ABSTRACT

Title of thesis: CLASSICAL TRAGEDY IN CONTEMPORARY VIOLENCE: WRITING, DEVISING, AND PERFORMING “SACRED SOIL”

David Michael Demke, Masters of Fine Arts in Performance, 2013

Thesis directed by: Associate Professor Leslie Felbain
Department of Theatre

"Sacred Soil" is a play about a young man's search for redemption. It poses the question of whether or not we can be redeemed by violent means. It is the story of the young man's struggle to make sense of the violence that is around him and a part of him set against the backdrop of the harsh and beautiful North Dakota landscape. This backdrop provides a mirror for the complexities and paradoxical truths at play in the human condition, revealing the fundamental tragedy within contemporary violence. Echoes of Classical Greek tragedy are heard throughout the play, as the young man discovers his fate, and the question of redemption is left unanswered.

# CLASSICAL TRAGEDY IN CONTEMPORARY VIOLENCE: WRITING, DEVISING, AND PERFORMING "SACRED SOIL"

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By

David Michael Demke

Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park, in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

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Advisory Committee:

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# Preface

The play *Sacred Soil* is both a personal and a creative journey. Having grown up in North Dakota, I am tied to its geography, people, and history. Home is where the heart is, as the saying goes, and my heart is at home in the Dakota landscape. In spite of this, I've spent my entire adult life living elsewhere, and the landscape of my childhood has shifted from an external, sensorial experience to an internal longing. I long to live in a farmhouse in the wide open plains of western Dakota, but I live in an apartment in the city. The landscape of my youth is the inspiration for my art, but I need the city to make a living as an artist. As an adult I am defined less by the world around and more by the world within me, a truth that often puts me at odds with myself.

The North Dakota landscape is an integral part of *Sacred Soil* for a very simple reason: it is the primary source of human conflict. The landscape is full of contradictions, it is both harsh and beautiful, bountiful and unforgiving. The people who live with these contradictions are, in response to them, contradictory as well. They are both hospitable and insular, open hearted and closed minded. While I love the landscape of my childhood, and long for it, as an adult I cannot live there because of the insular thinking within its communities. *Sacred Soil* is a reflection of this discord, and an attempt to find resolution. Sam Schmitt, the central character of the play, is the voice of all those who, like me, are destined to search for harmony; the dissolution of the schism between the home within, and the home without.

On a creative level *Sacred Soil* was born out of an imagined family history very different, yet strikingly similar, to my own. The fictional Schmitt family of the play grew out of the destinies of two particular individuals; Gordon Kahl (see figure 1), and my father (see figure 2). They never met, but they were born and raised within 50 miles of each other, only 5 years apart. They both grew up on farms and served in World War II. In fact, up until their early twenties, the general details of their lives are almost interchangeable. Their destinies, however, were very different. My father raised a family, had a successful career, and died at the age of 80 surrounded by loving family and devoted friends. Gordon Kahl, on the other hand, became a tax protestor, shot and killed two U.S. Marshals, and died in a shootout with law enforcement at the age of 63. How could two men of such similar backgrounds end up leading such different lives?

In Sophocles' classic Greek tragedy, *Oedipus the King*, we learn that the infant Oedipus was taken to a hillside and left to die. His father, Laius, having been told by the Oracle that he was destined to die at the hands of his own son, was attempting to cheat fate. Oedipus, however, is rescued from the elements by a shepherd and adopted by the King of Corinth. He grows to young adulthood, journeys forth to seek his way in the world, quarrels with an older man at a crossroads, and kills him. The older man was Laius.

What does this have to do with my father and Gordon Kahl? If the end of a man's life is the result of a series of events dictated by fate, then how does one chart the events that led to two very different endings? I knew how my father's and Gordon's childhoods were similar, and I knew how and when their lives diverged.

However, because there was scant information on how Gordon's childhood differed from my father's, I couldn't pinpoint any specific events that hinted at his destiny. I could guess, however, and the fictional Schmitt family emerged out of my imaginings as the focal point of *Sacred Soil*. These imaginings represented the meeting ground between myself, my father, and Gordon Kahl. Creating these characters allowed me to explore the events in the life of a family that set the stage for tragedy.

The landscape of North Dakota is mythic in scope and history. Simply mention Deadwood, South Dakota, and mythic ideas of the taming and settling of the Great Plains, as well as larger-than-life characters, come to mind. But the truth is much grittier and mundane. For example, the romantic myth of Calamity Jane, such as the one portrayed in the 1953 musical starring Doris Day, is far removed from the real life Jane, more accurately portrayed as a foul-mouthed alcoholic in the HBO series *Deadwood*. Life for the Native Americans, often romantically depicted in movies and art, was instead a daily struggle for survival with constant warring among tribes. The myth of the Great Plains can draw people towards destruction like a Siren's song.

The contradictions in the landscape create a tension that cannot be resolved, and the human response to this tension runs the gamut from acceptance to control. The fictional Schmitt family runs this gamut, making it impossible for them to escape their tragic fate. Their downfall is a catharsis, a cleansing, and at the end of *Sacred Soil* the Schmitt family, like the landscape they are a part of, reflects a world of made up of myth and truth.

# Acknowledgements

Thank you to James Corcoran, for writing the book that served as the inspiration for *Sacred Soil*, and for taking the time to meet and talk with me.

Special thanks to my thesis committee for their support, and for holding my feet to the fire. Thank you to Walter Dallas for always pushing me out of my comfort zone, to Mitchell Hebert for much needed guidance, and for reminding me not to ease into anything, and to Leslie Felbain for shepherding me through the entire process.

Thank you to my mother and my sister Susan, for driving me to Medina and elsewhere in support of this endeavor; to my brother, nieces, and their significant others for listening to me play and sing the song "Sam Hall" on my Ukulele, over and over again, during my visit home.

Special thanks to the Millikens; Joe, Chick, Ian and Grennan, who not only read my work, but told me they really liked it and encouraged me to keep going.

My biggest thank you to my fiancé, Caley Milliken, who graciously succumbed to my constant requests for feedback, gave me rock-solid advice, patiently endured my many creative ramblings, and even occasionally cooked me meals.

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U.S. Department of Justice
United States Marshals Service

# WANTED
## BY U.S. MARSHALS

NOTICE TO ARRESTING AGENCY: Before arrest, validate warrant through National Crime Information Center (NCIC).

United States Marshals Service NCIC entry number: (NIC/ W255541014 W302433894 ).

NAME: KAHL, GORDON WENDELL

AKA(S): LOUDEN, SAN

DESCRIPTION:

| | |
|---|---|
| Sex: | MALE |
| Race: | WHITE |
| Place of Birth: | NORTH DAKOTA |
| Date(s) of Birth: | JANUARY 8, 1920 |
| Height: | 5'7" |
| Weight: | 160 LBS. |
| Eyes: | HAZEL |
| Hair: | WHITE/BALDING |
| Skintone: | MEDIUM |
| Scars, Marks, Tattoos: | SCAR FOREHEAD, SCAR LEFT HIP |
| Social Security Number(s): | 501-14-2682 |
| NCIC Fingerprint Classification: | DO CI PN PI PM BI PM PM PI CI |

ADDRESS AND LOCALE: CONSIDER ARMED AND DANGEROUS
KAHL is believed to have been involved in the February 13, 1983 shooting where two U.S. Marshals were slain and four other officers were wounded.

| WANTED FOR: | MURDER | PROBATION VIOLATION |
|---|---|---|
| Warrant Issued: | District of North Dakota | Western District of Texas |
| Warrant Number: | 8359-0214-0044E | 8180-0330-0444D |
| DATE WARRANT ISSUED: | February 13, 1983 | March 30, 1981 |

A $25,000 REWARD IS OFFERED FOR INFORMATION WHICH WOULD LEAD TO THE DIRECT ARREST OF KAHL.

If arrested or whereabouts known, notify the local United States Marshals Office, (Telephone: _____ ).
If no answer, call United States Marshals Service Communications Center in McLean Virginia.
Telephone (800)336-0102; (24 hour telephone contact) NLETS access code is VAUSM0000.

PRIOR EDITIONS ARE OBSOLETE AND NOT TO BE USED

Form USM-132
(Rev. 1/2/81)

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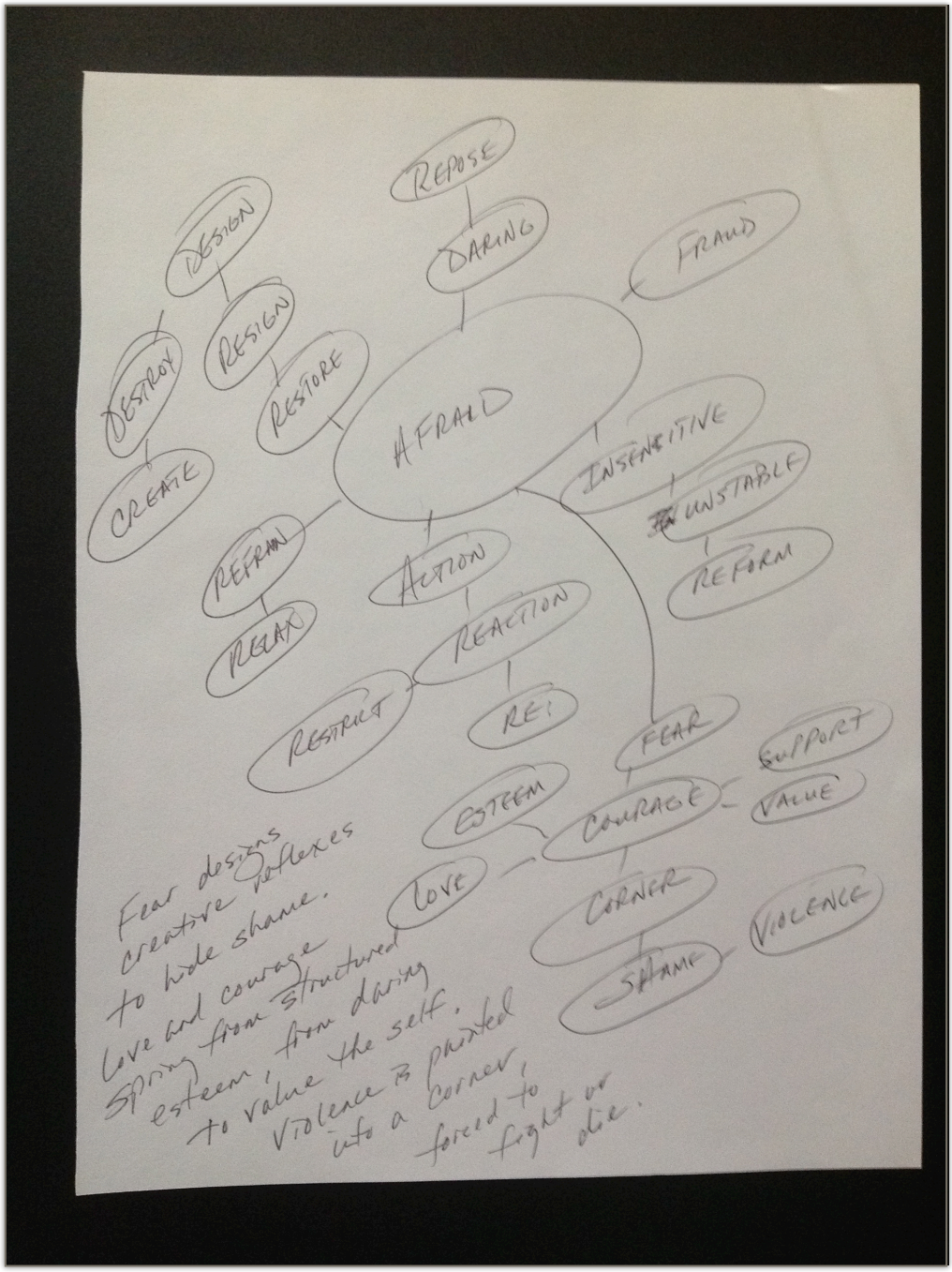
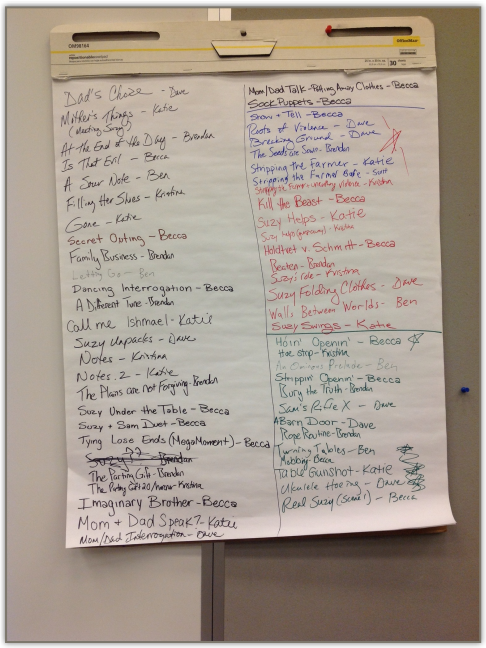
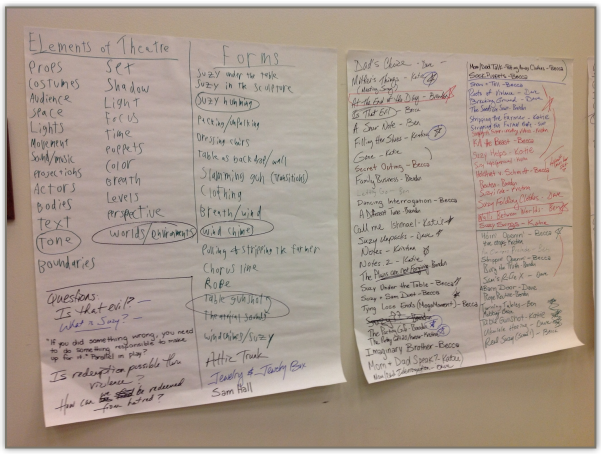



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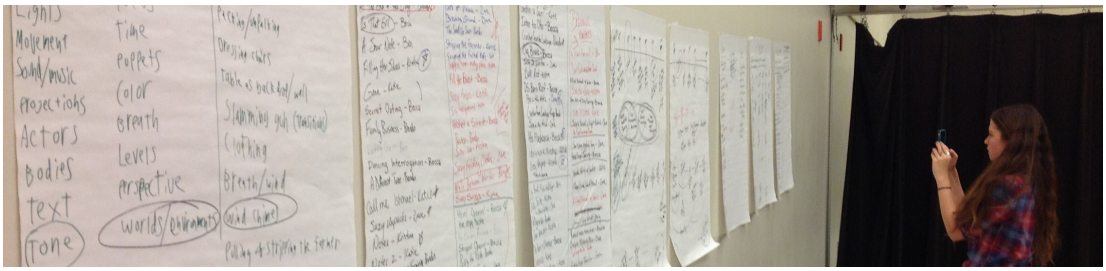




Figure 17. My Assistant Director, Kristina Moyer, takes a back-up picture of the latest additions to our devising work.

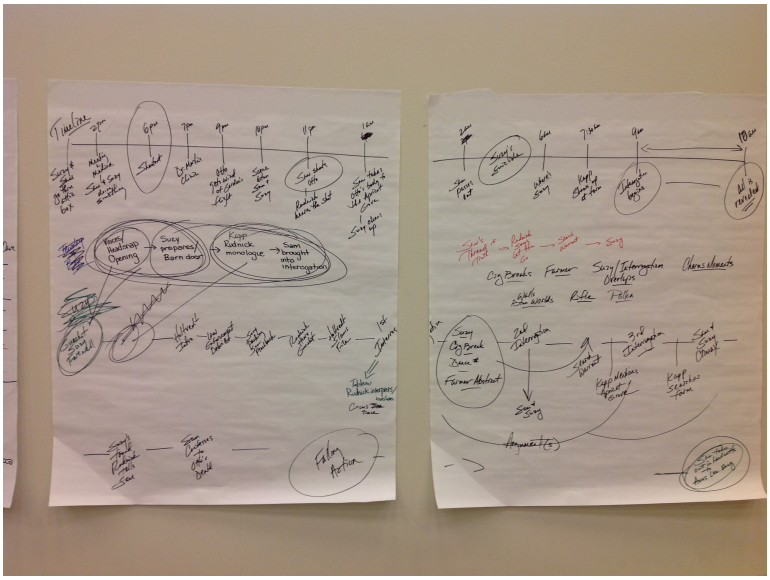



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Figure 25. The law enforcement characters debrief, with the Kahl Wanted Poster in the background, and Sam in the Interrogation Room.



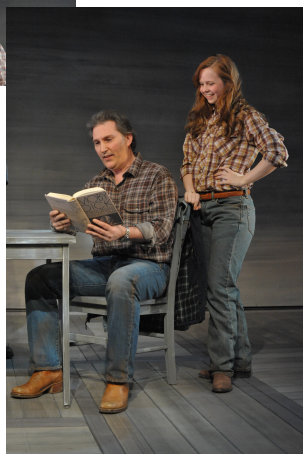
Figure 26. Sam in the Interrogation Room; the action of the play that happens in present tense.



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# Chapter 1: The Idea

In the early 1990's I came across a book entitled *Bitter Harvest* by James Corcoran. It is the story of Gordon Kahl's shootout with U.S. Marshalls in 1983 (see figure 3). I bought it on sight and read it immediately.

Kahl had been a war hero, a farmer, and a tax protester. He was a spokesman for a radical militant group called the Posse Comitatus, who believed the only legitimate government was local government. For a time he was a member of an ultra-conservative religious group called Christian Identity, however he had left the group in order to start his own church. He was considered a 'true believer' within the community of radical conservatives. He had been arrested and tried for tax evasion, and was released on parole. When his parole officer came to see him, Gordon had a simple message for him: set foot on my property again and I'll kill you. The parole officer told officials that when he looked into Gordon's eyes, he saw he meant it and he never attempted to visit Gordon again.

On the afternoon of February 12, 1983, U.S. Marshals and other local law enforcement set up a roadblock near Gordon's home, just north of Medina, North Dakota, in an attempt to arrest him for parole violation. Kahl resisted arrest, and a standoff ensued. Gunfire erupted, and two U.S. Marshals were killed. Kahl's son Yorie, who, based on all the evidence, probably fired the first shot, was severely wounded, but his father escaped. Four months later, after a nationwide manhunt,

Kahl was traced to a cabin in Arkansas, where he was shot and killed in another shootout.

North Dakota is not a violent state, in fact, it has the lowest crime rate in the United States. For most people, the Kahl shootout was a shock. Yet to many who knew him, it wasn't a surprise, they had known Gordon would be violent if confronted. After his death, Kahl was seen as either a true patriot or as a dim-witted lunatic. Corcoran's book, however, portrayed a much more complicated and richly contextualized story. It was a story that intrigued me.

In January of 2011, in a writing workshop with Dael Orlandersmith, we were asked a simple question; "What have you got for me?" The first idea I thought of was Gordon Kahl. As I began, at Dael's instruction, to write about Gordon, a theme emerged: I found I was writing about identity. More specifically, I was writing about identity *change*. I was discovering two different people, who inhabited the same body. One was Gordon Kahl as a child, the other was Gordon as an adult.

Dael had suggested a particular exercise: write a monologue from 5 year old Gordon's perspective. To do so, I drew on my father's childhood. My father told many stories of his childhood on a farm. Since the broad strokes of my father's and Gordon's childhoods were so similar, my father's stories provided detail I felt comfortable imagining for Gordon. I wrote a monologue entitled "Mom" (see Appendix A). In that monologue I discovered a child who was sensitive, gentle, and loving. Writing from an adult Gordon's perspective (see Appendix B), I found a cold,

hard, unyielding man. What had happened to Gordon between childhood and adulthood that transformed him from innocent child to loaded gun?

This question became the catalyst for the creation of *Sacred Soil* (see Appendix C), but the path to a fully written play was circuitous. I had to remove Gordon Kahl as the central character of the play, and instead make him the instigator of the play's story. Rather than write about Gordon Kahl's actions, I determined to write about the *consequences* of his actions. In Sophocles' tragedy, Oedipus plays a defining role in his own demise, but his destiny was set in motion by his father. Similarly, the son in Sacred Soil is sent down a path paved by others.

In writing *Sacred Soil*, the earlier question of identity change had to be accompanied with the question of man's fate. Oedipus presents us with fate as unknowable and inescapable. But we, as the audience, are forever left wondering what might have happened if Laius hadn't left Oedipus on that hillside to die. That question is unanswerable, but we continue to ask it because it is human nature to ask "why am I here" and "where am I going.". Just as the Greeks looked at their tragedies, we must look at ours, and wonder, like them, if things could have turned out differently. In so doing, we might find some authority over our daily lives, and acceptance of our fate.

## Chapter 2: Research and Influences

James Corcoran's book *Bitter Harvest* was not only the initial inspiration for *Sacred Soil*, it was also a major research source. I also relied quite heavily on the following titles: *Dakota: A Spiritual Geography* by Kathleen Norris; *Violence: Reflections on a National Epidemic* by James Gilligan; *The Killing of Crazy Horse* by Thomas Powers; and, *Clabbered Dirt, Sweet Grass* by Gary Paulsen. I was also greatly influenced by *Oedipus the King*, the tragic Greek play by Sophocles. In addition, I traveled to North Dakota, perused boxes of documents about the Gordon Kahl shootout at the North Dakota Historical Society, visited the shootout site, and researched my own family history to create a more personal context from which to write. There were many other research sources and influences (all of which are listed in the Bibliography), but for this chapter I will focus on those I've mentioned, and describe how they connected to each other and to the development of *Sacred Soil*.

Corcoran's *Bitter Harvest* painted a picture of Gordon Kahl the man, but it also depicted the social and political backdrop for his actions. Throughout the 1970s inflation had driven up the price of land, farm exports hit new records every year, and farmers were selling their crops at record prices. Consequently, second and third generation farmers suddenly found themselves, on paper at least, rich. "In fact, by 1980 North Dakota had the second-highest number of millionaires per capita in the United States" (Corcoran 8). The boom in agriculture was spurred on by agricultural policies that encouraged farmers to buy more land and new machinery. Banks offered

low interest loans, and generously provided farmers the capital for such expansion. However, just as the housing bubble burst in 2008, the farm bubble burst in 1981. Land values and crop prices plummeted, farmers could no longer make their loan payments, and banks began foreclosing in staggering numbers. The farm crisis hit the midwest nearly as hard as had the Dust Bowl of the 1930s, and it provided Gordon Kahl and others with their "god particle" - they had found the perfect justification for their conspiracy theories. Gordon and others believed that the government was on a mission to take away private ownership of farmland, in order to control the food supply, and therefore the people. They had to be stopped.

The farm crisis became an especially potent lens through which to view the narrative of *Sacred Soil*, and in my reading of *Oedipus the King* I discovered the connection to classical tragedy. At the beginning of Sophocles' play the city of Thebes is suffering from a plague. Medina, North Dakota, the location for *Sacred Soil*, was also suffering from a plague brought on by the farm crisis (see figure 4). Oedipus, having been told by the Chorus that the fields are barren, the livestock are dying, and the people starving, determines to fix the situation, and sets the play in motion. The farm crisis had the same effect on the midwest. Farmers who had been feeding the world could no longer feed themselves, and the suffering led to suicides and even murder. Like Oedipus, Gordon was determined to set things right, and his actions would set the story of *Sacred Soil* in motion.

While *Bitter Harvest* gave me a socio-economic lens for my play, and *Oedipus the King* provided a dramatic context, I needed additional details and perspective. I visited the North Dakota Historical Society, in Bismarck, ND, and there found an important theatrical detail. The Society had a copy of the wanted poster for Gordon Kahl (see figure 5), which was used in the play as a projection (see figure 25). This poster/projection symbolized the power government has over those who willfully oppose its policies, and it became a key element in the tone of *Sacred Soil*. I also found several different pamphlet versions of the Kahl story, mostly written by those who sympathized with Gordon. They each articulated the Zionist conspiracy theories. held by Gordon and others, in great detail, complete with historical background. In them I saw more clearly the belief systems held by Gordon and other true believers, as well as their paranoia. Through this research it became clear to me that Gordon, a voracious reader, had arrived at his fanatical beliefs after a long and steady diet of propaganda.

With the different perspectives from this research, I knew I needed one that was more personal. Creating characters that lived and breathed on stage would require a more visceral connection to my subject matter. Seeing as how mine and Gordon's family history were similar in heritage, geography, and lifestyle, I chose to look deeper into my own family history. I read first a booklet entitled *Unassuming People,* written by Roy C. Merkel, a cousin of my mother's. It was subtitled *A Schmitt-Merkel Family History,* and I chose to use the surname of Schmitt for the

fictional family in *Sacred Soil*. My mother's maiden name was Schmitt, and I had spent many childhood summers on my grandparents farm. The musical references in *Sacred Soil*, including the use of a ukulele and dancing to Lawrence Welk on the radio, were also inspired by details in this booklet. Second, I read a book by Urben Gratz, a very distant relative, entitled *We Did It the Hard Way*. Though I had spent some summers on a farm, Gratz' book gave me a distinct picture of what it was like to grow up on one.

Another book that connected me to life on a farm was *Clabbered Dirt, Sweet Grass* by Gary Paulsen. In the same way Gratz' book is shaped by the routine chores of farm life, Paulsen's book is shaped by nature, and the way nature defines farm work. This was an important source for defining the atmosphere for Sacred Soil. In addition, the Forward of Paulsen's book gave me the inspiration for the denouement of *Sacred Soil,* as well as the title. Towards the end of the play, the character of Sheriff Dan Rudnick speaks to the audience: "My dad used to always say, when you plant the seed of something you love in the ground, it makes the soil sacred. Sam made me promise him, that when spring came, he could bury his father in the apricot grove."

While in Bismarck, ND, I also visited the Veteran's Cemetery, where my father is buried. The Cemetery sits along a hillside on the Missouri River well outside of the city. It is surrounded by a quintessential North Dakota landscape (see figures 8 through 10). It was there, visiting my father's grave, that I began to devise

the play's father and son relationship, and redefine the role the landscape would play in that narrative. I had considered the landscape as a backdrop for the play's theatrical setting, but I now determined that it needed to play an active role in the story.

Upon finishing my research in Bismarck, I traveled to the setting of *Sacred Soil*, Medina, ND. I got a feel for the town, and then drove to the site where the shootout between Kahl and the US Marshals had taken place back in 1983. I took pictures of the site, and they also became an important part of the performance projections (see figure 6). In addition, while at the site of the shootout I decided to locate the fictional Schmitt family farm up the road from the site of the shootout (see figure 7).

"Tell me the landscape in which you live, and I will tell you who you are." This quote, by Jose Ortega y Gassett, is part of Kathleen Norris' acknowledgements at the beginning of her book, *Dakota: A Spiritual Geography*. This book provided me with an enormous amount of inspiration and guidance. Norris looks deeply into how the North Dakota landscape has shaped the values, attitudes, and psyche of its inhabitants. The Dakotas are a land of extremes, and these extremes create a tension (see figures 11 through 13). As Norris states on page 7, "I make no attempt in this book to resolve the tensions and contradictions I find in the Dakotas between hospitality and insularity, change and inertia, stability and instability, possibility and limitation, between hope and despair, between open hearts and closed minds." This

clear articulation of Norris' became my guide for creating the characters and tensions in *Sacred Soil*.

Norris can make no attempt to resolve these tensions, because any attempt to do so is futile. These tensions exist in the people of the Great Plains because they exist in the landscape of the Great Plains. I determined, therefore, that any attempt at resolution made by the characters in *Sacred Soil* must be just as futile. Terrence Kardong, a monk at an abbey in North Dakota, puts it quite succinctly when he says the Plains offer constant reminders that "we are quite powerless over circumstance" (Norris 9). This made it clear to me that the landscape was not just a backdrop, as I had begun to suspect at my father's gravesite, but a constant and powerful influence on the psyches of the *Sacred Soil* characters (see figure 19), much like the gods' influence on the characters of Greek tragedy.

Norris states, "The spirit of the land is not an abstraction in Western Dakota, but a real presence" (128). In talking about the landscape neither I, nor Norris, make a distinction between the geography and weather, or between scenery and experience. The landscape includes all the ways in which the land plays on our senses. It includes all the sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and feelings one can experience from a geographical locale. It is the full human experience of the natural world we live in, including a psychic connection to the energy, history, and evolution of the land, or, in other words, it's spirit. For the ancient Greeks, this spirit was personified in the gods, who are always present in daily life. In Classical Greek tragedy, trouble always

begins with humans defying the presence of the gods. Laius defies the gods by attempting to murder the infant Oedipus. Oedipus in turn defies the gods by being prideful: he believes so strongly in his power to end the plague that he ignores all pleas to cease his search for murderer of Laius, even when he himself becomes the main suspect. The main character of *Sacred Soil,* Sam Schmitt, also conspires in his own tragedy, believing resolutely that the tensions in his life can be resolved. The more evidence he is given to the contrary, the more stubborn and desperate he becomes. His stubborn desperation leads to the destruction of all that is dear to him. Both Oedipus and Sam refuse to accept that they are powerless over the circumstances around them.

According to Norris, this powerlessness over circumstance can create a tension between the outer, natural world and the inner world of the psyche. Our inability to control nature is often met with the desire to control other aspects of life. As Norris puts it on page 53, "More than ever, I've come to see conspiracy theories as the refuge of those who have lost their natural curiosity and ability to cope with change." This loss puts the psyche and an ever-changing world at odds. Change is resented on the Plains. “Change means failure; it is a contaminant brought in by outside elements,” says Norris (84). Unfortunately, in losing the ability to change, the capacity for hope is diminished and paranoia flourishes.

Norris also articulates the central role that religion plays in this disconnect between the world and the psyche, stating on page 95, "Fundamentalism is about

control more than grace." Fundamentalism serves a profound need for control through literal, concrete interpretations of God's laws and strict adherence to those laws. Fundamentalism transforms a God of love into what Norris calls a "Monster God," which is exactly what the Sam character talks about in *Sacred Soil*. In the scene where he and his sister Suzy are sitting on the roof of the barn, Sam looks out over the vast, rolling Dakota landscape and says to Suzy, "This is where I see the God that I believe in. Not dad's God, the Monster God, but a God that is made up of beauty and sadness." Gordon Kahl was a manifestation of this need for excessive control, and I created the fictional Otto Schmitt to be his mirror image.

The character of Sam plays a tragic role in *Sacred Soil* because, like Oedipus, his options were taken away long ago. "Trust is something abused children lack, and children raised with a Monster God have a hard time regaining it," says Norris (96). This lack of trust is a seed of violence planted in the psyche. In his book *Violence; Reflections on a National Epidemic*, James Gilligan begins with a story of violence from his own family history. He does so, "because this family story raises so many of the issues I will be discussing in this book... questions about justice and morality; shame and pride; victims and perpetrators" (5). He goes on to state, "I have come to see the necessity of bringing the discussion of violence into the interpretive arena of tragedy, in the realization that just as tragic drama is always violent, violence itself is always tragic" (6). When I read Gilligan, the various parts of my research and

influences began to connect. I knew from him that *Sacred Soil* needed to be a tragedy.

Gilligan takes pains to differentiate tragedy from pathos and morality. Pathos, he says, relates to acts over which we have no human agency or control. Natural disasters create victims who evoke our sympathy. With violence, however, there is both a victim, and a force of human agency known as the victimizer. As Gilligan puts it, "The whole story of violence includes, inescapably, the lives of the victimizers, and the moment we realize that, we are in the territory of tragedy" (7). With regards to morality, violence cannot be contained within questions of "right" versus "wrong" or "innocence" versus "guilt" because it is an attempt to "simplify human complexities into easy moral categories of 'good' and 'bad'" (Gilligan 8). Continuing on page 11, he states, "The first lesson that tragedy teaches (and that morality plays miss) is that *all violence is an attempt to achieve justice,* or what the violent person perceives as justice, for himself or for whomever it is on whose behalf he is being violent" (italics Gilligan's).

Early on, I questioned the categories of either dim-witted lunatic or heroic patriot that Kahl had been placed in after the shootout. I knew from my research that the truth was much more complex, and I created the fictional Otto Schmitt with that complexity in mind. In addition to that complexity, the seeds of violence had to be planted in the fictional Schmitt family history. I relied on James Gilligan in order to understand those seeds.

"Probably no American novel speaks more powerfully to the tragic flaw of violence in the American character than does Herman Melville's masterpiece, *Moby-Dick*," says Gilligan (page 15). For him *Moby-Dick* is a masterful depiction of our American obsession with retributive justice. Retribution is inextricably bound to the conviction that justice is restored when evil is punished, and that evil can be clearly identified by certain individuals. Ahab is certain in his belief that Moby-Dick is evil, and arrogant in his belief that only he can kill him and restore justice to the world. This provided the insight I needed to create a backstory for the fictional Schmitt family in *Sacred Soil*. Just as Ahab is obsessed with the great while whale, Otto Schmitt is obsessed with "Zionist" bankers, and the Sam character is obsessed with his dad, Otto. In one scene in the play the Suzy character pulls out a copy of *Moby-Dick*, reminding Sam that it was his favorite book growing up (see figure 29). Later, when they get into an argument about their dad, Suzy openly challenges Sam, saying, "You act like you're Captain Ahab and he's Moby Dick." Sam, of course, denies this, but Suzy speaks the truth. Sam believes his dad has committed a terrible crime against the family, and that it is his job to restore justice. My next step was to understand the crime.

Violence is "the ultimate means of communicating the absence of love by the person inflicting the violence" (Gilligan 47). In other words, the self cannot survive without love, so if it is denied love, the self (or soul) dies. With children, those who "fail to receive sufficient love from others fail to build those reserves of self-love, and

the capacity for self-love ... when self-love is sufficiently diminished, one feels shame" (Gilligan 47). In Gilligan's many years of field research, he has come to the conclusion that shame is the root cause of all violence. Violence is an attempt to kill shame.

Perpetrators of violence, know as victimizers, attempt to protect themselves from exposure by committing violence upon anyone who might expose their shame. This is the emotional logic underlying violence. Gilligan calls it "the logic of shame" and describes it as a kind of magical thinking. He states, "We all know that shame motivates the wish for concealment...the word itself comes from the Old Germanic roots meaning to clothe or cover oneself...Darwin pointed out that 'under a keen sense of shame there is a strong desire for concealment...An ashamed person can hardly endure to meet the gaze of those present...'" In an existing fragment of a lost play by the Classical Greek playwright, Euripides, a character voices an old proverb: "shame dwells in the eyes" (64). Gilligan also refers to folk beliefs about the "Evil Eye" and points to a famous folk song about a murderer who is to be hanged:

> "My name it is Sam Hall,
>
> And I hate you one and all,
>
> God damn your eyes!"

This song and the "evil eye" reference both appear in *Sacred Soil*. The Sam character says that his dad is "always giving us the evil eye," and later, when Suzy brings him his old ukulele, he sings "Sam Hall" for her (see Figures 33 and 34). The

meeting ground for violence is the place where eyes meet, because eye contact exposes shame.

It's significant that U.S. Marshal Robert Cheshire said over his radio, just prior to the shootout, "We're right down the barrel with these guys," (Corcoran 97). Cheshire and Gordon Kahl were pointing rifles at each other, less than 20 feet apart. If you look down the barrel of a rifle, you are looking down the sight-line and right into the shooter's eye. In *Sacred Soil*, the Sam character describes the standoff between himself and his father, Otto. Sam picks up his dad's rifle and points it at him, but; "he just looked at me, looked me right in the eye. And I knew. We both knew." In that moment, both Sam and Otto are caught in a mutual exposure: both are trapped in the logic of shame, with only one way out. Oedipus, upon discovering the truth in the presence of the Chorus, blinds himself by gouging out his own eyes, in order to hide his shame. In my play, the Sam character blinds his father, shooting him in the eye and killing him.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention the influence of Thomas Powers' masterful book, *The Killing of Crazy Horse*. Crazy Horse was a chief of the Lakota, one of the many tribes of the Sioux nation. His death found its way into *Sacred Soil* because it provided historical perspective for the events of the play. It became important to me that the *Sacred Soil* story communicated a history and pattern of violence in the Great Plains. When the tide of white Europeans flooded the Great Plains, and began pushing the Native Americans off the land, a pattern of violence

was created that has yet to be broken. The Native American wars ended at Wounded Knee, South Dakota, in 1888. However, the violence continues in the form of alcoholism, poverty, and disenfranchisement within the Native American communities. In taking possession of the land we often assume we have control of it. However, as Norris says, the land itself demands "that you give up any notion of dominance or control" (170). In the face of this tension between our arrogant assumption, and what Norris refers to as the "land's essential indifference to the human" (156), we are often driven to the point where "even ordinary experiences may be perceived mistakenly as shameful" (Gilligan 76). The character of Suzy makes an heroic attempt to view the world differently. She tries to see the harshness and emptiness of her life, and of the landscape, as inspiration for a simpler, more spiritual approach to life. In the end, however, like Oedipus' wife/mother, Jocasta, Suzy is caught in the web of family violence, and she too must play her tragic part.

# Chapter 3: Drafts and Sketches

There were two phases to creating *Sacred Soil*. The first was a solitary writing phase in which I wrote what would become the foundation for the second, which was a collaborative devising phase. In this chapter I'll deal with the writing phase, and in the next, I'll outline the devising phase.

I initially wrote in the form of sketches: putting ideas to paper in the form of monologues, short scenes, descriptions of stage action, and thought maps (see figure 14). The very first sketch I wrote was a monologue about the North Dakota landscape called, simply, "The Landscape" (see Appendix D). This monologue remained present, in one form or other, throughout the writing process. Other early sketches inspired ways of exploring themes of longing, home, hope, abandonment, and redemption. The sketches created a collage of ideas, from which I wrote various drafts. Through writing different drafts, I slowly began to establish specific plot, narrative, and dramatic structures.

In my first draft I imagined the main (and only) character as a wandering troubadour, a story-teller who travels from town to town telling the story of Gordon Kahl's shootout with U.S. Marshals. I introduced the ukulele as a prop (see figure 33), and the song "Sam Hall" as a story-telling device (see figure 34). However, the story-telling scenario proved to be more narrative than dramatic. My intention was to write a contemporary tragic play, that borrowed elements from Classic Greek tragedy,

and this approach was too presentational. It was an artistic dead end, so for my next draft I chose a different approach.

I drew on a sketch I had created and performed while participating in a Tectonic Theatre Project workshop taught by Moises Kaufman in New York. The sketch involved initial image of a mother, son, and a dominating, possibly violent father, sitting at a kitchen table. The image slowly transformed as the mother and father exited and two police detectives entered, taking up positions on either side of the son. The kitchen transformed into an interrogation room, and a mysterious tragic tone had been created.

Inspired by that sketch, for my second draft I established the main character of the son, Sam, and created two law enforcement characters. The main setting (see figure 26) became an interrogation room in the police headquarters of Medina, North Dakota. I established that the main action occurs on the morning after the Gordon Kahl shootout. The Gordon Kahl shootout took place at 5:45pm on Sunday, February 13 1983, and therefore, the action of my play would occur the morning of Monday, February 14, 1983. I created the fictional Schmitt family for this draft, though Sam was the only member of the family to appear as a character, and I put in place the plot points that connected Sam and Otto Schmitt (Sam's father) to Gordon Kahl.

For my second draft, I created Suzy Schmitt, Sam's sister, as a character in the play. I created scenes between her and Sam that took place in Sam's mind as he sat in the interrogation room. I expanded these scenes in succeeding drafts, but their

purpose was not fully established until later in the devising process. Similarly, with drafts four and five, I expanded the interrogation scenes, establishing clearer law enforcement characters, as well as conflict within law enforcement. These drafts established the Kahl shootout with U.S. Marshals as the play's opening. Through the devising process this beginning was tested, refined, and finalized as the opening moment (see figure 20).

By the time I got to *Sacred Soil: Draft 6.3** I had answered many of my creative questions regarding plot, narrative, and dramatic action. However, I didn't yet have a fully realized tragic play. There were inconsistencies in the flow of dialogue and action, as well as holes in the plot. The characters, though distinct, all sounded a bit too much like me. The interrogation room scenes took place in the present. However, it was unclear whether the scenes between Sam and Suzy were in past or present, and whether Suzy was visiting Sam as a ghost or as a figment of his imagination. I was ready to transition from solitary writing to collaborative devising, and approach these issues with the fresh perspective of my Creative Team.

*Each draft included the play's title and it's sequential draft number, in order to track the writing process. Some drafts had sub-drafts, and were designated with their draft number, and their sub-draft number. *Sacred Soil: Draft 6.3* was the third revision of sixth version of the play.

# Chapter 4: Devising

Normally, the main activity in the first rehearsal of a production is a read-through of the play. Heading into my first rehearsal of *Sacred Soil*, I had certain goals in mind. The first was to establish my actors and two Assistant Directors as a Creative Team, with myself (the Creator, Writer, and Director) as Team Leader. The second goal was to define for this Team the collaborative devising method that we would use.

We utilized Tectonic Theatre Project's method of devising, which I had recently learned from Greg Pierotti and Moises Kaufman. This method is built upon a creative activity called Moment Making. A "moment" (see Appendix E) is a short scene or improvisation created by one of the devising artists. Each moment is given a title and listed for future reference (see figures 15 and 16). As the process moves forward, certain moments begin to connect to others, organizing principles emerge, and over time, the play is molded into shape.

We created moments well into our second rehearsal. Then we decided to do a read-through of *Sacred Soil: Draft 6.3*. One major benefit of delaying the read-through was the creative freedom the Team enjoyed. A read-through could have created certain obligations towards the existing script that would have inhibited that freedom. Without such obligations, Team members felt free to create several moments featuring Otto Schmitt. Creating these moments allowed everyone on the Team a creative opportunity to deepen their connection to the play. These moments

all had a similar story: the farmer, driven to rage by the effects of the farm crisis, exchanges his scythe for a rifle. Creating these moments gave everyone a visceral, emotional, and sympathetic connection to the fictional Otto Schmitt. This connection might never have happened post-read-through, since Otto didn't appear as a character in the play.

Continuing with the devising process, the Team began to integrate dialogue from *Draft 6.3* into more and more moments. Often, bits of dialogue were used to generate improvisations, which were instrumental in distinguishing the character's voices. The character of Suzy became the voice of a depressed soul who is desperately seeking peace, in spite of the turmoil around her. Each law enforcement agent took on one of the collective responses to the Kahl shootout back in 1983: FBI Agent Holtvedt became the voice of Authority, Deputy Kapp (who'd lost his finger in the shootout) became the voice of Revenge, and Sheriff Rudnick was the voice of the Community. The character of Sheriff Rudnick was someone who had grown up on a farm outside Medina, and been a close friend of Sam Schmitt. He spoke for a community that was caught in the middle between loyalty and justice. Through the devising process, the law enforcement characters took on the role of a Chorus, as in Greek tragedy. They spoke directly to the audience, providing context, history, and perspective (see figures 21 thru 24).

As our list of moments grew (see figure 17), we discovered certain props and design elements and turned them into narrative devices. For example, we created a

moment in which Suzy brings out an old trunk of her mother's (see figure 27). From that moment, we created a scene in which Sam and Suzy draw family items out of the trunk. Each item is connected to a specific memory from when their mother was still alive (see figures 28, 29, and 30). This device provided us with a narrative and dramatic window into the Schmitt family history, thereby foreshadowing the tragic violence in the play. We also created the sound of wind chimes to identify shifts in time, and signal Suzy's entrances.

We then moved to the next step in this particular devising process, called Sequencing (see figure 18). Sequencing is based on the fundamental element of dramatic structure: cause and effect. As we explored different ways of sequencing moments, we discovered holes in the story that needed further exploration. It was my job each night after rehearsal to integrate the devising work into a working draft, expanding and refining the actions and dialogue. I wrote several drafts leading up to the performance draft, which I finished just prior to the start of technical rehearsals.

Throughout the devising process I collaborated with the Design team, continuing to revise and refine the design elements for *Sacred Soil*. The set design had been established much earlier, and was meant to serve seven different productions. Through the devising process we learned how to utilize the set to fully support the story of our play. Specific lighting elements were discussed, such as the time of day for the flashback scenes, a sunrise effect, and the balance of light with projections. Sound elements were specified, such as the voice overs for the opening,

the wind chimes, and specific music choices for the play. The costume design had been determined early on, but during devising it was refined and solidified. We added key props, such as the items in the old trunk which included a necklace, a copy of *Moby Dick*, and a "World's Greatest Dad" hat (see figures 28, 29, and 30).

I transitioned the Team to more traditional rehearsal roles, as the performance draft was being completed. All of the actors (including myself) began to focus specifically on individual character work. As Director, I met with my Design Team to finalize details regarding costumes, lights, sound, set, and projections. My Assistant Directors and I attended to staging questions, technical needs, and the needs of the actors. We now had a play, and we needed to prepare ourselves for an audience.

# Chapter 5: Performance

In retrospect, the writing and devising of *Sacred Soil* was the creation of a theory, that would be tested in the laboratory of performance. Inspired by Sophocles' *Oedipus the King,* my intention was to create a contemporary tragedy, wrapped in a mystery. The Team and I had done all we could to fulfill that intention, and all creative decisions had been made to the best of our ability. Now the time had come to test those assumptions.

Halfway through Jean Anouilh's *Antigone,* the Chorus states, "The spring is wound tight. It will uncoil of itself. That is what is so convenient in tragedy." Antigone was Oedipus' daughter, and her story is the story of the aftermath of the Oedipus tragedy. I co-opted this text of the Chorus' into a guiding principle for moving through the performance run. In my role as Director I frequently reminded the Team that we needed to keep "tightening the spring." I coached the actors to choose actions that increased tension between characters, and encouraged my Assistant Directors to take performance notes in order to improve audience response.

Each performance of *Sacred Soil* taught us how effectively we were telling our story. Based on audience responses we made adjustments between performances, which were intended to clarify the story for the audience. For example, at the end of our Invited Dress Rehearsal, I realized we had a false ending: the audience thought the play was over before it was over. After Sam and Suzy's final moment (see figure 39), Suzy exits. Sam then turns upstage, and the law enforcement officers enter to

officially arrest him (see figure 40). However, the audience thought the play was over, and began to applaud before the arrest could take place. Over the course of the next three performances, I adjusted the staging, which eliminated the confusion and allowed the play to finish as intended.

In order for the audience to experience the tragedy at the end of the *Sacred Soil*, they needed moments of laughter during the play. I was confident that we had created those moments, and was deeply gratified when I heard confirming laughter. However, humor was not always intentional. None of us anticipated audience laughter during Deputy Kapp's most dramatic moment, in which the character barges into the interrogation room and accuses Sam of lying (see figure 36). That moment was supposed to be shocking, but instead it was funny. Our adjustment was for the actor playing Deputy Kapp to take a slight pause to allow the laughter to die down, and then continue with the scene.

We made staging adjustments from performance to performance that addressed audience sight-lines, clarified character intentions, and intensified character relationships. In particular, we tightened the rhythm and pace for the second interrogation scene, in which Suzy's interactions with Sam overlap with the law enforcement interrogation (see figure 35). As a result, the audience was able to follow the action of the scene.

We also made subtle line shifts to heighten tension between characters. For example, during one performance the actress playing Agent Holtvedt addressed Sam

with the wrong question, asking, “You live in Medina, right?” The line as written asked Sam if he lived in Minneapolis. As Sam, I adjusted on the fly and replied, “No, I live in Minneapolis.” We later decided to adopt her line flub as a line change, with the intention of having Agent Holtvedt attempt to trip Sam up and fail.

Through the devising process we had solved two major questions regarding plot structure, but we weren’t sure if they would work in performance. The first question was how to structure the climax of the play. In *Oedipus the King* there is a moment in which Oedipus can turn back from his quest to solve the mystery of Laius’ murder. However, he chooses to press on, making the climactic moment of tragedy inevitable. This moment is Oedipus‘ point of no return: from that moment on there is no going back. Out of discoveries made during devising, I wrote a scene between Sam and Suzy that takes place on the roof of the Schmitt barn. This scene was meant to be our point of no return, and that proved to be the case. During performance the actress and I felt the audiences’ hearts break along with the characters’ (see figure 37). This point of no return paved the way for tragic climax in *Sacred Soil*.

The other issue was how to reveal that Suzy’s opening moments in the play were the closing moments of her life. In the opening, Suzy sits at a table with a jewelry box in front of her. She slowly opens the box, removes a necklace, and places it around her neck. She then rises from the table, walks across stage, and exits. Although her death occurred offstage, we needed the audience to connect these

beginning actions to her death. The Sam and Suzy scenes are flashbacks from the previous two days, creating two different timelines: a linear one for the interrogation room scenes, and a non-linear one for the Sam and Suzy scenes. We established the table as both the interrogation room table and the Schmitt kitchen table, and the place where Suzy exits as the entrance to the barn. In addition, the necklace she puts on in the beginning is established as her mother's wedding necklace (see figures 31 and 32). These parallel timelines proved quite effective in performance, allowing the audience to move back and forth in time with the play. The linear timeline told the story of law enforcement solving a mystery, while the non-linear timeline provided the audience with clues to the mystery. This created a convergence of events at the climax of the play. Suzy's suicide is briefly foreshadowed when law enforcement bring the necklace into the interrogation room and give it to Sam. When Sheriff Rudnick informs Sam that they found Suzy's body in the barn, the audience realizes that her beginning actions were her suicide note. This moment is quickly followed by Sam's confession of the murder of Otto, bringing all the clues and scenes into sharp focus.

This convergence, like the quick succession of events at the climax of *Oedipus the King*, is what creates the tragic effect. It also provided us with the most gratifying moment of the performance run. During one particular performance, we heard a loud gasp come from the audience after Sheriff Rudnick revealed the news about Suzy. In that moment, I knew that we had effectively built the mystery, and

achieved tragedy. The gasp was a spontaneous response to a surprising, and tragic event, and the sniffles and soft sobs we later heard in the audience told us that we had achieved catharsis.

I saw the parallels between *Sacred Soil* and *Oedipus the King* in the clearest light during the performance run. Just as *Oedipus* opens with a description of the Theban plague, the opening moments of *Sacred Soil* introduce a plague in Medina. One of Sheriff Rudnick's opening lines expressly states this parallel when he says, "violence is a kind of plague, and I'd been seeing it spread since the beginning of this here farm crisis." This direct address to the audience, which followed a direct address by Deputy Kapp, placed the law enforcement characters into the role of Greek Chorus. Shortly after, when Agent Holtvedt enters, she introduces herself to the audience and adds herself to the Chorus as well.

Just as in Greek tragedy, all the deaths in *Sacred Soil* occur offstage. They follow the same sequence as in *Oedipus the King*. Otto was killed prior to the start of the main action of *Sacred Soil*, just as Laius was killed prior to the beginning of *Oedipus*. We discover Otto's murder in flashback, just as we discover Laius' murder by uncovering the past. Suzy's suicide parallels that of Jocasta's in Oedipus, and both are revealed at the climactic moment of the play. Furthermore, the point of no return scenes occur just prior to the climactic moments in both *Oedipus* and *Sacred Soil*.

These parallels reflect the timeless nature of human tragedy, as well as the differences between the mythic world and our contemporary one. Sam's need to save

Suzy mirrors Oedipus' need to save Thebes. Sam's desire is personal, Oedipus' is public, however both are epic. Both journeys end in a tragic loss of self. Oedipus gouges out his eyes, imprisoning himself in darkness. Sam is arrested and imprisoned, losing sight of the landscape he loves. The plagues in both *Oedipus* and *Sacred Soil* are rooted in agriculture. The Chorus tells Oedipus that there is a blight on the fields around Thebes and that the people are starving. In *Sacred Soil* there is a blight on the agricultural industry, creating conditions of extreme poverty throughout the Midwest. Both plays draw parallels between family and society, and between personal action and social consequences.

This comparison made clear to me that the distance between the Classical world and our contemporary one is not that great. We have become shallow in our thinking, comforted by advances in civilization, and we imagine ourselves far removed from Oedipus' story. In *Violence*, James Gilligan quotes Elliot Currie: "We have the level of criminal violence we do because we have arranged our social and economic life in certain ways rather than others. The brutality and violence of American life are a signal...that there are profound social costs to maintaining those arrangements" (22). These arrangements persist because we create policies that address the symptoms of our social malaise, instead of the causes. As a culture we want simple answers and quick results. We've lost track of the most important lesson in Greek tragedy: in order to understand violence, we must dig deep down into ourselves, and uncover its roots.

# Chapter 6: the Future

Athletes have a saying; 'leave it all on the field.' In other words, devote one-hundred percent effort, one-hundred percent of the time, to the pursuit of winning the game. That way, win or lose, you can take pride in knowing you gave it your all. I grew up playing sports and I understand this saying from first-hand experience. The biggest thing I've learned from *Sacred Soil* is to look deep within myself, trust what I believe to be true, and follow my heart. For me, that's the theatrical equivalent of leaving it all on the field.

During this process, I learned the finer points of when to hold on and when to let go. For example, every week for several months I questioned whether or not to keep the ukulele and the song "Sam Hall" as part of the piece. I had determined early on to have these elements in the play, and felt compelled to honor that choice. In the end the ukulele and the song found their proper roles in *Sacred Soil*, and provided the necessary set up for the final moment between Sam and Suzy.

On the other hand, I discovered the true turning point of the play when I let go of a long held idea. I was determined that the climax of the play would be Sam's confession that he had killed his father. Although this idea was clear in my mind, it was never clear in the writing. During the devising process, the rest of the Team felt strongly that the struggle between Sam and Suzy had to reach its own climactic moment, in order to set up the tragic climax.

Text from "The Landscape" monologue kept finding its way into moments and drafts, but it always felt a bit forced. The rest of my Team loved the text, so I resisted cutting it. As the Team and I continued to discuss the sequencing, there came a moment of inspiration: Sam and Suzy needed a climactic scene sitting up on the barn roof. It needed to be a scene in which neither Sam nor Suzy could get what they both desperately wanted, which was a return to the relationship they had as children. The monologue became the heart of the scene on the barn roof, and the scene became the point of no return in the play.

Most importantly, I learned how to embrace a devising process, and surrender to the world and language of the characters. I learned that the creative process relies on creative problem solving: the process is really working when each problem solved creates another problem. I learned how to have faith in myself, trusting that the creative process would yield its rewards if I remained steadfast in curiosity and desire.

What is the future for *Sacred Soil*? First I'd like to develop the play further. Ushers handed out feedback forms to the audience as they entered the theatre, and encouraged each audience member to turn them in at the end of the play. These forms proved we had succeeded on many levels. However, some of the comments confirmed issues in the writing and staging that we hadn't had time to address. Eventually, I'd like to get *Sacred Soil* produced at a regional theatre, then tour it through the Midwest, using it to raise awareness around issues of violence.

Comments on the feedback forms expressed sadness, hope, and surprise. They expressed thematic ideas and feelings of isolation, tragedy, secrecy, and, as one audience member put it, "unbreakable love." Another wrote that the play "makes me think about my life and my relationships." Whatever future there may be for *Sacred Soil*, I take pride in knowing that it is a truthful representation of who I am, both as an artist and as a person. I'm also proud of the fact that my work served a higher purpose beyond simple entertain: it made people think about their lives.

In the final analysis, *Sacred Soil* is a work-in-progress that has proven its merit. I believe it deserves further development and future productions, and that is something I will pursue. I do not feel that I am finished with the piece, or that it is finished. However, I take great pride and comfort in knowing that, this time around, I left it all on the field.

# Appendices

## Appendix A. "Mom" monologue.

Mom trims my fingernails. I squirm but her hands are strong and used to keeping things still. Her hands have a toughness to them, they're cracked and soft. I like watching her hands when she's working the dough to make bread.

I'd rather be outside, but I like this time with my mom. It's quiet in the house, but it's a nice quiet. When Dad is in the house, sometimes it's not good when it gets quiet. Dad is teaching me to shoot his .22 rifle. He talks quietly when he's telling me how to sight down the barrel, how to let my breath out before squeezing the trigger. I like that time with my Dad – he's calm and gentle, he smiles at me.

Mom wants me to start learning to play the piano. I like listening to her play, especially when she plays hymns that we sign in church. After she trims my nails we'll turn around and face the piano – she'll play a bit and I'll watch her hands work the keys. Dad likes music, and he seems to like Mom's playing. I don't think he'll mind me learning to play, but he says come this spring I'll have more chores to do now that I'm getting older. And also, this spring he says he's gonna get me that 16 gauge so that I can start hunting pheasant and grouse with him.

I like watching my Mom's hands play piano. Her hands move in a way unlike any other thing she does. Sometimes I pretend I'm sitting at the piano and playing like she does, moving my hands the way hers move. Dad caught me doing that one time, when I was on the milking stool and was supposed to be milking. He smacked the back of my hands with the stick he uses to check the milk. "What'r you dreamin' - that milk ain't going in the pail by itself" he said.

## Appendix B. "Gordon" monologue.

We farmers have done no wrong; we're victims of a Jewish-led, communist-supported conspiracy that has infiltrated the U.S. government, the judicial system and law enforcement, and is bent on destroying the Christian Republic that was established by the Founding Fathers.

Benjamin Franklin, at the Constitutional Convention in 1787, warned against granting citizenship to Jews, because wherever they settle they create a state within the state and try to strangle the nation to death financially. This has happened exactly as predicted. The enemies of Christ have taken their Jewish Communist manifesto and incorporated it into the statutory laws of our country. They have thrown our Constitution and our Christian Common Law – which is nothing other than the laws of God as set forth in the Scriptures – into the garbage can. We are a conquered and occupied nation, conquered and occupied by the Jews and their hundreds, maybe thousands, of front organizations doing their un-Godly work. The Internal Revenue Service

does the work of the second plank of the Communist manifesto, which is to collect illegal income taxes. The Federal Reserve System places control of the country's money and credit into the hands of private bankers. Using these and other front organizations the conspirators are now erasing the last vestiges of individualism and independence – the farmer. By manipulating land values, grain prices and credit the conspirators push us farmers into bankruptcy and foreclosure, and rob us of our land. Once they control the land they control the food supply. When they control the food supply they control the people. Paying taxes means paying tithes to the Synagogue of Satan, and I will never help finance my own destruction, I will never give aid and comfort to the enemies of Christ.

There are people on welfare eating better than us farmers. Children are being taught sex before being taught their ABCs, and that they are descendants of apes, not Adam and Eve. The institutions of the Zionist Occupational Government are taking control of our own lives away from us. When I returned from WWII I realized something was drastically wrong in this country. My dad taught me that a man's race is his nation, and it's not God's law to mix races, but the secret societies of the conspirators want us to think that all men are created equal, that there isn't a distinction between good and evil. But their aim is the overthrow of Christianity and individual sovereignty; they are the disciples of Satan. I understand God's laws, but I do not understand Satan's laws. I'm not going to give up my religion or my sovereignty or my land. It is my right to defend my person and property as stated in the Constitution. Each day that another farmer loses his land to the bankers and the government, each day more children are brainwashed by the humanistic textbooks used in the public schools, the power of Satan's servants grows. The time has come to engage in a struggle to the death between the people of the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Satan.

My ancestors were unassuming people, God fearing and tidy. There motto was "work, save, build your own house" and with their faith and the Bible they overcame many hardships. They left their homeland in Germany and went to Russia because they had to pay unfair tithes to landlords, they had to fight in wars that had no meaning, and they needed their own land so that they could live as they believed was their God given right. In Russia they made a life, until that life started to be taken away, so they came here. My father homesteaded the farm I grew up on in 1905. I helped him haul rocks out of the field every year, did my chores every day, when he died he passed the farm on to me, and when I die the farm will go to my son. That is the way God intended it. My ancestors left Germany, my grandparents left Russia, but the time of leaving is over. Those 400 acres are mine and my family's and it's time to take a stand. I am a Christian patriot. I take no pleasure in the death or injury of any of the people I've shot, any more than I felt when I was forced to bring to an end the fighter pilots' lives who forced the issue during WWII. When you come under attack by anyone if becomes a matter of survival. I was forced to kill an American P-51 pilot one day over Burma, when he mistook us for Japs. I let him shoot first, but he missed and I didn't. I felt bad but I knew I had no choice.

I would have liked nothing other than to be left alone so I could enjoy life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, which our forefathers willed to us. This was not to be. When I discovered that our nation had been taken over by alien people, by the enemies of Christ, I realized that we were engaged in a struggle to the death between good and evil, just like the struggle long ago between Jacob and Esau. I do not know what will be next for me, but the fight has begun. Let each of you who says that the Lord Jesus Christ is your personal savior sell his gown and buy a sword, and bring his enemies before him and slay them.

## Appendix C. The final script of *Sacred Soil*.

*Sacred Soil*

written by
Dave Demke

devised by
Rebecca Ballinger, Dave Demke, Katie Moore, Kristina Moyer, Sarah Nowak, Brendan O'Connell, and Benjamin Walker

Elliot Currie –

"We have the level of criminal violence we do because we have arranged our social and economic life in certain ways rather than others. The brutality and violence of American life are a signal…that there are profound social costs to maintaining those arrangements."

*Setting*: Medina, North Dakota. The main action of the play takes place the Monday morning of February 14, 1983, in an interrogation room in the Medina police station. Other actions in the play take place in the Schmitt farmhouse, and around the Schmitt farm, on the Saturday and Sunday prior. The law enforcement address to the audience occurs in a theatrical reality and as a reflection of the events of the story.

The shootout between Gordon Kahl and law enforcement, just outside of Medina, is an actual event, which occurred between 5:40pm and 6:05pm on Sunday, February 13, 1983. Deputy Sheriff Bradley Kapp was part of the law enforcement road block, and he did lose the index finger of his right hand in the shootout. His actions and dialogue, however, are fictional. The radio transmissions heard are from the actual interactions between law enforcement just prior to and just after the shootout. They were re-recorded by actors.

By 11pm in the evening, after the shootout, U.S. Marshall's, FBI agents, North Dakota sheriffs, and North Dakota Bureau of Criminal Investigations agents were all involved in the ensuing investigation and search for Gordon Kahl. The following morning, Monday, February 14, the United States attorney for North Dakota announced at a press conference that the FBI would be in charge of the search and investigation.

All other characters and events are fictitious.

*Characters*: Sam Schmitt, 33

Suzy Schmitt. Sam's sister, 30

Foster County Sheriff Dan Rudnick, 32

Stutsman County Deputy Sheriff Bradley Kapp, mid 20s

FBI Agent Christine Holtvedt, out of Omaha, NE, mid 30s

*Preshow*

*As Audience enters: Images of the North Dakota landscape are projected onto the set. The Images change very slowly, dissolving slowly from one to another. Music plays under them. The set consists of a large back wall with a hidden door that covers the stage left half of the upstage space. Across the other half of the upstage space is another wall that consists of open cubby spaces of varying sizes, and has the quality of a sculpture. This Sculpture Unit is irregular in shape, and it's top can overlap with the SL Wall Unit while leaving a space for entrances from upstage center. In the open spaces live particular items, including an old radio, a chair, old farming buckets and tools, a living room lamp, etc. In one cubby sits various items of clothing and a couple small toiletry bags. The two wall units are moveable, they can slide side to side. At the top they are slide to either side, covering the whole of the upstage space, except for an irregular shaped opening UC.*

*A Table sits UCL. A chair is tucked under the Table, another chair sits in a bottom cubby space in the Sculpture Unit. Sitting in the center of the Table is a Jewelry Box which contains a Necklace.*

*Preshow lighting is focused on a Jewelry Box.*

*Moment 1: Voices Headsnap Opening*

*The music takes on an ominous and suspenseful tone. Images continue to play on the Wall and Sculpture Units.*

*Sam enters from audience left, carrying a Rifle. He stands facing upstage, watching the Images. He is followed one at a time by Agent Holtvedt, Deputy Sheriff Bradley Kapp, and Sheriff Dan Rudnick; all enter from various places, and stand facing upstage watching the images.*

*Suzy enters last, thru Wall Door, crosses to Table, and sits.*

*The Images shift to pictures of the Medina water tower and of the road where the Kahl Shootout occurred. The Images continue to draw us closer to the site of the Shootout, changing more and more quickly, as the following voices are heard - we are hearing radio transmission exchanges between the law enforcement officers during the road block.*

*Marshall Muir VO:*

Can we talk to these people at all?

*Marshall Cheshire VO:*

We're right down the barrel with these guys.

*Marshall Muir VO:*

What…what's with this guy? Who's the guy with the gun? What's he saying? I mean, is he saying anything? What's his problem? What's he saying?

*Marshall Cheshire VO:*

They're not saying anything, Ken.

*An Image of the Shootout site freezes. A Gunshot is heard and the ensemble snaps their heads around to look out over the audience. Suzy snaps her head up to face the audience.*

*Marshall Cheshire VO:*

I'm hit. Officers hit. Officers hit. Let's go guys. I'm hit bad.

*A Flurry of Gunshots are heard and the ensemble turns to face the audience.*

*Pause.*

*One Final Gunshot is heard, different from the others, more distant, and it echoes thru the space – simultaneously a new Image of the road appears, from the other direction and more distant from the Shootout site. Kapp, Rudnick, and Holtvedt look at Sam, Suzy stands and stares at Sam, Sam looks down in front of him.*

*Hotlvedt, Rudnick, and Kapp all exit. Sam turns to leave, shares a look with Suzy, then exits thru the Wall Door. Lights shift, the Images changes to that of a native North Dakota flower, the Sculpture Unit slides left to slightly overlap the Wall Unit and become the Barn Door, as we go into...*

*Moment 2: Suzy Prepares*

*Music - "The Corn Is My Pleasure" - plays. Suzy opens the Jewelry Box, pulls out the Necklace, and puts it on. She stands and crosses down towards the audience, then she turns and crosses up to the Barn Door. She opens it, steps thru the door, turns and looks up. She's looking up towards the hayloft in the barn. She closes the Barn Door as the music ends, and as she crosses off upstage we hear the sound of Wind Chimes. The Flower Image becomes a moving image as the flower slowly wilts, and the image disappears as we go into...*

*Moment 3: Kapp/Rudnick Intro*

*Kapp enters and crosses downstage to address the audience. An Image of the U.S Marshall's Wanted Poster for Gordon Kahl is projected on the Wall Unit.*

*Kapp (to audience):* Deputy Sheriff Bradley Kapp, of Stutsman County. The whole thing started when I spotted Gordon Kahl's car parked outside Doc Martin's clinic in Medina *(he pronounces it Muh-dye-nuh).* I had called the US Marshal's service to see if there was still a warrant out for his arrest.

*Sheriff Rudnick enters from the opposite side and crosses to the audience. As he speaks Kapp takes the Chair out of the cubby in the Sculpture Unit and moves it to the Table, placing it on the SR side. Then he moves the other Chair to the SL side of the Table.*

*Rudnick (to audience):* Sheriff Dan Rudnick of Foster County. Everybody had said, leave Gordon alone, said he wouldn't go without a fight. Gordon was a helluva nice guy, but when you looked in his eyes, you could see the fire inside.

*Kapp:* The US Marshals had converged on Medina, and we'd set up a roadblock just north of town. We'd called for backup but…

*Rudnick:* By the time I got there it was too late…

*Kapp picks up Jewelry Box.*

*Rudnick:* Marshals Cheshire and Muir had been taken away and pronounced dead...

*Marshall Wigglesworth VO:*

Five-two-oh-six is DOA. Five-two-oh-oh is DOA.

*Rudnick*: ...Marshal Hopson was in critical condition...

*Marshall Wigglesworth VO:*

Five-two-oh-seven is badly injured.

*Rudnick*: ... and Deputy Kapp here was at Doc Martin's clinic.

*Kapp:* Those motherfuckers had blown off my finger.

*Kapp shuts the Jewelry box and exits with it.*

*Rudnick:* Gordon Kahl had got away. *(Rudnick crosses towards the Table, as the Image disappears.)* The thing is, violence is like a plague, and I'd been seeing it spread since the beginning of this here farm crisis. Our focus that day was on finding Gordon Kahl. We had no idea...well, that's the thing about a plague, you're never sure who it's gonna infect.

*Lights shift into Interrogation Room. Rudnick crosses to the Table as...*

*Moment 4: Sam Is Brought In*

*... Kapp pushes Sam thru Wall Door into Interrogation Room.*

*Sam:* Jesus, Brad, what're you pushing me for? What's up with you?!

*Rudnick*: Come on now Sam.

*Sam:* Well what the hell, Dan, I'm coming in here voluntarily! Tell Bradley here to stop being a dick!

*Kapp:* Sam, if you don't start showin' me some respect/

*Rudnick:* All right, let's calm down here/

*Sam:* /yeah, just calm down there Bradley/

*Rudnick:* /all right, all right, you two just back it up a bit!

*Kapp backs off.*

*Rudnick:* Sorry about that Sam, we're all a bit on edge today. How've you been Sam? Some weather we're having huh?

*Sam*: Yeah.

*Rudnick*: Why don't you have a seat there.

*Sam:* What're you doing down here, Dan, you're up in Foster County?

*Rudnick:* Well, Sam, I 'spect you've heard the news. We're looking for Gordon, and I got called down here to help out. He's been designated as armed and dangerous, so practically anybody with a badge is workin' on this.

*Sam:* Well I don't know how I can help you. Bradley *(he stops himself)*, Deputy Kapp here, said you wanted to talk to me, but I don't really know anything other than what I've heard on the news.

*Rudnick:* Well Sam, actually it's Otto we want to talk to.

*Sam:* My dad. *Pause*. Well, I haven't seen him since last night. So... now what?

*Rudnick:* Well, Sam, there's an FBI agent up from Omaha that's gonna wanna talk to you, so, why don't you just relax for a minute.

*Sam:* FBI? What the hell's going on here?

*Rudnick:* Gordon Kahl made the FBI's Most Wanted List, Sam, that's what's going on here.

*He goes to exit. Turns back to Sam.*

*Rudnick:* Sam, your dad's retired, it's not duck, or deer hunting season, I was just at the Donut Hole, he wasn't there…

...I can't figure where your dad would be at 7am on a Monday morning in February.

*Sam:* I don't know, he's probably in the machine shed tinkering with something, or tending to the chickens in the coop. I don't know…

*Rudnick:* But you told Brad here he wasn't home, and being somewhere on the farm, and not being home, are two different things.

*Pause.*

*Rudnick:* Well, just sit tight for a minute, Sam. We'll be right back.

*He exits thru the Wall Door.*

*Kapp:* Don't waste our time here Sam.

*Sam:* Don't be a douchebag here, Bradley.

*Kapp:* It's Deputy Kapp, dammit!

*Kapp exits out the Door. Sam lowers his head onto the Table. Lights shift out of Interrogation Room. A sound of wind is heard. The Wall and Sculpture Units slide center so that they overlap, and an Image of the FBI's Wanted Poster for Kahl appears as we go into ...*

*Moment 5: Holtvedt Intro*

*Hotlvedt enters and addresses the audience.*

*Holtvedt:* FBI Agent Christine Holtvedt. I was called up from Omaha, Nebraska, ordered to Medina *(she pronounces it Meh-dee-nuh)* to join in the manhunt for Gordon Kahl, specifically tasked with gathering information from the local population. Kahl had been a tiny blip on our radar since his association with the Posse Comitatus, his arrest for tax evasion, and his violation of parole. Now he had murdered two US Marshals, and we needed to find him.

*Rudnick and Kapp enter, lights shift and the Image disappears, as we go into ...*

*Moment 6: Law Enforcement Debrief*

*Rudnick carries a 2 Cups of Coffee. Kapp carries a File and a Cup of Coffee. They cross to meet Holtvedt.*

*Rudnick:* Agent Holtvedt *(handing her the coffee),* Sheriff Dan Rudnick, Foster County *(he shakes her hand)*, welcome to North Dakota. How're things in Nebraska?

*Holtvedt:* What have you got for me Sheriff?

*Rudnick:* This here is Deputy Sheriff Bradley Kapp, of Stutsman County, he was part of the roadblock that led to the shootout yesterday. He's the one brought Otto's son in for questioning.

*Kapp: (handing her the file)* Welcome to Medina, Agent Holtvedt *(he Medina his way).*

*Holtvedt:* I thought it was pronounced Meh-dee-nuh.

*Rudnick:* Well, back in the 40s or somethin' the town did vote to make Meh-dee-nuh the official pronunciation, but, everybody still says Muh-dye-nuh.

*Holtvedt stares at the two of them.*

*Rudnick:* Change comes slow in the Plains. Deputy Kapp here went up to the Schmitt farm to get Otto, but uh, well you want to explain it there Brad?

*Kapp:* I knocked on the door and Sam answered.

*Rudnick:* Sam is Otto's son, lives in Minneapolis, comes home weekends every once in a while.

*Kapp:* He said Otto wasn't home so I figured better Sam than nothing.

*Holtvedt:* Say's here there's a daughter still living at home.

*Rudnick:* Yeah, Sam's sister Suzy; Bradley here used to have a crush on her.

*Kapp:* We were in high school.

*Rudnick*: I've known Sam and Suzy practically their whole lives. We grew up together on neighboring farms.

*Holtvedt:* Touching. What happened to your hand, Deputy?

*Kapp:* They shot my fucking finger off.

*Holtvedt:* Sorry 'bout that. Where's the mother?

*Rudnick*: Well, she passed away a number of years ago. Cancer. It was pretty rough. Not long after is when Gordon and Ott started their own church so to speak. They spent a lot of time working out their view of the world, including maybe plans for what to do if their so called holy war erupted…. Thing is, Otto and Gordon are cut from the same cloth.

*Holtvedt:* Well, since Sam's all we got right now let's go talk to him.

*They start to exit.*

*Rudnick:* There's somethin' else... Might not mean anything, but it's a bit odd.

*Holtvedt:* What's that Sheriff?

*Rudnick:* Well, Suzy works at the Donut Hole, and as far as I know she works every morning, Monday thru Saturday, isn't that right Bradley?

*Kapp:* Dan!

*Rudnick:* Deputy Kapp, here, is still a bit sweet on Suzy.

*Holtvedt:* What's your point here Sheriff?

*Rudnick:* Well, I stopped in at the Donut Hole this morning, and she wasn't working. They said she hadn't come in today.

*They exit. An Image of a North Dakota farm is projected as Lights change. The Wall and Sculpture Units open as we move into...*

*Moment 7: Suzy Packing Flashback*

*... the Schmitt family kitchen. Suzy enters from UC, between the Wall and Sculpture Units, with a Suitcase. During the scene she removes items from a cubby in the Sculpture Unit and packs them into the Suitcase.*

*Sam:* Suzy you can't do this, you can't go off with him.

*Suzy*: I have to. He needs me.

*Sam*: No he doesn't! Not to get himself killed with Gordon Kahl.

Suzy: You don't understand.

Sam: You'll be a fugitive, Suzy, do you have any idea what that will be like?! If he wants to make that choice let him, it doesn't have to be yours.

*Suzy:* Sam, please, he's our father.

*Sam:* He stopped being our father a long time ago.

*Suzy:* That's not true, it's not, he did his best.

*Sam:* He did his best at making us feel like shit, and for that he doesn't deserve any special treatment.

*Suzy:* He's struggling with his own demons like we all are, trying to make sense of a world he doesn't understand.

*Sam:* So that gives him the right to drag his only daughter into his lunacy?

*Suzy:* No, it doesn't give him that right, but I refuse to punish him for sins neither you nor I fully understand.

*Sam:* I'm not asking you to hurt him, but he's sealing your fate.

*Suzy:* My fate is in God's hands, Sam, not his, not anybody's.

*Sam:* Yes, but you can make choices. You can choose to get in the car with me and head for Minneapolis – find out what fate has in store for you there.

*Suzy:* We've been thru this, I can't do that, I just, it's not who I am.

*Sam:* I know what you said up on the barn roof, but think about it, do you want to end up in prison, in a hospital, or even dead? I couldn't bear it if something terrible happened to you.

*Suzy:* Sam, please try to understand/

*Sam:* /I can't, Suzy, I can't understand it. Our father is sick in his mind, if he wants to join in some kind of holy war let him. You do not need to get in that pickup with him.

Suzy: Yes I do!

Sam: Why?!

Suzy: Because he needs me!

*Pause*.

*Sam:* Fine. Okay. If I can't change your mind, I'll change his. When he comes back in here I'll tell him he's gotta go it alone. I'm taking you with me.

*Suzy:* Sam, please, don't do that, don't confront him like that.

*Sam:* Why not?

*Suzy:* You know how he is.

*Sam:* What's he gonna do, shoot me?

*Suzy:* Sam, please, it could get really ugly.

*Sam:* Suzy if we stand together he'll back down.

*Suzy:* No, Sam, not this time, I don't think he'll back down this time.

*Sam:* He'll have to, he won't have a choice.

*Suzy*: No, no, it won't work, I can't let you do it.

*Sam*: You don't have to say anything, just stand behind me and keep quiet.

*Suzy*: No, I can't, I can't do that.

*Sam*: Yes you can, you can. You don't have to make a choice, he'll make it for you. He may be a bastard, but he wouldn't want to see you get hurt. And I can convince him that he needs to leave you out of it.

*Suzy*: No, Sam, no, I won't go along with this, no matter what you say he needs me!

*Sam*: He isn't helpless.

*Suzy*: I won't abandon him!

*Sam*: Why not?! He abandoned us!

*Suzy*: No Sam! You abandoned us!

*Suzy exits with Suitcase out the Wall Door, and the Sculpture Unit closes in. Lights shift. The Image of the abandoned vehicles, post shootout, is projected on the Sculpture Unit as we go into ...*

*Moment 8: Rudnick Hears Gunshot*

*Rudnick enters and addresses the audience, as the Image dissolves.*

*Rudnick:* The night of the shootout, I was the last one to leave the crime scene. It was so dark and quiet, the gunshot…

*A distant Gunshot sound is heard.*

…seemed to have come from the landscape itself.

*Sam sits and puts his head down.*

The funny thing is, when I heard the shot I had immediately looked up the road towards the Schmitt farm. It was so quick, though, and the echo of the shot so all around me, that I never remembered that...

... not until the moment we found Suzy.

*Lights shift to Interrogation Room, and Rudnick crosses to the Table as we go into ...*

*Moment 9: 1st Interrogation*

*Holtvedt enters thru Wall Door with File, followed by Kapp. Sam is sitting with his head down as Holtvedt slams her File onto the table.*

*Holtvedt:* Good morning, Mr. Schmitt. Agent Holtvedt, FBI. You seem pretty tired, you have a late night?

*Sam:* I'm fine.

*Holtvedt:* Mr. Schmitt, I understand your father was a good friend of Gordon Kahl's.

*Sam:* Well…yeah, he had a lot of friends, so did Gordon.

*Rudnick:* That's true Sam, but everybody's used to seeing them together like they were joined at the hip. Now, your dad's not in any trouble. We know he wasn't part of the shootout. But we're pretty sure he can give us a clue to Gordon's whereabouts.

*Sam:* I don't know where he is.

*Holtvedt:* Any idea where he might be?

*Sam:* No. He was gone when I got up this morning.

*Holtvedt:* You live in Minneapolis, right?

*Sam*: Yeah. So?

*Holtvedt:* Any particular reason you came home this weekend?

*Sam*: No, no particular reason, I just had a long weekend is all.

*Holtvedt:* Did you hear any kind of ruckus this morning?

*Sam:* No.

*Rudnick:* What time did you get up?

*Sam:* When I heard Brad/*(stopping himself)* Deputy Kapp here, pounding on the door, that was what, seven or so?

*Kapp:* Seven oh five.

*Holtvedt:* Did you hear the shootout yesterday? I understand your farm is just up the road from where it took place.

*Sam:* It sounded like opening day of deer hunting season.

*Holtvedt:* Did you know what was going on? Could you see anything?

*Sam:* No, we're about a mile up the road, plus there's a shelterbelt that blocks our view south.

*Holtvedt:* How did your dad react to it?

*Sam:* Well, we didn't know what to think at first. But when we started hearing the news, he was, shocked, we all were.

*Holtvedt:* What time did he go to bed.

*Sam:* After the 10 o'clock news.

*Holtvedt:* And you didn't notice any suspicious behavior in your dad last night, no suspicious activity outside?

*Sam:* No. Nothing.

*Holtvedt:* How did your sister react to the news?

*Sam:* My sister? She was upset, we all were, it was tragic news.

*Pause.*

*Holtvedt:* Can you describe your relationship to your father?

*Sam:* Can I … What is this?

*Holtvedt:* Well everyone has a relationship with their father, how would you describe yours?

*Sam:* What's going on here, Dan? What is this?

*Holtvedt:* I'm sorry, Sam, I don't mean to offend you.

*Sam:* You're not offending me, I just want to know what's going on here.

*Rudnick:* Sam we're just trying to locate you father.

*Sam:* Well I don't know where he is!

*Rudnick:* We're not accusing you of anything. Isn't that right Agent Holtvedt?

*Holtvedt:* Do you share his beliefs?

*Sam:* So that's it. If I share his beliefs I might be inclined to not help you.

*Holtvedt:* Well you seem to be avoiding my question regarding your relationship with him.

*Sam:* You're wondering where my sympathies lie, is that right?

*Holtvedt*: Why don't you just answer the question?

*Sam*: Because it's a bullshit question. My beliefs and my relationship to my father are my business.

*Kapp*: Not today, Sam, god damn it, not today! People have died and I got my fucking finger shot off, so if you don't want to cooperate I'll throw your ass in jail for interference!

*Rudnick*: All right Deputy all right, just back off. Sam, Brad here's right, if you don't cooperate you're kinda forcing our hand. So, how 'bout it – how 'bout just, giving us a little something to work with here.

*Pause*.

*Sam*: My father's beliefs are a kind of lunacy. He and Gordon are true believers. I am neither a fanatic nor a lunatic.

*Holtvedt*: So you have no idea where your father might be.

*Sam*: He could be a lot of places.

*Pause*.

*Holtvedt*: I appreciate your talking to us.

*Sam*: Can I go now?

*Holtvedt*: We need you to stay here for the time being.

*Sam*: Here? Wait, what do you mean?

*Holtvedt*: Just sit tight, Mr. Schmitt.

*Sam*: You can't hold me here, I haven't done anything?

*Holtvedt*: Today, Mr. Schmitt, today, we can.

*She exits, followed by Kapp.*

*Sam*: Dan, Dan, what the hell's going on, help me out here.

*Rudnick*: I'm sorry Sam. This is outta my hands.

*He exits.*

*Suzy's Flower Image appears, lights shift, and the Sculpture Unit shifts as we go into...*

*Moment 10: Mom's Trunk*

*The Schmitt kitchen. Sam crosses and calls offstage, as if he's calling down cellar steps, for Suzy.*

*Sam:* Suzy, what are you doing down there? I thought you were going to help me wash the dishes?

*Suzy enters carrying a large Trunk.*

*Sam:* Why are you dragging that old trunk up from the cellar?

*Suzy:* You know whose this is don't you?

*Sam:* Of course I do. That was mom's. What are you doing with it?

*She sets the Trunk down.*

*Suzy:* I don't know, thought maybe I'd get started on my spring cleaning.

*Sam:* It's February.

*Suzy:* Come Sam, let's see what's in here. It'll be fun.

*Sam:* No Suzy, come on, let's get these dishes cleaned up before dad gets back.

*Suzy:* No, come on, Sam, *(she gently harasses him)* come on come on come on come on come on/

*Sam:* /Suzy what's with you this weekend, you seem really/

*Suzy:* /Please Sam, for me, please please please – just humor me okay!

*Sam:* Okay, okay!

*They open the Trunk.*

*Suzy:* This hasn't been opened since before she died.

*Sam:* Yeah?

Suzy: Oh my god, look here, *(she pulls a loop of yarn out of the Trunk)*. Do you know what this is?

*Sam:* It's a piece of yarn.

*Suzy:* It's my Cat's Cradle Yarn. Do you remember how to do it? *(She crosses in front of the Trunk and sits on the floor.)*

*Sam:* Why would she have saved this? *(He joins her, and they begin to go thru different Cat's Cradle passes.)*

*Suzy:* It was meaningful to her. Playing Cat's Cradle was one of the little things she did with me in between doing her chores. Mom liked making the in-between time special.

*Sam:* The what?

*Suzy:* The in-between time. She taught me that you have to enjoy the snatches of time in between all the chores that need doing. If you don't, you'll drown.

*They do one final pass with Cat's Cradle, in which the yarn gets wrapped around Sam's wrist and…*

*Suzy:* I got you.

*… then Suzy does another pass and the yarn falls away from his wrist and…*

*Suzy:* You're free.

*She puts the yarn around her neck.*

*Suzy:* Sam, do you ever think about moving back home?

*Sam:* Back home? Well, I, I don't know, I don't really think…

*She moves back to the trunk.*

*Suzy:* It's fine, Sam, you don't need to answer that….

*She rummages thru the Trunk, finding and pulling out the Jewelry Box. She lifts out a Necklace - a gold chain with a simple gold cross.*

*Sam*: *(reverently)* Oh my God... Do you know what that is? *(He gently takes the Necklace from her and holds it up.)* That's the necklace mom wore on her wedding day. She used to wear it every now and again, when we were little. She stopped wearing it after...

*Pause*.

*Sam*: You should keep it. I think mom would have wanted you to have it. *(He puts the Necklace back in the Jewelry Box, and closes Suzy's hands around the Box.)*

*Suzy*: Why didn't she ever wear it again?

*Sam*: I think you know the answer to that.

*She puts the Jewelry Box on the Table, and goes back to rummaging in the Trunk.*

*Sam*: Well I guess we'd better get to these dishes.

*Suzy*: Oh my god... look at this!

*She pulls out a woman's scarf.*

*Suzy:* Polka nights, remember? Wait! It's Saturday night! *(She runs to the Sculpture Unit and turns on the Radio. She tunes it to the Lawrence Welk show. We hear the announcer introduce the show, and polka music plays from the Radio.)*

*Suzy continues thru that...* Saturday nights, remember? They would turn on Lawrence Welk, dad would push the table and chairs to the wall, mom would make us cinnamon toast/

*Sam*: /and we'd sit in the doorway, eating our toast, and watch them polka around the kitchen.

*Suzy*: And mom would always say...

*Sam*: ... "I have to put my champagne scarf on for Mr. Welk."

*He puts the scarf around Suzy's neck, and they begin to polka. After a bit of dancing, Sam twirls Suzy away, crosses to the radio and turns it off.*

*Suzy: (knowingly)* What's the matter Sam?

*Sam*: I'm sorry. I just can't... I can't... These memories of our childhood are like sour milk.

*Suzy*: Sam, why can't you just.../

*Sam*: /why can't I just what? Forget? Forget why they stopped dancing? Forget why she never wore that necklace again?

*Suzy*: Yes, Sam, for the love of God, it was a long time ago.

*Sam*: Your damn right it was a long time ago, and he made us pay for a long time after.

*Suzy*: He was hurt, Sam, he felt betrayed.

*Sam*: How 'bout the fact that he was ready to betray us! If she hadn't paid those back taxes he would have lost the farm. How do you suppose he was gonna support us without being able to farm?

*Suzy*: Sam, dad is far from perfect.

Sam: Well he sure was perfect with his word. He vowed never to speak to her again, and by God he didn't. We spend our childhood being their go-between. They would sit at the dinner table, two feet away from each other, and talk thru us, remember?

*Suzy*: Sam, he didn't know how to talk to her, he didn't know how to get past his own shame.

*Sam*: He certainly knew how to be silent. It wasn't cancer that took our mother away from us, it was his silence that killed her.

*Suzy*: Sam...

*Sam*: Even at the end, even in her final hours, he kept his vow. He sat at her bedside, holding her hand, stroking her hair; and when she died he wept like a baby...

...but he never said a single word to her.

*Pause*.

*Suzy*: Sam, dad is like the plains. It's not like he was born here, more like he grew out of the soil, like the prairie grass, tough and hardy, or like one of the Apricot trees. He's is a man of extremes and contradictions, he swings between being open hearted and close minded. He's had to wrestle with this land his whole life in order to get whatever blessings it might bestow. And just like the plains, he is a constant reminder that we're quite powerless over circumstance.

You may have given up on him, Sam, but I'm not going to give up on either of you. I can't.

*She exits with the Jewelry Box. Sam crosses back to Table, and Suzy's Flower Image dissolves. Lights shift. The Wall and Sculpture units close and overlap, as Holtvedt enters and we go into ...*

*Moment 11: Cig Break – Send Kapp Back Out*

*She removes a Cigarette from a Cigarette Case, and lights it with her Lighter. Rudnick enters and crosses to her.*

*Rudnick*: Mind if I join you?

*Holtvedt*: No.

*Rudnick gets a Cigarette out of his Pack and lights it with his Zippo*.

*Rudnick*: You grow up in Nebraska?

*Holtvedt*: Yeah.

*Rudnick*: On a farm?

*Holtvedt*: No. *Pause*. My grandparents farmed.

*Rudnick*: Any siblings?

*Holtvedt*: Two older brothers.

*Pause*.

*Rudnick*: You have a first name?

*Holtvedt*: Let's just leave it at Agent Holtvedt.

*Rudnick*: What is it?

*Holtvedt*: It's Agent.

*Pause.*

*Rudnick*: So what're you thinkin' here Agent?

*Holtvedt*: I'm thinking something's not right with the Schmitt family.

*Rudnick*: Well, now, I don't know about that/

*Holtvedt*: /Didn't you say the sister, Suzy, wasn't at work this morning?

*Rudnick*: Yeah.

*Holtvedt*: And she wasn't at home this morning, right?

*Rudnick*: Not according to Deputy Kapp.

*Holtvedt*: What about according to Sam?

*Rudnick*: My hunch is that Sam thinks she's at work. Fact, I'd bet the farm on it.

*Kapp enters. He carries three Cups of Coffee.*

*Rudnick:* Sorry Brad, I didn't think it might be hard to carry that what with your finger and all.

*Kapp*: I've got nine fingers left. I'll be fine.

*He gives one cup to Rudnick, one to Holtvedt, and keeps the other for himself.*

*Holtvedt*: Deputy Kapp we need you to check around town, check all the neighboring farms, and make another stop up at the Schmitt farm. See if Otto is somewhere in the area, or if there's anyone who's seen him in the past few hours.

*Kapp*: Begging no disrespect, Agent Holtvedt, but I need to be in that room getting some answers god damn it. I was the one out on that road yesterday, I almost got killed!

*Rudnick*: Don't take your anger at Gordon out on Sam, Brad. That's not going to get you the answers you need. The best thing you can do right now is to do what Agent Holtvedt here is asking you to do. You are asking, right Agent Holtvedt?

*Holtvedt*: Deputy, you know the area, the people, they'll be much more open to talking to you; you know where to look. This is your community, so it makes sense for you to be out there looking while the Sheriff and I hold down the fort.

*Kapp*: Okay. I'll look around.

*Rudnick*: Sounds good. Thanks Brad. And, can you do us a favor? Can you swing by the Donut Hole and see if Suzy's turned up for work?

*Kapp* exits.

*Rudnick*: Hold down the fort?

*Holtvedt*: I'm a girl of the Great Plains, Sheriff.

*Holtvedt drops her cigarette into Rudnick's coffee cup and exits. He drops his own into his cup and exits after her.*

*The Wall and Sculpture Units open. Lights shift. Suzy's Flower Image appears as we go into...*

*Moment 12: Suzy with the Uke*

*... the Schmitt kitchen. Suzy enters with the Ukulele as the Image dissolves. She strums as she crosses over to Sam.*

*Sam:* My ukulele. I didn't know you still had that.

*Suzy*: I've been hanging on to it for a special occasion.

*Sam*: And this is it?

*Suzy*: Well...I really need you to play again, and I figured... *(she holds the Ukelele out to Sam, but Sam recoils)...*

*Sam*: Suzy I haven't played that since...

*Suzy*: I know, since mom died...you played the night before she died, and we sang for her...

*Pause*.

*Suzy*: *(again, she holds the Uke out to Sam, this time more gently) ...* play something for me Sam. *(She gently places the Uke against Sam's body).* I really need you to play for me again.

*Sam takes the ukulele and checks the tuning.*

*Sam:* You've kept it in tune.

*Suzy*: It's one of the few things I know how to do with it.

*Sam*: What do you want me to play?

*Suzy*: Something fun.

*Sam begins to strum. He finds a particular chord progression, and then starts to sing. During the following, Suzy interjects comments and at times sings along. It's a very familiar song to both of them. There are parts of the song Suzy likes and other parts she doesn't, and partway thru the song she requests that Sam sing her favorite verse, "the one about Molly."*

My name it is Sam Hall, Sam Hall.
My name it is Sam Hall, Sam Hall.
My name it is Sam Hall, and I hate you one and all
I hate you one and all, damn your eyes.

I killed a man they said, so they said.
I killed a man they said, so they said.
I killed a man they said, cuz I bashed his bloody head

And I left him there for dead, damn his eyes.

I saw Molly in the crowd, in the crowd.
I saw Molly in the crowd, in the crowd.
I saw Molly in the crowd, and I hollered right out loud,
Hey there Molly ain't you proud, damn your eyes.

To the gallows I must go, I must go.
To the gallows I must go, I must go.
To the gallows I must go, while you critters down below,
Yell out 'Sam I told you so' well damn your eyes.

Now the Sheriff he did come, he did come.
Now the Sheriff he did come, he did come.
And the Preacher he come too, and he said "Sam, how're you?"
Well you can kiss my bloody bum, damn your eyes.

My name is Samuel, Samuel.
My name is Samuel, Samuel.
My name is Samuel, and I'll see you all in hell,
I'll see you all in hell, damn your eyes.

*Pause*.

*Suzy*: Thank you Sam. That meant a lot to me.

*Sam*: You're welcome Suzy.

Suzy: Will you play for me again tomorrow?

*Sam*: Anything for you.

*She exits with the Ukulele. The Sculpture Unit and lights shift as we go into ...*

*Moment 13: 2nd Interrogation*

*Holtvedt enters thru the Wall Door into the Interrogation Room. She carries the File.*

*Holtvedt*: Mr. Schmitt I want to follow up on a couple things. Your sister, Suzy, lives on the farm with your father is that right?

*Sam*: Yeah.

*Holtvedt*: Sheriff Rudnick told me Suzy was only 16 when your mom died, and that, with your mom gone, she became the woman of the house and has been ever since.

*Sam*: Do you have a point here?

*Holtvedt*: That must have been hard, a 16 year old girl, alone on the farm, taking care of her dad, her only sibling off in college

*Sam*: I came home almost every weekend, I was home every summer, helping with the farm, at least until he lost it all.

*Holtvedt:* That's a common story. A lot of farmers have lost their farms lately.

*Sam:* I think it might be more than just a common story, if fact I think they're calling it a crisis, a farm crisis. Or maybe you haven't noticed the full scale of things? It seems to be affecting the whole midwest, even in Nebraska.

*Holtvedt*: A lot of farmers, like your dad, overextended themselves without knowing/

*Sam*: Are you saying my father's to blame for losing his own farm?

*Holtvedt:* Sorry Sam, I'm not implying it was your father's fault that the farm went under. What I was going to say is that he didn't know all the politics involved. He didn't know there were, forces, beyond his control, and that the fault for his loss, and for this, crisis, lies elsewhere.

*Sam:* Like maybe with the government?

*Holtvedt:* Yeah, actually. Isn't that the truth of it?

*Sam:* You tell me.

*Holtvedt:* Okay. *(She opens up the file she has with her.)* In the early 70s your father took on SUBSTANTIAL bank loans to buy more land and new machinery.

*Sam:* Grain prices and the value of land were soaring. Loans were cheap.

*Holtvedt:* That's right, and the Dept. of Agriculture was pushing farmers to expand in order increase grain exports. But after a few years grain prices plummeted.

*Sam: (sounding conspiratorial)* Yeah, who knew Russia would invade Afghanistan and effect the price of grain in North Dakota.

*Holtvedt:* You make it sound like there might be a bit of a conspiracy at work.

*Sam:* That's a bit of a stretch don't you think, Agent, what is it, Holtvedt?

*Holtvedt:* From what I gather, it wasn't that much of a stretch for your father. The government, controlled as it is by a secret Zionist banking organization, uses the invasion of Afghanistan as a means to change agricultural policies and take control of the farming industry.

*Pause. Rudnick enters.*

*Sam:* Why don't you get back to the Schmitt Family Farm story. Dan kinda knows but it is fascinating.

*Holtvedt:* Grain prices fell so low your father couldn't maintain his loan payments. The value of land dropped drastically, and he didn't have the collateral to justify the loans. So, the banks started to foreclose. Of the 480 acres your father owned and farmed for most of his life, 475 of it has been sold off or lost to bank foreclosure. Almost all of the

machinery and large implements were auctioned off right there on the farm. What's left is 3 acres of farmyard, and a grove of apricot trees. Your father was forced to retire.

*Pause*.

*Sam:* You know, land isn't just collateral to a farmer, it isn't just the thing you earn your living on. It's a way of life. Land is a farmer's identity, his heritage, his legacy to his children and his children's children. Land is a farmer's soul. That day on the farm, when that auctioneer's gavel sounded, I watched neighboring farmers bidding and buying not machinery, but pieces of HIM. My dad didn't retire. He died. That day, at that auction, his soul died.

You look anywhere in this state, hell you look anywhere in the midwest, and you'll find farmers just like my dad. There are about 200 farmers a day, A DAY, losing their farms, and every one of them have a reason to be pissed off and wondering if there isn't some kind of conspiracy going on.

*Holtvedt*: Do you?

*Sam*: Do I what?

*Holtvedt*: Think there's some kind of conspiracy?

*Sam*: I think it's a helluva lot more complicated, and corporate, than some Jewish banking, government controlled desire to take over the world.

*Holtvedt*: How do I know that's how you really feel? That you're not protecting Gordon, or your father?

*Sam*: Because if I was like my father, or Gordon, or any of them, I'd be using room as a pulpit to preach from.

*Pause*.

*Rudnick*: Sam do you know where Suzy is?

*Sam*: What? Do I know...well, she's at the Donut Hole working.

*Pause. Suzy enters and crosses to Trunk.*

*Rudnick*: Well, Sam, the thing is, Kapp just radioed in and told me she never showed up for work this morning.

*Pause. Suzy opens the Trunk and looks inside.*

*Rudnick*: Sam, is there any reason why Suzy wouldn't have shown up for work this morning?

*Sam*: No, no... she always ...

*Rudnick*: Any idea where she might be?

*Sam*: No, I have no idea.

*Rudnick*: Sam, did Suzy want you to come home this weekend?

*Suzy pulls a set of Wind Chimes out of the Trunk and crosses to Sam.*

*Suzy*: Sam, do you remember these? Mom had them hanging on the porch.

*Sam*: Yeah, her cousin in Florida sent them to her.

*Suzy*: I always loved the sound they made when there was a summer breeze. Do you think you could hang them back up?

*Sam*: Yeah, sure, I'll do it tomorrow.

*Suzy*: I wish you could stay longer. You could help me make some interesting chimes out of old bits of metal and stuff. Wouldn't that be fun?

*She crosses back to the Trunk.*

*Rudnick*: Sam. Did Suzy want you to come home?

*Sam*: Well, it did seem like she really wanted me to get home, and then I got this long weekend.

*Rudnick*: Was there anything unusual going on with Otto the past few weeks?

*Sam*: No, no, nothing.

*Suzy jumps up from the Trunk with an old paperback book.*

*Suzy*: Look at this! It's your old copy of Moby Dick. You were always reading this, and you'd always come into my room at night and try to read it to me.

*Sam*: You'd always fall asleep after about 10 minutes. We never did get thru the whole book together.

*Suzy*: Well, if you were here more I bet we could get thru the whole thing.

*She crosses back to the Trunk.*

*Holtvedt*: Has your dad ever been physically violent with you or Suzy?

*Sam*: No, Agent Holtvedt. Never. But physical violence isn't the only kind.

*Holtvedt*: What do you mean by that? *Pause*. What was his weapon?

*Pause.*

*Sam*: Silent judgement.

*Suzy pulls a Hat from the Trunk.*

*Suzy*: Do you remember this, Sam? We gave it to dad for Father's Day that one year.

*Sam*: *(reading the front of the hat)* World's Greatest Dad. Some joke.

*Suzy*: Oh come on, Sam.

*Sam*: Well let's be honest Suzy, we didn't get this for him because it was true, we got it for him because we thought it was funny.

*Suzy*: That's right, so the least you can do is laugh a little, instead of being so bitter.

*Sam*: Well how 'bout the fact that this is in mom's trunk, what kind of weird shit is that?

*Suzy*: I don't know Sam, maybe dad put it there for some kind of evil purpose.

*Sam*: Oh come on, I never said that.

*Suzy*: No, you didn't but it seems like we can mention dad without you talking like he's evil or something. You act like you're Captain Ahab and he's Moby Dick.

*Sam*: Don't exaggerate.

*Suzy*: I don't think I am, Sam. Dad is your embodiment of evil like the white whale was Ahab's.

*Sam: (trying to make a joke)* Well dad is certainly an expert in giving people the evil eye.

*Suzy*: Stop it Sam just stop it! Why can't you let it go! For me!

*Pause*.

*Sam*: What's with you, Suzy, what's going on. You seemed almost desperate for me to come home this weekend. You bring up mom's old trunk, my ukulele... What's going on?

*Suzy*: Just forget it Sam. Forget it.

*Sam*: Is there something going on with dad that you're not telling me?

*Suzy*: No Sam, it's not like that it's just, I just wish you could make your peace with him. Find a way to, I don't know, start over. It would make such a difference for both of you. For me. I want us to be a family, us, not just you and me but all three of us. Before it's too late.

*She exits*.

*Holtvedt*: Mr. Schmitt? Mr. Schmitt!

*Sam*: You said my sister didn't show up for work this morning?

*Rudnick*: Yeah, Sam. That's what they said at the Donut Hole.

*Sam*: I don't understand.

*Holtvedt*: Don't you have any idea where she might be?

*Sam*: No, I don't, I have no idea.

*Holtvedt*: Could she be at home?

*Sam*: I don't know, I suppose, I didn't think...

*Rudnick*: Any chance she could be with your dad?

*Sam*: No. No.

*Holtvedt*: You seem pretty sure of that.

*Sam*: I am...I mean...she wouldn't...maybe she's not feeling well and that's why she didn't go in to work.

*Rudnick*: Yeah, but she never called in, Sam, they haven't seen or heard from her at all this morning.

*Sam*: Well I don't know...there's gotta be an explanation here. You gotta let me outta here so I can find out where she is.

*Holtvedt*: Are you absolutely sure she's not with your father?

*Sam*: Yes! Absolutely! Now I'm sorry but you gotta let me go look for her.

*Rudnick*: Sam I appreciate how you feel here, but we can't let you go just yet.

*Sam*: She is the most precious thing in the world to me, Dan, you know that!

*Rudnick*: I know, Sam, I know, but something just doesn't add up here.

*Kapp bursts into the room.*

*Kapp*: Why are you lying Sam? Why are you lying?

*Everyone looks at him with stunned silence.*

*Kapp continues*: I found your dad's pickup, Sam, parked behind the house, filled with about three week's worth of supplies. Now what are you hiding, Sam? Why is your dad's truck packed with clothing, food, and camp supplies, but nobody seems to know where he is? And why is his rifle laying in the truck bed, and not sitting in the rack in the back window?

*(crossing aggressively towards Sam)* Now I think it's about time you stop fucking around and tell us what's going on, Sam, or by God/

*Rudnick*: All right that's enough Brad, that's enough!

*Kapp backs off*.

*Rudnick*: Well, how 'bout it Sam?

*Sam*: I don't know what to tell you Dan.

*Rudnick*: Well this looks pretty odd here, Sam, I mean, did your dad say anything about taking a trip?

*Sam*: No, he didn't say anything like that.

*Rudnick*: Did you see him doing any packing over the weekend?

*Sam*: No, no, I didn't/

*Kapp*: That is bullshit Sam bullshit and you know it!

*Rudnick*: Brad, that's enough/

*Holtvedt*: Mr. Schmitt I find it hard to believe that you had no idea your dad had his truck packed for some kind of trip.

*Sam*: Well I didn't and I don't appreciate your accusation.

*Holtvedt*: And I don't appreciate you playing games here/

*Sam*: /I'm not playing any games/

*Holtvedt*: /people died yesterday, others have been hurt, don't you care about that?/

*Sam*: /Of course I care/

*Holtvedt*: /don't you care that other people's lives may be at risk?/

*Sam*: /Of course/

*Holtvedt*: /don't you care at all?/

*Sam*: /Yes! Yes I care!

*Holtvedt*: It certainly doesn't seem that way!

*Sam*: Well maybe that's because you don't know what the hell you're talking about!

*Holtvedt*: And maybe it's because you're not telling us the truth! Maybe it's because you're hiding something!

*Kapp*: And maybe it's because you're arrogant enough to think we won't find out what it is!

*Rudnick*: All right, all right, both of you, just stop, stop! I think it's time the three of us stepped outside and had a talk. Bear with us for a minute, won't you Sam?

*They exit. Lights shift slightly. We hear the Sound of Wind Chimes as Suzy enters in stocking feet and we go into...*

## *Moment 14: Mom's Trunk, the Morning After*

*It is early Sunday morning. She rubs here eyes, looks around, warms herself. Sam watches her as she crosses to the trunk, closes it up, and carries it back to the cellar.*

*Lights shift again as we go back into ...*

*Moment 15: Rudnick Goes It Alone*

*The Interrogation Room. Rudnick reenters.*

*Rudnick*: I'm sorry about all this, Sam. Yesterday was a, a really tough day for all of us and, well, it's not fair that you've been caught up in this. I thought maybe just the two of us could talk this out.

*Sam*: Dan, I'd like to get outta here and find out where Suzy is/

*Rudnick*: /I know, I know, but just bear with me here, I just wanna tie up a couple loose ends and then I'll get you outta here. Now, Sam, it's pretty odd that your dad would have his truck packed like that for a trip in the middle of February. Any ideas here?

*Sam*: No, Dan, I'm worried about Suzy!

*Rudnick*: I know, I know, but Suzy must have said something to you if your dad had some kind of plans.

*Sam*: You don't know that.

*Rudnick*: Well, Sam, I think I do, I know Suzy well enough to know she wouldn't have let your dad go off by himself.

*Sam*: Dan, that's... for God's sake... he's a grown man!

*Rudnick*: Sam, I know Suzy musta talked to you about it, musta said something.

*Sam*: Well she didn't.

*Rudnick*: And I know something else here Sam. Your dad wouldn't have gone anywhere without his rifle, and you know that. Your dad, Gordon, they never went anywhere without carrying their rifles with 'em, 'cept maybe into the grocery store.

*Pause*.

*Rudnick*: I'm guessing you and Otto had a big fight last night, after you all found out what the shootout was about.

*Pause*.

*Rudnick*: Was your dad gonna run off and try to join up with Gordon, Sam, is that why his truck was packed up?

*Sam*: Yeah.

*Rudnick*: What stopped him?

*Pause*.

*Rudnick*: Come on, Sam, I'm just trying to be your friend here. Help me out and I promise I'll do everything I can to help you find Suzy.

*Sam*: You want to be my friend Dan?

*Rudnick*: Yeah, I do.

*Sam*: Then just let this be.

*Rudnick*: You know I can't do that Sam. I'm like that bird dog you used to have, once I have the scent...

*Sam*: You how Crazy Horse died?

*Rudnick*: Sam...

*Sam*: He was betrayed by his best friend.

*Rudnick*: I know the story Sam.

*Sam*: Stabbed in the back at Fort Robinson. In Nebraska.

*Rudnick*: Sam this is 1983 not 1877.

*Sam*: Do you know what his death song was?

My friends have courage.

Me, I cannot do anything anymore.

Me, I can no more go to war.

I am dead. I help no more.

*Rudnick*: What is this about Sam?

Sam: It's about what a man does he's backed into a corner and his home, his identity, everything that means anything to him, is on the line.

*Rudnick*: What happened last night, Sam? Just tell me the truth here.

*Sam*: The truth? That would take way too long Dan, and besides that's not really what you want. You want answers, simple answers, just like everyone. But the truth is never simple, it's hard earned, it's filled with doubts and pain, its complex, threaded like a rich tapestry, and when you go looking for the truth you never really arrive anywhere, the search just leads to another search, because here's what I can tell you Dan, the truth is not a destination it's a journey. But everyone just wants to arrive somewhere, and so do you.

*Rudnick*: Sam...

*Sam*: Dan, don't pull on threads you don't want unraveled. Please.

*Rudnick exits*.

*Lights shift to Schmitt family kitchen. Sound of Wind Chimes as we go into ...*

*Moment 16: Suzy Gets Eggs*

*Suzy enters. It is still early Sunday morning.*

*Suzy*: *(calling upstage)* Sam? Sam, do you want some breakfast? I'm going out to the chicken coop, there should be some fresh eggs.

*She exits out the Wall Door.*

*Lights shift. Wall and Sculpture Units close to overlap and Holtvedt enters from behind the Sculpture Unit as we go into ...*

*Moment 17: Cig Break 2 - The Warrant*

*Holtvedt lights a Cigarette. Rudnick enters*.

*Rudnick*: You okay? You got a little hot in there.

*Holtvedt*: What's his problem, Sheriff, what the hell is his problem?

*Rudnick*: Well, Sam is angry at the world.

*Holtvedt*: And I'm angry at the fact that something's going on here and I don't know what it is.

*Rudnick*: Agent Holtvedt, whatever's going on I don't think it's going to lead us to Gordon Kahl.

*Holtvedt*: And how exactly do you know that?

*Rudnick*: Because I'm convinced Gordon was only a catalyst for whatever happened up at that farm, and whatever happened was between Sam, Otto and Suzy. And them only. Now, I think we might want to leave Sam alone here and get back to the business at hand. Let's get back to finding Gordon.

*Holtvedt*: Well forgive me Sheriff if I think that's a stupid idea. I don't trust whatever it is he told you in there, and I'm not about to leave this alone, because not only do we need to know where Otto is, now we need to know where the sister is. You might think there's no connection here Sheriff, but right now, I need convincing.

*Pause*.

*Rudnick*: Well, my guess is, if we find Suzy, we'll find Otto.

*Holtvedt*: And where do you propose we look for her.

*Rudnick*: Not sure why, but I don't think she ever left the farm. I don't think either Otto or Suzy left the farm.

*Holtvedt*: You sure about that?

*Rudnick*: I'd bet the farm.

*Pause*.

*Holtvedt*: I'll make a couple calls. Expedite a warrant. Send Kapp back up there.

*They exit.*

*Lights shift, we hear the sound of Wind Chimes. The Wall and Sculpture Units shift open as we go into ...*

*Moment 18: Suzy Calls for Sam*

*Suzy enters from behind the audience. As she enters, Sam crosses down and sits on the edge of the stage. She pauses in front of the audience and looks up, as if looking at Sam, who is sitting on the Barn Roof. She calls to him.*

*Suzy*: Sam! Sam! What're you doing up there?

*Sam*: *(calling down as if from the Barn Roof)* I'm gonna watch the sunrise! Did the hens have some eggs for you?!

*Suzy*: Yeah! How long you gonna be up there?!

*Sam*: I don't know, a bit!

*Suzy*: I'm coming up!

*Sam*: You're what?!

*Suzy*: I'm coming up!

*Sam*: You know how to get up here?!

*Suzy*: Of course, what a stupid question! Up the ladder in the hayloft and thru the trap door!

*Suzy crosses around, lights shift slightly, as we go into ...*

*Moment 19: The Barn Roof*

*Suzy walks along the edge of the stage as if she's walking along the peak of a roof, crossing towards Sam.*

*Sam*: Careful.

*She sits next to Sam.*

*Sam*: Well, this is a special occasion.

*Suzy*: It's chilly up here.

*Sam*: Pretty warm for February, though.

*Pause as Suzy adjusts and Sam looks out.*

*Suzy*: What're you lookin' at?

*Sam*: Well, right now I'm lookin' at how all the farmyard lights haven't gone out yet. They look like ghosts in the dawning light, lingering in this world for as long as they can before the sun chases them away. See the light straight up from the edge of the lake?

*Suzy*: Yeah.

*Sam*: That's the Rudnick farm.

*Suzy*: I never expected Dan to become a Sheriff, what with all the trouble you all used to get into.

*Sam*: Well, Dan's a good soul, deep down he just wants to help people.

*Suzy*: What about you? What do you want to be when you grow up?

*Sam*: What do you mean? I'm a horticulturalist. I've got my bachelor's hanging on my wall to prove it. "Sam Schmitt, Bachelor of Science, North Dakota State University, Horticulture."

*Suzy*: I didn't know you needed a BS to be a landscaper and mow rich peoples' lawns.

*Sam*: Hey, are you saying what I do is BS?

*Pause. They both look out.*

*Suzy*: Every time you come home, weather permitting of course, you do the same thing. You take a walk thru the apricot grove, and then you come up and sit here on the roof. Sometimes you're up here for the longest time.

*Sam*: Yeah, I guess that's true.

*Suzy*: What do you see when you're up here?

*Sam*: I don't know...I see the landscape.

*Suzy*: Yeah, but...what do you see?

*Sam looks at her*.

*Sam*: Well ... *(he thinks for a moment)* ... remember when you were little, when mom and dad would argue? You would cry and cry and cry, and I would try to make you feel better by telling you the stories I was reading, stories about the Native Americans and about North Dakota.

*Suzy*: I remember.

*Sam*: Well, that's what I see. I see a Lakota hunting party swooping down on a herd of buffalo. I see Lewis and Clark coming up the Missouri. I see General George Armstrong Custer marching off to meet his death at the Battle of the LIttle Bighorn. *(With each vision he gestures towards where the landscape and his imagination take him.)*

I see how the land rolls like the ocean floor it once was, how it swoops and curves like reclining bellies backs and hips, holding mysteries and secrets in the hollows you can't see into.

I see a land older than time. A land that's seen dinosaurs and giant mammals, and great migrations of people, from the Clovis people to the native americans, to the Germans-from-Russia.

I see a sky that's bigger than the earth. I see multi-dimensional multi colored sunsets that wrap around me, and soon we'll see the miracle of another day's sunrise.

This is where I see God. The God that I believe in, not dad's God, that Monster God, the Vengeful God. But a God that is made up of beauty and sadness.

*Pause*.

*Suzy*: You love this landscape, don't you?

*Sam*: I do.

Here is comes, the sun is breaking the horizon! Look... look how the light burnishes the land, and makes the world new.

*The Lights shift as the sun rises behind them*. *They both look on, amazed and bedazzled*.

*Suzy*: This is amazing.

*Sam*: Yeah. This is a good one.

*Pause*.

*Suzy*: Sam, why is it that, the only time you see the beauty of this place, is when you're up here?

*Sam looks at her*.

*Sam*: That's not true.

*Suzy*: Why did you leave here?

*Sam*: Well, you know why. I had to go to college. I had to make a life for myself.

*Suzy*: I know that part of it, but ... but inside of you this isn't your home anymore. There's a home within, and a home without, and this is neither for you.

*Sam*: Home is where the heart is, Suzy, and my heart is with you.

*Suzy*: That's nice Sam but, up here, you look out as if this landscape is sacred, as if every part of it has been hallowed by some sad or happy event. But when you're not up here you act like you can't wait to get away. You make me feel homeless in my own home.

*Sam*: Suzy, I'm sorry, I don't mean to make you feel that way. I guess when I'm up here I feel removed from the past, and I can breathe/

*Suzy*: And you can't breathe with me?

*Sam*: Well of course I can, but, it's different, I mean, there's just too much of him around. I wish you'd come to Minneapolis with me, Suzy.

*Suzy*: Sam, we've been thru this. What would I do in Minneapolis?

*Sam*: Find a job, I'll help you. You can stay with me until you get settled in, you could even go to school part-time.

*Suzy*: Sam I'd be lost in Minneapolis, I'm not a big city kinda girl.

*Sam*: That's him talking. He's put that thought in your head as a way to keep you here, to make you too afraid.

*Suzy*: That's not true, Sam.

*Sam*: I hear how he talks to you, I hear the subtle messages, the same messages we grew up with. But back then we just thought it was parental guidance; now I hear it for what it is, a constant, self-defeating mantra, meant to keep you so humble you can't even fathom a life beyond this farm. Don't start thinkin' that you're better than anyone, no sir, or that you're meant for anything better than this.

*Suzy*: Sam I'm a grown woman, do you really think I don't know what thoughts are mine and what are his? This is my home. I know you had to leave, I know that. I don't understand it, but I know you needed to go out, into the world, searching for something. But I'm not like you. My search is right here, right here is where the world and I meet.

*Sam*: How do you know that Suzy? You've never been away from here for more than a few days.

*Suzy*: I know it because I'm like mom. She taught me that, if the grass is always greener somewhere else, then you can never be happy with where you are, and I want to be happy with where I am.

*Sam*: How can you be happy taking care of him, day after day?

*Suzy*: It gives me a purpose, it's something I'm good at, and that's a good thing!

*Sam*: But you could find a new purpose in Minneapolis, you can change and shift gears however you need there.

*Suzy*: Sam that's just not who I am, that's not me! Things change too fast in the city, it's too noisy, I feel muted there. I've learned to trust things that take time, that grow out of the ground. I like the silence. As much as I struggle with my own thoughts, I appreciate the struggle. I need the quiet because it creates space around my thoughts so that they don't overwhelm me. I need, I need ...

*Sam*: What? What do you need?

*Suzy*: I need you.

*Sam*: You've got me.

*Suzy*: No, Sam, I need you here.

*Pause*.

*Sam*: I know. *(As if finally understanding his sister for the first time.)* I know you do.

*Suzy*: We could be a family again, Sam, we could really make this a home.

*Sam*: Suzy I don't know, I'm...

*Suzy*: You wouldn't have to live here on the farm if you didn't want to, and I know Medina is way too small, but Jamestown is just a half-hour away.

*Sam*: Suzy, dad and I, we really don't, we can barely be in the same room together.

*Suzy*: Dad would settle down, I know he would. He gets so nervous whenever you come home, but if you were here all the time he'd relax and open up a lot more. He's a very different person when you're not around.

*Sam*: Suzy I don't know about that, and besides, what would I do for work?

*Suzy*: There's a lot of new construction in Jamestown, I bet there's lots of landscaping opportunities.

*Sam*: Suzy....I...

...Do you really want to know why I come up here?

When I'm up here I see how big I want to be, and when I'm not up here I feel how small I actually am. If I moved back here, I feel like I would just shrivel up and die. I love this landscape, I love you, I love the quiet, but at a certain point I need the noise, I need the distraction of the city. I need...

...the city helps me be at peace with the past.

*Pause*.

*Suzy*: So that's that, huh. You can't live here, and I can't live anywhere else.

*Pause*.

*Sam*: I guess so.

*Suzy*: So tomorrow morning, I'll go back to work, and you'll head back to Minneapolis, just like always.

*Sam*: I'm sorry Suzy.

*Pause*.

*Suzy slowly begins to sing the following. She repeats the beginning until Sam finally joins her.*

I know (I know)

You belong, to somebody new,

But tonight, you belong to me.

*Pause*.

*Suzy*: I'll go make us some breakfast.

*She rises and begins to exit the way she entered.*

*Sam*: *(calling after her)* Over-easy?

*Suzy*: You'll get what I make you.

*She exits, as her Flower Image plays on the Wall Unit. Sam slowly rises and crosses back to the Table. Lights shift as the Image dissolves, and we go into ...*

## *Moment 20: Kapp Finds Suzy*

*Kapp enters from the audience, just as Suzy had earlier. It's Monday again, mid-morning, and he's back up at the Schmitt farm. He crosses towards the Sculpture Unit, then pauses. He slowly turns and looks out as if looking towards the Apricot Grove.*

*Kapp*: *(addressing the audience)* They told me to go back up to the farm and search the premises. The place seemed abandoned, yet there was a kind of eerie presence there. I had left the barn for last, and as I was crossing the farmyard towards it, I had stopped, for no apparent reason, and looked across towards the apricot grove. I remember just standing there thinking...It's going to be a good apricot harvest this year.

*He turns and crosses up to the Sculpture Unit. He slides it open, as if he's opening a large barn door, the same way Suzy opened it in the beginning. He takes a couple steps upstage as if entering the barn, looking around. He then turns and looks up, and exits, as if to go up to the hayloft.*

*Lights shift. Suzy's Flower Image plays so that we see the Flower wilting, as we go into ...*

## *Moment 21: 3rd Interrogation*

*Rudnick enters into the Interrogation Room thru the Wall Door.*

*Rudnick:* Sam, I think I can get you outta here pretty soon. Agent Holtvedt is going to take care of a little paperwork, and in the meantime I wanna help you find Suzy as best I can.

*Sam*: I appreciate that Dan.

*Rudnick*: So talk me thru this. When you got up this morning, it was in response to Brad knocking on the door, right?

*Sam*: Yeah.

*Rudnick*: And you just figured Suzy was work, right?

*Sam*: Yeah.

*Rudnick*: So you didn't call out to her or anything before you left?

*Sam*: No.

*Rudnick*: And what about last night. Did she act different in any way?

*Sam*: No. I mean, well, she was upset, about the shooting.

*Rudnick*: What was the last thing you remember her doing last night before going to bed?

*Sam*: She... she was cleaning... cleaning the kitchen.

*Rudnick*: Did she usually clean the kitchen before going to bed?

*Sam*: I don't know...her usual routine, she...

*Rudnick*: What about this morning, did you notice anything different, anything at all, before you left with Deputy Kapp?

*Sam*: No, no, I don't...I was really groggy.

*Rudnick*: Was anything sitting out on the kitchen counter that wasn't there last night?

*Sam*: No, nothing, I mean, except, *(suddenly remembering)* on the kitchen table ...

*Rudnick*: The kitchen table. There was something on the kitchen table?

*Sam*: Yeah, yeah, it was a jewelry box, a jewelry box that used to belong to my mother. Saturday night we had been going thru some things and...

*There's a knock on the door ...*

*Moment 22: The Necklace*

*Rudnick goes to the door and opens it, revealing Holtvedt. They have a brief, whispered conversation, during which Holtvedt hands something to Rudnick. They both enter the room, shutting the door. Rudnick crosses back to the Table. Holtvedt stands by the door.*

*Rudnick*: Sam, you said that there was a jewelry box on the kitchen table?

*Sam*: Yeah, it was ... what's ... what's going on?

*Rudnick*: Was there anything in it, Sam?

*Sam*: No, it was empty. I mean, there had been a necklace in it, a necklace that had belonged to my mother.

*Rudnick*: *(placing the Necklace on the table)* Is this the necklace that was in the box?

*Sam*: Where did you find this? Where was this?

*Rudnick*: Sam, we found Suzy.

*Sam*: Where is she?

*Pause*.

*Rudnick*: She's dead Sam. Brad found her in the barn, up in the hayloft. She'd hung herself.

*Sam stares at Rudnick, and slowly begins to sink into his chair.*

*Holtvedt*: *(gently crossing in)* Sam. Can you tell us what happened last night?

*Pause, as Sam slowly places the Necklace on the table. He arranges the Necklace on the Table, as if lovingly putting it on display.*

*Holtvedt:* Can you tell us where Otto is Sam?

*Sam slowly looks up at her, then at Rudnick. He starts slowly, from a very surreal place, and as he speaks the truth begins to break him down.*

*Sam*: It was like you said, Dan. He was gonna run off and join Gordon, he was ready to go, and he was gonna take Suzy with him. But I couldn't let that happen, Dan, I couldn't! I tried to talk him out of it, I tried, but he wouldn't listen, I couldn't get thru, he just kept ... preaching at me ... I thought maybe if I, if I gave him no choice, if I threatened ... so I picked up his rifle and pointed it at him ... I told him Suzy wasn't going anywhere, that she, she was staying with me ... But he just looked at me. He stared me right in the eye. And I knew. At that moment, we both knew ...

He reached for his pistol, and I shot him. I shot him right in the eye. Right in his eye.

*Pause*.

*Rudnick*: Where's his body, Sam.

*Sam*: It's in the apricot grove.

*Pause*.

*Rudnick*: I'm very sorry, Sam. We'll, uh, we'll give you a little time here, alone.

*Rudnick and Holtvedt exit*.

*Sam begins to break down. He looks closely at the Necklace, and as if attempting to talk to Suzy thru the Necklace he calls out "Why?!" several times. As he breaks down further, his body beginning to wrack with sobs, he tries to deny it all, calling out "No!" repeatedly, until he can no longer fight, and he collapses onto the floor.*

*Lights shift, and we hear the Ukulele offstage ...*

*Moment 23: Suzy and Sam's Goodbye*

*Suzy enters with the Ukulele, and slowly crosses to Sam. She sits down beside him, as he sits up to be next to her.*

*Suzy:* Play something for me, Sam. Please? Before I go?

*She gently lays the Ukulele in his lap. He looks down at it for a moment, then slowly takes up into his hands and begins to strum a particular chord structure. Suzy begins to sing.*

*Suzy*:

I know,

You belong,

To somebody new,

But tonight, you belong to me.

*(Sam now joins in, singing the echo and harmony)*

Although (although),

We're apart,

You're part of my heart,

And tonight, you belong to me.

*Sam continues to strum the chords of the song as Lights come up on ...*

*Moment 24: Rudnick's Promise*

*Rudnick enters. He crosses down and addresses the audience*.

*Rudnick*: My dad used to always say, when you plant the seed of something you love in the ground, it makes the soil sacred. Sam made me promise him, that when spring came, he could bury his dad in the apricot grove. I kept my promise.

Suzy was buried next to her mother. I stop by the grave every once in a while, and I walk thru the apricot grove now and again. I keep trying to figure it all out, but, like Sam said, the truth is hard to come by.

After searching for four months, they finally found Gordon holed up in Arkansas. There was another shootout, and two more people died; another US Marshal, and Gordon Kahl. The whole thing was tragic. No two ways about it.

Personally, I think to understand all, is to forgive all.

*He goes to exit. Pauses, and turns back to the audience.*

It's gonna be a good apricot harvest this year.

*He exits. Lights shift back.*

*Moment 25: Cat's Cradle*

*Sam and Suzy continue singing the rest of the song.*

*Sam and Suzy:*

Way down, by the stream,

How sweet, it would seem,

Once more, just to dream,

In the moonlight.

My honey,

I know (I know),

With the dawn,

That you, will be gone,

But tonight, you belong to me.

*They continue to hum as they do one last Cat's Cradle. Suzy creates the pattern, and Sam puts his hand thru, so that as she releases the pattern his wrist is caught in the yarn. Then she makes another pattern, and the yarn releases from around his wrist. She looks at him and says ...*

*Suzy*: You're free.

*They both rise to face each other, and enter into a long embrace. She then takes the Ukulele, kisses Sam on the cheek, and exits.*

*Sam stands, turns to face the door. Lights shift back into the Interrogation Room ...*

*Moment 26: Sam's Arrest*

*Sam turns to face the Wall Door. Music comes up (Amos Lee's "Windows Are Rolled Down"). Rudnick enters, and he and Sam share a look. Then Kapp enters, followed by Holtvedt. Kapp crosses down to Sam, and Sam raises the same hand Suzy had caught and freed with the Cat's Cradle yarn. Kapp pulls out Handcuffs and cuffs the one hand, then the other.*

*Sam turns and heads for the Door.*

*All exit as ...*

*... a final landscape Image of a long and straight country road appears across the full expanse of the Wall and Sculpture Units.*

*Lights and Image fade out.*

*The End*

## Appendix D. "The Landscape" monologue.

Flat as a pancake, then gently rolling, like the curves of the human body in repose.

I can hear the air; the quiet sounds of a million voices both human and animal, dead and alive, float on the breeze.

The music of the land is the music of the spheres come to earth, it's feel and rhythm like the blues, slower than molasses, slower than the turning of the earth, slower than crawling glacial blues.

The size and scope of the landscape makes my soul grow big and wise inside of me. Looking west the rolling hips and thighs, bellies and backs of the grasslands turn to Badlands, where the earth was gouged by receding glaciers into upstart canyons, intricate ravines, majestic bluffs and plateaus where, when the sun hits the inner canyon walls the earth turns into stripped candy colored mystery, each sediment showing off it's purple or pink or gold seeking bragging rights.

The land feels older than time, and as wise as God. The land has seen the birth of life, dinosaurs, giant mammals, the stone people who came across the land bridge between Russian and Alaska, the people of the horse, Lewis and Clark, and the great immigration of Swedes, Norwegians, and Germans from Russia.

I can see for miles in all directions, yet the contours of the land hide things from sight as if they were underwater – the cuts and coulees, dips and bowls drop beneath the surface of the plains and give the land a poetic mystery.

When I was a boy, on my grandparents farm in the summer, I would climb to the very top of one of the taller than tall pine trees in the shelter belt, on the north side of the farmyard. At the top I would sit for what seemed like hours, the tree and me swaying in the breeze, while I looked into the distance like a sailor seeking the sight of land after months at sea. I could see, it seemed, to the ends of the earth, and could understand how it was possible to believe the world was flat.

Then there's the wind – my mother says there's always wind – it's as if the air is so happy it just has to run along the plains, and like a skateboarder, jam in the rolling hills and badlands soaring with kick-ass amplitude.

The smell of earth, prairie grass, animal musk, and weather sits in the air, on the ground, and on the skin. It gets in my hair and under my fingernails. I can smell the coming weather before seeing it in the sky.

The sky is bigger than the earth, the sunset is a multidimensional 64 color rainbow wrapping around the horizon.

I walk the same ground as the Clovis people, as the Lakota, the Mandan and Arikara. My father is buried in the Veteran's Cemetery along the Missouri River, a few miles south from the great earth-lodge city of the Mandan, now lost and dissolved into the landscape. On the flat below the cemetery is Fort Lincoln, from which General George Armstrong Custer marched out and met his death at the Little Bighorn, and with his death came the death knoll for the of the Sioux nation, the last of the free native tribes in North America.

I lived on this land, my mother and sister still live on it, at the expense of others, and the land speaks to me, it silently tells me their stories. The lululuing of the Lakota women, calling their warriors home, still echoes thru the cottonwood trees, and the silent keening of settler women, calling their men home from foreign wars, swirls in the waters of the Missouri.

The shifting sandbars of the river express the ebb and flow of a seemingly changeless, yet ever changing, land. In spring the cottonwood trees loose their desire, releasing huge cottony fluffs with a tiny seed center into the wind, and it's as if giant snowflakes are floating on the wind. Walking thru this spring snowfall of regeneration, time and timelessness echo thru me.

I am of the land and the land is me.

## Appendix E. "The Tea Party" moment.

*The actor enters with a tray, on which sits a teapot and cups. He sets the tray down on the floor, sits next to it. and addresses the audience.*

Gordon Kahl was buried in a small cemetery on the scuffed North Dakota prairie, near his hometown. At his funeral service, the Reverend opened his eulogy in a subdued tone: "On this quiet, humble community today, we have the eyes and ears of the entire nation."

*(The actor continues speaking as he sets out a teapot and teacups.)*

The Reverend slowly changed his tone, however, as he said "I would like to say that we honor this country...we love this country, and we can say that this man really loved his country."

The Reverend went on to state that Gordon Kahl was a man who paid a great price in his attempt to awaken a pacifistic public to the dangers facing these great United States of America. He referred to Patrick Henry, quoting his famous line "give me liberty or give me death." He spoke of Paul Revere, riding thru the night to warn of the coming of tyrants, and spoke of Gordon's travels around the country to warn of the coming of tyrants.

*(The actor slowly begins pouring tea into the teacups.)*

After the funeral service, there was a quiet reception, where coffee was served. North Dakota coffee is made very weak, almost like tea, probably in keeping with pioneer traditions of necessary frugality. Those in attendance spoke of Gordon as a hero, and spoke of his epitaph as one of inspiration.

Those not in attendance thought of Gordon Kahl his epitaph was one of violence and lunacy.

*(The actor finishes pouring tea.)*

But Gordon's message has gone on, long past his epitaph, and has found a new voice.

*(The actor picks up a cup of tea.)*

Would you like to join my tea party?

*End of Moment*

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