold on Nicole seems to calm Nicole, momentarily. Then Nicole erupts again, shoving Lt. Narova and freeing herself from the woman's grip.

NICOLE

(to Inspector Miller)

So?!

PORTER

I'm with her, as far as all that goes.

Porter is looking out another window, peering off toward far house-right.

PORTER

...cause a moment ago... Did y'all impound 'em both?

Lt. Narova resumes her grasp on Nicole.

NICOLE

(now in hysterics)

Let me go!

(moving on Insp.
Miller)

You have to tell me what I did, or do something! You can't keep me here! Just kidnap me out of the blue! You have to let me call my mom. You have to. Tell me the truth!

Officer Samuels is near and reaches out to her, but she knocks his hand away.

NICOLE

I'm sick of all of you!

PORTER

(impressed)

Smooth. Fuckin-A, smooth. I'm warning all of you. She's probably hiding some shank on her...gonna off us all in our sleep. That right?

Inspector Miller motions for all the officers to leave. This action alone pulls Nicole and Porter to silence. After the others have left for the kitchen, Inspector Miller motions to a bench in the hall, indicating Nicole and Porter should sit. They do. Inspector Miller now goes to the first front window and pauses, looking out. He carefully closes the shutters on that window, then does the same to the other window, cutting the light down to illuminating streaks through the dusty air.

He turns to them both.

INSPECTOR MILLER

It is time. What I must now do is, by any definition, difficult. But it is my job, so I must. It is my duty. My trust. It is done with love. At the end of... when it is over, you will thank me, as a result, and we'll be closer.

PORTER

What the--

INSPECTOR MILLER

There's no need--

NICOLE

You're scaring me.

INSPECTOR MILLER

That's just the fear of being set free.

Inspector Miller looks up to the clock. He watches the seconds tick. In C.U. the second hand lurches forward in loud, menacing pops. The big hands still don't move.

Inspector Miller's face calms, he closes his eyes, then turns with resolve to the windows. He opens wide the shutters of one window, and then the other. The room bursts full of light, even brighter than before when the shutters were partially open. He looks out the window, to the left, and smiles.

INSPECTOR MILLER

Come Nicole. Tell me what you see.

She hesitates for long moment. Inspector Miller just smiles at her warmly. Finally she stands and joins him, facing off house-left. She stares, squints. Now she sees something, but doesn't understand.

NICOLE

Who is that?

(no response)

Who is that!?

Inspector Miller steps back with no offer to help. She looks for a moment, then panic hits her. Her eyes are wide and terrified.

Porter has meanwhile gone to the other window.

PORTER

What are we looking at?

Nicole races to the front door in a shriek.

NICOLE

Mom! Dad!

She rushes out. We follow behind her, but watch from inside. She stops and screams.

NICOLE

Mom! Daddy! I'm over here! MOM!!! DADDY!!!

Porter focuses where she is looking, toward the back of the theater house.

What she is "seeing": a Suburban has come to a stop where her car had been. A man, woman, teenage girl, and a couple of others are out of the vehicle. Another car stops and others get out.

NICOLE

DADDY!!! Over here!

Inspector Miller is now outside, beside her. She starts to run, off the stage and into the aisle, shouting for her parents as she goes, then stops. Suddenly she turns and screams at Inspector Miller.

NICOLE

Take me to them! I have to go out--

INSPECTOR MILLER

I cannot. No.

Now she "sees" more: the older man, presumably her father, banging on something with a large hammer. The flicker of sunlight hits the object.

Is that a white fence pole?

She runs back up to the porch
to confront someone, anyone.

NICOLE

(to Officer Samuels)

You! Take me out to that road!

Before Officer Samuels can say anything, Nicole sees Porter's petrified look as he stares and points to where she had seen her parents. He motions for her to look. She does, and we see her petrified look: she 'sees': her father has just erected the white cross by the road, right where her car had been.

NICOLE

Is that a cross? No. Beside road? No! For who? No. No. No.

Neither of them move. Just stare into the distance, into the truth. Finally Porter is the first to blink.

PORTER

They think you're dead.

NICOLE

No! Something instead, something...

Nicole races out front into the grass again and screams.

NICOLE

Mom! Daddy! I'm here! I'm here!

INSPECTOR MILLER

Nicole. Dear.

NICOLE

I'm here!

INSPECTOR MILLER

It is as it appears.

NICOLE

(spinning to look
up to the porch)

I didn't just disappear!

INSPECTOR MILLER

They can't hear you.

NICOLE

Why? Why not! They're right there! DADDY! DADDY! You
tell me why they can't hear me, can't see me. They're so
near.

(crying)

Mom. Daddy. I'm here.

INSPECTOR MILLER

Come back.

(she stops)

Come back dear.

She turns, looks at Inspector
Miller. She slowly walks back
up to him. He holds her.

INSPECTOR MILLER

You're free. It's out of your hands.

NICOLE

(crying against him)

I don't understand.

INSPECTOR MILLER

But you do, as a matter of fact.

NICOLE

I should go back.

INSPECTOR MILLER

You are here now. Not by chance.

NICOLE

I've gone mad. I'm in a trance, coma or something.

INSPECTOR MILLER

Same song. New dance.

She stares at him, his tender
smile, and then through him,
absorbing the reality of what
has happened.

INSPECTOR MILLER

Come on.

SCENE 8

Inside, Porter is sitting on the floor. He is motionless, with a blank stare at the opposite wall. He could be dead for how frozen he is.

Nicole enters from the porch, followed by Inspector Miller. She stands at the door, staring down at Porter.

Time passes as she begins to further understand and her rage grows.

Suddenly she rushes Porter, screaming at him, kicking him, tripping, hitting him. He just lets her.

NICOLE

You shit! You crashed into me! You were drunk. Asshole! You hit me! Fuck you! Know what you did to my family? You're a piece of shit.

Tears course his face as she tires. She pauses, then resumes with new energy hitting, slapping him, scratching him, tearing at his clothes, beating the crap out of him.

NICOLE

I hate you! You are worthless. A shit. Why did you do that? You're not a man. You are a selfish asshole. You're less than that. You don't care about anybody, not even yourself. And then you came on to me. You gross old, miserable-- You're a worthless piece of shit! You killed me.

Porter slumps. Though he appears dead, he is still breathing, just empty.

Time passes. The sun shifts. Finally she has stopped. Inspector Miller is still there at the foyer end of the hall, watching them. When Nicole glances at him, he speaks softly.

INSPECTOR MILLER

It is alright. Sometimes the only way to become whole, balanced... aligned, is to release control. Lose your mind.

She is leaning against Porter, exhausted. Tears and sweat across her face.

PORTER

(mutters)

I was blind. I was blind. I was blind.

She stares ahead blankly. The beams of daylight move slowly across the room, angling through the dust particles in the air, the sun passing from morning, across its apex and into late afternoon. All the while they remain motionless there.

Inspector Miller approaches and reaches down to her.

INSPECTOR MILLER

Come.

She takes his hand and stands. She walks to his office. Her shoes are strewn on the hallway floor and Office Samuels picks them up and follows Inspector Miller and Nicole. He has to step over Porter's outstretched legs to do so.

After all three go into the office, the door closes with a loud click, and Porter is left lying there, alone, on the hallway floor, his eyes fixed on the closed handle.

SCENE 9

Nicole is sitting on the couch. Inspector Miller says something to Officer Samuels and Samuels leaves. Inspector Miller approaches her and sits in a chair opposite. They look at each other.

INSPECTOR MILLER

He'll bring some milk.

NICOLE

(wiping her tears)

So this is what this is, instead?

INSPECTOR MILLER

That is a good question.

NICOLE

I am dead.

INSPECTOR MILLER

Perhaps more of a conception.

NICOLE

I am dead.

INSPECTOR MILLER

You're alive, just ahead of--

NICOLE

My family thinks I am dead.

INSPECTOR MILLER

And they're right. And yet, those who see the dead, or what they perceive as 'not alive', they are easily misled.

NICOLE

Just like that, I was gone? Just died?

INSPECTOR MILLER

From that world, yes, on the outside.

NICOLE

He hit me. He was drunk, all over the road, and then onto my side.

INSPECTOR MILLER

You tried to avoid him, but, too late.

NICOLE

I hate him.

INSPECTOR MILLER

That's a good start.

NICOLE

Good?

INSPECTOR MILLER

Here hate gives and breaks under its own weight. It must.

Long pause as she processes.
He waits patiently. He watches
patiently. Finally she returns,
and then, as if a headache had
subsided, she relaxes, staring
at the hunting knife.

INSPECTOR MILLER

If you choose to lay it aside, hatred can just go.
(snaps his fingers)
...in the blink of an eye.

NICOLE

Feel like I've been knifed.

INSPECTOR MILLER

Your fight has slowed.

NICOLE

He deserved it! It was justified. Saying he was blind.
What is that? He deserves worse than I gave him.

INSPECTOR MILLER

Deserves? Justice? That's a different thing. Something of
man's design.

Another long pause between
them as Officer Samuels brings
her a mug of warm milk, then
leaves.

INSPECTOR MILLER

There is something especially amazing in you. A truth. A
trying. A strength I haven't seen since...since you were a
child.

(beat)

You have great capacity to be kind, to give love. I find
that when someone has that kind of love, they usually pass
by. They go on, forward, traveling their light.

(MORE)

INSPECTOR MILLER (CONT'D)

(beat)

I don't know why you're here exactly. Or where you'll travel after. It's not for me to understand. I'm just the station master.

(beat)

My job is to help you make the choice...to do whatever is required...to push you through. Then, to turn you loose.

(sits beside her)

There is goodness and love in you.

NICOLE

Someone I used to be.

(beat)

He killed me.

INSPECTOR MILLER

He also killed himself.

NICOLE

See? It all balances. Save your breath.

He picks up the knife from his desk and uses it to demonstrate the following.

INSPECTOR MILLER

Balance. Like up and down? Light and dark? Life and death?

(beat)

How can there be dark where there is only light? How can there be death where there is only life?

(beat)

Symmetry is boring, Nicole. Beauty is in the disruption. In the disorder. It lives here, along the perfect edge of the knife.

(beat)

Porter left behind, in that life, his wife, children, friends.

NICOLE

So what? Didn't I? My mom. My dad. My sister. They were out there by the road...in the end.

(beat)

I didn't tell them...

INSPECTOR MILLER

They know your love. They knew it then, and will again.

NICOLE

I said awful things to my mom. Then I was gone. But I didn't intend...

INSPECTOR MILLER

Everyone leaves loose ends. It's part of the connection across. Threads and fibers that glue each life span to the next. Cloth to cloth.

NICOLE

They came...and put up that cross.

INSPECTOR MILLER

Fibers reaching forward.

NICOLE

But no one came for Porter.

INSPECTOR MILLER

Yes. No symmetry. No apparent order.

NICOLE

So that's what? Beautiful?

INSPECTOR MILLER

It opens a corridor. A perfect edge. A chance for you to cause disruption. Create *disorder*. To give him that *one thing*. That one thing everyone cries out for.

(beat)

There is such longing in that world. You were old enough to have felt its burn. That search for peace. Yearning for unqualified kindness. To be forgiven out of turn, beyond one's worth. To know the meaning of for better or for worse...the joy of life...that loving someone is having someone to forgive, to give all that we might.

SCENE 10

On the porch, Porter is sitting in an old metal lawn chair, circa 1960s. He stares ahead into the grass, but not expectantly. Every once in awhile he looks up, off to the far right, where his truck used to be.

This time he looks left, into the distance. He "sees" her cross, the flowers, the long pink ribbons spinning and spiraling in the wind. The vehicles and people are gone. He scans back to the right to the emptiness.

He sits back, leaning the chair against the wall of the station.

He looks up as Lt. Pearson comes out, gets in his car and drives away.

Charles comes out and takes a seat in another metal chair next to Porter.

CHARLES

It's a good day. No, a *great* day! A great day to be dead!

Porter is not amused, but studies the curious old man.

PORTER

I'm sorry I hurt your head.

CHARLES

Nah. Just bled.

The two sit silently.

PORTER

So you too? You're dead?

CHARLES

Me? No, I'm alive. I'm right here. So are you. But yeah, that's how they see it, back around the bend.

PORTER

So, at the end of your...did you, also, kill someone?

Charles takes a long look at Porter.

CHARLES

It's all how you look at it, son. I was selfish buck. I let my health slide. Left Helen on her own for a bunch of years. My bride.

(beat)

But today is joyous. Today I keep my word to her. I know it sounds corny, but love is truly all that endures. And loving ourselves, yourself...well, that's the sure cure to all that ails you.

PORTER

So you're not dead?

CHARLES

I assure you, I've never been more alive.

SCENE 11

Inside, Nicole enters the kitchen, sees Lt. Narova at the table, and joins her. Lt. Anson is washing a pot. As Nicole and Lt. Narova talk, in the B.G. Lt Anson leaves. Lt. Narova gives Nicole a smile as Nicole sits.

LT. NAROVA

You're a fighter, I swear!

NICOLE

And then some.

LT. NAROVA

Who'd you get that from? Your father? Your mother?

NICOLE

Both. Maybe neither one.

(beat)

I wish they'd fought *for* each other.

(beat)

Can I talk to them, from here?

(sees the answer in

Lt. Narova's look)

Not even a text?

(gets a smile)

I want to talk to my Mom, to make things clear.

LT. NAROVA

She knows you. Trust. Your love fills her.

(beat)

Just as you and the Inspector discussed.

NICOLE

I wish I could just hear her voice, just once. Tell me again that I'm her peanut...

Nicole begins to cry. Lt. Narova comes around and sits by Nicole, holding her.

LT. NAROVA

Know this in your heart dear girl: You have been good from the unknowable start. Since you...since all was created. And you will keep growing in your love. Beginning with what you show here. And it will be for her too.

NICOLE

What can I do?

LT. NAROVA

Let this fear go. Clear yourself of your mother's ghost.
Leave the frayed ends alone. Until then you can't begin to
see pain but your own.

NICOLE

How can I?

LT. NAROVA

Just decide. Choose to be free of that burden inside.
(notes Porter out
front)

Then *you* can forgive *him*. And you'll do it not just for
him, but for yourself, your mother...for *all* of you mothers.

SCENE 12

Porter and Charles are still talking on the front porch.

PORTER

I might ask you something, though I'm not sure I ought to.
(sees Charles smile)
If we're alive, sorta, can a man kill himself in this place?
Here?

CHARLES

Where do you imagine *here* is?

PORTER

Some sort of bridge? Can't be heaven.

CHARLES

Why not?

A long silence lingers.

PORTER

(indicating Inspector
Miller inside)

Is he God?

CHARLES

It's always tempting to wanna take it straight on, to find that one answer, one shape, one fix for everything that comes to mind. Like Duct Tape.

(sees Porter's
surprise)

Yeah, they use it here too.

PORTER

Jesus! You do?

CHARLES

I'm just saying that for every kind of nail back there...every decision, every disaster, we made one hammer, one answer: "God". One ever after. Much easier than finding truth. Just swoop everything up in a plain white wrapper.

PORTER

There's no god?

CHARLES

Slow down hot rod. Just saying you've gotta find your own path off this island, take your own highway. Or stay and serve milk. But nobody but you can pay your bill.

PORTER

My highway? What? My bill?

CHARLES

(smiles warmly)

My fault. Talking till I'm blue in the gills. It's an exciting day for me.

PORTER

Sure as hell isn't for me.

CHARLES

Could be. Inspector said you only gotta forgive yourself for what you did to that girl in there. Then you can move on from this world.

PORTER

Then I'm staying to burn. Who could forgive themselves for something as horrible as what I did? There's nothing worse. Taking away the life of a girl who had her whole life ahead of her. She's my daughter's age for God's sakes! No way. It's beyond...beyond...

CHARLES

Beyond what?

PORTER

I don't know. Wasn't fair. Wasn't right. Beyond anything I can think on.

CHARLES

Grace?

PORTER

Yeah, beyond grace.

CHARLES

My friend, nothing is *that* far away.

PORTER

You don't know what your saying.

CHARLES

Close your eyes.

(waits for him to
do it)

Now, try to see your favorite color, from your other life.

(beat)

Got it?

PORTER

Fine. I see it...in my mind.

(MORE)

PORTER (CONT'D)

(opens eyes)

But why--

Seeing the disapproving squint in Charles's eyes, Porter closes his again.

CHARLES

Get it again. One more time. See it?

(Porter nods)

Now let it go. Relax, but don't open...keep your eyes closed. Soon a new color will show, a color you've never known.

PORTER

(eyes open)

No. I'm too broken for this.

CHARLES

How do you know? You just learned there's a way-station for your soul, just few hours ago. Now, lo-n-behold, there's new colors. Why's that so hard to hold?

Porter ponders that for a second, then closes his eyes again.

CHARLES

So?

PORTER

A highway. A road.

CHARLES

Colors? Or no?

A smile forms across Porter's face. He nods, covering his face in his hands. Finally he sits up and opens his eyes.

PORTER

My god...it was blue...sorta gold.

CHARLES

Color is your own.

PORTER

It was--

He tries to 'see' it again, but it is gone.

CHARLES

When you're ready, it'll show.

PORTER

And the road?

CHARLES

Remember that blue highway. It's your path on home.

(pause)

So, told you. You didn't think you could see a new color, till you were shown. I'm telling you now, you can forgive yourself too, Lord knows.

PORTER

That's too far to go.

CHARLES

You set those limits. They're yours alone. If you set forgiving yourself out beyond your own reach, well that's your own.

(beat)

I don't mean to preach, but don't you go assuming anything is impossible or beyond belief.

Porter again surveys toward where his truck had been.

CHARLES

Anything to see?

PORTER

No.

CHARLES

No, don't suppose so.

PORTER

Thought my wife might be...

CHARLES

She won't, Porter.

PORTER

(long beat)

I wish I could hold her.

CHARLES

I know. For better or worse.

Porter looks down at his left hand where his ring finger is empty.

He scurries and reaches into his pocket to retrieve his wedding ring, but cannot find it.

PORTER

Where is it? I had it! Did it drop in the dirt?

Porter drops down to the grass and searches up around his chair, then jumps up and sprints inside.

CHARLES

More heaven my friend, less earth.

Now inside in the holding room, Porter is searching for his wedding ring. As he can't find it, his stress escalates. He digs around the benches, gets on the floor, comes to the doorway, returns, now in a state of high anxiety he runs into the kitchen.

In the kitchen, Porter sees the Lt. Anson and Lt. Narova there.

PORTER

What'd you do with my-- Y'all see my wedding band?

Both of them shake their head.

LT. NAROVA

Why? You never had it on your hand.

Porter exits back to the holding room where he shouts in despair.

PORTER

NOOO!

SCENE 13

Now in the office, Inspector Miller is wearing a carpenter's apron over his black suit, and is standing at his easel painting something, though we can't see what it is as he is blocking it from view. Nicole is nearby. Officer Samuels is dusting the room. As Inspector Miller moves said, it is visible that the painting is half-complete of the black lab, which is on the floor, chewing on that same old shoe.

NICOLE

What's his name, your dog?

INSPECTOR MILLER

Not mine, and he didn't say.

NICOLE

No way.

INSPECTOR MILLER

He knows who he is, day by day.

(beat)

Everyone comes with the name they made in the other life. If they had one. Then some change.

NICOLE

Were you the same, in that life?

INSPECTOR MILLER

Not me. I wasn't there. None of the officers either. We were named in a different life, some other plain of leisure.

(back to dog)

He either never took a name, or disclaimed it. His reasons are his reasons.

NICOLE

How long will he stay?

INSPECTOR MILLER

When he feels the time has come, he'll be gone.

(a knowing smile)

Every dog has his day.

NICOLE

Even if he's stuck here?

INSPECTOR MILLER

Stuck? It's by our choices that we steer, and--

NICOLE

Well I didn't choose to be here!

INSPECTOR MILLER

(back to painting)

And by our actions do we volunteer.

(beat)

You've heard the line: to err is human, to forgive divine?

NICOLE

Maybe, one time.

INSPECTOR MILLER

Well, we here, we're in the business of the divine.

NICOLE

Yeah, so what you've got in mind is, for me to move forward, I've got to forgive him, the man who took my life.

(sees Miller nod)

I don't know.

Inspector Miller walks out of his office and to the front window and looks out toward the back of the audience on the right. He turns and motions Nicole to join him. She does.

INSPECTOR MILLER

There. On over. Who is that?

Nicole is transfixed on what she sees.

NICOLE

(mutters)

My mom.

INSPECTOR MILLER

What is she doing? Can you see what she's done?

Nicole stares, watching. What she 'sees' is her mother out beside the far highway, alone, standing beside her own car, hammering a small, unadorned white cross into the ground.

NICOLE

I don't know.

Nicole.

INSPECTOR MILLER

It's not as though--

NICOLE

But she is.

INSPECTOR MILLER

Another cross?

NICOLE

For?

INSPECTOR MILLER

Porter. She can't have begun to--

NICOLE

But she did.

INSPECTOR MILLER

But mine is--

NICOLE

Yours is still there. Over there.

INSPECTOR MILLER

He points to the left.

Nicole stares, then back to her mother in the distance. Tears stream Nicole's face.

NICOLE

Mom. Oh mom.

Inspector Miller leaves her there and returns to his office and his painting. Finally Nicole returns and sits down.

INSPECTOR MILLER

Did she go?

NICOLE

Yes. So...

INSPECTOR MILLER

That is grace, not justice. If she can forgive him...

NICOLE

Then...I must.

He smiles at her, there is a long pause as he finishes the painting for the day.

INSPECTOR MILLER

(turns partial painting)

So, what do you think? Fit?

NICOLE

(dries her eyes)

His ear looks clipped.

INSPECTOR MILLER

It's just a bit flopped.

(points to dog)

See?

Nicole stands, paces, messes with Inspector Miller's pens.

NICOLE

What if I don't? What then?

Inspector Miller begins cleaning his brushes.

INSPECTOR MILLER

You cannot carry forward hatred, or the hope of revenge. Not from one plateau to the next, time and again.

(beat)

Think of it like your possessions in that life. You had to resign from them, leave them behind. These clothes, your jewelry...just trappings of your mind.

NICOLE

But I have them.

INSPECTOR MILLER

Many people carry from that life some strong, negative emotions. Anger. Revenge. Jealousy. Self-Loathing. They come through, holding it by the throat. And when hatred's created by death itself, it can be so hard to let go.

(now directly at her)

Like demands for justice that aren't yours to ask. If you don't shed them here, you cannot advance.

(beat)

Some learn in that life or even before it, the peace of forgiveness, the selfless euphoric. You've seen them. They are sensitive and softer. In fact there's one you've known since you were a toddler.

NICOLE

My father.

(long pause)

So if I forgive Porter, this hate will just, what, be over?

INSPECTOR MILLER

Can there be one without the other?

NICOLE

So it is my choice.

There is a very long pause as
Inspector Miller finishes
putting away his paints.

NICOLE

Then I do. I do. I do. I forgive him. My sweet mother.
That's all that matters. I do.

She smiles, then chuckles as
the weight lifts.

INSPECTOR MILLER

That's a good answer. I like good answers.

There is another long pause
between them. The wind begins
to blow and the shutters return
to their banging. Inspector
Miller goes to them and
reinserts the shim that stops
the banging temporarily.

INSPECTOR MILLER

He's coming now. One mad badger.

Inspector Miller removes the
apron and hangs it up. Outside
the office, Porter is
approaching from the holding
room.

There is a loud knock at the
door. Officer Samuels opens
it. Porter is there. The dog
hops up and goes out the open
door and down the hallway.

PORTER

I had a wedding band!

INSPECTOR MILLER

I understand.

Porter cannot look at Nicole.

PORTER

I can't find it now!
(angry tears)
I hadn't planned...

Inspector Miller motions Porter to sit in the other open chair at the desk.

INSPECTOR MILLER

Sit. There's no need to stand.

Porter does, but not looking at Nicole. As Inspector Miller sits on the edge of the desk, Nicole rises to leave.

INSPECTOR MILLER

(to her)

Would you stay?

She stops her exit.

PORTER

I can't talk to her. There is nothing I can say.

INSPECTOR MILLER

Today she moves on. You can wish her well.

PORTER

(dismissive)

Suit yourself.

INSPECTOR MILLER

She's forgiven you. No blame.

PORTER

Like hell!

(stands, now to her)

Don't. That's bullshit. You deserve life, a fair shake. I took that from you! Who are you to forgive me? You gonna clear my name?

(beat)

I deserve this. You don't. We're not the same.

(beat)

Go on if you want, if you can, but don't you dare forgive me. You ain't raising me from the grave.

(back in chair,
takes a breath)

NICOLE

It's ok. It's not too late.

PORTER

No, it will never be ok!

(kneeling, holding
her hand)

I'm am ashamed. I was in the wrong place. I'm sorry. It was all my mistake.

He finally lets go, and
Inspector Miller nods for her
to leave the office. She exits.

INSPECTOR MILLER

(to her)

I'll be out soon to see you away.

When she has gone, Porter walks
around the room. Inspector
Miller watches him. Porter
looks down at the Royal
typewriter and sees no words
were actually typed there. He
taps a key and nothing is
written, as if there is no ink
ribbon.

INSPECTOR MILLER

You said you lost something? What did you lose?

PORTER

Everything.

(beat)

So if I were to jump in front of a train...?

INSPECTOR MILLER

You think that's the way? That that's your fate?

(sees Porter's look)

Killing yourself is for the weak. Quite lame. Want to do
something outrageous? Give yourself grace.

(beat)

Besides, no trains here.

PORTER

Your cops have guns. I saw one. And there's knives in the
kitchen, and there's one.

(points at the one
on desk)

INSPECTOR MILLER

So tell me...where do you think you'd go? Same place you've
been?

PORTER

To hell. Right? Cardinal sin?

INSPECTOR MILLER

There's a hell?

(no answer comes)

The mystery of a man convinced.

(beat)

What does *she* deserve? Nicole.

PORTER

Life. Not this.

INSPECTOR MILLER

And you?

PORTER

Not life. Not this.

INSPECTOR MILLER

So this isn't true life, and neither of you deserve whatever *this* is?

PORTER

You're not in my shoes, are you? I did this.

(stands)

I'll do what needs doing.

Porter exits.

SCENE 14

In the kitchen, Lt. Narova is at the stove. She pauses to taste the stew, then begins to chop more carrots. Lt. Anson has his boots propped up as he reads the paper.

Suddenly Porter enters, rushing toward them. He avoids Lt. Anson then slams into Lt. Narova, knocking her down, scrambling for her gun. She is fighting him off, but then Porter gets an upper hand and appears to be about to get the gun.

Just then Lt. Anson grabs Porter and throws him off Lt. Narova. In a millisecond Lt. Anson is down in Porter's face.

LT. ANSON

Boy you're in it deep! Want to shoot us all!?

PORTER

Just me.

LT. ANSON

Get on your feet!

The moment Porter gets up, Lt. Anson shoves him against a cabinet and holds him there.

LT. ANSON

As you sow, so shall you reap.

PORTER

No. I wasn't meaning to hurt... Me. Only me.

LT. NAROVA

(now standing)

Let him go.

LT. ANSON

(still bracing Porter)

You want to shoot yourself? Haven't caused enough slaughter?
Want to make a show?

(sees Porter nod)

Say so!

PORTER

I want to.

LT. NAROVA

John, no, this is out of order.

LT. ANSON

His choice. His alter.
(to Porter)
What do you want to do?

PORTER

I want to shoot myself.

Lt. Anson steps back, studying
Porter's eyes.

LT. ANSON

I know your type. This isn't about self-reproachment or
guilt. Maybe once, but no longer.
(a touch mocking)
You need to prove to yourself that for once in your lives
you've got a spine, the *courage of a warrior*.
(beat)
Fine. But not in close quarters.

Lt. Narova is a bit stunned,
watching as Lt. Anson pulls
Porter away from the cabinets,
then shoves him forward, toward
the kitchen's back door. Nicole
is now in the kitchen, as is
Officer Samuels.

LT. ANSON

You can use my gun.
(sees Porter hesitate)
No, tough guy, you've got a ticket to punch. Let's get this
done.

Porter is becoming more and
more alarmed, though still
allowing himself to get shoved
out the back kitchen door.

SCENE 15

Out in the grass, UC, Lt. Anson shoves Porter, overpowering him. Porter falls, stands and is shoved forward again. Nicole is outside too.

NICOLE

Stop it! I forgave him. Stop it!

SCENE 16

Inside, Lt. Narova yells,
running toward Inspector
Miller's open office door.

LT. NAROVA

Inspector Miller! We need you!

In the office, Inspector Miller
is standing at a window, staring
out. When Lt. Narova rushes
in, Inspector Miller stays
stoic toward the window.

LT. NAROVA

What should I do?

INSPECTOR MILLER

We must give the devil his due. I can't help him...
(turns toward her)
...and neither can you.

EXT. BACK FIELD - CONTINUOUS

Now Porter is to the middle of
the field, in the distance,
and now there is a large stand
of dried up corn, with an
opening to a maze carved into
it. This is not a green corn
field, but dry stands, with an
obvious opening cut out in the
wall of it.

EXT. STATION/BACK - CONTINUOUS

Lt. Narova and Officer Samuels
are near the kitchen door of
the station, and Nicole is
twenty feet or so beyond the
door, toward the field. She
has stopped moving, but is
still hysterical. She sees
Porter and Lt. Anson
disappearing into the corn
maze.

NICOLE

Leave him alone. Stop!

Officer Samuels goes to her
and pulls her back.

OFFICER SAMUELS

You can't go out there on your own.

EXT. CORN MAZE - CONTINUOUS

Lt. Anson shoves Porter around
multiple turns in the dry maze,
stumbling over the plow rows.
Once he decides he has shoved
Porter far enough, he stops
and turns Porter to face him.
The wind blows across the corn
stalks. Lt. Anson unsnaps
his pistol, pulls it out, turns
it around so the butt is toward
Porter and holds it out toward
him.

LT. ANSON

Take it.

Porter hesitates.

LT. ANSON

Time's now, you unfaithful, selfish punk. You killed her.
You were drunk. Smashed your truck into her. Cut her head
off.

(sees Porter's shock)

You didn't know that.

Porter takes the gun.

LT. ANSON

Show how us how brave you are! How tough. How little you
love. Pull that trigger.

Porter hesitates. He is
panicking. Finally he lifts
the gun to his head. He
hesitates. Long silence here
as the wind picks up. Time
seems to slip by, but Lt. Anson
never flinches. Porter steels
his nerves, then, finally, he
pulls the trigger. Click.
Nothing. He does it again.
Click. Again. Click. Then
again and again. Nothing.
Tears stream across his face.

He stares at Lt. Anson. He is shaking.

LT. ANSON

(snatching the gun)

Give me that! You were told this wasn't possible.

Lt. Anson watches Porter collapse into the dirt and cry. A calmness comes over Lt. Anson as he kneels beside Porter.

LT. ANSON

You don't have to be who you were. You are brave. You have steel nerves to pull that trigger. The question is, do you have the strength to do something much harder.

(sees Porter's glance)

What both Charles and Inspector Miller told you to do.

Porter shakes his head.

LT. ANSON

If you don't have the strength to forgive yourself, you must stay at the station until you do.

Lt. Anson stands and starts to walk away. As he does, he points the pistol into the sky and fires it. Bam! Bam! Bam!

EXT. STATION/BACK - CONTINUOUS

Nicole jumps at the sound of the gun fire. Tears streaming across her cheeks.

EXT. CORN MAZE - CONTINUOUS

Porter stands, turns, but is unsure where to go, but starts out walking. He makes a wrong turn, stumbles, then stands and turns to where he expects to find the exit, but is not there. He collapses, face in hands. We see the perspective from inside his hands.

Between his fingers the sunlight shines, making the edges of his fingers glow red from the blood inside. When he slowly opens his fingers, he sees that now his is standing in the opening to the maze, the station just ahead. He sees Nicole is standing near the station, watching him, smiling.

He starts walking toward the station. He stops several feet from Nicole and stares at her.

PORTER

(barely audible)

Please forgive me.

She comes to him, holding him, almost as a mother might comfort a child.

NICOLE

You'll do good. Just breathe.

INT. STATION/INSPECTOR MILLER'S OFFICE - EVENING

The evening's golden light illuminates what appears to be a quiet station. As we view the room, we see Porter asleep on the Inspector's couch.

INT. STATION - CONTINUOUS

There is no one in the hallway, holding room or kitchen either, but we do hear voices in the far B.G.

EXT. STATION/FRONT - LATE EVENING CONTINUOUS

Nicole and Charles are sitting in the metal chairs, watching into the distance. Inspector Miller, Lt. Anson, Lt. Narova and Officer Samuels are in the front as well.

They all appear to be waiting on someone to arrive.

NICOLE

You are a kind soul.

CHARLES

I am glad to know you, Nicole.

NICOLE

I wish I'd met you back then, a long time ago.

CHARLES

Maybe we did.

(beat)

One thing I've learned, at this station: Distance is an illusion, and time flows in all directions.

(beat)

So that means everything is here and now. Don't you think?

NICOLE

I guess so.

CHARLES

So I figure that sometime, someplace, between here and now, we'll meet again.

In the distance a patrol car approaches. As it comes closer, Charles stands, beaming a smile. Everyone notices.

CHARLES

It's time!

Nicole stands, and as the car comes to a stop, we see Lt. Pearson is driving.

CHARLES

She's here! Sakes alive!

Charles is already at the passenger door. He opens it and HELEN WILSON (82) steps out. She is wearing a pretty floral dress. Her long white hair flutters in the wind. It is loose and yet has a youthful Raphaelite braided strand. She smiles at Charles and he at her and their embrace is long. He kisses her.

Both have tears of joy.

Charles turns to everyone.

CHARLES

I'd like you all to meet Helen, my beautiful wife.

The others greet her. She is a bit surprised.

HELEN

(to Charles)

Oh Charlie, a police station? Is everything alright?

INSPECTOR MILLER

Mrs. Wilson, it is good to meet you. We've heard so much, across the years, awaiting your arrival.

HELEN

I hope he's not been of any trouble. His bark's worse than his bite.

INSPECTOR MILLER

(chuckles)

No, no ma'am. Nothing of the kind.

HELEN

I missed you, husband.

(tears up)

I dreamed you'd be here.

CHARLES

I promised, m'dear. I said I would.

HELEN

Yes, you did, didn't you.

CHARLES

They let me wait. I made myself useful.

HELEN

I'm sure you were good.

(beat)

How did you hurt your head? It needs ice.

CHARLES

Oh, no, I'm fine.

HELEN

Charlie, I may be dead but I'm not blind.

He holds her, then looks to the others.

Porter has now come to the doorway.

CHARLES

(to them)

I will miss you all. Friends of mine.

INSPECTOR MILLER

Nah, you'll not remember us. On to another life. But it'll never be the same here without you Charles...without your light.

(beat)

Thank you for your time, for your love in rich supply.

(beat)

Goodbye.

CHARLES

Goodbye.

Charles puts his arm around Helen and they turn and walk away. As they get a few yards beyond the patrol cars, they gently dissolve into a white dust that the wind picks up, swirls and gently carries away.

Everyone watches, then they file back inside the station, except Nicole who sees Porter is not moving. She goes to him. He is clearly struck with the beauty of what he just saw.

PORTER

They just...flew.

NICOLE

Come inside to our room.

PORTER

I can't talk with you.

NICOLE

Then I will talk to *you*.

She reaches for his hand. He pulls back.

PORTER

I can't touch you either.

(MORE)

PORTER (CONT'D)

(beat)
You've gotta cut me loose.

NICOLE

(chuckles)
Come on. Move your boots.

She takes his hand and leads
him inside.

INT. STATION/HOLDING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Nicole is now on Porter's bench,
and he is on hers.

NICOLE

I want to help. I want to be your friend.

PORTER

Friend? Help me what?

NICOLE

Move on. Beyond the dead.

PORTER

Like I already said, I can't.

NICOLE

Look, you came in here showing your reptilian human side.
All 'hey baby'.

PORTER

Yeah, I remember. And you handled my shit gracefully.

NICOLE

Then gracefully kicked your ass this morning.

PORTER

You should have been a kick boxer. Clearly was your calling.

NICOLE

(laughs)
Maybe I would have.

This stops the banter as it
sets into Porter.

PORTER

Back there, I was a bad man.

NICOLE

Here is a beautiful soul.
(touches his forehead)
I'm going forward on my road. I want you to as well, on yours.

PORTER

This station needs a real porch.
(sees her small smile)
I'm a carpenter.
(beat)
And I know a few things that need restoring.

Officer Samuels appears at the doorway.

OFFICER SAMUELS

Hungry? The lieutenants made veggy stew.

NICOLE

Sounds good. Thank you.

Officer Samuels leaves.

She stands and looks back at Porter.

NICOLE

Will you have dinner with a fellow traveler?

PORTER

(stands)
Sure.
(beat)
One thing. If you don't mind. How'd you so quickly come to be kind?

NICOLE

My mom forgave you.

PORTER

How...

NICOLE

When you forgive yourself, you'll--Guess we all live and learn.
(pats his back)
Sometimes you live, *then* you learn.

INT. STATION/FOYER - NIGHT

Dinner is over. The door is open, and Nicole is hugging Lt. Narova. She now turns to Lt. Anson.

NICOLE

You keep up this tough exterior. But I know better.

Inspector Miller approaches with the dog walking next to him.

He hugs Nicole and they look at each other. Everything is said without words.

She turns to go outside.

NICOLE

Where's Porter?

Porter appears from the kitchen, and comes outside. She hugs him, then whispers in his ear.

NICOLE

I love you. When you can, fly.

Porter nods, but he is too overcome to speak.

She gives them all a smile, then turns and walks away, beyond the light of the porch, beyond the patrol cars, and disappears into a swirl of glowing white particles.

Porter stands there, watching her go.

PORTER

Goodbye.

The wind picks up. He turns and goes inside.

We stay outside, and now see a patrol car is approaching.
Lt.

Anson steps off the porch to greet the vehicle.

Now the wind is whipping strongly.

Lt. Narova pulls her car to a stop, then goes around and opens the back door, helping out YOUNG MAN, a handcuffed, young, black man (18). He is barefoot. He has the look of a rough life in the gangs of South Central. Lt. Anson joins Lt. Narova and takes over, now firmly ushering the Young Man inside. The Young Man is clearly pissed off.

YOUNG MAN

I got this. Hands off my shit!

INT. STATION/FOYER - CONTINUOUS

Lt. Anson uncuffs the Young Man and leads him to the holding room which is now empty. We stay outside the room, looking in.

LT. ANSON

The Inspector will be ready for you soon.

Lt. Anson disappears to the kitchen.

YOUNG MAN

I don't give a fuck who wants to talk to me! I didn't do nothing wrong. Just rolling with my crew.

(no response)

You can't keep me here!

(to himself)

Where my shoes?

The Young Man sits there for a moment, then reaches for his cell phone, grinning that he still has it. But then we see his expression as he realizes there is no signal.

YOUNG MAN

Shit. No, no, no. I ain't nobody's fool.

Porter suddenly appears in the doorway.

PORTER

How are you?

YOUNG MAN

(startled)

Ah shit. How am I? What you think?

PORTER

(snorts a laugh)

I just came by to ask you...

(beat)

Would you like some milk to drink?

YOUNG MAN

What the fuck you say? Milk? What for?

PORTER

Hey man, I can even bring it warm.

CUT TO BLACK