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SF PERUSALS

Father Comes Home From the Wars

Parts 1, 2 & 3

Suzan-Lori Parks

A Samuel French Acting Edition

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FATHER COMES HOME FROM THE WARS, PARTS 1, 2 & 3 was frst produced at The Public Theater (Oskar Eustis, Artistic Director; Patrick Willingham, Executive Director) in New York City on October 28, 2014. The performance was directed by Jo Bonney, with sets by Neil Patel, costumes by ESosa, lighting by Lap Chi Chu, and sound by Dan Moses Schreier. Songs and additional music were by Suzan-Lori Parks, with arrangements by Steven Bargonetti. The Production Stage Manager was Evangeline Rose Whitlock. The cast was as follows:

THE MUSICIAN . . . . . Steven Bargonetti

Part 1: A Measure of a Man

The Chorus of Less Than Desirable Slaves:

LEADER . . . . . Russell G. Jones
SECOND . . . . . Julian Rozzell Jr.
THIRD . . . . . Tonye Patano
FOURTH . . . . . Jacob Ming-Trent

THE OLDEST OLD MAN . . . . . Peter Jay Fernandez
HERO . . . . . Sterling K. Brown
PENNY . . . . . Jenny Jules
HOMER . . . . . Jeremie Harris

Part 2: A Battle in the Wilderness

A COLONEL, IN THE REBEL ARMY . . . . . Ken Marks
SMITH, A CAPTIVE UNION SOLDIER . . . . . Louis Cancelmi
HERO, THE COLONEL'S SLAVE . . . . . Sterling K. Brown

Part 3: The Union of My Confederate Parts

THE RUNAWAY SLAVES . . . . . Russell G. Jones, Tonye Patano and Julian Rozzell Jr.
HOMER . . . . . Jeremie Harris
PENNY . . . . . Jenny Jules
ODYSSEY DOG . . . . . Jacob Ming-Trent
ULYSSES . . . . . Sterling K. Brown

FATHER COMES HOME FROM THE WARS, PARTS 1, 2 & 3 then opened at the American Repertory Theater (Diane Paulus, Artistic Director) in Cambridge, Massachusetts, on January 28, 2015. The design and production personnel remained the same. The cast was:

THE MUSICIAN. . . . . Steven Bargonetti

Part 1: A Measure of a Man

The Chorus of Less Than Desirable Slaves:

LEADER . . . . . Charlie Hudson III
SECOND . . . . . Julian Rozzell Jr.
THIRD . . . . . Tonye Patano
FOURTH. . . . . Jacob Ming-Trent/Patrena Murray

THE OLDEST OLD MAN. . . . . Harold Surratt
HERO . . . . . Benton Greene
PENNY. . . . . Jenny Jules
HOMER. . . . . Sekou Laidlow

Part 2: A Battle in the Wilderness

A COLONEL, IN THE REBEL ARMY. . . . . Ken Marks
SMITH, A CAPTIVE UNION SOLDIER . . . . . Michael Crane
HERO, THE COLONEL'S SLAVE . . . . . Benton Greene

Part 3: The Union of My Confederate Parts

THE RUNAWAY SLAVES . . . . . Charlie Hudson III, Tonye Patano, and Julian Rozzell Jr.
HOMER. . . . . Sekou Laidlow
PENNY. . . . . Jenny Jules
ODYSSEY DOG . . . . . Jacob Ming-Trent/Patrena Murray
ULYSSES . . . . . Benton Greene

FROM THE AUTHOR'S *ELEMENTS OF STYLE*

I'm continuing the use of my slightly unconventional theatrical elements. Here's a road map.

(Rest)

Take a little time, a pause, a breather; make a transition.

A Spell

An elongated and heightened *(Rest)*. Denoted by repetition of figures' names with no dialogue. Has sort of an architectural look:

HERO.
HOMER.
HERO.
HOMER.

This is a place where the figures experience their pure true simple state. While no action or stage business is necessary, directors should fill this moment as they best see fit.

PRODUCTION NOTES

Staging: Sometimes indicated by "*(Aside)*" but most often not, throughout these plays, I'm widely employing the convention of direct address. Enjoy.

Music: I've written songs for these plays. We had a musician on stage, visible and "witnessing" and "interacting" with the characters and audience. Most often the musician will sing the songs. In Part 2 (but not in Parts 1 and 3) the characters sing. Lyrics are in the text. Music's in the back of the book. Also, I've written several musical themes which we used as underscoring or punctuation throughout the show. The musical themes are to supplement the dialogue and stage action. Place the songs where indicated. Future publication may provide indication of the musical themes' specific placement, but, in the meantime, place them judiciously in relationship to their corresponding character or situation.

Returning is the Way of the Tao.

—*Tao Te Ching*, Verse XL

Part 1

A Measure of a Man

(The **MUSICIAN** *sings:)*

DARK IS THE NIGHT

DARK IS THE NIGHT
LONG IS THE DAY
DARK IS THE NIGHT
LONG IS THE DAY
GOT TIME FOR WORK
NO TIME TO PRAY.

HE'S HEADING OUT
OR WILL HE STAY.

THE SUN HE HIDES
DON'T SEE HIS FACE
THE NIGHT HE CROWDS
AND DEATH DON'T LEAVE A TRACE.
DARK IS THE NIGHT
BUT THERE'S NO RESTING PLACE.

(Early Spring, 1862. A slave cabin in the middle of nowhere.)

(Far West Texas. One hour before dawn.)

(The **CHORUS LEADER** *measures the night by holding a hand up to the sky.)*

(After a moment, the **LEADER** *is joined by the* **SECOND**.*)*

LEADER.

LEADER.

LEADER.

SECOND.

How much time we got?

LEADER.

How much you want?

SECOND.

Don't be smart.

Hero's gonna be leaving when the sun comes up.

And we gotta know how long we got till he goes.

LEADER.

Listen to him. Talking like he know.

But we don't know if Hero is going or not.

All we know is the sun's gonna rise, God willing,

But when it comes to Hero,

We gotta wait for his word to know what he's doing.

SECOND.

Me, I'm betting that he's going.

LEADER.

Are you now?

SECOND.

That's right.

LEADER.

You're betting that Hero's gonna go to the War?

SECOND.

That's how I'm betting,

Mark it.

LEADER.

You betting that Hero's going to the War with the Boss-Master?

Working as the Boss-Master's servant-slave?

SECOND.

That's what Hero does here, so that's what he'll do when he goes to the War.

His job ain't gonna change just cause he gets to wear a fancy uniform.

LEADER.

You're betting Hero is gonna wait on Boss-Master hand and foot?

SECOND.

He waits hand and foot on him now.

LEADER.

And hold his horse steady for him to climb on top?

And hold his horse again for him to climb on down?

And run behind, carrying all Boss-Master's whatnots on his back?

Running behind the Boss-Master and the Boss-Master's horse both?

And getting spattered with flecks of dirt

From Boss-Master's horse's hooves?

And getting speckled with bits of bad-smelling release

From that same horse's privates?

And combing down the horse after a long day of fighting?

Scrubbing the horse? Then scrubbing the Boss-Master?

Then putting the Master to bed?
Then combing the Master's coat
And shining his boots.
And Boss-Master, the Colonel, sleeping inside
On a warm cot inside a warm tent.
And Hero, the slave, sleeping outside on the cold hard ground
While the cannons pound and the bullets fly
And the war-wounded holler
Cause their legs and arms are lost, and their hopes are dashed.

SECOND.

Why you got to go on and on about it?

LEADER.

I'm just making sure you know what you're talking about.

SECOND.

I'm betting Hero's going to the War.

LEADER.

With the Boss-Master?

SECOND.

Yep.

LEADER.

As the Boss-Master's slave?

SECOND.

That is what I'm betting. Mark it.

LEADER.

You got time to change your mind.

SECOND.

I'm not changing my mind.
I'm all decided on it.
I just want to know how long we got until sunrise
Cause that's when I'm gonna collect my share of the winnings.
Sounds like you're betting the other way.

LEADER.

I am.

SECOND.

You betting that Hero will give up his chance
At greatness to stay here and grub in the dirt?
You betting that, instead of picking a field of battle,
Hero is gonna pick a field of cotton and corn?
That Hero's gonna want a rusty plow for planting
Instead of a shiny medal for bravery?
That he's gonna choose coveralls instead of a uniform?
That he'll be satisfied with having his name only wrote down
In the Boss-Master's counting-book
Instead of getting a chance at getting his name, Hero,
Maybe wrote up in one of them great Histories?
Now you betting Hero's gonna stay home, so you betting for all that?

LEADER.

Mark it.
And I got a good chance at winning too.
As good a chance as him, anyhow. And we'll see soon enough.
We got about an hour before the sun comes up.

SECOND.

Don't look like an hour to me.

LEADER.

Measure it yourself then.

*(***SECOND** *holds a hand to the sky, measuring the night as best he can.)*

LEADER.

What you betting?

SECOND.

My spoon.

LEADER.
I thought you was gonna be buried with that spoon.

SECOND.
I'm betting it but I'm gonna win it back right away
Cause Hero is going to the War.
Mark it!

LEADER.
I'm betting my shoes.

SECOND.
Both of them?
Oh, winter is gonna be cold for you.
You gonna be shoeless and your feet gonna
Freeze and turn blacker than they are now
And then Missus is gonna chop them off
Cause they'll be frozen. Cause they'll be frost-bit-dead.
And you gonna be walking around like Homer do
But worse:
Homer used to have two feet and now he don't got but one feet.
But Hero, on the other hand, Hero is as he was born:
Big, brave, smart, honest and strong.
The favorite.
He ain't missing nothing.

LEADER.
Except maybe the War. Snap.

SECOND.
Please.
Anyone else bet?

LEADER.
Not yet.

SECOND.
Not Penny? Not the Old Man?

LEADER.
Nobody yet but you and me.

SECOND.

Them two got more sway on Hero than all of us put together.

LEADER.

If Hero goes he'll be missing them: Penny and the Old Man both.

SECOND.

Here are the others

Let's see what they say.

(The other **CHORUS** *members enter, ready to place their bets and trying their hands at measuring the night.)*

THIRD.

How much time we got?

LEADER.

A little less than an hour now.

SECOND.

Some of us are betting that Hero's going to the War.

LEADER.

And some of us are betting that he'll stay.

FOURTH.

You might be the best at measuring Night

But that don't mean you the best at measuring Men.

THIRD.

Early risers have their say but we gotta make our own choices on this

Each of us gotta make a measure of the man

We gotta choose for ourselves.

(Rest)

I got a brass button

I might be betting that Hero is—

Going to the War.

FOURTH.

I got a banjo.

THIRD.

Don't bet that.

FOURTH.

I'm betting it. And maybe I'll bet—
That Hero stays put.

LEADER.

There is a kind of sport to be had
In the consideration of someone else's fate.

THIRD.

Where's Penny?

SECOND.

Still in her house most likely.

THIRD.

And the Oldest Old Man?

LEADER.

He woke up early this morning
And he went out in the field to die of shame cause his son won't be going.

SECOND.

Or he's dead of fear cause his son will be going.

FOURTH.

Either way sounds like the Old Man is most likely dead.

THIRD.

It happens. He was pretty much as old as a person should get.

LEADER.

Woah.

(The **OLD MAN** *enters.)*

CHORUS.

OLD MAN.

CHORUS.

OLD MAN.

OLD MAN.

Why you all crouching away from me?
It's just the Old Man here.

LEADER.

Old Man, you dead yet?

OLD MAN.

What kind of foolish question is that?
Good thing you all ain't free.
Good thing they days ain't they own to fill.
Good thing they time is still owned by the Boss-Master,
Cause, if they time ever was they own, mark it:
They'd be filling it all up with foolishness.
Seeing me standing here but thinking me dead.
Goodness, people, I was just out walking, out looking for Hero's dog.

FOURTH.

Hero's dog, the dog called Odd-See.
We all know where Odd-See Dog is at:
Hero's dog is by Hero's side, just like he always is.

OLD MAN.

The dog's run off,
Where he's gone to I don't know.

THIRD.

That's hard to believe.
Hero's dog,
The dog with eyes that go this way and that?

OLD MAN.

Hero's only got one dog.

SECOND.

There must have been something he was chasing.

OLD MAN.

He weren't chasing nothing
Hero kicked that dog.
And then the dog run off.

THIRD.

Old Man, you know Hero don't kick his dog.

OLD MAN.

And Odd-See, his dog, he don't run off neither.

But I'm telling you: both them things happened, mark it.

LEADER.

Strange news. How will it sway your bets?

FOURTH.

Strange news on any day but especially today.

Cause of the bond Hero and Odd-See got between them.

THIRD.

The Dog is always by Hero's side.

SECOND.

The Dog lives in Hero's footsteps.

FOURTH.

All his food comes from Hero's plate.

LEADER.

And the shade he takes comes from Hero's shadow.

OLD MAN.

And the dog is Hero's good luck charm.

Don't forget about that.

LEADER.

Now that's just some superstitious nonsense!

OLD MAN.

I'm telling you what I know for true.

Listen up:

Penny, she comes out the door

And when Hero said the dog had run off she got worrisome.

Then, Hero and Homer together, they headed on up to the house.

And Penny, left alone, she fell on her knees and prayed a quiet prayer:

For Odd-See to come back.
She finished praying on her knees
Then she went praying on her feet.
She walked off, went looking for the dog.
I followed her but I followed slow.
Got tired, headed back, here I am.

LEADER.
How are you betting, Old Man?

SECOND.
Will Hero stay or head to the War?

OLD MAN.
I ain't ready to reveal my say.

LEADER.
Still thinking about that dog.

OLD MAN.
It's a consideration.
That dog is Hero's luck.
It's as simple as that.

THIRD.
The sun's coming soon.
And Hero will get himself decided.
Dog or no dog.

SECOND.
Don't make a mountain out of a molehill,

FOURTH.
Don't make a god out of a dog, Old Man.

LEADER.
Don't make a snake out of a rope.

OLD MAN.
What I'm telling you is true.
And The Truth will set you free
Even if the Master don't.

CHORUS.

OLD MAN.

CHORUS.

OLD MAN.

OLD MAN.

That's Hero coming now.

*(***HERO** *enters, coming back from the big House.)*

(He carries a pair of boots and some worn-out pieces of a Confederate Army uniform. The day's events and their possibilities have created an air of excitement within him. A buoyancy.)

HERO.

Morning.

ALL.

Morning Hero.

HERO.

You all all awake, huh?

LEADER.

We're waiting on you, Hero.

HERO.

Where's my dog?

Why don't he come to greet me?

OLD MAN.

Penny's gone to bring him back.

He's probably out there curled up in a warm spot, sleeping.

LEADER.

It's still early yet.

SECOND.

Everything with any sense is still asleep.

HERO.

Count us among the senseless then. And Boss-Master-Boss the most senseless of us all. He's been up awake

the whole night working on getting ready and he's still busy at it. I was trying to decide my mind while I was helping him. And he knew it too. He kept giving me these looks. But under his watch ain't no place for this man to think. So I had to excuse myself and come back here with my mind as unmade as my bed!

(Rest)

Boss had me and Homer both helping him get dressed. Homer, after all his years of working outside minding the mules, he ain't much of a valet, but it turned out all right. All them uniform whatnots. Boss gave me these remnants to wear, if I choose to go.

OLD MAN.

Boss' uniform must be a fine thing.

HERO.

You'll see it soon enough. All the sashes and belts and buckles and braids. If I hadn't of known, I'd think Boss-Master-Boss was decorating himself to join the traveling circus. He's got this hat with a cream-colored feather that's as big as a fan, hell, it's bigger than a fan, that feather is twice the size of Boss-Master's head. I hope the wind don't blow on it else it'll blow him right off his horse. And his new boots. To get them on he had to tug and stomp and cuss so much, Missus comes in running thinking that me and Homer had attacked Boss-Master. That thought alone is funny. Ha, you shoulda seen it. Boss-Master, sitting on the bed with Missus fanning him cause his boots, they fit, but they so new-tight, you know. And then Homer said, "Lucky you don't got to walk to the War." And that's when Boss-Master laughed.

(Rest)

You all gonna head up to the House to see him head out?

OLD MAN.

He's promised each of us a coin for our trouble so we'll be there, mark it.

HERO.

Maybe you'll be waving goodbye to me too. But maybe not.

(Rest)

Go get some rest, now. Unless night turning into day is suddenly something special to see.

LEADER.

Are you going or are you going to stay?

SECOND.

Some of us will bet you'll go.

FOURTH.

Others'll bet the other way.

THIRD.

What will you decide, Hero?

OLD MAN.

Listen to you all
Feeding on Hero's choice
Like so many buzzards feed.
Cept the carcass ain't one. He's still living.
So let's step away.

HERO.

You all clutching ahold of your best treasures.
Odd-See!

OLD MAN.

Plenty of time for him to come home.

HERO.

I'm starting to think that dog ain't nothing.
A dog is just a dog.
A dime a dozen.

OLD MAN.

Sit. Rest.
Penny's out looking for him
And we'll sit and watch the dawn come up.
Mark it with us.

*(***HERO** *sits with them, measuring the night.)*

HERO.

CHORUS.

HERO.

CHORUS.

HERO.

Why don't my dog come back, do you think?

OLD MAN.

Don't think on it.

Just sit.

HERO.

I need peace or quiet at least.

You all go help look for my dog, huh?

FOURTH.

We jump when you say jump.

THIRD.

We follow you, even if it's just your finger, pointing out the way.

(They go. The **OLD MAN** *slowly follows them.)*

HERO.

Father.

Stay with me awhile.

OLD MAN.

"Father."

I love it when you call me that.

HERO.

If you could have anything you wanted

Could you name it?

OLD MAN.

You granting wishes?

HERO.

Would you have your son go to the War or would you have him stay?

OLD MAN.

I bet you already know your father's mind.

HERO.

Not until I hear it from his mouth.

When I say "War" I try to read your face

But you sense me looking and you turn away.

OLD MAN.

I want you to decide your own self.

Boss-Master ordering you to go to the War with him

And then he tells you that you got a choice in the matter.

The great Boss-Master-Boss gives you your freedom of choice.

Like he figures his freedom of choice is gonna somehow

Take the place of the Rightful Freedom that he's been denying you.

Like he figures that his gift, his little crumb of choice,

Will somehow save his soul when the Judgment Day comes.

Me and Penny both agreed to stay clear and let the last word on it be up to you.

HERO.

Still still still: Do you want me staying home?

OLD MAN.

Yes.

HERO.

You want me staying here? Did I hear right?

OLD MAN.

Lemmie shine up your boots for you.

Keep my hands busy.

(The **OLD MAN** *shines* **HERO***'s boots.)*

OLD MAN.

What father in his right mind wants his son going off to the War?

I mean, yes, well, maybe real fathers.

Lucky men who had their sons shot out into life through their own balls

Maybe they figure easy come easy go.

You're my son but as you know

I didn't make you from my spit.

Which makes me, I guess, a fake-father.

But you, Hero, no mistake, you're a real son through and through.

No, we don't got the luxury of blood between us,

And your arrival was a happenstance, but all that makes me

Double-bless the day you came here and looked up to me.

And here I am now. Looking up to you.

Oh, I wish I was your real daddy.

Then I could say I knew your Ma.

Cause you got at least half your self from your Ma,

Which means that Woman was a Force Divine.

So if I had known her even for a quick minute: Woah!

I'd still, after all these years, I'd still have that sweet gal on my mind.

Lord! I ain't never even met her,

So stop me, son, from crying cause she's gone.

HERO.

You can always get me laughing.

Even when things are weighing heavy.

OLD MAN.

I want you to go, son.

There. I said it. I'll tell you true:

I want you to go to the War.

HERO.

There's Truth in your voice now.

OLD MAN.

Yes.

HERO.

This morning when Boss and me spoke alone together
He promised me:
My Freedom for My Service.

OLD MAN.

Your Freedom?
Your Freedom for your Service?
All the more reason. You'll go now, surely.
Mark it!
I'm readying myself to wave goodbye.

HERO.

Not just yet.
He dangled it in front of me. My Freedom.
Like a beautiful carrot.
Like a diamond. And those scraps of uniform and the diamond Freedom glittered
As he promised it, asking me to see it, to smell it, touch it, try it on for size.
But while I so wanted to I was still thinking on the bald fact that in his service
I will be helping out
On the wrong side.
That sticks in my throat and makes it hard to breathe.
The wrong of it.
All those days working in his fields that I thought of killing him.
You know those days. I'd come home in a sweat
Not from working but from the rage.
And Penny, understanding but bearing on, like we all do.
I'd be out in those fields behind a plow praying for his murder.

How can I last one day on the battlefield
Without doing the same or worse?

OLD MAN.

Kill him and there's no life for you.

HERO.

I know.
I won't hurt him. There's my Word.
But can you see Boss-Master and me coming home from the War
And him giving me my Freedom like he says he will?

OLD MAN.

It's right for you to wonder.
After the way he promised you your Freedom that first time.
Why do you shiver?

HERO.

Just the memory of it.
His First Promise. His very First Promise.

OLD MAN.

That was the only other time he offered you your Freedom.
Unless I'm mistaken.

HERO.

Father?

OLD MAN.

Son?

HERO.

Nothing.

OLD MAN.

Boss-Master promising in front of everybody and in a loud voice:
"I'll give you your Freedom if you cut off Homer's foot,"
And you said, "No!" You bravely refused him.
So Boss threatened you with death

And then the axe came down.
Mark it: Yes, it was horrible
But right now: this Promise is—more promising.
He'll come through this time, son.
Your Service for him and for his Cause will outweigh everything
And he'll come through.

HERO.

I'll chance it if you feel so sure.
I'll accept his offer. Take him up on his Promise.
And I'll give myself a chance at something great.
And I'll come back here.
And I'll help everybody when I get home.
I'm as good as gone.

OLD MAN.

Put on your uniform.

HERO.

It's not a whole uniform.
More like a bunch of scraps.

OLD MAN.

Put it on and wear it.
A man like you can make a wholesome thing out of bits and pieces.

*(***HERO** *puts on the scraps of his Confederate Army uniform.)*

HERO.

I can see myself, out there.
Guns blazing all around, cannons going off
And the line of endless tents
And the piles of the dead.

OLD MAN.

You won't be one of the dead, son.
You do your service and then
Here you are coming home.

I can see you.
Walking bravely

HERO.

And I bow down to you, giving thanks, glad to be back.

OLD MAN.

And your Freedom has been granted
And your dog has been found
And none of your limbs have been lost.

HERO.

Mark it.

OLD MAN.

You all dressed?

HERO.

Pretty much.

OLD MAN.

Look at you.
How do you look?

HERO.

I look all right.

OLD MAN.

Parade around.
Lemmie hear your boots marching in the dirt.

*(***HERO** *parades around. He styles and profiles.)*

*(***PENNY** *enters. Her presence stops him in his tracks.)*

HERO.

Hold my hand.

PENNY.

Oooh it's warm.
Look at me, I'm dancing you!

(She moves his arms, making him dance.)

(He lifts her up.)

HERO.
And I'm flying you!

PENNY.
I'm a bird!

(They embrace. It's deep.)

HERO.
Close your eyes.

PENNY.
They're closed.

HERO.
Kiss?

(They kiss.)

HERO.
Keep them closed. Now look.

PENNY.

HERO.

HERO.
I was just trying it out.

PENNY.
There's planting to be done today
You gonna wear them whatnots and them boots walking behind the plow?

HERO.
I was just seeing how it felt.

PENNY.
Feels hot, don't it? If it don't yet it will soon.

HERO.
What do you think?

PENNY.
I think— I think the day's gonna be warm.
And you all dressed up like that and plowing the field—

I think you'll be sweating like the old folks do when they see a holy miracle.
And I think it'll take you twice as long to get done half as much
And then everybody would know what I know looking at you now:
They'd say, "Hero, the man who is practically Penny's husband,
That man Hero has gone and lost his mind."

OLD MAN.

He's got something to tell you, girl.
If you'd just give him a clearing.

PENNY.

Tell me what, Hero?

HERO.

We've been discussing things.

PENNY.

I'm ready to add my say.

OLD MAN.

You filled up both my ears already.

HERO.

Head to toe, Penny: How do I look?

PENNY.

That outfit makes you better-looking, Hero, I can't lie.

HERO.

Not every man can wear it well.

HERO.

PENNY.

PENNY.

Let's go inside
And stay in bed all day.

HERO.

And miss the War?

PENNY.

The War is nothing.

You said as much yourself.

HERO.

You gone looking for the dog?

PENNY.

I did.

But I shoulda stayed here and kept an eye on you.

HERO.

Odd-See ain't come back with you.

PENNY.

Even the Old Man can see that.

The way you look would make someone with less conviction

Think they was too late to put the good sense back into your head

That seems to have drained clean out from spending time with the Old Man.

OLD MAN.

He's made his mind up, woman,

Leave him be.

PENNY.

His mind don't matter none to me

Cause I know what his heart says.

You don't want to disappoint the Old Man but go on and tell him.

He can bear it.

HERO.

HERO.

PENNY.

Hero? Go on.

OLD MAN.

Don't keep pestering him.
It's natural for a man to want to go to War
To seek his fortune
To try his hand at grabbing better than what he's got now.

PENNY.

It's also natural for God to strike dead someone as old as you.
Just cause God ain't yet called his name don't mean He forgot.
I'ma remind Him:
"Lord, You got an old old man down here who You shoulda taken a long time ago."

HERO.

Don't curse, Penny.
Not on my account.
She didn't mean it, father, so the curse, it didn't get to Heaven.
Girl, we went and talked it through, father and me.
Hear me out, hear?
I'm going.

PENNY.

But you don't want to go.
You don't want to.
You told me so.
Hero, just this morning.
We woke together.
At the same time. In the same breath like we often do.
You breathed it out and I breathed it in.
And we woke up.
No work to do that early so it wasn't the plow calling.
No rooster up that early and not no sun, Hero.
Just us two.
Everything else was quiet and sleep.

"I got to tell you my mind before the others meddle with me and twist me up," you said.
Cause you knew. You knew that that's what they do.
Planting their own seeds into you.
Using you worse than Boss-Master does.
"I'm not going," you said.
"I'll tell the Master so at sunrise," you said.
"Help me keep my secret," you said.
You leaned close to me, my ear to your lips. In the dark it was.
Whispering into my ear.
Putting your words into my head.
"I'm not going to the War," you said.
And, oh, oh, I was afeared for you.
Crossing Boss-Master is a horrible thing.
That's what went through my head.
But also, it was sweet
Even though it was terrifying it was sweet.
That you was not gonna raise a hand against your own cause
That you was not gonna help out Master.
That you would stand up.
That you would stay home.
At least that's what I thought I heard.

OLD MAN.
You woke this morning deciding not to go?

HERO.
Hours ago I might of said that.
I might have thought that out loud
And shared it with Penny, sure.

OLD MAN.
You gave her your Word?

PENNY.
You did.

HERO.

I gave you some words in the dark while half sleeping.
What man don't do that?
But now I'm decided.
I'm going, girl.

PENNY.

You go to the War and for what?

HERO.

I got a chance at getting something.

OLD MAN.

He can't explain it, Penny
There is a thing about his call to service
That he needs to keep private until the time is right.
So let's all just accept the hard truth:
Hero has been called to serve and he's leaving.

PENNY.

Without his dog.

HERO.

The dog will be home directly and if he don't come what of it?

PENNY.

That dog's your luck, Hero.

OLD MAN.

That's just some superstitious nonsense.
It's time for all of us, if we want to grow out of this low place,
To leave behind beliefs like that.
Hero has changed his views and, following his lead,
I've changed my views too.
And so should you.
It's very liberating.

PENNY.

"Liberating"?

OLD MAN.

"Freeing."
Mark it, woman.

PENNY.

Boss, he must be promising you something wonderful.
He's promising you your Freedom
Something "Liberating,"
Ain't I right?
(Rest)
I'm right. Mark it. That's what's got your head turned.
At first I thought it was the Old Man's words
But, no, Boss, to sell you on it,
He's promising you your Freedom again, ain't he?
Such a sweet promise!
But how could you even think of saying yes to him
When you know good and well
That his Freedom-promise is only. Ever. Linked.
To something. Bad.

HERO.

Quiet!
Quiet please.

HERO.

PENNY.

PENNY.

Hero?

HERO.

Penny?
(Rest)
Daylight will be here shortly.
And here comes everybody.
Coming on back
And they're coming back without my dog.

(The **CHORUS** *enters. The Dog is not with them.)*

HERO.

Tell me the news.
Tell me how you found him dead.
Tell me quick.
The creature that brought me nothing but luck
Like other dogs bring their masters bones
You found him dead and his body ripped in pieces.
So horrible you didn't have the heart to bring him back in scraps.
Am I right?

LEADER.

We didn't find nothing.

SECOND.

Not even a hair.

FOURTH.

We did see his tracks
But they faded.

THIRD.

We called out to him
No answer.

OLD MAN.

So Hero's dog is gone.

LEADER.

What do you say to that?

SECOND.

Weigh it all careful.

THIRD.

Weigh it in your heart.

HERO.

There's still time before the sun is up.
But, hell, I'm all decided.

LEADER.

Give us a chance to place our bets

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