

ROAD FUNERAL  
A Tale of the American West  
by Jesse Case

.....

The Characters

DOVER - Early to mid-twenties, lost.

REAL - Twenty years old, also lost.

THREE VOICES, of drivers, none of whom are seen on stage.

The play takes place next to an old road sign along Route 80 in the middle of a barren section of Wyoming, present day.

I - Around noon.

II - About four hours later.

III- The next morning, around nine o'clock

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ROAD FUNERAL is dedicated to  
the memory of my Dad,  
who couldn't figure out the West either.

.....

I

(The Lights come up suddenly and are very bright. We see a beaten up dusty road sign that says "Highway 80," and just below that "Speed Limit 105." Perhaps there is also some indication that we are in Wyoming on a lonely stretch of highway between Superior and Rawlins. There are weeds and some dried grass growing from the base of the sign. Next to the sign and slightly behind it there is a large section of a sun-bleached tree, lying on its side, and hollow.

It is at least three feet tall on its side, with a few large branches jutting out here and there. It would look out of place except for the grass surrounding it and the dust covering it. We see the wide bright blue wyoming sky in the background, with just a hint of wispy clouds moving through. The entire stage is covered in pale sand, except the very front which might have some indication of the highway. It is the middle of the day and hot as hell. We are given a few seconds to gaze at the set, and then DOVER enters, from LEFT, carrying a duffel bag, a backpack, and a large metal canteen about halfway full of water. He wears tennis shoes, khakis, a wife beater, a Yankees hat on his head, and is very dirty and tired, obviously having just walked a long distance in the blazing heat. He looks back, and throws his stuff down. He sits on the tree for a second, relaxing. He takes off the bandanna and wipes his head, and at the very faint sound of a car coming, he looks up. He squints his eyes, then gets excited, puts on his hat backwards, then forwards, picks up his bag, sets it down, picks it up again, tries to clean off his shirt, puts his thumb out, smiles, thinks better of it, leans back casually, smiles again, and waits, fully poised. He realize that it is not slowing down. We hear the car cruise by at 120 miles per hour, as he watches it shoot by. He runs a few steps after it.)

DOVER

Oh come on! COME ON! COME ON!

(The sound of the car rapidly fades in the distance. DOVER throws his bag down.)

DOVER

FUCK! FUCK! (He throws up a middle finger.) I know you saw me, you asshole! Nothing else to see in this goddamn desert. FUCK! (Then, to himself) That is some cold shit.

(He kicks some sand, sighs, goes to sit down, turns around, gets the bag he threw, and and sits down again, leaning up against the tree. He looks down the road for any sign of another car, but there is none to be found. He sits, leans forward, and closes his eyes. After a few seconds, REAL enters from far UPPER RIGHT. He wears a cowboy hat, a fade pair of boots, and a beaten up button-down shirt. He has a cracked leather bag. He sees DOVER lying next to the stump, looks back toward where he entered, takes a deep breath, walks over and kicks DOVER in the arm. DOVER is beyond surprised. He screams, dodges to the left, losing his hat in the process, stands up, ready to defend himself. Upon seeing that it is just another guy, he regains his composure somewhat.)

DOVER

Wow, wow, wow. Jesus Christ, you scared the shit out of me.

REAL

I'm sorry.

DOVER

Don't sneak up on people like that.

REAL

I'm sorry.

DOVER

No it's... it's ok. Wow. (He takes REAL in) Well, God damn, I didn't realize there was anybody on foot within miles of this place.

REAL

You didn't?

DOVER

Well I mean I guess I assumed no one would be... around. Holy shit, my heart is still beating. (He sits. REAL stays standing.) Well you could have at least said hi first.

REAL

I'm sorry. I really am. I thought you were dead.

DOVER

What?

REAL

I thought you were dead.

DOVER

You thought I was dead?

REAL

Yeah.

DOVER

Huh. (Considers it) Why would I be dead?

REAL

It happens a lot out here.

DOVER

What, people dying?

REAL

Yeah. No, no, I mean, like hitchhikers and stuff. (DOVER is confused.) People who are new to the area out here, people don't realize how hot it gets. They don't drink enough water and then they lay down to... to take a nap or something and the sun kills them. It boils them.

DOVER  
It boils them?

REAL  
Yeah. Boils their brains. Heatstroke.

DOVER  
Jesus.

REAL  
Yeah. Yeah. (Pointing to DOVER's canteen) Is that water?

DOVER  
Yeah.

REAL  
Drink some.

DOVER  
OK, yeah, that's a good idea... (He drinks, with great vigor.)

REAL  
You can't get enough water out here.

DOVER  
(Upon finishing his drink.)  
So you know something about hitchhiking, then.

REAL  
Hitchhiking? No, not hitchhiking. The west.

DOVER  
Oh.

REAL  
Yeah.

DOVER  
So you live around here?

REAL  
Yes. No. I used to.

DOVER  
You used to?

REAL  
I did.

DOVER  
Where?

REAL  
Nowhere.

DOVER  
Nowhere?

REAL  
No.

DOVER  
Huh. Oh, you mean like the middle of nowhere.

REAL  
I guess you could say that. (They both laugh, cautiously. REAL puts his stuff down.)

DOVER  
Well it must be close to here, though, right? I mean, if you're so familiar with hitchhiker death.

REAL  
Yeah, well sometimes the State Troopers come by and knock and ask if anybody knows anything about the guy they found, but they never stay because its never anybody's fault. I mean, you can tell, I guess, if a guy has had his brains boiled out or if it was... you know, something else.

DOVER  
I guess I wouldn't know.

REAL  
I guess I wouldn't either. I only saw it twice.

DOVER  
What?

REAL  
I don't want to tell you about that, though.

DOVER

Well, no, you've seen it? Is that what you mean? Seen it happen?

REAL

No, not happen, ever, not the actual death. That would be horrible.... well, let's see, when I was a kid I was out here at the highway looking for stuff, sometimes cars will just toss stuff out the window out here and sometimes its pretty good stuff too, but I was out here and I was walking and saw a guy, probably no more than a mile off thataway (he points RIGHT) and he had fallen over I think because he was just lying there face down. And his canteen was empty.

DOVER

Wow.

REAL

Yeah, I know. But there are only a few cars on this stretch of road so a guy could be here for days and not get found. So I guess it doesn't happen all that often, but whenever it does, I'm... We're the first to know about it.

DOVER

Where is this town?

REAL

What town?

DOVER

The town you live in.

REAL

Oh I wouldn't really call it a town. It's not that big. It's a village, maybe.

DOVER

A village, huh?

REAL

Yeah.

DOVER

A village, wow. Village sounds so medieval. Village.

REAL

Does it? Oh, well maybe it's not a village then.

DOVER

No, it still could be a village, I guess. I don't what else you would call it. Did you see that movie, "The Village?" By that guy who did "The Sixth Sense?"

REAL

No.

DOVER

Oh. Well, that, that's what I think of when I hear the word "Village." You know, a bunch of people dressed in 1800's clothing and speaking with "thee" and "thou" and shit, you know?

REAL

No.

DOVER

Oh. Well "The Village" sucked, anyway. You did see "The Sixth Sense," though, right?

REAL

No.

DOVER

Really? But I bet you know how it ends, though, huh?

REAL

No.

DOVER

NO? Damn, how did you pull that off?

REAL

We don't have a movie theater.

DOVER

Oh. Wow, that IS a village. How many people live there?

REAL

Uh... Thirty-six.

DOVER

Thirty-six? Thirty-six people? (REAL nods.) Jesus Christ, there were more people in my first grade class than that. Thirty-six people. Huh. And you've lived there for... what, your whole life, I bet.

REAL

Yeah.

DOVER

Wow. Man, a real live westerner. I've heard about you. Do you ride horses to

school and shit?

REAL

No, I just walked. We had horses, though.

DOVER

Did you do that whole cowboy thing? (He throws his hand above his head as though to throw a lasso.)

REAL

Uh, I guess.

DOVER

Man, that is so cool. I think that's great, I really do. I couldn't even imagine growing up that way, though, I grew up in New York.

REAL

New York City?

DOVER

Yeah, in Manhattan. I wasn't born there, though, so I don't have the accent.

REAL

Uh, ok.

DOVER

Thirty-six people?

REAL

Yeah, but I mean, we took the truck up to Superior on some weekends, and that's where I went to school, so it's not like I only knew only those thirty-six people. Me and my family even drove to Denver once, stayed in a Hotel and everything, for a livestock show.

DOVER

Well, I haven't even been to Denver.

REAL

It's huge. Not as big as New York, I'll bet, but huge.

DOVER

I heard its just a bunch of empty warehouses and shit.

REAL

Well some of it was from what I remember, but some of it was really nice too. I mean, really crowded, but nice. I thought all cities had those empty buildings.



DOVER

No, not at all. I mean, they do, but... well take New York, for example. There are a bunch of empty buildings but there's so much else too, you don't even notice, really. You really should see New York. Especially Manhattan, it's wonderful there.

REAL

I've seen pictures. Of the Bridges and the Statue of Liberty, and of the, uh... the World Trade Center before... that must have been horrible.

DOVER

Yeah, I guess. I didn't know anyone who got killed, though, thank God

REAL

Well, yeah, but, I mean that was a huge tragedy. And so close, too.

DOVER

Yeah, but I got over it pretty quick.

REAL

I didn't. I was terrified. We all drove out to Superior just to buy American Flags after that. We never had one in front of the church before. (A moment) A thousand people died and you didn't know one?

DOVER

No.

REAL

Not one?

DOVER

Well, my friend's boss had a cousin or something who got injured, I think.

REAL

Wow.

DOVER

Yeah. The world keeps on spinning, I guess. (An awkward pause) Um... I'm Dover, by the way.

REAL

Oh, my goodness, I completely forgot. I'm Real. (He chuckles and they shake.)

DOVER

Real?

REAL  
Yeah.

DOVER  
Huh.

REAL  
Dover?

DOVER  
Yeah.

REAL  
All right.

DOVER  
So what's your town called?

REAL  
Farmington.

DOVER  
Farmington.

REAL  
Yeah.

DOVER  
Farmington. Sounds like a village. "Once upon a time in the quaint village of Farmington there lived a small boy named Real." Real. How did you get that name?

REAL  
Is it unusual?

DOVER  
Well, no worse than Dover.

REAL  
It was my grandfather's middle name. I don't know where he got it.

DOVER  
Huh.

REAL

It means “Real.” (Silence) That was a joke.

DOVER  
Oh. Ha ha.

REAL  
Where does Dover come from?

DOVER  
It’s where my parents were when I was conceived. (REAL is confused) Where they were when they had...

REAL  
No no no no no, I mean, I’ve never heard of Dover.

DOVER  
It’s in England.

REAL  
England. Wow.

DOVER  
You think New York sounds big, you should see London.

REAL  
Really?

DOVER  
Yeah, I mean New York is big, but it’s dirty and flashy. It’s concrete, but it’s concrete covering... something. I don’t know. But London is so... settled in. It’s comfortable with being a huge city, you know, it’s paid its dues. New York isn’t used to being one of the big cities, it’s insecure in its size. Like its making up for something.

REAL  
Ok.

DOVER  
So how did Farmington stay so small?

REAL  
It’s a long story.

DOVER  
I don’t see any cars coming.

REAL

OK. Well, uh, a few of our families moved out here around 1890, I think, from Superior, and started farming, because they found this... this small spring coming up out of the ground. It's called Jeremiah's Well, after the guy who found it. And they didn't tell anyone about the spring, because they didn't want everybody moving in.

DOVER

Why not?

REAL

Well, they were with God and thought Superior was getting too sinful, I guess, but they kept on trading with other cities, and it just stayed small. And backward.

DOVER

Backward?

REAL

Yeah, you know, backward. Stupid. Behind the times. Even Superior got a movie theater. Even when a corporation offered to buy the land, they said no, it's our father's land. Nobody moved forward in that town. Just stayed and farmed.

DOVER

I think that's great. I hate corporations.

REAL

So does Farmington.

DOVER

Where is it?

REAL

Farmington?

DOVER

Yeah.

REAL

Over that way.

DOVER

Where?

REAL

You see that, uh, that plume of smoke way out there?

DOVER

Where, over that way?

REAL

Yeah, maybe ten miles out.

DOVER

(Looks for a moment.)

I guess I don't see... oh, wait, way out there? That plume? Yeah, I do see that.

Huh. Ok. Ten miles out, huh? How big is it?

REAL

Thirty-six people.

DOVER

No, I know, I mean like how many houses.

REAL

Well, there's the store, the church, then a couple of barns... but there are only fifteen houses. Gosh, that must sound so small.

DOVER

Yeah, that is pretty small. Is it pretty?

REAL

Pretty?

DOVER

I always imagine small towns as really well taken care of, you know, no pollution, no littering, clean front yards, no vandalism.

REAL

It's not pretty.

DOVER

Oh.

REAL

I mean, not pretty like that. You can't really grow grass shorter than five feet out here.

DOVER

It must be spacious though.

ROVER

Oh yeah, lots of space. Not in the town, but around it.

DOVER

Yeah, well, I can tell. How long does it take to walk to the highway?

REAL

What?

DOVER

>From the town. How long is the walk?

REAL

Well, two hours, three maybe.

DOVER

Why?

REAL

Why what?

DOVER

Why would you walk all the way out here?

REAL

You mean now?

DOVER

No... well yeah, I guess, but I mean in general. To the highway. You said as a kid...

REAL

Yeah, yeah. I don't know, I guess living in that town I had such a fascination with this highway. I mean, this goes all the way to Sacramento that way, and Chicago that way. The same highway. Isn't that amazing? One road, hundreds of miles. All the way through. I guess I would come out here and imagine sometimes that I could see all the way out, you know, out to Sacramento.

DOVER

Huh.

REAL

A couple of times I tried to hitchhike, too. No one ever picked me up, though.

DOVER

Huh.

REAL

Well, no, actually, this one time a guy in a Pepsi truck stopped and waved me over, but when I got to the door, he was... uh, uh, naked.

DOVER

Naked?

REAL

Yeah, stark naked. Isn't that funny? Just sitting there, stark naked, and he said "Come on up, kid, you can ride with me" and I remember not knowing what to do and just kind of standing there and then I remember just running as fast as I could back home, scared out of my mind. But when I got back home I couldn't tell anybody.

DOVER

Why not?

REAL

I just... couldn't.

DOVER

Huh.

REAL

I stopped hitchhiking after that.

DOVER

Well shit, good thing you did, too. I've run into some creeps before, but never full blown nudity.

REAL

Like who?

DOVER

Who have I run into?

REAL

Yeah.

DOVER

Well, just a couple of days ago in... uh... Kansas, I think, I can't really tell the difference, but a couple of days ago I'm just outside of some town and this guy in a limo pulls up to me.

REAL

A limousine? A real limousine?

DOVER

Yeah, a stretch. And he rolls down the back window, and he's got this western accent and he's all like (donning an accent) "you need a lift, stranger?"

REAL

A western accent?

DOVER

Yeah, like a real twang. "You need a lift there?" And at first I was like, this guy isn't rich. Look at him. I mean he had the beard and the cowboy hat and everything. And then I realize that he's got other people in the car, and I can't see them yet, but I see their silhouettes in there. And I'm thinking this is pretty sketchy because why is he stopping like this if he's not looking for trouble, I mean if he's even really a rich guy. And so I ask him, I say "where you headed?" And he says "Anywhere you wanna go, there, boy." And I'm kind of creeped out at this point, but it's hot as hell and I figure, hell, when's the next time a limo is gonna pick me up, and so I say "sure," and he opens the door and gets out to let me in, and I realize that his pants are wet. And I look in the car and the people moving around in the seat next to him are two guys, and they're fucking going at it, I mean like you would think their lips were stuck together.

REAL

Dear Lord.

DOVER

And I saw that there was a hot tub in this limo, and at that point, I just booked it. And they left me alone, but I heard the guy laughing as I ran off.

REAL

My goodness. My goodness. That's disgusting.

DOVER

Well, I mean do what you gotta do, you know, but I'd rather walk is all I'm saying.

REAL

Damn... damn right you'd rather walk. Damn right. You'd better walk. That is not right.

DOVER

Well, when you get your own limo with a hot tub in it, I guess you're free to do what you want in it.

REAL



But inviting you in like that? Those people have no business... (DOVER is looking at him.) What?

DOVER  
Never mind.

REAL  
No, what? They do have business? They can just go solicit people like that whenever they want?

DOVER  
They?

REAL  
Oh Lord, you're not queer are you?

DOVER  
No, I'm not, but it... (They stare at each other. Then, to no one in particular)  
If you think I'm gonna get into this, you're out of your mind.

REAL  
(Genuinely confused.)  
What? Wait, get into what?

DOVER  
Never mind.

REAL  
What?

DOVER  
Forget it.

REAL  
Are you angry?

DOVER  
No, I'm not angry?

REAL  
Then what are you?

DOVER  
(Looking at REAL.)  
Intelligent.

(A moment.)

REAL

It must be different in the city.

DOVER

Yeah, it must be.

REAL

Why did you leave?

DOVER

What?

REAL

Why did you leave the city. Why are you here?

DOVER

I had to. To leave, I mean, I had to.

REAL

Oh. Me too.

DOVER

Yeah?

REAL

Yeah.

DOVER

Why?

REAL

(Hesitating at first, then...)

I watched television.

DOVER

You watched television.

REAL

I did.

DOVER

Television?

REAL

Never take it for granted.

DOVER

I don't take for granted.

REAL

Yeah, sure you don't.

DOVER

Well if by take it for granted you mean that it doesn't cause me to pack up and leave home, then yeah, I do.

REAL

OK then.

DOVER

But you did.

REAL

What?

DOVER

Packed up and left.

REAL

Yeah, I did.

DOVER

Because of television.

REAL

Yes.

DOVER

(Fairly frustrated.)

But why television?

REAL

Well we always were able to pick up a few channels with the rabbit ears, you know, and so I would watch the News and Jeopardy, I loved Jeopardy even though I never knew any of the answers... but we only had a few channels, right, and then one day my Uncle came home with this huge box in the back of his truck, and it was a satellite dish. And I had seen advertisements for this thing a couple of times, but my Uncle was always like that, buying shit with money we didn't have. And my mother ran out and started swatting my uncle with a newspaper, saying how could you, how could you go and buy a thing like that?

And my uncle just said, he said that we were unconnected, that we never saw what was going on in the real world, we never knew, we just sat there in our small town and watched time pass, and he said that we might as well be dead because we didn't exist, and he said that if we got connected, if we figured out what was going on than we might start existing again. And he set it up and all of a sudden we had five hundred channels. Five hundred channels on our old T.V. Movies, the Home Box Office, everything. Even some naked stations, but ma figured that out pretty quick. But... Dover, there would be nights, nights after working all day, where I'd just watch. And I saw a lot of things. I saw kids, younger than me, making millions of dollars. I saw people who everyone seemed to know on a first name basis who I'd never seen before. I saw all this money, all this wealth, and all this stuff. All this stuff that you would never need, but what a great way to live, to just be able to have stuff just because it was fun. And on other news stations, not the local news we got, but other news, you know, like CNN, news all the time, every day, unbelievable, and this British Channel, which always said stuff about the president that the regular channels never said, and I would always wonder why the regular news wasn't saying it, and at first I just figured it wasn't true, but now I'm not sure, and the more I watched, the more I realized that the rest of the world is moving on. The rest of the world is not divided into towns with thirty-six people each. It's huge, and it's vast, and its different, and it keeps spinning, like you said, only somewhere back in 1900 me and my (He spits it out with difficulty) Goddamn little town got left behind. We got left behind. And finally I couldn't deal with it. I couldn't handle it.

(A pause.)

DOVER

And you left.

(Another pause.)

REAL

And I left. That's all. Just left. Before sunrise today.

DOVER

Huh. Jesus. I mean, I watch T.V. all the time, well not all the time, but a lot and I guess I just...

REAL

Take it for granted?

DOVER

Yeah.

REAL

Well.

DOVER

It's different, though. I mean, it's not taking Television for granted, it's taking all the crap that's on television for granted.

REAL

Same thing.

DOVER

Maybe. (A moment) I'm heading to a funeral.

REAL

A funeral?

DOVER

Yeah.

REAL

A funeral.

DOVER

Yeah.

REAL

My gosh. Who's?

DOVER

My dad's.

REAL

Your DAD'S? Oh no. Oh, no. Dover, I'm sorry, that's... that's awful.

DOVER

No, it's not as bad as it sounds. I never really knew him.

REAL

How could you not know your father?

DOVER

He and my mom got a divorce when I was two, and my mom got custody, so off I went to Manhattan and my father stayed in Utah.

REAL

Utah?

DOVER

Yeah. And so I grew up in New York and then a week ago I get a letter telling me he died.

REAL

How?

DOVER

Crossing a river.

REAL

A river?

DOVER

He was leading horses across a river and got pulled under.

REAL

He works with horses?

DOVER

Worked with horses, yeah. He ran a ranch.

REAL

So did I.

DOVER

You do?

REAL

I did.

DOVER

Oh, right. But none of my family in New York could stand him, so nobody offered to drive me out here, and no one gave me money for a plane ticket either.

REAL

And you don't have any money?

DOVER

None of my own. I should. I don't though. I'm such a momma's boy, my mom's whole family is rich, but I have none of my own. I stopped getting an allowance when I left for college, and ever since then my mom has paid for everything. None of my own money, that's so depressing.

REAL

I don't have any money either.

DOVER

Right, but what you got you earned, I'll bet.

(A pause.)

REAL

Well, what about the bus? Like a greyhound or something?

DOVER

Well, to tell you the truth... and this is gonna sound fucking dumb.... but the truth is that I considered the bus, I really did, but... even if I could have found the money, which I probably could have, I think this is how he would have done it. He would have hitchhiked I mean. Mom said he used to hitchhike all the time before they married. I can imagine him thumbing down cars no problem. Like this (He demonstrates). Relaxed, not eager, but friendly looking, like it isn't the end of the world if you don't get a ride. Nothing threatening, ideally not too many bags, just a guy trying to get from here to there. Deodorant helps too, especially on long-ass highways like these. But I guess this trip is a tribute, or something. It was more of an impulse at first, but now that I'm this far... (He shrugs.)

REAL

Why do they hate him?

DOVER

My family?

REAL

Yeah.

DOVER

He was too much of a cowboy, I guess. Never settled down. And my mom's side of the family are all businessmen, very WASP and very refined. I got a letter from him once, but my mom wouldn't let me write back. She swore she'd never speak to me again if I came out here, but she will. She always does. I left after a bit of a fight though, which is probably how I got this far without her chasing me down.

REAL

Wow, I can't even imagine.

DOVER

Imagine what?

REAL

Divorce. That whole thing. That must mess around with a kid's mind.

DOVER

It's not so bad.

REAL

It's normal in New York, isn't it? That's what I hear.

DOVER

Well, not normal, but... common. I guess.

REAL

Oh.

DOVER

Maybe too common.

REAL

Well it's pretty rare out here. Especially in my town... village... but I guess it was only rare because... well, if you divorced there'd be no one else to marry. I mean, you kind of had to pick.

DOVER

Pick?

REAL

Yeah, pick who you wanted to marry early on, unless you meet someone in the city, of course, which a few of them did. They'd always move away, though, the ones who married out of town. And Farmington would shrink into the desert just that much more.

DOVER

Did you have somebody?

REAL

Somebody picked?

DOVER

Yeah. I did, I had somebody. A girl. Friend of the family. I don't think she liked life very much.

DOVER

No?

REAL

Same reason as me. Too big a head for too small a town. But her family,



tradition and all... her grandfather was Jeremiah, who found the well. She never would have moved. She would have grown old and died in the same fucking house. The same fucking house.

DOVER

And you were going to marry her.

REAL

I never got around to asking her. I think she liked me, though. Enough, anyhow.

DOVER

Well, what's enough?

REAL

Good question. What's enough? California.

DOVER

For you, you mean?

REAL

Well, it better be. Sacramento. That's where I'm headed.

DOVER

Yeah?

REAL

Yeah. I'm gonna find myself... and get a job. Not in that order. Get a job, first. Stay in a shelter or something. I saw the shelter in Denver, it looked OK. And I saved some money. Not much, but I can make money quickly. And then, who knows. Acting, maybe. Working as a grip on a film set, I heard that pays pretty well if you can get into a union. I always wanted to work a spotlight for a show, like a show in a theater. Is that strange?

DOVER

No, that's... that's nice.

REAL

Good, cause people told me that was strange.

DOVER

It's unusual. Not strange. Unusual

REAL

I love that you think there's a difference. (They laugh) I really do.

DOVER

I love that you have a plan. I mean, it's got some, uh, blank spots, I guess, but... (he sighs) after the funeral is over, I'll stay one night out there, and hitchhike back in the morning. Same highway. And the same bitchy family waiting for me. The same college. Same boring people. Same campus. God damn.

REAL

College. Don't take that for granted either.

DOVER

Oh I don't.

REAL

Like T.V.

DOVER

(Smirking)

Like T.V. Touché.

REAL

What?

DOVER

Touché. Touché? It's French. It comes from fencing, or something. It means "You got me," or something like that. You've never heard "touché" before?

REAL

Guess not.

DOVER

Huh.

(The noise of a car coming begin to be heard, very quietly at first.)

REAL

Well do you know how to make fire with a stick and a rock?

DOVER

No...

REAL

Well then.

DOVER

Well then what?

REAL

Well then... you know French, but I can survive in the wilderness.

DOVER

Touché.

REAL

(Laughing)

Right, right.

DOVER

(Hearing the car.)

Hey, hey. Check it out. (They both look off LEFT.)

REAL

Well it's about time.

DOVER

Yeah. Ok, you've never hitchhiked before?

REAL

No.

DOVER

Ok, it's easy. Just relax, act natural. (REAL puts up his thumb, stretching it as far as it can go. DOVER pushes it down.) No, no, we can wait until it gets over that rise. Now when it comes, just relax. That's the real trick to hitchhiking. Let it come to you. Be ready when it comes, but let it come to you. (A moment.) All right, here we go, here we go, thumbs up. (REAL's thumb is stretched in a "Good Job" gesture.) No, nonono, relax the thumb. Like this. (He demonstrates.) There you go. Ok, here we go. (A moment, as they wait, frozen in anticipation. REAL tries on a large, unnatural looking smile. After a second DOVER notices, and reacts.) Woah, woah, you wanna get a ride or get shot?

REAL

Oh, sorry.

DOVER

Creepy. (After a few seconds, REAL smiles again. DOVER notices something.) Oh shit, it's a coupe.

REAL

Wow, that's a nice car.

DOVER

A very small nice car. Shit... well, we'll see. (The car gets louder, passes them, and we hear it slow down and stop off RIGHT.)

VOICE

You boys need a lift?

DOVER

Yeah, where you headed?

VOICE

Just to the border. I only have room for one, though.

DOVER

(To himself) Oh shit. I thought so OK, uh... (To the driver) Hold on. (To REAL.)  
You want it?

REAL

No. No, I don't. You're on a deadline.

DOVER

I know, but... shit.

VOICE

Hey, you coming or not, I gotta get going here.

DOVER

How long does it take to get to Salt Lake City from here?

REAL

Probably four hours. Three, maybe.

DOVER

Well, ok, if I can get a ride within the next... well, by three, what is that, two and a half hours? If we can find a ride by then, I'll make it in plenty of time.

REAL

The funeral is TONIGHT? TONIGHT? OK, no, Dover, get in that car right now.

(DOVER says nothing.)

REAL

Get in the car! (A pause) Are you honestly thinking about... wow... but I mean, he's going to the border, Dover, you have to go.

DOVER

Well... we can find another car. A four seater.

VOICE  
HELLOOOO?

DOVER  
Just a second, God Dammit. Look, it kind of seems like we're in this together at this point.

REAL  
Thank you.

DOVER  
Well, that and you'd never get a ride by yourself.

REAL  
I guess I wouldn't.

DOVER  
Ok then. (To the DRIVER) Hey! Hey, go on ahead, we don't need a ride.

VOICE  
(Hesitating at first.)  
What?

DOVER  
Go on ahead, we don't need a ride.

VOICE  
What the fuck do you mean you don't need a ride? It's like a hundred degrees out here.

DOVER  
It's ok, we don't need a ride.

REAL  
Yeah, we're fine.

VOICE  
Well what the fuck you gotta go and hitchhike for then? Crazy kids.

(The car starts and drives off into the distance. They watch it go.)

DOVER  
Well that's that, then.

REAL  
That's that. Dover, the funeral is TONIGHT?

DOVER

Yeah.

REAL

Are you gonna make it?

DOVER

I don't know. I hope so.

REAL

I hope so too.

DOVER

Thanks. It really was just bad timing, that's all.

REAL

What do you mean?

DOVER

Well it takes longer to hitch a ride cross country than you might think. At least, longer than I thought it would.

REAL

How long have you been out here?

DOVER

Five days.

REAL

Five days. Five days ago I was working in a fucking field.

DOVER

Six days ago I was working in a fucking classroom.

REAL

Well, work is work, I guess. It could be out here, it could be back there, but really when you get right down to it, it's the same thing.

DOVER

The same thing.

(They sit on the tree and toss their bags down. The lights fade down slowly.)

.....

## II

(The Lights come up slowly. Over four hours have passed. It is nearing sunset, and the light has taken on a distinct reddish quality, although it is still very bright and warm. More clouds have filled the background, and they are tinted a light orange. The sun continues to set as the scene progresses. As the lights come up, REAL kneels in front of the tree, holding a gold watch. He looks at it, timing DOVER. We hear the sound of running in the distance. REAL shouts LEFT.)

REAL

Two minutes and ten, eleven, twelve, oh come on, you can do better than that! Fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, eighteen...

(Suddenly DOVER runs on from LEFT, panting. He runs in front of the tree, tags the sign, and walks with his hands on his hips, gasping for breath.)

REAL

Two twenty. My grandma ran faster than that.

DOVER

Oh yeah, like you could beat two twenty.

REAL

Maybe not... if I were on one foot.

DOVER

One foot my ass. Give me the watch, bitch.

REAL

Hey, now, ask nicely.

DOVER

(Slowly)

Fuck you, give me the watch.

REAL

OK, OK, you want to play that way, we'll play that way. But you are about to get a mean schooling on how a real man runs.

DOVER

Yeah, yeah, you're a real man. Give me the watch.

REAL

(Handing over the watch)

Ok, wait until the second hand gets to 55, then count down from five.

DOVER

I know how it works.

REAL

OK.

DOVER

Nice watch.

REAL

Yeah, uh, it was my father's.

DOVER

Is this real gold?

REAL

Yeah, I think so. It's really old, but it works.

DOVER

When did he give you this?

REAL

Not too long ago.

DOVER

Oh. Well that's nice.

REAL

Sure it is.

DOVER

What's with you? Awwwww, do you miss daddy?

REAL

(Meaning it.)

No.

DOVER

Oh. Uh, I mean if you do that's only natural.

REAL

That's not what I mean.



DOVER

Then what do you mean?

REAL

I took it.

DOVER

You took it?

REAL

Yeah, I took it.

DOVER

As in stole it?

REAL

Yes.

DOVER

Oh. How come?

REAL

One time I told him I wanted to leave town, to hitchhike to Sacramento, and he said I couldn't. And I told him that he couldn't stop me, and he said he couldn't, but if left now, I wouldn't have his blessing, nor my mom's, nor anybody's.

DOVER

So you stayed.

REAL

For a while yeah. And then a few days later I asked him if he would ever give me his blessing. And he said that if he ever decided I could leave, he'd give me his watch.

DOVER

Huh.

REAL

As a going away present.

DOVER

Huh.

REAL

But we both knew he'd never give it to me, not until he died, not after I wanted to leave.

DOVER  
Huh.

REAL  
So I took it.

DOVER  
So you took it.

REAL  
Right before I left.

DOVER  
You stole this thing this morning?

REAL  
Right before I left.

DOVER  
Oh.

REAL  
Is that bad?

DOVER  
I don't know. What do you think?

REAL  
I don't know. I don't know. I had to.

DOVER  
Did you?

REAL  
The reason he never would have given it to me, to take from the town, I mean, was because it was Jeremiah's watch.

DOVER  
Jeremiah. Wait, Jeremiah from the well?

REAL  
Yeah.

DOVER  
Oh my God.

REAL  
Yeah.

DOVER  
The Jeremiah.

REAL  
THE Jeremiah. He gave it to my great grandfather, who I heard was kind of like his sidekick, before he died. He said to make sure the town stayed safe. It's written on the well in the center of town what he said. "Keep all the men around you safe and you shall be truly at home."

DOVER  
That's nice.

REAL  
It's shit.

DOVER  
It is?

REAL  
I don't think home isn't about other people. It's about you. Whether or not you're happy is what really matters.

DOVER  
I guess.

REAL  
You don't agree?

DOVER  
No, I agree. It's just that in New York there are so many people. So many people. You have no idea. And it would be nice if someone out there was thinking about me.

REAL  
They are.

DOVER  
Not really. Not at all in fact. Not even my family, really. They're not trying to keep me safe, anyway. My safety is the last thing on their minds. That's why I'm here. In New York, no one gives a shit. I could die out there and no one

would notice. Nobody notices anything.

REAL

In Farmington, everyone does.

DOVER

That's nice. That's comforting

REAL

No, it's not.

DOVER

Don't take it for granted.

REAL

Yeah, yeah, take it for granted. Believe me, I'm not. I can't for granted. I can't take it at all. Do you know how badly I want to live in a city where no one knows exactly what I'm doing all the time? You think there are any secrets in a town of thirty-six? Any at all? Well there aren't.

DOVER

You have secrets.

REAL

I do now.

DOVER

What will your father do when he notices the watch is gone?

REAL

He won't notice.

DOVER

He won't?

REAL

No.

DOVER

No one will?

REAL

No. No one. I don't think.

DOVER

(Sensing he is on dangerous ground.)

Well, that's good.

REAL

I guess. (A pause.) Dover...

DOVER

Yeah?

(A long moment.)

REAL

Time me.

DOVER

What? Oh, uh, ok. (He looks at the watch.) Uh, you ready....

REAL

Yeah. (He loosens up his legs.)

DOVER

Ok. Ok, here we go, ready? And five... four... three... two... GO!

(REAL runs off LEFT. DOVER sits for a second, blinking. He watches REAL running. He looks at the watch.)

DOVER

Oh shit. SHIT! OH NO!!! (He gets up, frustrated, not knowing what to do, walking around. He kicks his bag. He is about to throw the watch, but restrains himself. He sits on the tree again. After a minute and thirty seconds go by on the watch he looks back off LEFT. A few seconds later, REAL runs on, tags the sign, and collapses on the ground near the tree, breathing hard.)

REAL

How'd I do?

DOVER

A minute forty.

REAL

Ha HA! What'd I tell you? A minute forty, man, I should enter a race or something. (Noticing DOVER.) Well don't look so depressed, I run all the time.

DOVER

Did you realize what time it was?

REAL

No.

DOVER  
It's four thirty.

REAL  
So?

DOVER  
Four fucking thirty, Real, the funeral is in two and a half hours. TWO AND A HALF HOURS.

REAL  
I know. Nobody's come.

DOVER  
I KNOW nobody's come! But I'm gonna miss it! I'm gonna fucking miss it.

REAL  
You might not.

DOVER  
I might not? I might not? It's a three hour drive Real, and then I have to find the place. FUCK!

REAL  
Calm down.

DOVER  
Calm down? Fuck you calm down, I did NOT spend five days on this God forsaken highway to MISS my dad's funeral.

REAL  
Dover, if a car comes, it comes. There's nothing you can do.

DOVER  
I could have been walking. This whole time I could have been walking. I could have made it.

REAL  
You never would have.

DOVER  
I would have. I could have.

REAL

No, you couldn't. It would have taken five hours just to walk to Superior. You'd still be walking, Dover, you'd be walking right now, alone and saying the exact same thing.

DOVER

Well at least I would have tried. I sat here like a fool.

REAL

You didn't. YOU DIDN'T. You sat here because you might as well have.

DOVER

I could have been in Superior. I could have caught a bus.

REAL

You don't have money for a bus.

DOVER

I could have found money.

REAL

Could you? What would have done, Dover, get a job? And then what, get stranded in Utah. Mother isn't going to pay for a bus ride back, now is she?

DOVER

I could have found money.

REAL

And even then, Dover, you'd make it to Superior at five thirty, hungry, dirty, exhausted, sunburned, poor as shit, scrape together your last cash for a two hour bus ride, and pull in to Salt Lake City right at seven thirty. How far away from Salt Lake is the funeral?

DOVER

About an hour.

REAL

About an hour. And that's by car. You'd arrive at the funeral at eight thirty. Right in time for the after-party.

(DOVER is softly crying.)

REAL

Don't... aw, don't... Dover. You tried. You tried

(REAL puts his hand on DOVER's back. The sound of a car starts, unnoticeably at first.)

DOVER

You knew what time it was, didn't you?

REAL

Yes.

DOVER

Why didn't you tell me?

REAL

It wouldn't have mattered.

DOVER

Yeah, but I would have liked to know.

REAL

Would you?

DOVER

Yes. Maybe. (The car gets louder. They hear it. DOVER lifts his head up and looks LEFT.) Oh my God.

REAL

Hey, what do you know?

DOVER

(Getting it together.)

OK, OK, this is it.

REAL

What if he's not going to Salt Lake? What if he's only going to Superior?

DOVER

Then I'll go anyway.

REAL

You will?

DOVER

Well you'll come, right? I mean it doesn't matter where you end up.

REAL

I guess it doesn't.

DOVER



All right, here we go, here we go. You got your bag?

(REAL picks up his bag.)

DOVER

Here we go. Get the thumb out.

REAL

Dover, you're not gonna make it.

DOVER

I'll make it. I've got three hours.

REAL

Two and a half.

DOVER

Two and a half.

REAL

The drive is three.

DOVER

I know the drive is three, God Dammit, but I have to try.

(The car pulls past them, and slows down and stops off RIGHT, but does not turn off.)

DOVER

Yes!

VOICE

Need a lift?

DOVER

We do, yes! (Then, to nobody in particular) Oh thank you, thank you, thank you. (He makes to go off RIGHT. REAL does not move.) Real? Come on, we gotta go. (A pause.) Come on, this guy's not gonna wait. Did you see it, it's a van for christ sakes, it'll seat like six. You can lie down in the back if you want.

VOICE

Hey fellas?

DOVER

Real?

REAL

Dover... where do you want to be when they bury your father? Do you want to be driving along some... God Forsaken highway, making jokes with some stranger you've only known an hour? Do you want to be doing that? If we don't make it in time, and we probably won't, you'll be sitting there, in shotgun, and you'll look at the clock on the dashboard and you'll see it's seven o'clock, and you'll think about him, but you won't be able to do anything. You won't be able to do anything at all. You'll have to sit there and take it, you'll have to act like nothing's going on. I don't know much about people but I bet I know that driver. Imagine if you started to cry. Imagine that. He'd think you were crazy. He'd get scared and kick us out of the car, and you'd we'd be right back here, in the desert, but you'd have missed it. You'd have missed it.

VOICE

Hey, is something wrong?

REAL

We could do it here. At seven o'clock. We have wood, we'll make a fire. We'll... well I don't know... we'll do something. We'll do what we can. You're here, Dover, you're in the desert now, you're in the west, and there's nothing you can do about it except live with it. But from what you've told me, I think your father would much rather be celebrated in the desert, in the West, on the land he loved, even along the edge of the highway he used to hitch rides on, rather than in some beat up van crossing the Utah border. I guess what I'm saying is that it's terrible, but there might be a reason why you're here, why you're here now, why the Lord put you in the desert when you should have been in the city.

(A pause.)

VOICE

Hey I don't mean to interrupt here, but do you guys need a ride or what?

(A pause.)

DOVER

No. (He is choked up. He clears his throat. Then, louder) No, we're fine.

VOICE

Are you sure?

DOVER

Yeah, we're sure. Thank you anyway.

VOICE

OK, uh... well, I'm gonna go.

DOVER

Thanks anyway. (After a moment, we hear the car pull away. There is a pause as the sound fades away into the distance.) We'll light a fire. We should say a prayer or something.

REAL

I have a bible.

DOVER

Good. I have something too. We have to pour him a drink. I have a small bottle. We'll pour him a drink. We have to do it exactly at seven.

REAL

All right.

DOVER

It has to be perfect.

REAL

It will be.

DOVER

OK. (A pause.) Thank you, Real.

REAL

You're welcome.

DOVER

(Looking off RIGHT.)  
This might have been really stupid.

REAL

(Meaning it.)  
Yeah, it might have been.

DOVER

But it feels right.

REAL

Yeah, it does.

DOVER

(After he sets his bag down.)  
Should we get started?

REAL

Yes.

DOVER

Ok.

REAL

Ok... um, you get the branches off of this tree. Uh, they won't light, though. We need tinder. I bet I can find some. It might take a while.

DOVER

I can wait.

REAL

Ok, I'll be back by seven... six. Six thirty at the latest.

DOVER

Ok.

(REAL exits up RIGHT. DOVER proceeds to rip all of the dead branches from the tree. It takes him a little under two minutes and to get them all off, using a knife he has in his back pocket. As he cuts off the branches and puts them in a pile, several things happen. "Pontiac" by Lyle Lovett begins to play. The sun sets, and the stage becomes bathed in a beautiful red light, then purple, then reddish purple. The clouds in the background speed up, and move across the sky, turning the same color as the sun. The moon comes out, a full moon, which we do not see, but whose light will become more and more obvious as the rest of the scene moves on. As the song finishes, the sky slows down again, the light becomes stable, and DOVER has finished piling the branches, looked through his bag, and found a book, the play "Hamlet" by Shakespeare, in a well worn book. He is reading it as REAL enters with some small pieces of wood.)

REAL

Hey.

DOVER

Oh hey.

REAL

I, uh, I found some wood.

DOVER

Oh, excellent. Hey, that's great, that'll work perfectly. Do you want a drink? It's kind of warm, but it's all right.

REAL

Uh, yeah, sure. (He takes the bottle.) Whiskey, huh?

DOVER

Yeah, good stuff too. A real western drink.

REAL

A real western drink. I mainly drink Vodka.

DOVER

Oh. Well, vodka is OK too. It's just when I think of Whiskey I think of Saloons and guys with mustaches playing poker and gunfights and stuff. You know, typical western stuff like that.

REAL

Yeah, typical western stuff.

DOVER

Well hey, if you don;t want it...

(REAL takes a huge swig. They proceed to pass the bottle back and forth throughout the scene.)

REAL

Like hell I don't want it. Hey, that's pretty good.

DOVER

I know. Jim Beam.

REAL

Ah, Jim Beam. My uncle loved Jim Beam, he had all these empty bottles of it in his kitchen, lined up around the cabinets. He said back in College he and his buddies would drink a bottle a night.

DOVER

Wow.

REAL

I know. The one relative I had who went to college and of course he drinks too much whiskey and gets kicked out.

DOVER

Only one?

REAL

Only one who came back home... to Farmington, I mean. Uh, did those branches come off easily?

DOVER

Yeah, kind of. I have a knife. You were gone a while, what happened?

REAL

I couldn't find anything for a while. You have matches, right?

DOVER

Well you can make fire with a stick and a rock, we'll be fine.

REAL

Well yeah, but... don't tell me you don't have matches.

DOVER

No, I do. I'm just messing with you. Can you really make a fire like that?

REAL

With the right rock and the right stick.

DOVER

That's really cool.

REAL

I guess. Well, anyway, we can use this grass to get it lit, and then we'll put this stuff on, and can probably get a pretty big fire going.

DOVER

Great. Great.

REAL

How big do you want it?

DOVER

Big. Not too big. But big. Reasonable.

REAL

Reasonable. That's good. We can keep it reasonable.

DOVER

So you know a lot about fire, though, huh?

REAL

What?

DOVER

You just seem like you know what you're doing.

REAL  
Do I?

DOVER  
Yeah. It's a good thing.

REAL  
It is?

DOVER  
Hell yeah, I would love to have skills like that. Outdoor skills, I mean. That would be great. I mean, you just don't learn stuff like that in New York.

REAL  
Well, yeah, but that's the reason I want to get out of here. I don't know anything.

DOVER  
Sure you do. You went to school, right?

REAL  
Yeah, up through ninth grade. Junior High. And that was only because I asked to.

DOVER  
You asked to?

REAL  
To go to school. One day my dad after sixth sat me down and asked me if I wanted to continue with school. He said I could start working on the farm full time if I wanted. But I said no, I wanted to go to Junior High, and maybe even High School.

DOVER  
The rebel even then.

REAL  
He said he didn't know about High School, but Junior High was fine as long as I made sure to leave plenty of time for the farm.

DOVER  
Why did you want to go?

REAL  
The rebel even then. Even then, there was this idea in my head that I should try to get smart. I always like Junior High after that. It was like I was being

given a gift. I'd like to try and get a... what's it called... a G.D.E. when I get to Sacramento.

DOVER  
G.E.D.

REAL  
G.E.D? Not G.D.E?

DOVER  
Yeah. G.E.D. General Education Degree, or something like that.

REAL  
Well OK. G.E.D. then. Not college though. I mean I loved Junior High but enough is enough.

DOVER  
You're lucky you liked it. Most kids hate middle school.

REAL  
Wait... Middle school?

DOVER  
Yeah, middle school.... middle school? Like Junior High but a grade lower...?  
You've never heard of Middle School?

REAL  
No, when did they do that?

DOVER  
A while ago. Huh, I don't believe that.

REAL  
Well, anyway, this... Middle School. Why do they hate it?

DOVER  
It's just an awkward time, I guess. Adolescence and all. Everybody is all emotional but they don't know why, you know, and there's the whole dating scene starting up for the first time, and all the guys need deodorant but they don't realize it yet, and the women are all growing tits and the guys can;t handle it, at least I couldn't, and no one really knows who they are yet... It's just weird. It wasn't weird for you?

REAL  
No... but it was a pretty religious school, I mean not private but pretty religious. It was strict. I don't think any of us had room for social lives,



not complex ones any.

DOVER

Or maybe that was just you.

REAL

Or maybe that was just me. There were only two of us from Farmington.

DOVER

Oh, yeah, you and who?

REAL

That girl. We played together all the time, but never really knew anyone else.

DOVER

That explains it.

REAL

It does?

DOVER

Well it's hard to have any good drama with just two people, you know?

REAL

You never know.

DOVER

Drink?

REAL

Thanks. (He takes a drink.) When we were in eighth grade she dated another boy for a while.

DOVER

Oooh. Ouch.

REAL

Yes! Thank you! It was terrible! Nobody else understood why it bothered me, because I didn't really like her, you know, but I mean she was my only friend and all of a sudden she wouldn't sit on the bus with me anymore. I never quite forgave her for that, even when they broke up. It was like this rift.

DOVER

See, didn't Middle School suck?

REAL

Junior High.

DOVER

Junior High. Right.

REAL

Yeah... it really did... uh, suck. But I was able to forget it, I mean I had the farm... and...

DOVER

And what?

REAL

Well... even if she was dating another guy, I was pretty sure that we were gonna get married, even back then. I'd overheard our parents planning for it a couple of times, and I just knew, you know? Anything to keep Farmington going. So I never really felt like I had to work for her. Let her date the football player, in the end Farmington would keep us together.

DOVER

Wow.

REAL

Yeah. Do you see why I left.

DOVER

I'm getting there. (A pause) So wait, you had a football team in Middle School?

REAL

Junior High.

DOVER

Right, right, whatever.

REAL

But yeah, we did, we had teams for every grade. You didn't?

DOVER

No, our parents would never have let that happen. We were too young and fragile. They almost banned it in High School once.

REAL

What? Why?

DOVER

Some kid got paralyzed from the waist down.

REAL

Wow.

DOVER

But they didn't.

REAL

Kids got injured all the time in the Junior League. Not paralyzed, but injured. No one seemed to mind. All part of being a kid. Even Carin's boy got a broken nose. He came into class with two black eyes one Monday. It was great.

DOVER

Carin was your girl?

REAL

Carin, yeah.

DOVER

I like that name.

REAL

Me too.

DOVER

Did you ever play?

REAL

Football?

DOVER

Yeah.

REAL

No, I had no time for practice. I had to work the farm every day after school.

DOVER

Homework must have been a bitch.

REAL

I never did much homework.

DOVER

That must have been nice.

REAL

Oh, yeah, sure, it was great. If you had a choice between baling hay in the snow or lying on your bed with a glass of juice listening to music and adding one plus one over and over again... what would you pick?

DOVER  
Good point.

REAL  
Touché.

DOVER  
No, no, I say touché.

REAL  
Well what do I say?

DOVER  
(Thinks about it.)  
I don't know.

REAL  
Well what do the fencers say? It was fencing, right?

DOVER  
I don't know... hey hey I got you? (They laugh) In French, though, probably.

REAL  
Oh of course.

DOVER  
Oh shit. Hey, what time is it?

REAL  
Relax. It's probably only about six twenty. Do you have the watch?

DOVER  
Yeah, I do. (He takes it out and checks it.) Yeah, Six twenty-five. Way to go.  
(He hands it to REAL, who will absentmindedly place it out of sight under the tree.)

REAL  
You can tell by the sun.

DOVER  
You can?

REAL

See how it's just about to be down out there? It's August, so that means it's six thirty right after it's gone down.

DOVER

Huh. See, this is what I was talking about. Knowledge about fire and the earth. I don't know shit about the earth. I know its circumference, and how far it is from the sun, and that's about it.

REAL

How far is it from the sun?

DOVER

Ninety-three million miles.

REAL

Wow.

DOVER

It takes light something like eight minutes to get here.

REAL

Wow. How did they figure it out?

DOVER

Who cares? They know it now. I don't know what they know it for, but they do.

REAL

Did you learn that in class?

DOVER

For class, not in class.

REAL

What do you mean?

DOVER

I only know it because it was on a test in Astronomy 101. That's all. You don't need to know crap like that.

REAL

You don't need to know how to make a fire. Not in New York.

DOVER

Well you don't really need to know anything.

REAL

But people like knowing things. I like knowing things. Like the distance to the sun. Or about books. What are you reading?

DOVER

Oh, Shakespeare.

REAL

Him I've heard of.

DOVER

That's good. It's due in a class when I get back. If I ever do. I figured I might as well bring it. (He hands it to REAL.) This is the first time I've opened it.

REAL

Hamlet, huh?

DOVER

Yeah. It's his best one.

REAL

Says who?

DOVER

The one guy who's read them all, I guess. (THEY laugh.) I don't know. It's just thought to be.

REAL

I always liked Romeo and Juliet. That's the only one I know anything about, but we did it as a play in fourth grade.

DOVER

Romeo and Juliet in fourth grade.

REAL

Well a shortened version of it, obviously, and the writing wasn't all fancy either, but the plot was the same.

DOVER

Who did you play?

REAL

Tybalt.

DOVER

Aw hell yeah. Tybalt is the shit.

REAL

Yeah, he was pretty cool. His name always bothered me, though. Tybalt. Tie-balt is much better, I think. Tybalt sounds like a kid brother. He got to die too, die fighting, and that was after he got to kill Mercutio. Two fights in one show, it was great. That was fun. And then it was me and the kid who played Romeo going at it with these cardboard swords for like five minutes. What a fight. And then I died and I had these packets of ketchup hidden on the sword handle, and I got stabbed and squeezed and grabbed the wound. It looked great.

DOVER

I never liked acting much. Theater, I couldn't take it. And New York is not the place to not like theater. It's everywhere out there.

REAL

There was a small theater troupe at the middle school, run by this teacher with a shaved head. They were really strange. I went to see one of their shows, though, and it was really good.

DOVER

What was it?

REAL

All My Sons, by... uh... I forget who wrote it.

DOVER

Arthur Miller.

REAL

Oh, you've heard of it.

(DOVER laughs.)

REAL

What's funny?

DOVER

Nothing. Never mind. What time is it?

REAL

You've got the watch.

DOVER

No, I gave it back.

REAL

Did you? No, you didn't, I don't have it.

DOVER

I'm pretty sure I handed it to you.

REAL

Huh. Well, OK.

DOVER

What do you mean "well OK," we should look for it. Is it in your pockets? (He checks his own pockets.)

REAL

Dover, it's probably not even six forty. I can tell you when its seven, don't worry.

DOVER

Are you honestly not worried about losing that watch?

REAL

Not really.

DOVER

How are you not worried? That's like the whole town. That's Jeremiah's watch. Jeremiah. He founded the town for God's sake. You can't just lose that.

REAL

I didn't take it to keep it. I took it to take it. Why are you getting so worried about it?

DOVER

How old is that watch? Over a hundred years old, I'll bet.

REAL

Yes. One of the first ever made. But why is it a big deal, Dover?

DOVER

REAL, IT'S YOUR WHOLE GODDAMN TOWN! HOW ARE YOU NOT WORRIED ABOUT THIS?

REAL

Hey, now, you don't have to...

DOVER



I DO HAVE TO YELL, REAL! I DO, BECAUSE FOR SOME REASON YOU DON'T SEE HOW IMPORTANT THIS IS!

REAL  
I LEFT, REMEMBER DOVER? I LEFT! I RAN AWAY! I HATED THAT FUCKING TOWN, DOVER, I COULDN'T STAND IT. I HATED EVERYTHING ABOUT THAT TOWN. JEREMIAH'S SHIT MAY HAVE BEEN IMPORTANT TO THEM, BUT IT SURE AS FUCK IS NOT IMPORTANT TO ME!

DOVER  
Well it fuckin' should be.

REAL  
Should it? Should it really Dover?

DOVER  
Yes, it should. You have something that the whole fucking is missing out here. You have it. And if you're going to leave it behind, that's fine, go ahead, but you'd better God Damn well not forget about it.

REAL  
YOU DIDN'T LIVE IT, DOVER. You didn't live it! You have this idea of the American West as some sort of playground, some sort of fucking place where a bunch of bold unchained men drink Whiskey straight from the bottle ride around on horseback and live like the good earth intended, but that's not how it is. The West is hard and hot and poor and simple, and there are people who like their lives hard and hot and poor and simple, but most of these people are out here because they were born here. That's all. They're out here because their fucking stupid grandfather and his boss came out here in 1900 and said exactly what you just said... that this place has something. "Something." They didn't know what, but God Damn if it didn't have something. But this place has nothing, nothing that New York or Sacramento don't have more of, except sand. (He picks up a fist of sand.) Sand, Dover! This sand is nothing. It may look great from the other side of the fence, but trust me, it has no value whatsoever.

DOVER  
I'm not... talking... about... sand. There's a reason why your dad wouldn't let you leave, Real. As poor as you thought you were, you had something, something that I don't have.

REAL  
What, what did I have?

DOVER

You had the West. The West. The whole ideal of that man on the horse drinking whiskey or whatever. I mean, it doesn't look like they show it in the movies, but it's still there. You do take it for granted, and maybe you can't see it for what it is, or for what I see it as, or what your father sees it as, or what Jeremiah saw it as, but you have it. You have it, and you can't get rid of it. Even you yourself, in your personality, you have it. You know the land. You have a connection to the land, and the earth that some people spend their whole lives trying to find. You were born with it, for God's sake. And I know you want to leave it, I mean you see something in the city that's calling out to you, but please, please, please, don't deny you have it.

REAL

I have it. I can't get away from it.

DOVER

Do you have to get away from it?

REAL

It won't blend in with the city. The city is what I want. Sacramento. A normal life.

DOVER

What's normal?

REAL

Not thirty six people and an arranged marriage. That may have been normal back in the Old West, but fucking Farmington couldn't stay in 1900 as much as it tried. Time dragged it along, through the sand, kicking and screaming.

DOVER

Manhattan isn't normal either, Real. Far from it.

REAL

But Manhattan is ahead of the pack. New York is. It can do what it wants. If Farmington could have done what it wanted, it would have removed all the power lines and bought a fucking stagecoach.

DOVER

Would it have?

REAL

Maybe not. But it would definitely stay stupid.

DOVER

There's a difference between stupid and traditional.

REAL

I know. (A pause. REAL takes a drink, and passes it to DOVER, who does the same. REAL looks off right.) It's almost seven.

DOVER

Really. Wow, time flies when you're having fun, huh?

REAL

(With an exhausted laugh.)

Yeah, I guess it does.

DOVER

Look, I don't mean to assault you. I just... well, I like to think there's something out there besides concrete and buildings.

REAL

I know. And I guess I like to think that somewhere concrete and buildings are covering up some of that. (He gestures over his shoulder)

DOVER

(Looking back at the desert.)

It is pretty just after sunset, though, isn't it.

REAL

(Looking back as well.)

Yeah, I guess it is.

(They start for a moment, then look at each other.)

REAL

You ready to do this?

DOVER

Yeah.

REAL

Me too. Me too. Ok, so we need some grass. (He starts pulling the dried grass from underneath the tree.) Help me out. (DOVER starts pulling up grass too. Soon they have most of it. REAL moves deftly as he explains. DOVER drinks more as he watches.) Ok, now, this is how to make a fire get going in no time. Put the grass on the ground first, like so, in a small pile. Then put the wood chips over it in a pyramid shape, like this. Then, get the smallest of the big logs, like... this one, and lean it up against the pyramid, so it doesn't fall. Now give me the matches. (DOVER does, taking them out of his bag.) Great. Now,

watch this. (He lights the match and it immediately goes out.)

DOVER

Nice.

REAL

Shut up. (He takes another match and snaps it in half as he strikes it.)

DOVER

Need some help?

REAL

No. (He snaps the third match as well.) Damn it, anyway.

DOVER

Try pointing the head toward you as you strike it.

(REAL does so, and the match lights right up.)

REAL

Thanks.

DOVER

Just don't say I didn't contribute.

(REAL drops the match in and the fire goes right up. The log catches soon afterwards. As it goes up, REAL takes the bottle and drinks.)

REAL

See that?

DOVER

Very nicely built. I'll have to remember that.

REAL

I do that all the time.

DOVER

Really.

REAL

(Whoops.)

No. Yes, I mean, not all the time, I'm not a pyromaniac or anything.

DOVER

Pyromaniac.

REAL  
Pyromaniac. I don't set a lot of fires, I mean.

DOVER  
But you've set your share.

REAL  
Maybe more than my share.

DOVER  
Well, I've set less than my share, so you're probably in the clear.

REAL  
OK. (He leans back and finds the watch.) Oh, hey, whaddaya know?

DOVER  
Oh hey, all right! Where was it?

REAL  
Just under the tree.

DOVER  
Of course. I knew you had it.

REAL  
I had it? You could have put it there just as easily.

DOVER  
Well as long as its found. What time is it?

REAL  
Six fifty-nine.

DOVER  
Shall we?

REAL  
We shall...

DOVER  
Uh, I've never done anything like this before.

REAL  
Carin and I buried a cat once. No fire or anything.

DOVER

Well you'd better officiate then.

REAL

Guess I'd better. Oh wait. (He reaches into his bag and grabs a worn Bible) Sit on that side of the fire. (DOVER sits to the LEFT of the fire) Ok, here we go. (Standing now) Good evening everyone.

DOVER

Good evening.

REAL

We are gathered here at a road sign on the outskirts of Wyoming next to the famed Route 80 to pay homage to a great man. What was your father's name?

DOVER

John.

REAL

A great man, named John, father of Dover. What can we say about John? John was truly a man of the West. He loved the road, he loved the outdoors, and as much as he could, he loved his family. He died, as is only natural, he died and was returned to the dust from which he came. Do you want me to read from this?

DOVER

Pick something you like. I don't know it well.

REAL

Well here, how about the one they usually read.

DOVER

Ok, but you pick something too.

REAL

Ok. Uh, let's see, how does this go... all right. (He holds the Bible shut in his hands) In sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ, we commend to Almighty God our brother John and we commit his body to the ground... uh... oh yeah.... earth to earth; ashes to ashes, and dust to dust. The Lord bless him and keep him, the Lord make his face to shine upon him and be gracious unto him and give him peace. Amen.

DOVER

Amen. Ok, now pick something.

REAL

You first.

DOVER

Uh... ok, me first. I have a letter he wrote to me. One of the last I think.

REAL

Really?

DOVER

Yeah, I brought it with me

REAL

Read it.

(DOVER digs in his bag. REAL sits to the RIGHT of the fire. DOVER opens the letter up.)

REAL

Stand up.

DOVER

(Stands, clears his throat.)

Dated March 14th of this year... Dear Dover. I am sorry not to have written you in a while and may not be able to write you again for a while as things get busy out West in the Spring. I hope that someday you will be able to come out here and visit because I would like to see you. I hear you are in college now, that is great news, and I hope your grades are better than mine were, which should be no difficult task for you. I know your mother does not let you respond to my letters, and that is too bad, but I am sure you are responding anyway. I hope you do not look down upon your father for living life in the way he does. I am only a cowboy, but I love you anyway and am truly sorry I could not get to know you better. I know I have said this in other letters but I still mean it. I hope you are doing as well as you can, I know that I am, because really all that life is is doing as well as you can. At least as far as I've figured out. Eventually we will talk and you can reply to every letter at once, but I hope that meanwhile life in the city does not get too heavy. If it does, remember, this country still has places where there are no buildings in sight, and maybe someday you can try to get to one. Love, Your Father.

REAL

Thank you. That was beautiful.

(DOVER nods and sits, folding the letter back into the envelope.)

REAL

Do you still want me to pick a passage?

DOVER

Yes.

REAL

Ok... from the book of John, howabout.

(DOVER smiles. REAL nods and shuffles through the Bible.)

REAL

Ok, uh, here it is. I love this passage and I don't know why. In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God and the word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. Here's the good part. There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came for testimony to bear witness to the light. He was not the light, but came to bear witness to it. The true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world knew him not. He came to his own home and his own people received him not. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power. (He closes the book.) And so even in death, let John continue to give the light to the people, for it is in his footsteps that his son will follow.

DOVER

Thank you.

REAL

I cut some corners.

DOVER

That's OK. Uh, I have one more thing. If we can handle it. Have you ever heard of The Prophet?

REAL

No, what is it?

DOVER

(As he reached into his bag.)

It's this book, this short book, and some people think it's more important than the Bible.

REAL

Wow. What is it?

DOVER

It's... well its hard to explain, but I bought it at a small bookstore in Kansas



a couple of days ago and I want to read this passage.

REAL

Ok.

(DOVER stands. REAL sits.)

DOVER

This is called "On Death." Then Almitra spoke, saying, We would ask now of Death. And the prophet said: You would know the secret of death, but how shall you find it unless you seek it in the heart of life? (A pause) For life and death are one, even as the river and the sea are one. Your fear of death is but the trembling of the shepherd when he stands before the king whose hand is to be laid upon him in honor. Is the shepherd not joyful beneath his trembling, that he shall wear the mark of the king, but is he not more mindful of his trembling? When you have reached the mountain top, then you shall begin to climb, and when the earth shall claim your limbs, then shall you truly dance. (He shuts the book. REAL's eyes are tearing.)

REAL

(standing and sniffing)

And so we bid John's spirit farewell, out to roam what's left of the American West. Is there anything you want to say before he goes?

DOVER

I don't think so.

REAL

Are you sure?

DOVER

Well... dad, I... uh, I.... I'm doing as best as I can under the circumstances.

(REAL takes the bottle and hands it to DOVER. DOVER pours a drink or two onto the sand, and leans against the tree, softly crying. REAL sniffs, and sits. DOVER hands him the bottle, and he drinks it. DOVER takes it back and finishes it in one swig. He tosses the bottle back behind the tree.)

DOVER

That's that.

REAL

That's that.

DOVER

That felt good.

REAL  
Yeah, it did. It really did.

DOVER  
Thank you.

REAL  
No, thank you.

DOVER  
For what?

REAL  
For being real.

DOVER  
I'm Dover. You're Real. (They laugh. A moment. DOVER reaches for his water and takes a large swig.) How did this tree get here, anyway? A tree trunk in the middle of the desert.

REAL  
You know, I have no idea. I've seen it out here, though, when I was a kid. It's been here longer than me, though. I always thought somebody put it out here for hitchhiking, for people like you, you know, for people stuck in the desert who need a place to stop for a while.

DOVER  
Some people are just nice like that.

REAL  
They are.

(They look at each other, a long moment. Then, they slowly move toward each other and kiss, very slightly. They move back, look at each other in partial lust and partial disbelief, then move back in and begin to make out, slowly at first, then using their hands, kissing each other's faces and necks. DOVER sets his open canteen down on the ground. The lights slowly fade, leaving all but the firelight. As they kiss, REAL reaches for his canteen, and stops kissing DOVER just long enough to put the fire out with the water. The stage is dark.)

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### III

(The lights come up, suddenly and bright. It is morning, and already it is getting violently hot at the tree. Throughout the scene we may or may not notice a slow and steady rain of ash floating down from RIGHT. We also may or may not notice that there is a slight layer of ash covering everything on stage. At first it appears no one is on stage, although the bags and canteen and books are exactly where they were left, but almost as soon as the lights come up, DOVER sits up from behind the tree. He is shirtless. He stares off into the distance for a second, trying to go over in his head what happened the night before. He inadvertently brushes ash out of his hair. After a second he looks down and presumably sees REAL, still sleeping. He looks back up, a look of horror and disgust on his face. He finds his shirt, puts it on, and stands up, looking down the road to make sure no cars are coming in either direction. He sits on the tree, slowly, unsure of himself in every sense of the word. He emits a dry, painful cough, and reaches for his open canteen. He takes a drink, and immediately spits it out, choking and wiping off his tongue in disgust. He reaches his fingers into the canteen and they come out black. He stares at them in disbelief. REAL's voice comes from behind the log, cracked and dry.)

REAL

Hey, will you hand me some water?

(DOVER says nothing, looks over and remembers that REAL is still sleeping there. Saying nothing, he starts to pack up his things, tucking in his shirt and putting on his shoes.)

REAL

Hey, did you hear me? I'm dry as bone. (He sits up from behind the tree, also shirtless.) God damn it is hot out here. (Seeing DOVER packing.) Well Good Morning to you too. What's with you?

DOVER

I'm leaving.

REAL

You're leaving?

DOVER

Yeah.

REAL

Where are you going?

DOVER

I don't know. Away.

REAL  
There's nowhere to go.

DOVER  
I'll find somewhere.

REAL  
Why are you leaving? (DOVER just looks at him.) I know what's making you want to leave, but I don't know why. Just tell me why.

DOVER  
Last night.

REAL  
Last night was real. It was something real.

DOVER  
No it wasn't.

REAL  
How can you say that?

DOVER  
Because it wasn't. I was drunk, and... emotional. We were both drunk. It was the God Damn Jim Beam, that's all.

REAL  
You know it was more than that.

DOVER  
Do I? Look, I'm not gonna talk about it. I'm gonna drink some of your water and I'm gonna leave.

REAL  
Why?

DOVER  
I don't want to talk about it.

REAL  
I meant why my water. You have your own water.

DOVER  
Try mine.

(As DOVER unscrews REAL's canteen and takes a long drink, REAL comes around the tree, and drinks DOVER's water. He spits it out.)

REAL

That's horrible. What happened?

DOVER

I don't know. It tastes like ash.

REAL

Ash? (A horrible realization begins to dawn on him) Oh Lord. Oh Dear Lord. (He runs his hands through his hair and a small amount of ash comes out) Oh Jesus. Oh Jesus. Help me.

(DOVER has finished packing. He tosses REAL his canteen.)

DOVER

Here's yours. It was shut. (REAL throws it to the ground. DOVER shrugs) All right, then, don't drink it. But you're not sweating, and that's the first sign of dehydration. (He looks at REAL, who looks as though he has been slapped in the face.) I think it must have been from our fire. Or not... did you put it out before... oh Jesus. I can't deal with this. I'm gonna head up the road.

REAL

You're gonna walk?

DOVER

I'm gonna head up the road, yes. Don't follow me.

REAL

Why?

DOVER

Just don't, OK. Whatever we had... whatever you think, whatever YOU THINK we had... we didn't, OK.

REAL

We did.

DOVER

No, we didn't.

REAL

How can you say that?

DOVER

Look, thank you for... everything. Everything last night, except for.... You could do that for a living, you know... services. It was... cleansing, I guess. But I can't... I mean, we can't.... we can't.

REAL  
Why?

DOVER  
I DON'T KNOW, for God's sake, we just can't.

REAL  
You just can't.

DOVER  
Ok, then, I just can't. But regardless, it... it didn't happen.

REAL  
Of course it happened. It happened for half of last night.

DOVER  
Don't... don't, don't say that. Do not say that.

REAL  
You can't go.

DOVER  
I'm going.

REAL  
Don't.

DOVER  
I have to. I have to. I couldn't stay.

REAL  
You could.

DOVER  
NO! NO, I could not, I can not. I won't.

REAL  
Why won't you? I don't understand.

DOVER  
I'm not... I'm not... that way.

REAL  
Neither am I.

DOVER  
You are.

REAL  
I'm not. I'm not. You're just different.

DOVER  
I'm not. I'm really not. I'm gonna go.

REAL  
Where?

DOVER  
I don't know, dammit. Anywhere. Anywhere but here.

REAL  
You can't.

DOVER  
I can and I will. Thank you for the funeral. (He starts to walk)

REAL  
But... you don't have any water.

DOVER  
I don't. Shit.

REAL  
See, you can't leave.

DOVER  
I don't have any... but I know where I can get some.

REAL  
Where.

DOVER  
Jeremiah's Well.

(A pause.)

REAL  
No.

DOVER

Yes, yes, you said it yourself... a two to three hour walk, I'll go fill up, maybe buy some food, you said they have a store, right?

REAL

Don't. Don't go to Farmington.

DOVER

Why not? Because that's the one place you won't follow me? Well that kind of strengthens its appeal, to tell you the truth. I need water, I need food, and I need a ride to Superior. Hell I bet if I call my mom she'll even fly me back out if I tell her I missed the funeral

REAL

Please. Please do not go to Farmington.

DOVER

What's keeping me here? You?

REAL

Don't go! You cannot go!

DOVER

I'm leaving. (He starts to walk off RIGHT. REAL follows a few steps.)

REAL

DOVER YOU CANNOT GO TO FARMINGTON!

DOVER

(Spinning around, close to off RIGHT.)

GIVE ME ONE GOOD REASON WHY, REAL, ONE GOOD REASON WHY I SHOULDN'T GO TO FARMINGTON!

REAL

IT'S NOT THERE ANYMORE. (A pause.) Oh God.

DOVER

It's not what?

REAL

It's not there anymore.

DOVER

What do you mean, Real. What do you mean its not there anymore.



REAL

Before I left. Yesterday morning. Before anyone was awake.

DOVER

What. What did you do before anyone was awake?

REAL

There were only eighteen buildings, but there were seven cars too, all full of gas. It was easy. A stick and a rock.

DOVER

Oh my God.

REAL

(Advancing on DOVER, who looks as though he has been shot in the back.) I'm sorry, Dover. I'm so sorry. I had to. I had to. It was the only way. I took the watch, and it all just went so easy after that, please, you understand, right? Please. (He places a hand on DOVER, and DOVER punches him in the jaw, sending him reeling backwards. He stands, his mouth full of blood.) Please, please, you have to understand, Dover, it had to happen, it had to... (DOVER hits him again, twice this time before he is knocked backward into the tree. He ad-libs choked crying apologies as DOVER lifts him up by the neck.)

DOVER

HOW COULD YOU? HOW COULD YOU? THE ONLY FUCKING THING THAT MAKES YOU WORTH ANYTHING! THE ONLY FUCKING THING! (He punches REAL one final time, and he lands bleeding up against the tree, barely with it.) You, went back, didn't you? The wood chips. Oh my God. You went back to admire your fucking handiwork. (He kicks REAL in the ribs. REAL coughs up blood.) What did you see, huh? What'd you see?

REAL

Everyone.... everyone was asleep. The whole town.

DOVER

Nobody? Not one?

REAL

No... Nobody.

(DOVER emits an inhuman yell. He lifts REAL up onto the top of the tree, and pulls out his knife. He lifts it up and holds it above REAL. Five seconds pass. DOVER tries to stab REAL, but cannot bring the knife all the way down.)

REAL

You can't escape it, you know. I can't either. The West, I mean. Soon enough you're gonna realize that it's all the West. The whole fucking country. The east coast used to be the west when we were still European, for God's sake. The EAST COAST. It's all the West, it's just been fucked around with more in some places. Underneath New York, under all that concrete. The west is everywhere and it won't leave, it'll just get paved over, one fucking highway at a time. All I did was help it along.

(DOVER emits a sob, throws the knife away, and throws one final punch at DOVER's face. His leg kicks and he lies still. DOVER leaves him there, sheathes his knife, and starts to pack. The sound of a car begins to grow in the distance. After a few seconds, he hears it, looks up, and quickly hides REAL and his belongings behind the tree, but not before drinking the rest of REAL's water.)

DOVER

When you die from heatstroke, the State Troopers will go to Farmington.

(After a moment, he grabs the watch from REAL's pocket, and puts it in his. He sticks his thumb out. After a few seconds, the car drives past, and screeches to a halt off RIGHT.)

VOICE

You need a lift?

(DOVER takes one final look at the tree and the abandoned fire pit. He shoulders his bag and walks off RIGHT. We hear their voices talking off stage.)

VOICE

Where you headed, man?

DOVER

Sacramento.

(We hear a car door shut, and the car zooms away. A couple of seconds after the sound is completely gone, the lights suddenly switch out. End of play.)