

Curtain. Lights come up. Right-center stage, a bed faces the audience. To the right of the bed, is a small table and a stool. Cora sits on it, her hands folded lightly in her lap. Dewey Dell stands to the left of the bed, fanning Addie. Addie lays in the bed, the covers pulled up under her chin. A door is set sideways up-center stage. Cash is left-center stage, sawing and hammering Addie's coffin. Lights are dim on the left side of the stage.

Cora: They are just the nest cakes you have ever seen!

Dewey Dell: Oh that's nice...

Cora: She should have taken them anyways, but you know how rich people are...*The lights dim and everybody by Cora freeze. Spotlight is on Cora. She addresses the audience very matter of factly. Oh she's goin' to Hell for sure. The whole family is. Lights come up stage right again, and everybody unfreezes. Yes those cakes sure were nice...The sawing starts to aggravate Cora. Very loudly, as if hoping that Cash hears her and stops: It's such a lovely day! It would be nicer if it were a bit quieter! Cash stops sawing for a moment, then resumes. Cora sighs heavily. She glances nervously around the room. There is a 5 beat silence. Those cakes sure were nice...*

Lights dim on right side of stage and they come up on the left. Darl and Jewel enter from the left lobby door, walk down the isle, and climb on stage. Jewel is riding the horse (see props list). Darl leads, and crosses to Cash. . Cash has not noticed them. Jewel steps off of the horse and lays it carefully on the ground, then crosses to Darl and Cash.

Darl: Pa wants to leave soon to bury Ma at Jefferson. *Cash just now notices them, and stops working. He sets his tools down and whips the sweat from his forehead. He takes his time doing all of this. A look of bewilderment is on his face. Finally he answers:*

Cash: What?

Darl: I said, Pa wants to leave soon to bury Ma at Jefferson. *Cash's facial expression remains the same.*

Cash:...She ain't dead yet. *He scratches his head.*

Darl: Well she's nearly dead.

Jewel in a Napoleon Dynamite style voice : Gosh! Don't say things like that! Freaking Idiot! Jewel grabs his horse and gallops away back where he came from.

Darl to Cash: He's at that age. *Cash nods and continues sawing. Vardaman enters stage left holding a brown potato sack and a long stick with fishing line on it. He crosses to Darl.*

Vardaman: Look what I got Darl! *Lights dim and the spotlight is on Vardaman. Everybody freezes but Vardaman. He addresses the audience. Darl is my brother. Lights come up on left stage and everybody unfreezes. Vardaman opens his sack and him and Darl look in it. I got a big 'ern!*

Darl: Bring it to Dewey Dell.

Vardaman: Alright Darl! *Lights dim and everybody freezes. Spot is on Vardaman. Darl is my brother. Lights come up on the stage right. Everybody unfreezes. Darl starts to help Cash saw. Vardaman crosses to the door, then into the house and to Dewey Dell. She looks into the bag, then hands Vardaman the fan. He reluctantly starts fanning. Dewey Dell crosses behind the bed, then exits stage right. All of this is done without verbal communication. After 5 beats, Cora speaks:*

Cora: Well, I best be goin'. I've got ta' read God's holy word before suppa' time. *Cora stands, crosses behind the bed, and then to the door. God be with you Addie dear. Lights dim and the spot is on Cora. Everybody freezes but her. Oh she's goin' to Hell for sure. Lights come up on both sides of the stage, and Cora goes out the door, nods to Darl, and exits up-left stage. Addie struggles to speak to Dewey Dell, but finally she utters one word:*

Addie: Cash.

Dewey Dell *to the invisible window center stage:* Cash! Cash and Darl stop sawing and look to the window for a moment, then Cash holds the coffin up so that Addie can see. Addie weakly motions for him to come closer. Cash takes a few steps forward. Addie motions again. He takes a few more steps forward. He is now at the window. Addie motions again. Cash and Darl both carry the coffin into the house and they cross to the bed. They set the coffin down gently on the small table and Addie examines it, while still lying down. She struggles to talk again, and after 2 beats, she speaks.

Addie: I wanted it to look more like this. *She pulls out a tiny folded piece of paper from under the covers. Cash takes it and unfolds it. It is the size of a poster board. Cash looks it over and scratches his head.*

Cash: Shouldn't be too hard... *Cash takes the paper and him and Darl carry he coffin over their heads and back outside. Lights dim on stage right. Cash and Darl start taking apart the coffin to rebuild it. Anse and Peabody enter from the left lobby door, walk down the isle, and climb on stage. Anse leads. Peabody carries a black doctor's bag (see props list). Anse crosses to Cash and Darl. Darl stops working, but Cash continues without even looking up. Peabody climbs slowly onto the stage, then half squats, trying to catch his breath.*

Anse: I brung Peabody for your Ma...I guess she really is sick. *Anse scratches his head the same way that Cash did. Darl and Anse look over at Peabody. Peabody notices them and holds up one finger as if to say "one moment". He then crosses to them, and Anse leads the way to the door and into the house. Lights dim on stage left with Cash still working. Lights come up on stage right. Darl calls for Vardaman who slowly crosses to him and they exit stage left. Anse motions toward Addie, then leans against the invisible wall. Peabody crosses to Addie and sets his bag on the bed. He pulls out his stethoscope from his bag, and puts it on. He takes the other end and puts to her chest, under her clothes.*

Peabody: She's dead...

Anse *whispering to himself:* Praise Jehovah.

Peabody *feeling her neck:* She's still warm. Must'a just died.

Anse: May she rest in peace. *Lights dim and the spot is on Anse. To the audience: Now I can get them teeth! Blackout.*

Scene two:

During blackout, Darl sits on the edge of down-center stage, His feet hang over the edge of the stage. The spotlight is on him. His index and middle fingers are pressed against his temples and he stares forcefully at the audience. His voice comes from the speakers, but his mouth is not moving, as if he is telepathically communicating with the audience.

Darl: To quote a famous author: "All of this happened more or less". Each one of us remembers it a bit differently, but this is how I remember it. After Ma died, life continued. I went on reading people's minds, and they all went on being idiots. Dewey Dell got knocked up by some boy named **Leaf**. Her thoughts say that she wants to kill me. Vardaman lost it. His thoughts screamed at me something about a fish. Pa showed no remorse outwardly or inwardly. All he could think about were those darn teeth. Cash seemed to be focused on finishing the coffin. And Jewel... Well, he don't think much. The only thing he was worried about was that horse. It was almost like the HORSE was his mother!...Anyhow, we left for Jefferson the morning after Ma died. Tull reluctantly let us borrow the wagon (which was too small) and we were on our way. Everything seemed to be going well, until Vardaman complained that he was hungry. Pa had forgotten the food. So we had to make a stop in some town called Moonik...Muknic...Muchni...Anyways, we had to stop in some town. Pa said that we had *makes air quotes with his fingers as he says this*: "distant relatives" in...Mo-Muh-that town. *Lights come up and the stage is set (see set design for scene two). Darl crosses to down-right stage where the family and wagon are. Everybody is frozen except him.* But then again, we seem to have *uses air quotes again*: "distant relatives" in every town. *Everybody unfreezes. Rosa is at the stove, stirring a huge black cauldron with a wooden spoon. Hans sits at the table, reading a newspaper. His chair is the one facing the audience. Anse knocks on the door.*

Hans: It's them! They know about Max!

Rosa: Calm down shauwlaosuewayaho! I'll get it. *Rosa crosses to the door and opens it just a crack. When she sees that it is not the German police, she opens it a bit more and sticks her head out of the door)Yes?*

Anse: Rosa Huberman?

Rosa: What do you want shauwlaosuewayaho?

Anse: I'm Anse Bundren, your second cousin's brother in law's best friend's son twice removed. Remember? At the family reunion-

Rosa: Oh yes! Yes! Come in-

Anse: Well actually, we don't want to bother you. We just need some food and we'll be on our way-

Rosa: Non-sense! You come in.

Anse: But I don't think-

Rosa: COME IN SHAUWLAOSUEWAYAHO! *Anse and the kids walk in the house as Rosa holds the door open. Jewel leaves the horse with the wagon. Hans stand up anxiously and as she closes the door and walks to the black cauldron, she says: Calm down shauwlaosuewayaho. They're family. Hans nods at the Bundrens and takes his seat. With an odd cheerfulness: Have a seat!*

Anse: Oh no, we don't wanna be begrudging-

Rosa: Sit down you shauwlaosuewayaho! *Anse, Jewel, Vardaman, Dewey Dell, and Cash cross to the sofas and quickly sit down. Darl crosses to the kitchen table and sits in the chair to the left of Hans.*

Darl with his nose crinkled in disgust. Quietly to him self: The smell of the dead body outside is already seeping into the house!

Hans *whispering*: No that's just Rosa's pea soup-

Rosa: Tonight, I made my famous pea soup!

Hans *without sarcasm*: Mmm my favorite! *Just then, Leisel and Rudy burst in the door, huffing and puffing, their faces red from exercise. They stop dead in their tracks as soon as they enter. The look on their faces is similar to a deer in the headlights. Books are stuffed under their shirts. There is a 5 beat pause in which Rudy and Leisel remain frozen. The Bundrens all stare at them. Hans and Rosa don't even look up from what they are doing.*

Hans: Hello Leisel and Rudy. What have you been doing for the last hour?

Leisel and Rudy: Nothing!

Hans: That sounds fun. *Rudy and Leisel slowly walk sideways to the stairs.*

Leisel *as they are creeping*: Uh Papa? We are going to go up stairs and wash up for dinner. *Just as they turn and run up the stairs:*

Rosa: Alright, but then come down and meet your cousins.

Darl *to Hans*: That's your daughter. She likes books.

Hans: Yes...But how did you know?

Darl *shrugs*: Lucky guess.

Anse: Its really hot! Code blue! Code blue! *Anse stands during the first “Code blue” and thrusts his arms up. Jewel, Vardaman, Dewey Dell, and Cash all quickly stand and gather around Anse. They start to fan his armpits. Then, Anse flops his arms down and crosses down stage.*

Ben(aka Anse) I’m sorry, but I cannot do this. *The actors all sigh and say things like “not again, “He always does this” etc. Booth lights come on and the stage manager sticks her head out of the window.*

Stage Manager: What’s the problem now?

Ben: I just can’t do this. Anse would not say this. *Director now sticks her head out of the booth.*

Director: What going on? Why are we stopping?

Ben: Anse would not say and do this.

Director: I’ll be right down. *The director turns and leaves the booth.*

Stage Manager: Yeah we’ll be right down. *From the back of the booth we hear:*

Director: You stay here. *Stage Manager sighs and the booth lights go out. After a few beats, the director enters from the left lobby door and stops halfway down the steps. Now, what is the problem, Ben?*

Ben: I just don’t understand why this is in the script. Anse would have more self respect than this.

Director: Ok, Ben, we’ve been over this a millions times. This play isn’t supposed to be serious. It’s supposed to make fun of the books-

Ben: But even so, this is just ridiculous. *Max, Leisel, Rudy, Santiago, Cora, Addie, and Tull now come out from various places backstage.*

Director *rubbing forehead*: It’s supposed to be ridiculous.

Lucas (aka Tull) *taking a step forward*: Hey, while we’re all out here, we skipped my scene-

Director: Oh yes! I forgot to tell you! We had to cut it.

Lucas: Cut it?

Director: Yeah sorry. *Tull exits slowly stage right.*

Josh (aka Max): Can we go on? I really wanna get to my scene-

Kevin (aka Darl): I think that I should have more telepathic scenes. *There is a slight pause. The next few pages should be spoken rather rapidly unless otherwise marked.*

Director: What?

Kevin: Well, I just think that Darl needs to be more evil. Right now Anse is the evil one, and I just think that Darl should be eviler.

Ben: Yeah I agree!

Josh: Can we move on...?

Director: You have enough evil scenes, Kevin.

Kevin: Awww man.

Ahad (aka Santiago): I think that another evil scene with Darl might be beneficial to the balance of the play.

Josh: I wanna get to my scene...*Stephen (aka Jewel) crosses to center.*

Stephen: Do I really have to ride that horse-stick? *Everybody starts to complain about their costumes, props, the set and other things.*

Director: Guys...Guys!...GUYS! *Everybody is silent and now stares at the director.* The script is already written and will not be changed. Now, we need to practice. I need to get an A on this project.

Emily (aka Cora): Trust me, we want to get an A also, but with this script, I don't think that we are. *Some of the other actors agree.*

Josh: We aren't gunna have time for my scene.

Zach (aka Cash): Yeah, no offence, but this play kinda sucks.

Sean (aka Rudy): I like it. Its kinda corky, but I like it.

Danielle (aka Leisel): Yeah me too.

Lauren (aka Dewey Dell): I think that it would be better as a musical.

Josh: Can we go on? We stopped right before my scene.

Danielle: Well, I have to do homework soooo, can we go on?

Director: Yes! Lets go on! Good idea Danielle. *Josh shakes his head and goes backstage again, as do the other characters that aren't in this part of the scene.*

Kevin: Wait! I just don't know if I can do this without more telepathic scenes. *Director stares at him for two beats.*

Director: Ok! Moving on! Start from Darl's line! *The actors walk slowly to their places. The Director runs up the stairs and out the door. Once in the booth she calls: Ok action! The actors reenter the scene.*

Darl *shrugs*: Lucky guess.

Anse: Its really hot! Code blue! Code blue! *Anse stands during the first "Code blue" and thrusts his arms up. Jewel, Vardaman, Dewey Dell, and Cash all quickly stand and gather around Anse. The start to fan his armpits.*

Hans *to Darl*: Is this normal?

Darl *who has not even looked at his family*: Oh yeah. *Leisel and Rudy come racing down the stairs and are about to run out of the door.*

Rosa: Don't you leave yet you shauwlaosuewayaho! Come and meet your cousins. *Leisel and Rudy turn around slowly and Darl stands up.*

Darl: Well, I'm Darl, an this here is Dewey Dell, Jewel, Vardaman, Cash, and my Pa, Anse.

Leisel: Hi I'm Leisel and this is-

Rudy: Jesse Owens is the name. *The actors onstage try to hide smiles while Rudy keeps a very straight face.*

Darl: Jesse Owens, ay? *Darl tries with great difficulty to keep from laughing.*

Stage Manager: Wait a minuet! *The booth lights once again come on. The Stage Manager sticks her head out of the window. That is not in the script. At this point the Director bursts through the same door as before and comes halfway down the stairs again.*

Director *as she marches down the steps*: Sean!

Sean *laugh/talking*: Yes?

Director: That is not in the script!

Sean: I think that it should be.

Director: Sean, did you not hear what I said 3 minuets ago? We are not-

Sean: Well I think that we should because I think that Rudy would say something like this. He is so obsessed with Jesse Owens and you never once mention it. I think it would be really funny! I could say "Jesse Owens is the name" and then Anse could step forward and shake me and Leisel's hands and say "Its nice to meet you Leisel and Jesse". Then Vardaman could say "But I thought your name was-" and Darl could cut him off and say "Shhhh" and shake his head because he knew what me and Leisel were thinking. Then the whole time, the Bundrens would be calling me Jesse. *During that monolog, Sean moves about the stage, acting out what he is saying. The Director listens impatiently at first, but by the end is hanging on his every word. The Director stares at him for a long time. He becomes slightly nervous and waves his hand. She does not even blink and right as he is about to say her name, she snaps out of her trance.*

Director: That might work...

Kevin: What?

Director: Yep. I like it. Ok write it down! *The actors scurry back stage and come out with their scripts, all crowding around Sean to repeat the blocking and lines. The Director begins to go upstairs.*

Kevin: Wait! How come you changed the script for him?

Director *a matter of factly*: Because I liked his idea. *To the cast as she goes up the stairs and out the door.* Ok start with Rosa's last line! *The actors say things like "Hold on!" or "I'm not done writing!" etc. Eventually each actor finishes and gets to their place. They do the new blocking just as Sean said it. They hold their scripts while they do. After the new part is over, they set their scripts aside.*

Darl: Shhhh. *He shakes his head slowly. Just then, the basement door swings open and there stands Max, dressed in a penguin costume. He seems very surprised to see the Bundrens and quickly goes back in the basement, closing the door behind him.*

Dewey Dell: Who was that?

Rosa: Oh, uh, that was uh, just your other cousin. His name is Max.

Vardaman: Why don't he wanna talk to us?

Rosa: He's just uh, shy that's all. *Darl chuckles quietly to himself.*

Vardaman *sympathetically*: Oh...Is his mother a fish too?

Rosa: Dinner is ready.

Rudy: I better be going. *Rudy opens the door and steps out. He turns back to the Bundrens. Bye everybody. There is a chorus of "Nice to meet you"s and "Bye Jesse"s. the door closes and Rudy exits stage right. Leisel crosses over to the chair next to Hans. She is about to sit down, when Rosa gives her a glare, and so she sits in the stairs. Rosa hands her a bowl of soup. She passes the rest of the bowls out to her husband and the Bundrens. Although a few of them, make sour faces, they all eat the soup ravenously. The Bundrens finish in a few seconds and put their bowls on the table with their scripts. Anse stands first, then slowly the children do as well.*

Anse *while standing up*: Well we best be going...

Rosa: No! You must stay the night-*She is cut off by Darl, who is glaring at her in concentration. His index and middle fingers are pressed against his temples and he is shaking. As if in a trance: Actually, you'd better be going. Lights dim and everybody freeze but Darl. The spot is on him. Darl steps to the edge of down-center stage.*

Darl: Cool trick huh? *Thumbs back to Rosa.* Learned how to do that when I was three... You know what funny? When I was telling her what to do and say, she was fighting back...trying to resist me...thinking that she had control. *He chuckles softly to himself.* I'm sorry...I just find it so funny that she thought she could control anything, let alone me...But then again, all you humans think that you have control over what you do and say, don't you. *He says that line with the utmost disgust. Free will...He starts to chuckle again, but the chuckle turns into laughing, then into sickly cackles, and then howls. Men dressed in all white lab coats enter from stage right and restrain him, dragging him off stage right as he continues to laugh wildly. Blackout.*

Scene Three:

During the blackout, the set is taken apart. The actors leave the stage. When the lights come up on a dim, the whole family is standing by a grave stone, except for Cash. See scene three set. Cash stands down-right stage, the spot is on him and everybody is frozen except him.

Cash to audience: So Darl left us. He couldn't stop laughing at a bad joke Pa made after we left the Hubermans, and was eventually carried off by "the men in the white coats". We soon after made it to Jefferson. We buried Ma. Cash crosses beside Vardaman, shoves his hands in his pockets, and the scene comes to life. Dewey Dell is sniffing softly into a handkerchief. Once Cash is in his place, the lights stay dimmed and the spot goes to Jewel, but Dewey Dell continues sniffing.

Jewel as he stares off into space. Still in a Napoleon Dynamite style voice: We were supposed to sit quietly together...Spot is now on Dewey Dell.

Dewey Dell between quiet sobs: Why did you leave me here with these idiots!? Spot is now on Anse.

Anse: Now I can get them teeth! Spot on Vardaman.

Vardaman thoroughly confused : But you're a fish... Spot now on Cash.

Cash: We didn't need words. Lights come up and there is an awkward pause as Dewey Dell silently tries to control her sobs.

Anse as he looks up at the sky: Fine day we're having, ain't it? Dewey Dell's sobs get louder. Just then Santiago enters up-right and runs across the back of the stage, holding his bloody guts to his stomach. The whole family is now silent and looks at him in confusion. He stops up-center stage and proclaims loudly:

Santiago: They've killed me Winnie Child! He then runs off up-left stage with his guts.

Dewey Dell: Poor thing! Can we help him?

Anse: Nothing to be done.

Vardaman to Cash: Who is Winnie Child? Cash shrugs.

Cash: Well I think that a very powerful lesson can be learned from this.

Dewey Dell: What is that Cash?

Cash: It is impossible to judge other people's thoughts and actions because each circumstance is different for each person.

Anse: You mean that we cannot possibly judge somebody because we are not them and we are not living their life?

Cash: Exactly. There is a brief pause as everybody soaks this information in.

Anse: Naw, I don't like it. I can judge whoever I wan to judge. *The lights dim to blackout, and Cash comes forward to far down-right. The spot is on him as the actors get offstage. He stands awkwardly and speaks to the audience.*

Cash: We left Jefferson and went home with a new Ma and new teeth for Pa. A few months later, an addition to the family came from Dewey Dell, which was alright because Pa's new woman was not fertile. Lafe-or Leaf- or whatever it is- was murdered by two hit man named Pablo and Pedro. The police never found out who had sent the two men to kill him. Darl escaped the place where we had sent him. He is still on the run to this day. Vardaman became a vegetarian and an animal rights activist. Jewel became a rancher, and me, well I just opened my own carpentry shop. And now, there is nothing more to say except goodnight. *Cash nods to the audience and exits stage left. Lights fade out. Curtain.*