White Buffalo

A Play in Two Acts

Don Zolidis

A Samuel French Acting Edition

SAMUEL FRENCH
FOUNDED 1830

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WHITE BUFFALO was first produced by the Purple Rose Theatre in Chelsea, Michigan on March 29, 2012. The performance was directed by Guy Sanville, with sets by Vincent Mountain, costumes by Christianne Myers, properties by Danna Segrest, lighting by Daniel C. Walker, and sound by Quintessa Gallinat. The Production Stage Manager was Stephanie Buck. The cast was as follows:

CAROL . . . . . Michelle Mountain
MIKE . . . . . Alex Leydenfrost
ABBY . . . . . Stacie Hadgikosti
JOHN TWO RIVERS . . . . . Michael Brian Ogden
ANDERSON WILKES. . . . . David Daoust
FIRST GIRL. . . . . Meghan Thompson
FIRST WOMAN . . . . . Rainbow Dickerson
FIRST BOY . . . . . Nate Mitchell
FIRST MAN . . . . . Matthew David
CHORUS . . . . . Gregory Butka

CHARACTERS

CAROL GELLING – 40, a robust and energetic woman. Still attractive, but beginning to show her age.

MIKE GELLING – 41, Carol's ex-husband. Wiry and tough, but gentle.

ABBY GELLING – 18, their daughter, a very intelligent and attractive young woman who has been experimenting with the counterculture.

JOHN TWO RIVERS – 24, a young Lakota Sioux businessman from Chicago.

ANDERSON WILKES – 50s, owner of a large ranch out west.

CHORUS – consisting of four members who play various roles throughout the play. They are referred to as **FIRST MAN, FIRST WOMAN, FIRST BOY**, and **FIRST GIRL**.

SETTING

The Gelling farm, just south of Blackhawk, Wisconsin, close to the Illinois border.

TIME

The present. Late summer.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

Note: The main event described in this play, the birth of a white buffalo calf, occurred in Janesville, Wisconsin in 1994. The myths and legends associated with it, as well as their importance to many tribes, are true. All other events in this play and all characters within it, however, are purely fiction.

ACT ONE

(Scene One. The Gelling farm and environs.)

(Music. **JOHN TWO RIVERS**, *20s, is alone in the darkness, bewildered. A storm.)*

(Drums and a burst of singing. The **CHORUS** *appears.)*

FIRST MAN. See

FIRST WOMAN. See

FIRST BOY. See

FIRST GIRL. See

(A soft white light glows and begins to intensify.)

FIRST MAN. See

FIRST WOMAN. It begins

FIRST BOY. She is born

FIRST GIRL. She returns

FIRST MAN. He lays down his life

FIRST WOMAN. He dies

FIRST BOY. For Her

FIRST GIRL. For Her return

(They continue to say these lines, overlapping each other as the light grows brighter and brighter. All silent as the light washes out the stage.)

(Blackout.)

FIRST WOMAN. It begins.

(Blackout, and the sounds of the storm give way to birds chirping.)

(Lights rise on **CAROL**, *on the back edge of her house, putting on her boots. It is early morning.)*

(The **CHORUS** *watches as* **CAROL** *goes about getting feed for the animals. Music.* **CAROL** *stops and sees something out in the field.)*

FIRST MAN. She sees.

*(***CAROL** *opens the gate slowly. Still no sound.)*

She walks into the field.

FIRST WOMAN. She sees.

*(***CAROL** *steps into the field.)*

She walks into the field.

FIRST MAN. The grass is wet with dew. The sun sparkles in its water—

FIRST WOMAN. The clouds swirl near the edge of the sky—

FIRST BOY. The air sings—

FIRST MAN. It is cool on her skin.

FIRST WOMAN. She sees

FIRST MAN. She sees

FIRST BOY. She sees

FIRST MAN. The buffalo stand beneath a row of trees—

FIRST WOMAN. *(overlapping)* Then she sees her—

FIRST MAN. *(overlapping)* Something strange—

FIRST WOMAN. *(overlapping)* Something different—

FIRST BOY. *(overlapping)* A glimpse of white—

FIRST MAN. *(overlapping)* A child.

*(***FIRST GIRL** *appears in a suit of pure white, standing next to the* **FIRST WOMAN**.*)*

FIRST WOMAN. Next to her mother.

(The **FIRST WOMAN** *walks downstage to meet the* **FIRST GIRL**. *They both look directly at* **CAROL**.*)*

FIRST MAN. They stand together—mother and child—

FIRST WOMAN. The calf—

FIRST BOY. *(overlapping)* The newborn calf—

FIRST MAN. *(overlapping)* The calf—pure white—with dark shining eyes—pressed against her mother—

FIRST WOMAN. *(overlapping)* They look at each other—

FIRST BOY. *(overlapping)* The calf and the woman—

FIRST MAN. *(overlapping)* She is new.

FIRST WOMAN. *(overlapping)* She is made anew.

FIRST BOY. *(overlapping)* She has returned.

(Brief pause. They now describe **CAROL**.*)*

FIRST WOMAN. The woman sees.

FIRST BOY. She watches.

*(***CAROL** *takes a step back.)*

FIRST MAN. She feels it.

FIRST WOMAN. She feels—

(A heatbeat.)

FIRST MAN. She feels.

CAROL. *(shouting out)* Abby! Abby! Come out here!

*(***CAROL** *dashes off the way she came, back to the house.)*

Abby! You gotta see this!

*(***CAROL** *jumps up the stairs in the living room. She comes back quickly, bewildered.)*

Abby? Are you home?

(Lights fade on her, remain on the **FIRST GIRL**.*)*

(Lights switch. **ABBY**, *18, creeps in. She's carrying a backpack and looks bedraggled. She takes a furtive glance around the living room, then dashes up the stairs.)*

CAROL. *(from above)* Aha!

ABBY. *(above)* Ah! Jesus! What the hell are you doing?!

*(***ABBY** *scoots back down the stairs with* **CAROL** *close on her heels.)*

CAROL. Where were you last night?

ABBY. I fell asleep over at Debbie's. I called—

CAROL. You called at eleven to say you were gonna be late.

ABBY. Right.

CAROL. It's one o' clock in the afternoon.

ABBY. Yeah, late. Very late. What the hell is going on in the living room?

CAROL. The basement flooded.

ABBY. It didn't even rain that much last night—

CAROL. Well imagine my surprise then at finding the basement under two feet of water. I've been working at this since seven—

ABBY. Then what were you doing lying in wait for me at the top of the stairs?

CAROL. I was taking a break.

ABBY. Nice, Mom. Real nice. I'm going to Madison tonight, by the way.

*(***CAROL** *looks at her)*

What?

CAROL. What do you think?

ABBY. That I'm going to Madison tonight?

CAROL. Try again.

ABBY. That I'm going to Madison tonight?

CAROL. Look at this! I need you to help me clean out the basement—

ABBY. How long is that gonna take?

CAROL. Until we're both dead. And there's a whole lot of other things around here that need doing—you need to sweep out the barn, you need to feed the animals, I did it for you this morning, but they need it this afternoon—

ABBY. Well how bout I—

CAROL. How bout you go downstairs and pull up the rest of the boxes?

ABBY. Can I go to Madison after I'm done?

CAROL. What's in Madison?

ABBY. The State Capitol. A fine library system.

CAROL. No.

ABBY. How bout—

CAROL. Abby. Will you please go downstairs and bring up the rest of the boxes?

ABBY. Fine.

*(***ABBY** *opens the door to the basement.)*

You know, I thought this was America. I thought we had freedom—

CAROL. *(interrupting)* Oh shut up—

ABBY. *(continuing as she heads down the stairs)* Instead, I live under an oppressive autocratic regime where—God, it's gross down here!

CAROL. *(calling)* Just get the ones that aren't completely soaked!

*(***CAROL** *goes to the boxes in the living room and continues to save items from the wreck, work she has clearly been at for some time. We continue to hear* **ABBY** *complain about the disaster in the basement.)*

ABBY. *(from below)* Do we want these carpets!

CAROL. *(calling)* No! Get the boxes!

*(***ABBY** *comes up momentarily carrying a large, extremely water-damaged box. As soon as she gets up the stairs, the bottom rips through and its contents flop to the ground.)*

ABBY. Shit.

CAROL. Hey.

ABBY. Why is it every time I come home you have something absolutely disgusting for me to do?

CAROL. Cause I want to see you suffer.

ABBY. Oh God—

(She begins sifting through the things—she pulls something, gigantic, hairy, and sopping wet out of the mess.)

Oh God there's like a dead rat or something—

CAROL. What?

*(***ABBY** *holds it up gingerly.)*

That's a wig.

ABBY. Why?

CAROL. People wore wigs. They were stylish.

ABBY. I guess.

*(***ABBY** *flings it against the wall.)*

CAROL. Could you please just… not cause more damage?

ABBY. Fine. What is all this crap anyway?

CAROL. I don't know. Some of it's your father's—

ABBY. What does he have stuff here for?

CAROL. I don't know.

*(***CAROL** *pulls out an outrageous disco shirt from the `70s.)*

Here we go.

ABBY. That's awesome.

CAROL. We should find a stash of fake gold chains any minute now.

ABBY. Can I have that?

CAROL. No.

ABBY. Oh come on—

CAROL. These need to be burned.

ABBY. Aw these are cute—

*(***ABBY** *pulls out some baby clothes.)*

Were these mine?

CAROL. No those were Trevor's.

ABBY. Oh.

CAROL. I was going to take them to the Salvation Army a long time ago… I guess I didn't get to it.

ABBY. Yeah.

CAROL. Did you happen to go to Blackhawk Tech yesterday?

ABBY. No.

CAROL. You need to get that application in.

ABBY. You've only told me that twelve times—

CAROL. Well—do you know when the deadline is?

ABBY. Mom—come on, I'm not going to Blackhawk Technical College. Please. It's one step above Middle School. There's an entire class in how to balance your checkbook.

CAROL. Well I'm just saying that—

ABBY. It might even be a major.

CAROL. It's something, isn't it?

ABBY. So?

CAROL. I'm not gonna do this for you—

ABBY. I realize that.

CAROL. And I still don't understand how you couldn't find it in your heart to attend classes in the spring cause you had that scholarship all lined up—

ABBY. I know.

CAROL. I mean it's like three months of school, Abby—everyone manages to get through it. But suddenly you go and develop an aversion to having a brain—

ABBY. All right, all right.

CAROL. You got into a good college—

ABBY. How many times do I gotta hear it? Just tell me. Like fifteen? Twenty? What's the number? I just want to go write it down so I know.

CAROL. Well then don't complain about Blackhawk Tech.

(They work. **ABBY** *seethes. Pause.)*

CAROL. Sue had her calf this morning.

ABBY. Really?

CAROL. It's really weird.

ABBY. What is?

CAROL. The calf.

ABBY. What's wrong with it?

CAROL. It's white. I mean it's like…snow white.

ABBY. Is it an albino?

CAROL. No, I don't—it's just—it's white. You need to go see her, it's pretty cool actually. Big Ralph's not doing well though.

ABBY. Oh—I should go check on him.

(She gets up.)

CAROL. You don't have to check on him *now.*

ABBY. More fun than sitting here.

*(***ABBY** *heads out toward the fence—music.* **ABBY** *spots something and stops.)*

Wow.

(The music rises as the lights switch. The **FIRST GIRL***, still dressed in white, appears beyond the fence in very faint light. She stands next to the* **FIRST WOMAN***, in much the same way as they appeared earlier.)*

FIRST BOY. He lays down his life.

*(***FIRST MAN** *appears, dying.)*

ABBY. Big Ralph?

(She goes to him. **FIRST MAN** *sinks. Music.* **ABBY** *sits with him.)*

*(***CAROL** *is heard on the phone abruptly.)*

CAROL. *(into phone)* If you could come out this afternoon that would be great. I can't move him, he's just too big. Right. Right.

(Lights come back up on the house in the daytime. **CAROL** *is on a corded phone in the kitchen.)*

He's in the trees out back, we can probably get the truck out there, but I just don't know how to lift him into the bed of it. I mean, he's like a thousand pounds. He's huge. Yeah, I guess that might work. I don't know, my ex-husband always handled this beforehand, we haven't had one die in close to ten years—

*(***JOHN** *approaches the front door, dressed in a suit, newspaper in hand. He looks around for a minute, then presses the doorbell. Nothing happens. He tries it again, looking in through the window. Again, nothing happens. He knocks on the door.)*

CAROL. He seemed healthy enough until this week, and then he just—oh wait, the guy for the foundation is here, hold on one second.

(She calls upstairs)

Abby can you get the door!

ABBY. *(from above)* I'm busy!

CAROL. Will you please get the door I'm on the phone!

ABBY. *(upstairs)* This is why we need a new phone!

CAROL. Please!

*(***ABBY** *comes down the stairs as* **CAROL** *continues speaking into the phone.)*

ABBY. You know everyone in the whole world has a cordless phone and we just sit here with this Alexander Graham Bell model from 1902—

CAROL. *(into phone)* Sorry about that—our basement flooded last week so that's still a big mess and—

*(***ABBY** *opens the front door just as* **JOHN** *is about to knock again.)*

ABBY. *(to* **JOHN***)* Hi.

JOHN. Is this the Gelling residence?

ABBY. Yep. Are you here about the foundation? I'm guessing no.

JOHN. What foundation?

ABBY. To the house.

JOHN. No. My name's John—I… uh… saw this in the paper today?

*(He holds up an unimportant-looking page of the local newspaper—***ABBY** *looks at it.)*

ABBY. Mom, there's a guy from the newspaper here.

JOHN. No, I just saw this in the paper. Is this your buffalo?

ABBY. Yeah.

*(***ABBY** *takes the paper)*

I didn't know this was gonna be in the paper—this is so cool. My Mom must have sent this in.

JOHN. Has anyone else been out here?

ABBY. For what?

JOHN. To see the buffalo?

ABBY. No…who are you again?

*(***CAROL** *is getting off the phone)*

CAROL. *(Into the phone)* Great. Thanks so much. I'll see you this afternoon then.

(She hangs up and heads toward the living room.)

JOHN. My name is John Two Rivers, I'm from Chicago, well not really, but… I'm Sioux, Lakota actually, and I had a dream, a vision—

CAROL. Wait, what's going on?

JOHN. I'm not explaining this well. I saw this here in the paper and—can I go look at the calf?

CAROL. Why?

JOHN. I just…

(music.)

I just want to see.

CAROL. We're not really selling them.

JOHN. No I just want to see if this is real.

ABBY. O-kay. I mean we're not really in the business of fabricating buffalo photos, but…

CAROL. I'm Carol by the way—

(She shakes hands with him.)

This is Abby—We can go have a look. So are you like scientifically interested in this—I didn't really know that buffalo came in white—I've never really seen one before—here we'll go around the outside.

*(***CAROL** *leads* **JOHN** *around the outside of the house toward the fence.* **ABBY** *follows.)*

JOHN. I've never seen one before either—they're extremely rare.

ABBY. Are you like a buffalo expert?

JOHN. No, it's more of a cultural interest—

CAROL. Well we don't have much of a herd out here—we've got a few other animals, but uh…

(they reach the fence.)

You know we just keep the bison around cause we like `em, frankly. We were gonna sell them for meat back before—

*(***JOHN** *is no longer paying any attention to her.)*

At first I thought a cow had wandered in—

(More music in the distance.)

JOHN. Her father…is dead?

CAROL. *(perplexed)* Yeah.

ABBY. He died this morning.

JOHN. Stomach problem?

ABBY. How do you know that?

JOHN. I've seen this before. In a dream. I uh… no one has come out here?

CAROL. No, what's going on?

JOHN. Do you know the significance of this?

CAROL. No.

JOHN. A white buffalo is the most sacred thing you could ever find.

ABBY. Really?

JOHN. And there hasn't been one born in… in generations. And a female calf—to have a white female calf born… it's like uh…it's everything.

CAROL. What do you mean, everything?

JOHN. My people—the Sioux—among many others—many tribes, believe…in a legend—that's central to our—to their…to their knowledge of who they are. There's a prophecy too—

(Lights begin to shift on stage. A flute plays.)

ABBY. What's the legend?

JOHN. I haven't thought about this in a long time, but… It goes…a long time ago—

FIRST MAN. In the days before horses—

FIRST BOY. There was a time of great suffering on the plains.

JOHN. There was no food for anyone, and all the people were starving—so two young men, brothers, went out to hunt

(The **FIRST MAN** *and* **FIRST BOY** *become the hunters.)*

And they searched for many days, but they found nothing.

FIRST GIRL. And on the third day, when they had forsaken hope, a woman appeared to them—

(Accompanied by the fanfare of music, the **FIRST WOMAN***, dressed all in white as the* **WHITE BUFFALO WOMAN***, appears before the two men.)*

She was the most beautiful woman they had ever seen, and she was dressed all in white, the purest white you could imagine. One of the brothers

(The **FIRST MAN** *tries to approach her; her reaches out to grasp her, but she eludes him. Drums pound and he falls away.)*

Saw her and knew lust in his heart.

FIRST GIRL. He reached out to possess her, and was consumed by the air, transformed into a pile of bones. To the other, who showed no desire—

WHITE BUFFALO WOMAN. Go back to your people. Tell them I have come for them. They need fear no longer. Take this, and you shall become a prayer on this Earth.

(She hands him a small package. The hunter unwraps it and sees a long pipe. He bows to her, and departs. The **WHITE BUFFALO WOMAN** *steps forward, accompanied by strong music. She approaches* **JOHN**.*)*

You are children of the land. You come from the ground beneath your feet and the air that fills your lungs. You are the same as the clouds and stars, from the deep-flowing rivers to the high hills. You are all a part of the sacred hoop of life.

JOHN. And with her came the buffalo, who saved our people from starvation. She taught us how to use them, and she taught us ceremonies and mysteries—but she stayed only a few days—

(She turns her back on **JOHN***)*

WHITE BUFFALO WOMAN. When I am needed most, in another time of great turmoil, I shall return to you and all the children of the earth. My sign will be a white buffalo calf—

JOHN. And as she left, she appeared in the form of a white buffalo. And as the people watched, she transformed from white to red to yellow and then black, before finally turning the most brilliant shade of white they had ever seen.

(The **WHITE BUFFALO WOMAN** *disappears.)*

CAROL. Wow.

JOHN. And the prophecy says that the appearance of a white buffalo calf foretells a time of peace and unity among all people of all colors. This is what the Sioux believe. And there are dozens of other tribes with similar stories.

CAROL. Wow.

ABBY. So this is like peace on earth?

(he nods)

Right here, right now?

JOHN. So the legend says.

ABBY. Dude.

(short pause)

So I mean is that her—I mean, literally, is that the White Buffalo Woman?

JOHN. Many people would probably believe that. So what you have here, according to my tribe at least, is the savior of the world.

(Pause. Lights shift. Broadcast static is audible, which quickly separates into the intermingling din of radio and television broadcasts. Voices are discernable for a brief moment, then fade back into the confusion.)

(The **CHORUS** *members become pilgrims, bringing gifts. They begin to transform the world.)*

VOICE #1. Her mother might weigh twelve hundred pounds, but this bundle of joy is believed to be the reincarnation of an ancient spirit—

VOICE #2. The small town of Blackhawk, Wisconsin, home to twenty thousand people, an automotive plant, and now, a miracle.

(The **FIRST MAN** *nearly runs up to* **CAROL** *and embraces her in a gigantic bear hug, lifting her off the ground.)*

VOICE #3. Her name is Hope, and she represents—

*(***ANDERSON WILKES***, a middle-aged white man, arrives near the back of the* **CHORUS**. *He greets* **CAROL** *happily and shakes her hand vigorously before joining the others.)*

VOICE #4. They have come from all over just to see—

VOICE #5. According to the National Buffalo Association, the odds of a white buffalo are close to six million to one—

(The **FIRST MAN** *speaks as if he were giving an interview.)*

FIRST MAN. It will be a time of peace. For all people. Red, White, Black, and Yellow. This is like the Second Coming of Christ—

FIRST WOMAN. I was sitting in my office in DC when I heard the news. I got a phone call from my sister who said she heard on the news that there was a White Buffalo born in Wisconsin—I couldn't believe it. I cried. And I had to come out, I had to see her, so many people have been waiting so long for this—

FIRST MAN. *(overlapping)* This is a sign of the rebirth of our spirituality, of our belief—

WILKES. *(overlapping)* Well I just couldn't believe it when I heard the news—

FIRST WOMAN. *(overlapping)* I called my mother in Montana. I haven't seen her in five years—and I thought we should meet out here—

WILKES. *(overlapping)* I got on the first plane. I mean, this is the kind of thing that you never expect to happen in your lifetime—you know, a myth, that becomes reality—

FIRST MAN. *(overlapping)* I think people are so interested in Native American beliefs because of the suffering in the world—and that roots from our separation from the land, people sense that, people know that the whole earth is suffering—

(The voices fade out. The **CHORUS** *members go back to presenting gifts to the buffalo.)*

JOHN. I saw it all happen. In my mind. In a dream. I saw the father die, I saw the light, I didn't understand any of it. And so I'm here. I was the first. To know.

(Lights up on **ABBY** *addressing an imaginary crowd.)*

ABBY. Okay, okay, can I have everybody's attention please? Can you form a single line, um…okay?

(she takes a question)

No we can't have flash photography, all right? If you don't have a flash, you can take all the pictures you want—take `em home, get `em laminated, I don't care—she's sleeping right now, so if you could please be a little bit quiet—no—hey—you can't go past the fence, okay? The mother is very protective of the calf—she will…she will trample you down and that will be the end of peace on earth for you.

We have some lemonade near the house if you're thirsty—it's twenty-five cents per cup, my Mom made it, lots of sugar, please keep it away from the kids.

(Lights fade on her. The phone rings. **CAROL** *answers it.)*

CAROL. No I'm sorry we don't have a website—we're hoping to get one soon—if you want directions can just punch in the name Gelling and Blackhawk—we're just south of town on County Highway B. Yep. Yep. No charge. Totally free. Thank you.

(She hangs up and gets about a step away from the phone before it rings again. She picks it up.)

Yes it is. Thank you. Thank you very much. Nope, come on down any time between eight and eight—right—right—

(She hangs up—the phone rings again.)

Hello? Yes it is. No, you can't camp on the property—I think there's a place just west of town—thank you.

(She hangs up. **ABBY** *comes in.)*

ABBY. Jesus Christ—

(The phone rings)

CAROL. Can you get that? I've got to get these brownies out of the oven.

ABBY. You're making brownies?

CAROL. Yes—just answer the phone.

*(***CAROL** *opens the oven as* **ABBY** *answers the phone.)*

ABBY. Yes it is. Yeah, come on down. We got tons of white ones. Yep. Thirty. Whole herd. No I'm kidding, there's just one. Yes, please, open to everyone—

(she hangs up)

CAROL. What do you think, twenty-five cents a brownie?

ABBY. Sure.

(The phone rings. **ABBY** *grabs it. She speaks very quickly without waiting for a response.)*

Come and see the miracle. Highway B. Just look for the cars.

CAROL. Can you run this lemonade out there?

ABBY. I'm running the next tour.

(Someone knocks at the front door. **ABBY** *shouts at them.)*

Just go around the side! Follow all the people!

(To **CAROL***)*

Goddamn it, we should charge admission.

CAROL. We're not charging admission. You know somebody called up today and offered to buy her for five thousand dollars.

ABBY. Ha.

CAROL. We could get a new car.

(The phone rings. **ABBY** *picks it up.)*

ABBY. Miracle. Highway B. Follow the cars.

(She hangs up.)

CAROL. You know, someone could be actually trying to call us.

ABBY. You answer the phone then.

CAROL. I will.

(They wait for a second, expecting it to ring.)

I was expecting it was gonna ring right then.

ABBY. Yeah.

(It rings. **CAROL** *picks it up.)*

CAROL. Yes? Hello? This is. No I'm sorry my long-distance plan is just fine. No, take me off your list—

*(***ABBY** *grabs the phone from her)*

ABBY. Hey listen, buddy. We've just had a big fucking miracle down here, so there are a lot of very religious people trying to make pilgrimages to our back yard, so they need to have the phone lines open!

(she hangs up and laughs. **CAROL** *laughs too.)*

CAROL. I can't believe you did that.

ABBY. *(still laughing)* What? Those people get what they deserve.

CAROL. They're just doing a job.

ABBY. No no, I don't buy that. If you agree to work for a place, then you take responsibility for that company's actions. Those people could have gotten other jobs—

CAROL. All right. All right.

*(***ABBY** *sits down on the floor heavily.)*

ABBY. What time is it?

CAROL. It's almost four.

ABBY. That's it?

CAROL. You need to go back out there.

ABBY. I know.

*(***ABBY** *starts getting up again.)*

I'm just exhausted.

CAROL. It's all right.

(Pause)

ABBY. You know there was a guy from Mexico City here today? He drove here. Can you believe that?

CAROL. I can do you better. You know who called today? Guess.

ABBY. No.

CAROL. The Dalai Lama.

*(***ABBY** *bursts out laughing.)*

ABBY. You're a dirty liar.

CAROL. I'm serious, it was him.

ABBY. How do you know? Did you recognize his voice on the phone?!

CAROL. Who calls up and lies by saying they're the Dalai Lama?

ABBY. What did he want?

CAROL. He wanted to say hi. You know, congratulate us and stuff.

ABBY. You're such a liar.

CAROL. He said he might stop by.

ABBY. Are you serious?

CAROL. Yes!

*(***ABBY** *laughs)*

ABBY. The Dalai Lama is coming here.

CAROL. If he can work it into his schedule.

*(***ABBY** *gives her mother a big enthusiastic hug.)*

ABBY. This is so awesome.

*(***ABBY** *lets go of her and starts pacing.)*

Oh I got some questions for him! I gotta write some things down!

CAROL. Well I don't know that he's going to have any time—

ABBY. Oh we're having a talk. Me and the Dalai Lama—you can go back brownies or make lemonade or whatever Martha Stuart stuff you wanna do, I'm gonna get some answers from this guy—

(She gives a little scream of excitement.)

CAROL. Isn't this the coolest thing in the world? Look—whatever happens, we're together on this, okay?

ABBY. All right.

CAROL. God this is cool!

ABBY. I know! Oh—I forgot, they're having a big pow-wow here Saturday night.

CAROL. Who's they?

ABBY. I think there's a shaman from the Lakota tribe, and there's a couple more from some other tribes, I'm not sure, and they're talking like—I don't know, maybe two hundred people. I told them they could use the fire pit out back near the Henderson's place.

CAROL. What?

ABBY. Yeah and they invited us too!

CAROL. Why didn't you ask me if they could have a pow-wow?

ABBY. What am I gonna say?

CAROL. You could say, `I gotta check with my Mom.'

ABBY. Oh gee—sorry.

CAROL. How are we gonna have a party for two hundred people?

ABBY. `Sorry, I'm not sure that you can celebrate the birth of the savior of the world, I have to clear that through my mother. Please put your religious ecstasy on hold until we get the OK from the administration.'

CAROL. I'm serious—do you even know what goes on at one of these things?

ABBY. I figure we're gonna smoke a lot of peyote and commune with nature. I think it's a way of becoming a herd—

CAROL. You are not—

ABBY. I'm joking. God, listen to you. It's a religious observance. You can't exactly tell them not to do it—And they invited us—

CAROL. You're not smoking any peace pipe at this thing.

ABBY. Mom.

CAROL. I don't know what you think's gonna happen—

ABBY. *(overlapping)* You're not grasping the significance of the event, okay?

CAROL. *(overlapping)* Oh I'm grasping it—

ABBY. *(overlapping)* This isn't a high school party! This isn't me going around hanging out with the "wrong" crowd! This is a historical event that we have been chosen—

CAROL. *(overlapping)* What do you mean "chosen"—

ABBY. *(continuous)* To participate in! And that doesn't mean baking brownies or making lemonade—it means *participating*—we can't sit here and make rules about what is and isn't acceptable in their religion, all right?

CAROL. Fine. I'm not trying to do that. I'm just saying if there's a bonfire and two hundred people on my land, I'm legally responsible for that. And if there's drug use or—

ABBY. Oh come on—

CAROL. What?

ABBY. Do you know what you sound like? You should enjoy this, you should be enthusiastic—

CAROL. You are not joining the Sioux Nation, I don't care if—

ABBY. Fine. Fine. Forget it. I'll tell them to rent out the VFW place downtown. And I'll stay in and watch TV.

*(***ABBY** *storms off.* **CAROL** *stands there for a second as the sound of drums is heard growing louder in the background. Lights fade as the drums continue to increase in volume.)*

(The pow-wow. Loud music. Dancing. Fierce singing. **ABBY** *enters cautiously, dressed in party clothes. She's a little bit afraid of the celebration and is about to retreat, but the* **FIRST MAN** *guides her to the drum circle.)*

ABBY. Hi.

(No one says anything.)

Um… I was just stopping in—you don't have to stop or anything, I was gonna…um… I'm gonna head back to the house and—

(She makes to get up, but the **FIRST MAN** *stops her.)*

FIRST MAN. Stay with us.

(He hands her his drum.)

We'd be honored if you would join in.

ABBY. Well I haven't really—I don't really know how—

FIRST MAN. It's very simple. Follow me.

(He plays a simple beat on the edge of the drum. He looks at her expectantly.)

ABBY. Okay.

*(***ABBY** *tires to play the same beat with him. She's not very good at it.)*

I suck at this.

FIRST MAN. Yes.

(They both laugh.)

FIRST MAN. Relax. You're too self-conscious about it.

(He guides her hands to play the beat.)

Go limp. It's very easy.

(He continues to guide her hands for a moment, then lets her go and plays alongside her.)

Good.

*(***ABBY** *smiles. He plays with her for a few seconds before stopping. He motions for* **ABBY** *to continue to play. She plays alone, trying very hard to keep the beat. The* **FIRST MAN** *takes a step back and begins a slow, reverential song.* **ABBY** *tries as hard as she can, but it's difficult for her to keep the right beat. Seeing her difficulty, the* **FIRST GIRL** *helps out, keeping the beat with her. The song finishes.)*

(A celebration of loud drums and music. **ABBY** *is reluctant, but eventually she joins in the dance. She dances self-consciously at first, but then loses herself in the energy of the pow-wow.)*

(The **CHORUS** *fades from view, but the music continues.* **ABBY** *is alone, dancing, ecstatic.)*

(Lights shift. **JOHN** *stands near the fence.* **ABBY** *spots him and runs up to him as the music dissipates.)*

ABBY. Hey!

(She gives him a big hug. He's clearly uncomfortable.)

JOHN. Hello.

ABBY. I thought you went back to Chicago.

JOHN. I came up for the pow-wow.

ABBY. Cool. Where were you, though? I didn't see you over there.

JOHN. I was out here, actually.

ABBY. Doin' what?

JOHN. Nothing. Did you enjoy the party?

ABBY. Yeah! Yeah—it was… incredible. Like an entirely new world, you know?

*(***ABBY** *takes out a cigarette)*

Have you seen my Mom around?

JOHN. No.

ABBY. Cool. You want one?

JOHN. No thanks.

ABBY. *(referring to the brand of cigarette)* Check it out: American Spirit.

JOHN. That's not really produced by Native Americans you know. Just because there's a picture of one on the box doesn't really mean that it's any more natural or spiritual than Camel. And it's a little insulting that these corporations are profiting from exploiting my heritage in order to peddle a narcotic—but it's nice to see that you've bought into it.

(Pause)

I'm totally kidding. I don't know who makes those things.

(He laughs. **ABBY** *relaxes a little bit but doesn't join in.)*

ABBY. Now I feel kinda weird about smoking it.

(Pause. **ABBY** *walks over to the fence.)*

This is so amazing, isn't it?

(No response)

How long have you been out here?

JOHN. A few hours.

ABBY. You didn't want to come over to the pow-wow?

JOHN. Didn't feel like it.

ABBY. That's too bad—it was… it was…

JOHN. I know what they are.

ABBY. So are you from Chicago originally?

JOHN. South Dakota.

ABBY. I bet that's fun.

*(***JOHN** *gives her an incredulous look.)*

JOHN. Have you been to South Dakota?

*(***ABBY** *tries to laugh it off.)*

ABBY. I'm kidding.

JOHN. I haven't been back there for a while.

ABBY. Yeah I wouldn't go back there either. I mean, I guess if you're probably from there, it's probably different. What am I talking about? I'm from Po-Dunk Wisconsin. This place sucks.

JOHN. It's not so bad. At least it's quiet.

ABBY. Well when there aren't pow-wows going on it's quiet.

(she laughs)

I'm sorry, do I just keep saying things that are horribly offensive?

JOHN. Don't worry about it.

ABBY. You know it's really cool to see everything around here…transformed. And to take what had been ordinary and have it all…mystical. I never thought this place would be worth anything.

JOHN. You've got an Arby's.

(she laughs.)

ABBY. Yeah, that gives us our distinctive smell. But seriously, this is like Raisinville. We're a town full of raisin people—people might start out juicy and full, but they get the life sucked out of them by living here until there's nothing left but these kind of withered husks who worry about clipping coupons for Cheez-its and living vicariously through the Green Bay Packers. It's sad. When I leave here, I'm out.

JOHN. I was the same way.

ABBY. Really? You have any family back there?

JOHN. My parents.

ABBY. You don't see them?

JOHN. Not too often.