

SAMUEL FRENCH SAMPLE PERUSAL

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Palestine, New Mexico

by Richard Montoya

A SAMUEL FRENCH ACTING EDITION



**SAMUEL
FRENCH**

FOUNDED 1830

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Originally Commissioned by the Circuit Network

PALESTINE, NEW MEXICO was first produced in the Center Theatre Group's Mark Taper Forum on December 13, 2009. The performance was directed by Lisa Peterson, with sets by Rachel Hauck, costumes by Christopher Acebo, lighting design and projections by Alexander Nichols, and sound by Paul James Prendergast. The production stage manager was Susie Walsh. The cast was as follows:

CAPT. CATHERINE SILER	Kirsten Potter
BRONSON	Ric Salinas
TOP HAT	Richard Montoya
FARMER	Herbert Siguenza
MARIA 15	Geraldine Keams
CHIEF BIRDSONG	Russell Means
DACOTAH, GIRL IN BLUE DRESS	Julia Jones
GHOST OF BIRDSONG, SUAREZ	Justin Rain

CHARACTERS

Captain Siler
Bronson
Top Hat
Farmer
Maria 15
Chief Birdsong
Dacotah
Girl in Blue Dress
Ghost of Birdsong
Suarez
Starman
Bog Mountain
Broke Arrow
Sally 30/30
LA Megadeath

Please note: Some characters may be doubled.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

I will never ever forget Lisa Kron, the stellar playwright/actor, for teaching me the Kaddish word for word in the lobby of the Mark Taper Forum. This was my 'Hebrew School' and it would have been sort of cute except that it was so darn important, important to Lisa and her collaborator Leigh Silverman that I get it right. I too felt a jolt of responsibility not to tread on the Kaddish as I would not on sacred Navajo burial songs or the Rosary for that matter. I was touched that Lisa spent so much time and wanted me to get it right. That hour in the lobby felt like 10 years of Yeshiva!

I have to thank Artistic Director Michael Ritchie for allowing us to do PNM as such a production level. Rachel Hauck's set was our Rushmore and I give her and video artist Alex Nichol's and sound guru PJP special thanks along with LP, JG & CC. And a stage crew that is the best in the nation: IATSIE Local 33: Bob Ruby, Howie, Bubba, Bones, Billie and Dana. Thanks too to Riki Lurie and Brandon Oaks for help on the book cover and the Great Russell Means and his essential Pearl for the New Mexican green chili! A-ho!

-Richard Montoya

For consuelo & mountain.

CHAPTER 1: Somebody in the Desert

(A desert landscape swiftly grows dark and cobalt blue.

A Muslim Call to Prayer is heard.

Distant rocket fire and flashes dot the horizon.

A sliver of a crescent moon slowly appears.

In the darkness TWO PEOPLE move into position.

SOMEBODY is talking to **SOMEONE**.

Both are hunched over a small fire. Duffle bag.

There is an animal quality: crouched, yet ready to strike.

The Muslim Call to Prayer subsides under:)

SOMEBODY. So, in that courtyard Soldier, next to the bazaar, this courtyard...

(pointing down to a square she drew in the dirt)

SOMEBODY. Here. There was no code. No rules. No faith. No Tribes. No Hellfire missile cover. No Apache gun ships. No Gods...

(Distant thunder or gunfire. The second person is listening, a shrug or a nod but not speaking.)

SOMEBODY. Trust no one. Believe nothing. No family. No Army. No country in that courtyard. Scorched earth. But, there was you: Private First Class Raymond Bird-song. Why?

(Distant walky-talky snippets. Lights shift subtle.)

SOMEBODY. I was waiting with Echo Company near the Sector, where you should have been.

(SOMEONE stands.)

SOMEBODY. What were you doing there in the courtyard?
Answer your Captain, soldier. I will find out.

(SOMEONE takes a few steps away.)

SOMEBODY. Tried tracking you back to Dover but I lost
you. Second time inside a month I lose you.
I'm hungry. What'chu got? **MORE.** Gimmie.

(SOMEONE tosses a small plastic bag.)

SOMEBODY. Oh. Tuna ambrosia. Yum. Taste like shit.

(She tosses it back.)

SOMEBODY. What the hell happened to you?

(Echo. Distant animal howls echo thru the dessert.)

*(SOMEBODY is U.S. Army Captain Catherine **SILER.**)*

*(SOMEONE is a Soldier: Raymond **BIRDSONG:**
Deceased.)*

SILER. No-sleep mode for seven days now.

Army doc cut off all my meds, just cut em' off.

(SILER tries to drink from an empty canteen.)

Dry mouth, fighting forgetfulness and thoughts of suicide. Fuck it.

These colors don't run, dude. Work real hard to keep
all my soldiers alive, get them all home. But this little
Indian here, you Ray, you went off the reservation and
you got away and I needed those med's for the last
flight out of Ramstein...

*(Other shadowy **FIGURES** begin to appear on the ridge
above **CAPTAIN SILER.** **BIRDSONG** slips away.)*

Last flight out of Ramstein, I stood in the hold of a
C Transport and 32 coffins 32 flags draped over each
aluminum box.

Formaldehyde and the rattle of our sacred cargo.
Engines roar, flags over metal boxes. I did not feel a
thing. Could not feel. Would not feel.

I was nothing in the void of flag draped coffins.

(SILER pushes down confusion and pain.)

SILER. *(cont.)* I gotta bring this kid in.

Where the fuck am I? Which Desert of Death am I in? Rigestan? Khost? Ghazni? The Gates if Sau? No. Yeah. Wait. I'm in the middle of Bumbfuck...

(More people enter the ridge above SILER.)

Bumbfuck, New Mexico. *This* desert...

(In an instant lights up to reveal armed INDIAN MEN and WOMEN on the ridge above her, some of the men wear versions of cowboy hats with feathers. Sound: wind, deep drums. Rifles. Chains. Bats. Hatchets are all aimed at SILER.)

CHAPTER 2: Siler and the Ridge

(A Wheelchair Indian has joined the ridge posse.)

*(A severe Native-American man named **BRONSON** speaks.)*

BRONSON. You are on Indian Land.

You have illegally entered the private property of a sovereign nation. The men standing here are authorized under US *and* Indian law to shoot any and all trespassers.

SILER. You have a very big gun. Sir.

BRONSON. Big man requires big gun.

SILER. Is that a Bush Master?

BRONSON. That is a fact jack. Almost took you down with her.

SILER. Who's in charge here?

BRONSON. You *need* to get the fuck on down the road, lady.
Pardon my French nobody welcomes you here.

SILER. One of *your* men let me pass thru the main gate.

BRONSON. One of *my* men let you on *my* rez?

SILER. Could I get some water please?

BRONSON. What fucking genius would have let you on the rez? Had to be Farmer! Fucking Farmer...

RIDGE MEN. Farmer...Yep...figures...Indian Shreck.

BRONSON. I thought we furloughed his ass due to budget cuts.

BROKE ARROW. He's back.

BRONSON. Track him down then. Pronto!

SILER. Sir, I need to see the Chief, Raymond's father. Are you the Chief?

*(The **MEN** on the ridge chuckle.)*

BRONSON. I am not the Chief. But I am an extremely important man to the Chief.

SILER. Naturally I assumed you were the Chief.

BRONSON. When you assume, soldier, you make an ass out of you and me. The Chief protects the tribe, I protect the Chief. He's my bailiwick.

SILER. Yes sir.

BRONSON. Right now the Chief isn't receiving anybody in his hour. Especially a Fed from the U.S. fucking Army.

SILER. Sir.

BRONSON. We're preparing to bury his boy at sunrise.

SILER. Sunrise?

BRONSON. This is an extremely sacred ceremony. Strictly tribal family only. Understood?

SILER. I'm Captain Catherine Siler. US Army. 21st Military Police Company.

BRONSON. Whoa, whoah, the 21st Company?

MOUNTAIN. Same as our Ray Ray...

SILER. The very same as Private First Class Raymond Birdsong. Yes, sir.

(murmurs from the MEN)

May I ask your name, sir?

BRONSON. They call me Bronson. Like the great one-fourth Native-American actor.

SILER. Ray served under my command in Afghanistan.

BRONSON. *(bowed head)* Where he died.

SILER. Yes, sir.

BRONSON. You still need to be on the other side of the rez wire. Go on git now.

SILER. Not 'til I speak with the Chief.

BRONSON. You have no privileges here Captain.

SILER. I could really use a drink of water, please.

(only silence as the MEN do not budge)

Look man, Bronson, dude, I've been driving 36 hours non-stop, half out of my mind so excuse me. Landed in Fort Benning day before last.

BRONSON. *(quietly)* Fuck Georgia.

SILER. I came directly here to speak with the Chief. He needs to know Ray's Captain is here.

BRONSON. You don't give orders here, Captain.

STAR MAN. How come the Army didn't bring you into Fort Bliss? Texas is real close ya know.

(STAR MAN tosses the duffle at her feet.)

SILER. Sometimes the Army has its head up its ass.

(The MEN like this.)

Whole lotta guns on the rez. Show a gun. Use a gun.

BRONSON. We have to be armed at all times.

SILER. Why?

TOP HAT. I can answer that! That's my area, Bronson.

(Just then an Indian wearing a TOP HAT riding a tricked out Stingray bike swoops down. This is: TOP HAT.)

Back up Star Man, Take it easy everybody. Move Aside.

(He parks and de-bikes.)

Easy, Trigger.

(To bike – he then turns his gaze to CAPTAIN SILER.)

Why? *(scolding himself)* Damn. How. I'm the Information Officer around these parts, ma'am. You can call me Top Hat. This is known as the El Paso Corridor.

And you can bet your Narco-Traficantes, the Mexican Cartels like to run their heroin & crystal meth, weapons and humans right thru the *mesa* yonder there.

STAR MAN. Armed Coyotes smuggle the Wets through the Rio Grande less than a mile away.

SILER. Damn good reasons to be armed.

STAR MAN, MOUNTAIN & BROKE ARROW. *(smile)* Thank you.

TOP HAT. The Halliburton assholes are building their new border fence just south – there.

BROKE ARROW. Shovel ready stimulus project.

MOUNTAIN. I'm going to take a piss on that Fuckin Lou Dobbs memorial wall...

TOP HAT. Excellent idea, Mountain. Armed Minute Men, The militias are crawling all over the place. They still can't tell the difference between a Mexican and a real Indian.

BRONSON. Stupid fucking White Man.

MOUNTAIN. Yeah, stupid fucking White Man...

TOP HAT. Yeah...

BRONSON. Shut your trap, Top Hat. You half-breeds talk too much.

(TOP HAT quickly produces an Indian ID Card.)

TOP HAT. I'm one hundreth Apache by blood – read and weep, Bronson! *(to CAPTAIN)* My Indian authenticity card.

SILER. Well, I am not the stupid fucking White Man.

(Some RIDGE MEN applaud. BRONSON ups his game.)

BRONSON. Stupid fucking White Girl then, shouldn't be out here on the playa with the men...

(RIDGE MEN quietly snicker. SILER removes a small handgun from her waste band, the MEN on the ridge go rigid with a step back.)

Whoa, little sister...

(SILER swings around pointing off into the distance and fires.)

STAR MAN. Holy shit she hit a jack-rabbit in-between the eyes!

MOUNTAIN. That's over a hundred yards away.

BROKE ARROW. Dang.

BRONSON. *(slightly impressed)* That ain't Army issue.

SILER. Walther. Picked it up in Germany, didn't know what I'd find out here.

BRONSON. Krout craftsmanship! Damn fine.

SILER. It's yours.

(BRONSON slips the weapon in his waist belt and SILER grabs BRONSON and has his arm twisted behind him expertly.)

SILER. (*cont.*) Never ever call me little girl again. Call me a bitch, call me a slut, but not little girl. Girls don't do what I do.

MOUNTAIN. Watch your back, Bronson.

BRONSON. Well, you still can't see the Chief, he's in ceremony, he'll be in the lodge sending up prayers for the next 24 hours. He cannot be interrupted. This Tribe lost its boy – leave us in peace.

SILER. I am carrying an important letter I have to deliver to the Chief.

BRONSON. (*reaching for letter*) Give it to me.

SILER. I cannot do that.

(Rifle shots pop in the distance.)

(SILER's knees buckle slightly from the heat, and exhaustion.)

(She bravely maintains her standing position. Thunder in the distance as RAYMOND BIRDSONG in combat gear runs across the ridge.)

(As SILER regains her composure BRONSON quickly motions the ok for TOP HAT to allow CAPTAIN some water from a fake suede squirt pouch. SILER drinks.)

Oh, that's good.

TOP HAT. Sweetwater.

SILER. Thanks.

(SILER drinks again.)

TOP HAT. Only in Bumbfuck...

(SILER passes the water pouch back.)

Keep it. Drink it slow – it's laced with *peyote*. Or is it this one? Shoot...

(TOP HAT juggles the water pouches.)

Yeah, this one. No, that one. I am certain of it. Drink, White Devil Woman.

SILER. Are you the Chief?

TOP HAT. No. I am not. I'm a Road Scholar from East LA College. I'm in my 27th year there. The Chief *has* allowed me to write the history of the Tribe for Google Earth, except now I got writer's block like a mo-fo.

(**RIDGE MEN** *guffaw.*)

So, I'm just another high-plains drifter biker outlaw of the Badlands. To all my relations. Ho. (*slightly wrong*)

SILER. Can you help me get a message to the Chief?

(*pulling SILER in close*)

TOP HAT. If I did that, these men could shoot me. Then you. They will. This is certain.

SILER. I'm one of the good guys, man.

TOP HAT. Last time a good guy was here. A White US Army Captain was on *this* reservation, things didn't go so well. For the relatives. History, Captain – it's more than a cable channel. Ho!

SILER. Tell the Chief I bring no diseased blankets for fuck's sake.

TOP HAT. Why are you here? What do you want?

SILER. To find out how Raymond Birdsong got killed.

TOP HAT. I can't take that to the Chief.

SILER. Then tell him, I'm not officially representing the Army, and that what *they* say happened over there may not be what happened.

BRONSON. WE ALREADY KNOW WHAT HAPPENED OVER THERE!

SILER. You stay the fuck away from me! The Army isn't telling you the whole Ray thing.

BRONSON. Fuck the U.S. Army and whatever they're saying about Ray. We don't wanna hear it, he's a hero as far as this Tribe is concerned.

STAR MAN. Ray served his country better than it served him.

MOUNTAIN & BROKE ARROW. Damn right he did.

(*He whips out a folded newspaper page and reads:*)

BRONSON. Treason investigation continues over the death of New Mexico native Raymond Birdsong. Military Officials suspect PFC Birdsong of sharing intelligence with the enemy. Bullshit!

STAR MAN. You're part of the witch hunt!

SILER. That's not true.

BROKE ARROW. She's a narc!

BRONSON. Get the fuck off my rez.

SILER. Anybody around here know a kid named Suarez?

ALL. (*hushed*) Suarez....

TOP HAT. Suarez? Maybe...

BRONSON. Stand down, Top Hat!

SILER. Your Chief is gonna want to know what I have to say.
I was with Ray when he took his last breath for God's sake.

(**SILER** is breathing shallow, she slightly loses her balance.)

TOP HAT. Captain? Captain?

SILER. (*calmly*) Whoa...I'm fine.

TOP HAT. Star Man, call for Farmer, tell him to fetch Maria 15. Now!

STAR MAN.(*radio call*) Officer Farmer, north of the water tower. Now!

SILER. I'm not leaving...

BRONSON. Get this White broad outta here now!

TOP HAT. Give her a beat, dude. Let her catch her breath.
Altitude maybe. Too many Indians...

SILER. I know the desert...

TOP HAT. Hold up. Captain?

SILER. Oh...

(**SILER** slowly goes down. As soon as **CAPTAIN SILER**'s knee touches dirt:

ALL FUCKING HELL BREAKS LOOSE.

In a split second, we must be transported to the battle-field of another Desert:

Projections and sounds: Hellfire Missile, shoulder rocket fire – low flying Black Hawk Helicopters. Chaos. Smoke. Muslim Prayer calls and US Military radio calls.

*A **WOMAN** in full Burka with an infant and a small child run across the ridge. **INDIAN MEN** scatter. Three **MEN** in full combat fatigues enter quickly move up and over the ridge.*

A reservation water tower on the horizon looks like a Mosque tower or oil refinery smoke stack.)

SILER. (cont.) Birdsong? Birdsong!?

*(**BIRDSONG** in full Combat Gear appears on the ridge but only to **SILER**.*

And then he and all of it is gone like a wild desert wind. Reservation restored.

***SILER** regains her composure. The **RIDGE MEN** have made a half circle around **SILER**.*

*A beat up golf cart with BIA logo scraped on the doors of this dusty, beat up, wholly improvised mini cop car of the Badlands signals the arrival of BIA **OFFICER FARMER** – a by the book lawman of the Rez.)*

CHAPTER 3: Farmer and Maria 15

(FARMER and MARIA 15 arrive at the scene. FARMER is a huge lump of a man in full Indian Cop uniform with trooper type baseball hat and Daisy BB-Gun. He speaks on his cop radio PA system.)

FARMER. Smokey, smokey...

(MARIA 15 is the Elder Trickster Lady of the Rez. She has the respect of these Indian men. She has a gold tooth.)

Okay, what's all the hoopla people?

BRONSON. Farmer, escort this trespasser off my rez. Right now!

FARMER. Okay. Step aside people.

MARIA 15. Don't you put hands on her!

(MARIA 15 [QUINCE] b-lines to CAPTAIN SILER with cool water and a towel from the wings.)

Out of my way, gangway you big lummoX.

(MARIA 15 pushes her way thru the Men.)

Get off your fat asses. Make yourselves useful for fuck's sake.

(MARIA is a walking pocket-station of handy items: Hand bacteria bottle and quickly dons pink dish gloves like a surgeon.)

What's going on over here dear.

SILER. I'm fine, really.

MARIA 15. Don't bullshit me, sister. Talk to me.

SILER. Oh man...

MARIA 15. Heat spell. Dehydration. Chew on this Cheat-grass root. Let me see your tongue.

(MOUNTAIN steps in to offer a big buck knife.)

I don't need that, get away.

(MARIA 15 places her hand on SILER's forehead.)

Hillbilly Hot. You picked the wrong day to come on the rez.

(**MARIA 15** hands her a small mason jar with water.)

MARIA 15. (cont.) Drink.

SILER. Corn?

MARIA 15. My people call it maize.

(**MEN** laugh.)

Everybody pipe down I can't think.

SILER. (hazy) Are you the Chief?

MARIA 15. Are you stoned?

Just call me Maria Quince.

SILER. Maria Quince?

MARIA 15. Maria Fifteen. Maria Quince Gatos, Maria Quince Minutos, I can be anywhere on the rez in fifteen minutes. I can deliver a baby in fifteen minutes. Call me Maria 15 for short.

(**SILER's** phone has slipped out of her pocket.)

SILER. My Blackberry. It died.

MARIA 15. Blackberry? (sniffs) Even trade.

SILER. I might need that.

MARIA 15. Not here you don't.

SILER. But I need to get a message to the Chief can you help me?

MARIA 15. You need to drink that sweet corn water before your tongue gets all swole. Don't you worry about the Chief, he's got plenty worries and heartbreak right now.

SILER. Is that Ray's tree out there?

MARIA 15. How did you know that?

SILER. He told me about his Cottonwood tree.

MARIA 15. They grow all along the Rio Grande, they die each year but make a come back in spring. Ray will, too. For now, we'll lay him there to rest.

SILER. He won't rest.

BRONSON. You done jawing with the *wasuchi*, Maria?

(**MARIA 15** ignores his query and talks to **SILER**.)

MARIA 15. Don't worry about them hard on's, they don't know how to talk to women real good. They can talk to the rocks and the Moon like nothing but you make them plenty nervous.

(MARIA 15 continues to towel SILER's red-hot brow.)

Us women folk have to stick together out here on the rez. This clay will draw out the heat. Are you on your moon, dear?

SILER. No. Haven't had one in a year.

MARIA 15. You'll get *sangre* in an hour, just wait and see. Very exciting. Best get the Moon Hut built now.

SILER. Is everybody here wise like you?

MARIA 15. No, here comes a dumb Indian now. Farmer!

(Big FARMER ambles over.)

FARMER. Yes, ma'am?

MARIA 15. Grab me some pads from the first aide kit in your copper hoopy.

(MEN on the ridge look away. FARMER goes to cart.)

FARMER. Is the Captain on her moon, Maria 15?

MARIA 15. Broadcast it across the reservation, why don't ya.

FARMER. *(grabbing car radio)* Smokey, smokey: Attention Tribal people, the Captain is on her "Lady Time."

MARIA 15. It was a joke, Farmer!

SILER. Must be hard for you to live here.

MARIA. It's okay. God touched this dirt here.

SILER. I'm an atheist.

MARIA. I always wanted to be one of those.

(TOP HAT re-enters on his stingray bike.)

MARIA. Topper! Get me more red clay and sage pronto.

TOP HAT. Yes, ma'am.

(TOP HAT shoves off on his bike.)

Look out, Neanderthal.

(FARMER barely avoids TOP HAT.)

FARMER. Half-breed.

TOP HAT. Fat fuck Indian retard. To all my relations. Ho!

(offstage crash)

(FARMER moves in with the pad and clip board.)

FARMER. One emergency pad, please sign for it below.

BRONSON. Mr. Homeland Security, get your ass over here.

(FARMER moves on to a disgusted BRONSON.)

Pads? Aren't we sensitive.

FARMER. I had to let her on the Rez, Bronson. Lil Ray Ray served with her, she's a real Captain, I saw her Dog-tags and everything.

BRONSON. Why didn't you call me on the radio?

FARMER. She's got rank on me, Bronson and I gotta lot of respect for that wasuchi there.

MARIA. Look here Bronzie, this White girl ain't going nowhere. She got the heat spell real bad. Worse I seen. We're lucky she didn't die out here.

BRONSON. Damn lucky I didn't shoot her.

SILER. Lucky I didn't shoot you.

MARIA. She stay's put.

BRONSON. I gotta get'er outta here before the Chief sees her.

SILER. I'm not leaving til the Chief sees *me*.

BRONSON. All this commotion is gonna interrupt the Man while he's in the lodge.

MARIA. We can't put her out. Not right now. No sir.

BRONSON. I'm not losing my gig over this stubborn Army broad.

MARIA. Anybody tell Dacotah she's here?

BRONSON. Oh Lord no.

STAR MAN. She'll get right in the Captain's face.

SILER. Dacotah? Ray's wife. I need to speak to her...

BRONSON. You ain't talkin' to anybody.

MARIA. Leave her put. I mean it. I'll be her sponsor on the rez.

BRONSON. Rez sponsor? Goddamn it no.

MARIA. I'm the medicine man 'round here and I say she stays put.

BRONSON. And I'm the shot-caller 'round here, Maria.

MARIA. I never liked you, Bronzie.

(BRONSON growls. MARIA 15 growls.)

Don't get your snake skin panties in a bunch.

BRONSON. I'll be in the yurt making three coffins. One for you...*(pointing)* one for Farmer and one for Top Hat, damn Gringo lovers. Star Man.

STAR MAN. Yes, sir.

MARIA. Farmer?

FARMER. Yes, ma'am?

MARIA. Run over to Dairy Queen and get Captain some grub.

FARMER. Roger that. I'll get you some onion rings. I can't have them on account of my high cholesterol.

(FARMER leans in close to the CAPTAIN and speaks in hushed tones.)

My daddy was a White Man.

SILER. Thank you.

FARMER. I'm an evangelical Christian.

SILER. Thank you.

FARMER. I'm circumcised like Ray.

SILER. Thank you.

FARMER. Anyway.

BRONSON. Get her outta here before nightfall!

MARIA. Not if I can help it.

FARMER. Smokey, smokey. Back to base, over.

(FARMER heads out across the stage with his mini-cop/cart: RAY BIRDSONG gives a soft salute to SILER from the back bench of the cart.)

(Clouds begin to move in over the Rez changing slightly the New Mexican light.)

(MARIA crouches down to SILER and mixes more red clay with water.)

SILER. Can you tell me anything about a boy Suarez?

MARIA. Never heard of them. Him.

SILER. There is a Suarez. From this part of New Mexico. He was deployed the same time as us. Different unit. Suarez?

MARIA. I wouldn't say that name again.

SILER. So you do know him?

MARIA. Just another Indian boy from the rez down the road. Another world.

SILER. Ray said his name to me more than once, right at the end. I suspect they had contact.

MARIA. Impossible Captain. We don't talk to those people. Half-breeds. Haven't done so in a hundred winters.

SILER. Why the hell not?

MARIA. Not allowed.

SILER. But there may have been words over there.

MARIA. Don't know nothun bout that, mama.

SILER. Ray's dead and this kid Suarez is AWOL...

MARIA. Lookie here, I got two new hips and a bum knee, and I can't take another war with the Suarez clan.

SILER. A war? With the Suarez clan...

MARIA. They prolly ain't Indian. Nobody's sure what the hell they are. Just cause they here don't make them Injun by blood.

SILER. What does it make 'em?

MARIA. Here goes a little story G: years ago see, long time, centuries even, those damned Conquistadors landed in Morelia, Mexico. 1640 something, in the holds of those filthy ships were Hebrews, the Jews, like slaves, prisoners and servants of the *pinche gachupines* in their fancy clothes and gold crosses...

(High on the ridge a Spanish Monk and Jewish Slave cross.)

MARIA. *(cont.)* This entire area became their secret home. Crypto's, Sephardic's, Coversos. Los Marranos, what I affectionately call: The Christ Killers.

SILER. Jews on the rez?

MARIA. Shitloads of them. They were dark like us, darker than the Hidalgos, so they could hide among us, infiltrate the Tribes like nothing. But our elders would never allow that. That's why they called it Palestine. Just to piss them off more than they already are.

SILER. So the Birdsong Tribe is pure and they hate the Suarez Tribe because they are not?

MARIA. Just how we were taught.

SILER. Payback in the courtyard...

MARIA. Also, they're a thinner people than we are and that pisses *me* off to no end. Then things sort-a died down until...

SUAREZ. Until what?

MARIA. I can't say no more.

SILER. Maria 15.

MARIA. Great Grandmother took up with a Suarez Man and left this rez for that one. She left on the back of the Bootleggers horse wearing a blue dress they said. Oops! I said too much!

SILER. What are you talking about?

(Offstage: Left, left, left right left. Left...)

(Suddenly three ancient VFW World War Two Veterans march proudly across the ridge.)

(Hunched over, these Vet's can barely walk let alone carry a huge flag, one rifle, a bugle and a small PA System that needs to plug into somewhere.)

(The locals call these guys Old Buzzards. They are a physical marvel and have not missed a parade or pancake breakfast in 68 years.)

MARIA. If you Buzzards are here to get Captain off the rez you'll have to go thru me!

B-1. Look out!

(A shot gun blows off and the Buzzards are gone.)

MARIA. Too many damn guns out here. Chief's lost control of his rez is what he done.

SILER. Did you say Ray's Great Grandmother left this rez for a Suarez man?

MARIA. We gotta stop talken about her right now. I ain't afraid of too many things Captain, but if the Chief hears me talking about that slut – we're dead meat for sure's.

(SILER takes the rez in.)

SILER. Okay.

MARIA. Okay.

SILER. It's sad here. Before Ray sad.

MARIA. You're sad.

SILER. Too much sky.

MARIA. Hides them secrets real good.

SILER. The Konar River could be right there...

(A distant military plane can be heard en route to White Plains, SILER perks up in that direction.)

Apache gun ships?

MARIA. No gun ships out here, mama.

SILER. Ever been to Tora Bora?

MARIA. Ray sent you here.

SILER. You think?

MARIA. *(quiet)* Never seen white skin so up close.

SILER. Sorry...

MARIA. It's nice. Mines leathery. I'm worn.

SILER. I'll treat you to a facial after you take me to the Chief.

MARIA. You can be my gringo spirit guide at the Oriental Nail Spa in Albuquerque!

SILER. You don't get off the rez much...

MARIA. I went to Laverne California once. But it looked like hell so I come running back. I like it here but you got to be tough. Our Tribe, Palestine, we're plenty tough.

SILER. Tough men with guns?

MARIA. Home of the Brave.

SILER. Are they always trying to kick women off this place?

MARIA. That's why I'm the Medicine Man.

(distant hawk)

Look here cappie, I may have bought you a little time before you get the boot off the rez but I never had a BFF and I ain't looken for one now sabe?

SILER. Okay...

MARIA. Okay. Take it easy with the pills, mamma. You'll have to sober up if you're hoping to see the Chief!

(MARIA is gone as SILER moves her duffle bag and lays her head back.

Weary – she opens up her journal and removes a military portrait of Ray Birdsong and unfolds a military map of the Kandehar neighborhood.

She picks up the photo of the dead SOLDIER and a photo of Suarez.

BIRDSONG *appears in full gear on the ridge.*

She places them on the map and tries to imagine the "crime scene.")

SILER. Birdsong enters a courtyard, Birdsong never comes out of a courtyard...

(SILER puts her head back and places Ray Birdsong's military photo on her chest.)

Is Suarez there? Why is he there? To take you out? And who is this Great Granny in blue dress. Fuck. Help me Ray. Help me. I can't figure it out. Don't you dare cry, Captain. There's no crying on the rez.

DACOTAH. Why is my husband on your chest?

(**SILER** *slowly lifts her head.*)

Why is my husbands picture there?

SILER. Excuse me...

CHAPTER 4:

Dacotah

DACOTAH. You're prettier than they said. I'm plain.

SILER. You're Ray's wife, Dacotah.

DACOTAH. Where's my letter? Did you bring my letter?

SILER. It's addressed to the Chief.

DACOTAH. Fuck the Chief.

SILER. I am very sorry for your loss, Mrs. Birdsong.

DACOTAH. *You're* sorry? That's fuckin' hilarious. Nobody here ever said *that* shit to me. Don't know what pisses me off more, you saying it or them not.

(DACOTAH moves closer down the ridge to SILER.)

I dreamt you. I dreamt you were coming here, you know that? I dreamt those dark military cars speeding up the rez road clouds of dust rising behind them like the devil. And all of it headed right to me and the baby. Dreamed you like Crazy Horse dreamed his battles before he fought them. Maybe I'm a relative.

SILER. What's your baby's name?

DACOTAH. Running at your head with sharp scissors.

(SILER remains silent.)

Ray should have thought this out better.

SILER. Thought what out better, Dacotah?

DACOTAH. Joining up the damn war without even talking to me. He went to the store to get milk for his daughter and came back all signed up. I'm still waiting for the milk.

SILER. Ray was a brave man.

DACOTAH. That's the fucked up part, right? Married the Chief's son thought I had it made but only got played. Another Indian kid without a baby daddy.

I miss my man. He had good snugg's.

(DACOTAH moves down stage.)

When they sent me Ray's personal things, the Chief wouldn't even come over to see what it was.

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