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THE SINGING GRASS

a play

By

Alan A. Goddard

B.A., University of Montana, 1961

Presented in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

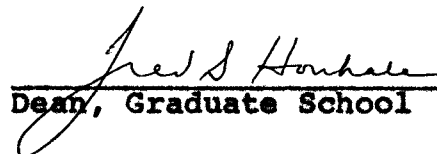
UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

1968

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C A S T

LEGEND

ESSA

WISAW

CORAL

NECCZUH

TODAS

ASSAM

Members of the Village

I

The Winter of the Long Dying

II

The Flowers Stained Red

III

The Shining Land...The Singing Land

ACT ONE

(The stage is perhaps bare at rise. Perhaps a series of platforms and ramps crisscross the upstage area. If one underlying specific effect is needed it is one of the American West in late spring--a place of distant shining mountains--blue, purple, ice and snow-capped--gleaming in a warm sunshine and edged at the bases with the delicate pervasive green that moved Whitman to make grass his central image. However, this is not the way the play begins. Rather it begins in complete darkness, perhaps a projection of space--a rich blackness, a void without movement of any sort until suddenly one is aware of movement--gases perhaps, and a whirring sound--almost Wagnerian in its opulent use of strings--or even merely the music of Charles Ives' The Unanswered Question is heard. The gases spin and begin to glow from the heat friction, they form a nova intensity. The cyclorama begins to burn almost in the orange-red beauty of the sun, there is enough movement in it to suggest rotation upon an axis. This is followed by the sounds of an explosion, and hopefully great fiery balls are cast out to the audience. These are the planets--then the stage glows like a coal, gradually dying to gray, ashen quality. Dark rain clouds appear, and the sound of rain is heard with a sizzling--a tree and leaf pattern appears on the cyclorama for this interlude and as it stops, stars twinkle above them. It is night. A primitive lullaby is heard sung in an unintelligible

way, by a deep, rich, woman's voice, a gaudy dawn breaks across the cyclorama and center in giant silhouette is a woman holding a child at her breast. The scenic effect with this is the basic design mentioned previously... The plains and mountains of the West. From the midst of the shadow appears a young man, golden, pale yellow and gleaming. Although he is naked, he has neither sexual organs nor navel...His eyes blaze from his shining smiling golden face. He is youthful, perfect and beautiful...He is LEGEND stepping out from ESSA, the earth mother. He steps downstage to directly address the audience.

LEGEND

I am Legend, the bastard son of nobody in particular... born of the sunshine and a smile, of the wind, and the rain, and a tear in a loved one's eye...My mother is Essa, the mother of all earth. She who carries fire for all men to share, Essa the mother who learned the secret of the seed and soil, who taught us which were the sweetest fruits to eat...I am Legend--I love, I live, I am you, a part of you...I live in your dreams and smiles. I love with you...I suffer with you...You are I, I am you...I am your guide in this world. I speak to you of a dream, a dream that begins here, and begins in many places, but here for now, and I speak to you of the winters of the long dying...Long, long ago--before even the oldest grandfather can remember, Essa ruled the tribe...

(The shadow disappears and ESSA suddenly strolls on the stage. She strikes a pose that is matriarchal.)

LEGEND

Essa, the mother of us all, carrying about her neck, a clay and mud pot held by leathern thongs lined with mosses and damp leaves that held fire. Essa, the keeper of fire for the tribe.

(Several Indians, primitive in their hides and covering, come forth and take gleaming coals from ESSA, they retire to various places about the stage artfully forming several family units.)

LEGEND

Now Essa had a son, his name was Wisaw.

(WISAW appears, and goes to one side of the stage. He is as LEGEND describes him.)

LEGEND

Wisaw was raised to be the wisest of men by his mother, Essa, who was the mother of us all. He knew her secrets of the fruits of the field and he discovered her secret of making fire. This was the winter of long dying, the winter of long dying.

(LEGEND retires. ESSA and WISAW come to life.)

ESSA

The winds shriek down from canyons, there is no way to keep warm.

WISAW

You are tired. How is the child?

ESSA

I have never seen an infant so pitiable and small. Her mother had no food.

WISAW

Game is scarce.

ESSA

They have been stripping the trees of bark as animals do to keep the fierce pain of hunger down. The mother feeds the baby snow and ice, she barely has strength enough to keep looking for wood to burn to keep the fire going.

WISAW

It is a pity.

ESSA

A pity? Yes.

WISAW

What have you done, mother?

ESSA

I gave them some of our grain.

WISAW

It was well done.

ESSA

I fashioned a large basket for them, and rubbed it with some of our fat so it would hold water. I showed her how to heat stones to warm the water. For flavor I gave her our salt stone that we found on the great Yellowstone River--I made a gruel. The child was so hungry at first, she could not keep it down. Then she ate.

WISAW

Did you give them a measure of our grain?

ESSA

I did.

WISAW

Essa, the earth mother. That's what they call you. They say you know the secrets of all things on earth.

ESSA

Don't smile so--I know nothing. I only can comfort...
It's so useless.

WISAW

You are upset.

ESSA

I am tired...Weary and so tired that my old bones feel as if they'll crumble in this dried, old sack of skin... I am so tired my son.

WISAW

I know.

ESSA

Do you know what they call it, this frost-biting winter? The Winter of Long Dying. They say it is like a ravenous wolf with hunger groaning along his ribs waiting at every portal to snap up everything warm and moving. At night, this winter wolf howls with despairing hunger...They call it the Winter of Long Dying.

WISAW

You are tired. I shall take some fat and some grain and make you a warming gruel.

ESSA

Wisaw, my son, I have raised you to be wise. Indeed, the men of the tribe call you the wisest of men--

WISAW

Nearly all our grain is gone! Why?

ESSA

Because--because...I can not stand the pain and hunger of others...Wisaw, I look into their long faces, their flesh so thin and delicate I can trace each muscle and bone... Only their eyes are alive, Wisaw, and they burn and blaze with life...Defiantly clinging to life, so in love with life that it shouts from their shadowed eyes when there is no hope of life.

WISAW

Essa!

ESSA

I am tired and old...What's the use? I see what I see, I know what I know. There is no hope. Oh, yes, there shall be another spring--sun will warm and bake even bones as old as these, then autumn when all is ripe and there is a harvest which can not last through another winter like this.

WISAW

You are always saying that the winters are getting worse.

ESSA

Is it a sign of age?

WISAW

Perhaps.

ESSA

No, do not smile...These last winters have been cruel. Many have died, many more are following them to the grave.

WISAW

I know. They die because they have no hope.

ESSA

Is there hope?

WISAW

What do you mean?

ESSA

Is there hope?

(There is a fairly long pause during which the wind begins to rise with a gusty sound, snow starts to fall--softly at first.)

ESSA

You say nothing...Can you think of nothing to say?

WISAW

What would you have me say?

ESSA

Is there hope?

WISAW

Hope? Hope for what, hope of what? Is there hope? I can only say that spring will come again and that the ice will melt on pools and water will be clear and cold and come tumbling down the rocks through valleys where the first green spears thrust up through the snowcap and shy first flowers, yellow and purple, will burst open, and the sun will assure them and soon the whole earth will be singing and smiling.

ESSA

Ah, my son, it has always been so...I sometimes think that man lives on the promise of spring.

WISAW

Yet it is not enough for you.

ESSA

I am growing so old. I told you that my bones ache with weariness...I am so old I can no longer remember being a child...No, no, don't laugh at an old woman. Please, don't. My eyes are weary and dim from so many tears, my hands are raw from scraping the rock-hard earth and breaking my fingers to hollow a grave, my ears are numb with the piteous ories of the dying and those who cry mourning the dead--my own lungs are raw with the screams of protest and grief for the sorrows I have known, even though long, long ago I tired of them. Sometimes I wonder if my heart has enough strength to beat its way through another day as I walk among the sorrows and

sufferings of the mute, tortured faces of our people as they endure--enduring so numbly, dumbly and piteously--enduring without hope. I am old, my son, I am old and I am soon to die. Tell me, my beautiful son, tell me, Wisaw, you who are the wisest of all men, tell me that there is hope. Don't look at me that way. Please...I-I-I-am sick in my mind, in the part of me that feels things, sick in the part of me that gives love, sick in the part of me that smiles in secret at some joy, I am sick of a life that is without hope. You, my son, are the wisest of men. Tell me, is there any hope? You turn from my eyes. What's wrong? You say nothing? Tell me is there any hope?

WISAW

(After a slight pause in which he decides to tell the truth.)

No...No. There is no hope.

(ESSA sighs wearily and heavily. She removes the fire pot from around her neck.)

What are you doing with your fire--well?

ESSA

You must give it to another, some other, younger woman and teach her the secret of the moss and dry leaves to nurture the coals so you will have fire. I miss it already; it was so warm against my chest. I love you, my son.

WISAW

I love you, mother.

ESSA

I have tried to teach you all I know so that you will be as sure and wise as you can be...Your father taught you the things a good man ought to know. I believe...I smile at you...for you are wise, Wisaw--truly the wisest of men. Look at me for a moment.

WISAW

My eyes are full of you.

ESSA

Let me look at you. Yes, you are good. You will find a way to give us, all our people, hope. Will you remember me?

WISAW

Mother.

ESSA

Will you remember me?

WISAW

As long as I remember how beautiful, it is to smile.

ESSA

I shall return to you my son.

(She steps away from him and he smiles and kneels to pick up the firepot. The wind begins to howl and the entire stage suddenly is alive with great, driven flakes of snow. The mimetic ballet of the blizzard starts here. A mourning song is heard, perhaps it is the parallel organum: Rex Caeli, Domine of the 9th century... It is barely heard however, just enough is heard to suggest the universality of the birth of hope. Meanwhile, the family groups on stage begin to move together and huddle and embrace one another against the ferocity of the storm. ESSA moves among them, starkly with vertical gestures as if she is absorbing the cold, embracing it. Slowly, a primitive, regular drumbeat is heard, a chant, the wolf song begins. From the wings two lines of dancers emerge in a shuffle step followed by the half-hope, half-step of the Arappahoe from either or both sides of the stage. They are dressed in gray skins, their faces and heads masked wolf heads; in their hands are blocks

of wood covered with skins and tipped by wolf claws. Slowly, inevitably they move toward ESSA, who sees them and stiffens with terror. WISAW warms his hands over the pot of coals as a child might, a simple and smiling act. ESSA goes into a position which suggests the martyrdom of Sebastian and the wolfdancers surround her.)

ESSA

Hope...We can not endure without hope...hope...
(The dancers slash at her, and blood gushes forth from her. She screams.)

WISAW

Mother...Essa?...Mother of the Earth.
(He stands and looks around the circle of light which is his dwelling. The wolfdancers pick up ESSA, she moans in great pain. WISAW kicks over the firepot, the coals spill out and glow brightly and then begin fading. They are dead by the end of the sequence.)

WISAW (shouting)

Mother!

(He leaves his circle of light which fades. The light projections now reach the fantastic blizzard proportions. The wolfdancers carry ESSA off stage in a stately procession. Her arms mime death throes. WISAW searches for her.)

WISAW

Mother.

(She is gone. He climbs the ramps at the back of the stage with great difficulty, pantomiming the struggle with ice, wind and snow.)

ESSA'S VOICE

Give us hope...We cannot endure without hope...

WISAW

Mother.

ESSA

We cannot endure without hope. You are the wisest of men.

(LEGEND steps forward.)

ESSA AND LEGEND TOGETHER

We cannot endure without hope, give us hope.

ESSA

Give us hope.

LEGEND

Hope.

WISAW (screaming)

Mother!

(Suddenly the wind is still, the snow ceases. The sky twinkles with cold stars. WISAW collapses on the highest point of the stage. The music shifts to the introductory statement of the Canzona Francese deta Pour ung Plaisir by Gabrieli. LEGEND smiles, and steps down to speak directly to the audience.)

LEGEND

Silently, the earth began to hum and sing beneath the bluest sky that mankind had ever awaited. The sun breathed sweetly with a mad lover's kiss upon the snow melting it into submission, on that day a patch melted and the tendrils grass shoots reached to grasp the sun as if to ask the heavens for mercy for its icy betrayal of man. The mysteries of earth opened themselves to the sun. And Wisaw fell to his knees, and ate the wild grasses of the field...on a day when the sun was splendid in the blue and white shining mountains.

(WISAW acts out the narrative of the preceding; as, the lights and scenic devices change to reflect the new mood... WISAW sits after greedily ripping the weeds of the field. He relaxes, perhaps a gentle wind might play on him...The lullaby of the opening is repeated, or repeat The Unanswered Question-- a sound of joy is in it and reflects the growing tranquility and serenity that WISAW feels.)

ESSA'S VOICE

Give us hope...

WISAW

I shall give man hope, and I shall call hope God...
(The music is triumphant. There may be a moment of tableau.)

LEGEND

The wisest of men gave God to man to help man endure his days which continue to infinity, and infinity may be creation, and infinity may be eternity, and infinity may be life itself...But Wisaw stood against the mountains and knew that even his wisdom was not enough to make man believe in God...He knew that he had to make this God believable...He knew he had to become a story-teller if the magic of God was to work, for words and magic were at first the same.

(WISAW stands and begins to pantomime the descent from the mountains to the accompanying text. Gradually the scenic background changes to a seascape. Enter CORAL, a long haired dark beauty. Her arms are laden with late spring flowers.)

WISAW

Who are you?

CORAL

What?

WISAW

Who are you?

CORAL

What? I do not understand you.

WISAW

I do not understand you.

CORAL AND WISAW TOGETHER

I do not understand you.

(They both laugh. She smiles, he is grave. She smiles more broadly and then struck by a happy thought that nearly makes her delight contagious, CORAL hands WISAW a flower.)

WISAW

Thank you. My words are not your words. Can you understand? Thank you.

CORAL

You smile...Good! I wish to give you--oh, do I dare be so bold? I wish to please, my handsome, darkeyed stranger...With my smile, with my eyes, I want to tell you, to make you feel that here you are welcome...

WISAW

With this flower, with your smiles, with the dark gleam
of your endlessly, deep eyes, you have made me feel I-I-
I can belong here, that I can smile...I am Wisaw...Wisaw.

CORAL

Wisaw?

WISAW

Wisaw.

CORAL

Ah, Wisaw...You are welcome here...Coral.

WISAW

Coral? Wisaw and Coral.

CORAL

Coral, Wisaw.

WISAW

Flower

CORAL

It is as if the sun has touched my heart...Wisaw,
flower...

WISAW

Coral.

LEGEND

They met by the edge of the sea, fog shrouded, and she
gave him a flower...They traded names, and perhaps it
was in this way, that marriages began...Word by word,
thought by thought, they grew to understand one another,
they learned each other's words. And the name of this
understanding is love...When Wisaw returned to the
mountains, Coral went with him. It was on the high

mountain pass, that she gave birth to their child, and her name was Essa.

(For this past speech, LEGEND stands alone in a spotlight, glowing and golden, radiantly beautiful. At the announcement of birth a thin wail of a child's first cry is heard as is, once again, the lullaby...For a moment, LEGEND smiles at the audience.)

LEGEND

I am Legend, I am born again and again, the bastard child of no one in particular. I am all love stories, and all your dreams, and I was born on a day of sunshine and singing grass.

(The lights come up as LEGEND retires. The stage is filled with people, center is WISAW, CORAL, holding a child in her arms, and NECCZUH, a tall, lank, warrior, in warrior's garb.)

WISAW

He came from the sky, a stranger, and he had hair upon his face which was his beard. His eyes reflected the sky and were as blue as a pale and thin dawn...and there was a strange and beautiful light about his face. It was a light which seemed to shine from within...He did not speak our language, nor one that any of us ever had heard before, but his words were gentle and full of love... We saw him cure the sick, make the lame and halt walk with ease, and he knelt over a blind woman, and took a pinch of earth and spat on it and caressed her eyelids, and when his firm touch was gone, she opened her eyes and saw the wonder of the world...Yet he was no womanly man, his hands were the hands of a brave...His arms strong and white with the purity of his being...His smile dazzled our eyes and made us want to laugh...He said Love, love each other, care what happens to each other for you are all the same as each other in my eyes...In his hand, he carried a staff and we knew he was good and kind for a ring of flowers were around this staff, growing rich with perfume as if in mid-air by magic. He spoke softly the last time we saw him...He spoke of many things--he asked

us to remember him, and he gave us this magic herb to soften our minds and make us gentle with love for each other. To you I give the singing grass of the plains and the herbs of the mountain forests...All of you shall know me, he said, but until you love one another, none of you shall completely know me.

NECCZUH

What is this story?

FIRST WOMAN

Necczuh

FIRST MAN

Listen.

SECOND MAN

He is never satisfied with what others do.

FIRST WOMAN

Hush.

CORAL

Wisaw...Wisaw.

WISAW

Necczuh.

NECCZUH

They call you the wisest of men...You are a fool.

SECOND MAN

A fool!

NECCZUH

Listen to me--I am Necczuh, the hunter in anger...I speak in anger now.

SECOND MAN

Quiet, Necczuh.

(With a thrust of a war club or spear, NECCEUH sends the SECOND MAN to the ground. The crowd is angry, astonished, fearful and suddenly divided amongst itself. A woman and a man quickly kneel alongside the SECOND MAN'S body.)

NECCEUH (shouting)

I am NECCEUH, the hunter in anger, the hunter who seizes the throat of the snarling wolf, the hunter who stalks even the great horrible bear...I am he who faces alone the dark challenge of the snow-crueted waste and finds in the howl of wind and snow-spatter, frost-shooting night the wild creations whose dark blood and rich, savory meat keeps so many of you alive...Yes, alive!

(There is just enough truth in this, so that the angry reaction of the crowd becomes a humiliated silence for some.)

You all know me...You all do know my eyes blaze with the truth. A man, a man whose skin is pure white! Who says such a thing? A man who caressed a woman's blind eyes and made her see! Who saw such a thing! A man who says love--love--love! Who can believe such a thing?

CORAL

Wisav.

NECCEUH

Wisav.

SECOND MAN

Wisav.

THE CROWD (muttering--half chanting)

Wisav.

NECCZUE

Wisaw! The dreamer, the teller of tales--the sad-eyed, solitary dreamer who has sat endlessly before the glowing coals and charmed and lulled our ears with answers so fanciful that they made us smile to hear them, answers to questions that none of us ever asked--Questions like how long is forever?...Where did we come from?...Why are we here?--A dreamer, a foolish and smiling dreamer. He now asks you to believe that there is a thing called hope, and that the special messenger of this hope is a man-god! God! A god created like us, but white! A man like us but with magic powers--a man who would have us love and give gentleness like a squaw--some foolish squaw man who sits in front of his teepee and allows his blanket to be opened and spread for any passerby and spills his seed on the dirt, wasting the strong pure seed of courage. Ah, Wisaw! Why? Why do you this? We know why. Your mother, a woman of compassion, came to my lodge and gave my child food during the winter of long dying...She saved my child...But her heart was so great, her eyes so full of the suffering and misery of all her people that she went mad and disappeared into the pelting, whirlwind of snow--and Wisaw the Wise, grief-eaten, staggered protesting out into the night and followed the driblets of her blood, across the snow-crust, howling her name after the wolves' mournful yowls...Ah, Wisaw, Wisaw, you went mad.

FIRST WOMAN

Is this true, Wisaw?

FIRST MAN

Wisaw?

WISAW

Mad? Is it mad to believe in the power of love?

CORAL

No...No, it is not! I am a stranger among you. What I have to say may be doubted; or, because of my strangeness to you, be held in such little regard that you may not

heed the importance of what I have to say...I saw the god...We saw the god. Is it mad to see what can be seen? Is it mad to have hope? You doubt, you scoff, you jeer--yet what do you offer? Hopelessness and violence! The winter of long dying is no shadow in your memories...Feel your children's ribs--they are your stark reminder. Remember the numb despair of empty stomachs and the ache of every step to fetch bitter bark and cold snow to eat and how difficult it was to hold this revolting mixture on your churning stomachs. Wisaw offers you hope. Hope!

NECCZUH

A woman...a woman tries to soften you.

CORAL

A woman who has given love and felt the flutter of life in her body...can I forget my child's eyes? There is hope there. Can I forget my child's smile? Hope is there too. Hope lives where life is...My child will grow in God.

NECCZUH

This is the foolish ramblings of a woman, a stranger, who believes her honor lies with her man's.

WISAW

Try the magic herb. What are you afraid of?

NECCZUH

I? Ah!

SECOND MAN

Necczuh the bold.

FIRST WOMAN

Necczuh the bold.

FIRST MAN

Try the magic herb.

CORAL

All we ask is that you try it...We want you to know
the God's mind.

NECCZUH

I am Necczuh...I-I-I...Necczuh! I! I!

FIRST MAN

We know who you are!

FIRST WOMAN

And what you do--you've told us often enough!

FIRST MAN

Boasted.

NECCZUH

Jeer? You jeer me. I hold the power of death, darkness
sings along the sinews of my arm as I send a dark shaft
to the heart to spread the chill of eternal winter through-
out the blood and the long winter of long dying is no
mere season but perpetual and real as ice. There will
you dwell in frozen caves blasted by endless winds that
prick the skin with a thousand frost daggers and hunger
endlessly for the relief of warmth. No herb, no god can
deny it. I am Necczuh, hunter of the wolf with the
wolf's golden-eyed cunning and keen wit, my teeth and
my claws are as sharp as hate and as voracious as the
wolf...

CORAL

Can a child drive you away with a stone? Are you afraid
of fire?

NECCZUH

Listen to me! Listen to me! You must fear me. Today,
I feed your lodge.

(A child picks up a stone, heaves
it and it strikes NECCZUH.
There is silence, then in visibly

constrained fury, NECCZUH strides to the child, through a frightened crowd. He grabs the child by the throat, the child whimpers. Quickly, WISAW crosses to them and seizes NECCZUH'S arm; for a moment muscles glisten in conflicting tension. NECCZUH yields and the crowd laughs in nervous relief. NECCZUH starts to exit.)

NECCZUH

Todas...My brother, Assam...Come with me! And any of you who fear this--this madman!

(NECCZUH exits.)

ASSAM

He is my brother...

WISAW

We would have all men brothers...

TODAS

Necczuh may be right, you may be a madman, Wisaw...but it is a beautiful madness.

WISAW

Don't go!

TODAS

He feeds my lodge.

THIRD MAN

And mine.

ASSAM

He is my brother...I am sorry, Wisaw...Perhaps I am sorriest of all for us who leave. Hope, hope is a good dream to have.

(About a third of the crowd departs; and, as they do, a drum beats slowly as the departees tearfully and reluctantly part from their friends. Gradually as the last of this group files out, the drum beat becomes an insane, warlike tattoo.)

WISAW

And the God said love one another...For it is by love alone that man shall endure, for man is frail, less cunning than the fox, less agile than the antelope, less strong than the great and horrible bear...These things shall endure, and the fields of singing grass shall endure, and the trees, the rivers and the mountains shall endure, but man shall only endure if he learns the lesson of love...it is my dream that man shall endure!

CORAL

He disappeared...He was there, and then he was gone! It was unbelievably quiet yet the air seemed to be warmer and the grass about us rang...His staff remained with the wreath of flowers...His voice seemed to come from the sun. Remember me, remember me.

(WISAW mounts the platform and raises a high staff. Lovingly and carefully, CORAL takes a wreath of golden flowers and places it about the staff. This symbol slightly above eyeline, forms a cross.)

WISAW

And the God shall return! For this God is love, and love is constant and everlasting.

CORAL

This pipe represents his floral staff...It is incomplete to remind us that the God will return.

WISAW

You will it with the herb.

CORAL

Then it is lit and passed from one to another as an act of love...It is strong but good medicine for the sickness of the soul which makes us live in despair.

WISAW

Turn the pipe so--thus it will symbolize the return of the God.

(The action with the pipe, of course, makes a completed cross.)

CORAL

Inhale deeply and hold the smoke in...Feel the love of the God and the love of hope spread inside you.

WISAW

And we must dance joyously...This is a dance to the sun. The sun dance honoring the God.

(This is the profoundest moment in the Indian religion; it is the Sundance. It is slow and stately, done to the accompaniment of drums, bells and chanting. It must be short here. The first man comes to WISAW and CORAL.)

FIRST MAN

This...This is the--

WISAW

Essa's fire-well.

FIRST MAN

She would want you to tend it, Coral.

CORAL

I shall...I will keep it blazing with hope. Go dance!

(For a moment, WISAW holds CORAL, then joins the dance. The chanting becomes almost rapturous in joy in the most golden of light...CORAL moves holding the young ESSA, smiling. The pipe is passed. Suddenly, quietly, a long shadow appears across the cyclorama. It is a bow and arrow held by NECCZUH. With a horrible grin, he dispatches several arrows into the crowd screaming a war cry. Chaos and confusion, the terrified crowd screams its way off-stage. Several have fallen including CORAL. WISAW faces NECCZUH.)

NECCZUH

I-I-I! I, Necczuh the Hunter, defeat the god!

WISAW

You cannot kill love.

(WISAW turns and crosses to CORAL. NECCZUH in a frenzy draws his last arrow, and it finds its target in WISAW'S back.)

NECCZUH

There is no love for you now...there is no hope for you now. I defy your floral staff.

(He pushes it down with a laugh. NECCZUH disappears. The crowd slowly finds its way back. There are many cries of grief, moans, and horrible lamentations. Names are called. Children united with parents. One of the men goes and picks up the young ESSA and the fire-pot. Another goes and uprights the staff. The man holding ESSA raises her in salute to the cross.)

SECOND MAN

We shall remember this day.

(The dance begins again, now
with the plaintive sorrow that
characterizes this ceremony.
LEGEND steps forward.)

LEGEND

I am Legend...born of the sunshine and grass. I know
sorrow and love. Can there be any doubt?

Slow Curtain

ACT TWO

(At rise the familiar refrain of "When Johnny Comes Marching Home" is heard as LEGEND crosses the stage in a follow spotlight.)

LEGEND

1865! The flowers are stained red...the great war over man's rights has...has ceased...Like spring, the stragglng survivors gradually arrive crowding the land with happiness and hope.

(The lights come up. The stage is still the spring light with the green, purple and white suggestion of mountains in the distance; however, the left side of the stage has a constructivist version of an old-style log church or mission. The cross is predominant. On stage right, there is the facade of a log dwelling. It is mid-day. In the yard, CORAL, dressed as any good frontier woman might be, is stirring clothes in a giant cauldron. She has been telling DEVLIN of the difficulty in getting yardage at the trading post since the soldiers came. TOBIAS, a Negro, comes along with WISAW from up right. CORAL sees him. The music fades.)

CORAL

Wisaw?...Wisaw! Devlin--it's Wisaw; he's come home.
(She begins running to him.)

CORAL

Wisaw!

WISAW (to himself)

I'm home.

(He runs to her and embraces her. Very quietly DEVLIN, all smiles, comes toward him--perhaps finally greeting him.)

DEVLIN

It's good to see you, Wisaw.

CORAL

Doesn't he look fine, Devlin? Oh, perhaps a little tired, but--well--we'll soon take care of that. You've come home. At last, you're home and I've missed you. I've missed you, Wisaw.

DEVLIN

This is your daughter...She's heard all about you.
(With a laugh) She might not know you.

CORAL

Of course, she does. We've told her all about you. Oh, Wisaw! She's a child, it'll take some time before she'll lose her shyness in front of you. Look at her--peering around the corner at you. Oh, Wisaw, I'm so glad you're back.

WISAW (after a pause)

He's welcome then.

DEVLIN

Hello there, Tobias? Is that it, Tobias? How long did you figure on staying?

WISAW

You don't understand...he's here for good. He saved my life. Twice. He picked me up at Stone Mountain--he found me where I lay bleeding, too weak in my consciousness even to cry out. He took a bullet for me in the pines of Virginia.

CORAL

I didn't know...

WISAW

Didn't you get any of my letters?

CORAL

Just one...this spring, and parts of it the rain or snow had blotted.

WISAW

He's going to stay with us, Coral. This is Tobias' home.

CORAL

Yes.

WISAW

They burnt his home...the Confederates. Then our boys... our boys shelled, and his family...was...killed. All except his wife--she died--after she was raped by thirty-four soldiers. And, and, and--he's going to live--with us.

CORAL (nearly mute)

He...Tobias, welcome.

WISAW

Say hello, Tobias. You're home.

TOBIAS

I can't believe it yet. I don't--

CORAL

You're welcome. Isn't he, Tom?

DEVLIN

Yes.

TOBIAS

I don't know what to say.

WISAW

Say hello, Tobias.

TOBIAS

Hello...Hello Coral, hello Tom Devlin...I know you,
don't think I don't for I do. Hello! Hello, valley--
green grass and shining, bright stream--hello, mountains...
Hello! My God, hello world. I've heard so much about
you. I can't believe it. It's a dream, Hello, dream!
Hello! I'm free.

WISAW

Shout it!

TOBIAS

I'm free.

WISAW

Shout it again.

TOBIAS

I'm free.

WISAW

Again.

TOBIAS

I'm free!

WISAW (shouting)

Free!

DEVLIN

My God in heaven, thanks be, you're home; and we're
awfully glad you are.

CORAL

I killed a chicken just this morning. And there are spring carrots. Oh, Wisaw--I've longed for you. For this moment...I'm tired of just touching the pillow next to me at night. I've been so lonely. I'll make a pie! I've got some dried apricots. What am I thinking of--what'd people think if they saw us just standin' here?

WISAW

I want to feel the sun...It calms me. I'm home then.--All the way through, I'm at home and at peace.

CORAL

Have you plenty of wood chopped, Devlin? You stay out here. I'll start the oven heating. Have you plenty of wood, Devlin?

DEVLIN

Yes...yes, I got plenty done. Go ahead.

CORAL

Oh, good! Or would you like an apple--

WISAW

Wait.

CORAL

What? I have some dried app--

WISAW

Wait.

CORAL

Why?

TOBIAS

Maybe he just wants to look at you, Coral.

CORAL

Oh!

WISAW

No, wait. Why does Devlin have to--to chop the firewood?

CORAL

There's not a young man in the valley left to hire--
Wisaw, they've all left to go work on the railroad.
You can't hire a soul.

WISAW

Is my father sick?

CORAL

No! He's not...ill--

DEVLIN

He's too old, Wisaw, he can't do it any longer.

WISAW

Oh--and where's my mother?

CORAL

She's gone to town. They both went--your father, too.

WISAW

Oh?

DEVLIN

To fetch your sister. She's been at the trading post.

WISAW

Town, you said...

DEVLIN

Well, it's not a town yet. It's the old trading post. It's a fort now. Soldiers moved in. During the war, the soldiers came. To protect us all.

TOBIAS

What from?

WISAW

Why? What from? Out here?

DEVLIN

Attack.

WISAW

What kind of attack?

CORAL

Confederate attack.

DEVLIN

They wanted to hold the territory. Consolidate their position. You know the railroad's coming through.

WISAW

Confederate attack...from Texas?

CORAL

No. You might as well know. Attack from us...No, not our people. Bad Indians, it's said. Indians who are given the guns, money--and--and whiskey by the Confederates.

WISAW (stunned)

Indians?

DEVLIN

It's true. The reports--the stories are hair-raising. Not all Indians have been like you, Wisaw. Your family welcomed the white man, made friends with him. You let my family come into this land, build our mission--my brother opened the trading post.

CORAL

Things have changed. We've had hard times. The war wasn't easy on us.

WISAW

But Indians attacking--

DEVLIN

It happens, Wisaw, my brother, Abner, was shot at the trading post...by a drunken Indian.

WISAW

The trading post never used to handle whiskey.

DEVLIN

We had to--the trappers, the soldiers...You wouldn't know the place. It's changed now. The railroad's coming. Pa has opened a church there...I preach here in the valley, now. My oldest brother has started a shipping line--north and south. He has warehouses in St. Louis.

WISAW

You've changed my land...You've--

TOBIAS

Wisaw!

CORAL

It's not our land anymore, Wisaw. Everyday, every single day, settlers come, some stay--some pass through and go on west.

WISAW

You're letting them take my land!

DEVLIN

This isn't your land--not all of this! All of this belongs to God, this is God's country.

CORAL (bitterly)

They found gold to the north...There's been a strike and rush to the south of us...Then there's California and Oregon beyond.

DEVLIN (enthusiastically)

And there's the railroad comin' through.

CORAL (sadly, contained)

Things change.

DEVLIN

Things change.

TOBIAS

I've learned this, Wisaw, you can't change change.

WISAW

But my land!

DEVLIN

You still own the valley. You can work it! You're not a savage, Wisaw. You went back east to school with me. It was our parent's dream that we should work the land here and open a school. You'll teach here.

WISAW

It was our dream that here we would have peace! Is there whiskey now? And violence? Where are our people? Where is our dream?

TOBIAS

Dreams? Where do dreams usually end in war? Broken, shattered like glass, strewn on bloody fields.

DEVLIN

Look! No, no bloody fields...As far as you can see, Indian paintbrush...your own bright, red, cheerful flower. There is peace here.

WISAW

I'm--I'm tired.

TOBIAS

Of course you are. We've come along way, ma'm. We travelled most the night, he was so eager to get here.

CORAL

You need a cooling drink.

WISAW

A glass of your blackberry wine. It's got the sun and lazy bees humming in it, Tobias.

DEVLIN

No, Wisaw.

WISAW

No?

DEVLIN

It's against the law for an Indian to have whiskey.

WISAW

In my home? Wine not whiskey.

DEVLIN

I'm sorry.

TOBIAS

I don't need it. I'd much rather have a cup of coffee, ma'm. If you've got some.

CORAL

I'll fetch it, I've some fresh made.
(She starts into the house,
stops and turns back.)

CORAL

But you must call me, Coral, as I shall call you Tobias. Thank you, thank you for returning my husband to me.

DEVLIN

Don't frown, Wisaw.

WISAW

Frown?

TOBIAS (laughing)

Great day in the morning, who's frowning. We're laughing.

WISAW

If I laugh, it is that I may not cry.

DEVLIN

I can't talk to you if you're going to be this way.

WISAW

Hell, I don't think you can talk to me at all, Devlin.

DEVLIN

You never used to curse.

TOBIAS

War--well, it changes a man, Mr. Devlin.

DEVLIN

Oh, I've heard that, Tobias, thank you.

TOBIAS

It's nothing, Mr. Devlin.

DEVLIN

Oh, look, I'm sorry--

WISAW

For what? They've taken my land from me, Tobias.

TOBIAS

I know.

WISAW

What'll I do?

TOBIAS

What every man does. Begin afresh.

WISAW

While I was fighting their god-damned war, they stole my land.

DEVLIN

We didn't steal it!

TOBIAS

Course not, he knows that. He knows you're a good man, Mister Devlin.

WISAW

I can't even have a drink in my own house.

DEVLIN

It was necessary--it's the price of progress. These laws aren't directed against you, Wisaw...but you're a Christian. You've got to obey the law now.

WISAW

Oh, do I? Am I a Christian? Must I turn the other cheek? Must I be meek and mild? We were gentle--we welcomed you. Are you the meek who shall inherit my earth, my land? When did we lose the war? Tobias? While my back was turned?

TOBIAS

Wisaw!! Shut-up. Mr. Devlin, sir, I'm sorry. He's been under--under a terrible--

DEVLIN

Strain?

TOBIAS

We had to walk. They took one look at me and those proud southern draft-dodgers wouldn't let me on their ferry...and then the stage, they took one look and... well, they wouldn't let him ride. Despite his uniform-- despite his stiff leg and staff. So we've walked. Folks haven't taken to us along the way...I guess it must be because we're...we're...

DEVLIN

Strangers?

TOBIAS

Sure...I knew you'd understand, Mr. Devlin, sir. I knew you'd understand.

DEVLIN

I can understand. You're tired, Wisaw, worn-out and exhausted. We'll get you on your feet again. Things have changed while you've been away; but we've been good to you, boy; we've tried to take care of you. This is your valley, your place...And you're welcome here, Tobias.

TOBIAS

Thank you, sir.

DEVLIN

Out here you'll really learn the meaning of God's country.

CORAL (re-entering)

You're not leaving, Devlin? Stay, eat with us. I'm making a mighty fine dinner.

DEVLIN

I can't, Coral, I've got to go into town and help Pa with some accounts. Once again, let me welcome you here Tobias.

(He does not offer his hand to TOBIAS. Then warmly he crosses, grips WISAW in a manly fashion.)

We've missed you. We're glad your home. We'll wait a couple of days, then Pa and I'll come out for a visit... We've got great dreams. We'll have two schools on this part of the country.

WISAW

Two?

DEVLIN

One in town where I'll teach and one out here where you'll teach the little Indian children...Can you see it? Working together again and we'll be building a greater America...an America at peace, free under God's sky.

(At this point, the background, a series of slides project graphic images, the vision of DEVLIN.)

The fields sing with grass now, the fields of the Lord wait to be sown with the good things from the bounty of God...the flowers will be replaced by golden fields of wheat, the settlers will come and the railroad. We'll have a town. Not much to look at, not at first, but a church and a school. My brother Caleb has already built a bank...The telegraph's coming in. People seeking peace and beauty will flock here for this is God's country...It's purple mountains--it's dark, green mysterious forests and shining lakes. We will be able to say then, truly, when we have created a city here, that God has blessed America.

(Here ends the vision of DEVLIN.
His face shining, he takes
WISAW'S hand and shakes it.)

We'll show you how to make use of the land which God has
given us. It's a promise.

CORAL

Are you sure you won't stay, Devlin?

DEVLIN

Can't. Got to get on to town.

TOBIAS

Goodby, Mr. Devlin, sir.

DEVLIN

Yes...Well, we'll be out for a visit soon. Bye now.

CORAL

Bye. We'll be looking forward to your visit.
(DEVLIN smiles, and exits
through the church, turning
at the door to wave.)

WISAW

Shit.

CORAL

He'll hear you.

WISAW

The son-of-a-bitch!

CORAL

He'll hear you.

WISAW

I don't give a damn if he does.

TOBIAS

I don't think he understands how things are, Miss Coral.

CORAL

Coral, call me Coral. My goodness, how rude I've been to you. Please come into the house--it is your home now. Please, let us love you, Tobias.

TOBIAS

Good God, you don't know...I've wanted--I've hoped--I've prayed to hear words like that again. Thank you.

WISAW

It's all going to be all right. We're home now. We're safe now. Toby, we've found peace. It was just over the mountain like I told you.

TOBIAS

Well, practically. Over several mountains and a couple of hundred miles. My feet ache.

CORAL

Come into the house.

TOBIAS

Oh, gladly. No, I can find the way easy. It's easy to find your way in a friendly house. If you'll allow me to, Coral, maybe you'll have a chance to say a few words to this man, your husband here. I know he has something to say to you.

(He exits into the house.)

CORAL

What a kind man he is.

WISAW

He is very gentle.

CORAL

I don't know what to say...I love you. More than I care for myself. I love you, Wisaw. You know that don't you?

WISAW

Yes.

CORAL

Please say something...anything before I make a fool of myself.

WISAW

You look different...I expect you're older.

CORAL

I expect so. But--then so are you, and you're not nearly so fast with that limp, I'll wager.

WISAW

If you've been true to me, woman, I won't have to be very fast.

CORAL

You saw me coming running to you, didn't you?

WISAW

I don't know that I want to go to bed with you. You're a stranger practically.

CORAL

Wisaw! I'm your wife.

WISAW

Lotta things been changing around here. How do I know?

CORAL

Kiss me.

WISAW

The white man's way?

CORAL

Any man's way. I aim to show you that I'm your woman.

WISAW

You used to be shy.

CORAL

One of us had to be...you've been a long time away from my side, and I hope to God you haven't forgotten how warm and good it is there.

WISAW

Oh?

CORAL

Because if you have, I'll have a scalp.

WISAW

We are not a war-like people. We do not take scalps.

CORAL

But you've taken a prisoner--one--my heart. I'm your captive, Wisaw. Kiss me before I shed tears--quickly.
(They kiss)

CHILD

Mama, who is he?

CORAL

He's your father.

CHILD

I thought my father was away.

CORAL

He's come back to us. Haven't you, Wisaw?

(There is a moment of tableau and darkness. LEGEND appears golden in his moving light.)

LEGEND

Ulysses to Penelope...No, simpler...Every man who has been shattered in a war is mended, woven whole again by someone who loves him...despite fields painted red, stained red...Explosions as delicate as tendrilous veins ripped and spurting into blood flowers, delicate plashes... Red, dripping red, scarlet against a pale pink, vermillion swirling through crimson and lavender deepening to smoking purple of Shakespeare. This is the harvest of man's mind; these are the flowers of his sowing--the fruits of the earth may be inedible...Bloodsoaked soil produces strawberries large as an egg but squashed again, who will eat them? Under the cold blue-green of a mountain-flavored night pinpoint, stars twinkle.

(The scene change is in lights. Stars do twinkle. ESSA'S shadow is seen.)

His mother, Essa, returns lamenting.

(The lullaby theme is heard, now in a mournful fashion. ESSA'S bent shadow grows giant and clear. ESSA appears...She staggers rather than walks under the weight of her grief.)

ESSA

My God! My God, why hast thou forsaken me?

WISAW (from the house)

Who is it? Who?

ESSA

Wisaw! Is that you my son? Wisaw.

WISAW

Mother!

ESSA

My son is come home.

WISAW (entering)

Essa...mother.

(They rush to one another and embrace. The old woman begins to weep, and WISAW with great tenderness and infinite tenderness brushes away her tears.)

WISAW

No tears for me...Shed no tears; I have come home.

ESSA

I've prayed that you would...I've prayed.

(CORAL appears at the door.)

Fetch us the pipe. Quickly.

WISAW

What's wrong?

ESSA

Let her fetch the pipe and fill it first...I want to greet my son in the right way. My old eyes shed their sorrows and griefs, that's all, just at seeing you. Wisaw, my son.

(CORAL has disappeared into the house. The mother clings to her son for awhile repeating "my son, my son." CORAL returns carrying the pipe and an ember which glows. ESSA takes the pipe and turns it into the cross-symbol pattern.)

ESSA

May the peace of the great spirit comfort you.

(WISAW takes the pipe, inhales, passes it back.)

WISAW

May your peace in the spirit never diminish.
(ESSA takes the pipe, inhales
and passes it to CORAL.)

ESSA

Share in the spirit with us, my daughter.

CORAL

I pray that we all shall never suffer more nor be less
content than we are now.

ESSA

Don't!

CORAL

What's wrong?

ESSA

Just ask for the spirit's great peace.

CORAL

May I share in the spirit's great peace.
(She inhales on the pipe.)

WISAW

What's wrong.

ESSA

Dead. Your father...my husband is dead...I'm-I'm too
abrupt. They didn't tell you. Is that why you fail to
rush to your mother and share her grief?...If I-I...have
stunned you with sorrow, it is because I am all blunt
with sorrow...I open my eyes, and through my tears, all
I can see is...is emptiness, my open arms wait--wait for
an embrace which will comfort and cannot come.

WISAW (going to her)

Mother.

ESSA

Wisaw, my son, my son.

WISAW

How?

ESSA

It--It cannot be explained...I can't tell you. Your sister.

(Enter TELLE [pronounced "teal"])

TELLE

Go ahead.

WISAW

You're drunk.

TELLE

Am I? I didn't know. I wasn't sure...I thought it was grief.

CORAL

I'll give her some coffee.

TELLE

I don't want coffee!

ESSA

Let her be.

TELLE

Even my mother has abandoned me...No, I'm sorry, I'm sorry. I was feeling sorry for myself. That's what most grief is, isn't it? A sense of being alone... Alone! Oh, Essa, why did you give birth to me? Why did you carry such sorrow beneath your heart?

CORAL

I'll fetch some coffee.

(CORAL exits.)

ESSA

I've never felt, Telle, that you were sorrow...When you were born I laughed...I smiled.

TELLE

Do you smile now?

WISAW

Shut up, Telle.

TELLE

You'll have to slap me, Wisaw...I've grown accustomed to actions, not words from soldiers.

WISAW

No...No?...No! Not my own sister...Why you, you slut.

TELLE

Why not me?

WISAW

You're my sister.

TELLE

And they are men. Soldiers! There aren't many women out here...No one notices--no one cares...no one dares say anything about what happens to one...one, pathetic, dirty, ignorant Indian girl.

(She falls to her knees in a drunken, pitiful, self-pitying state.)

No one cares that I fell in love with a white man, a boy as lonely and confused as I, far from home and that we could walk in fields of blue and white flowers, laughing at fluttering insects and butterflies, and lie together, laugh softly and kiss--soft-mouthed, gentle kisses fresh

with mint leaves, and that his hand on my breast could warm my heart and open my thighs to him...No one cares that spent, we could dream beneath fireflies and stars of marriage. They raped me, Wisaw, and told him I was a whore...That's what I've become, the trading-post whore! At first I wanted to make him jealous--he wouldn't even look at me, and when he did, his eyes shouted filthy, Indian whore...It's what I am. Father was killed trying to pull a drunken sergeant from atop me. And no one cares.

CORAL (re-enters)

I care...We all care.

TELLE

Do you? What man among our people will have me now? Whose children will I bear? Would you touch me, Wisaw? I'm a whore.

CORAL

You're only a whore if you despair.

TELLE

What else can I do? Will you try to shelter me here? When one of the soldiers, or a group of them gets liquored and hot beneath his pants, which of you will shout that I can't be had? You, Wisaw? They'd kill you. They killed our father. Coral? One's as good as the other. Mother? Could any of us watch her raped? They don't fear us, they don't respect us...We're their enemies. They're out here to fight, to conquer, to kill Indians. Don't you know? Don't you see? Can't you understand?

ESSA

Too much of what she says is true.

WISAW

I can't believe it!

(TOBIAS enters)

TOBIAS

Believe it.

ESSA

It has happened.

TOBIAS

I know what they've been through. For years I had a dream, a dream--small, very practical--about what my whole life could be. Then in about twelve seconds, I saw each dream shattered--I saw all my hopes for my wife, my family clearly for the last time. Then there was nothing but shock, and, stunned, I realized that all my dreams of life were hulks of meat growing cold...I could reverse the bodies for what they had been, but--but what was left for me? What warmth is there in an eye that stares glazed as a blue fly walks across it.

ESSA

It has happened.

TELLE

It can happen again right here.

ESSA

I don't know who you are, stranger, but you are welcome here.

CORAL

He is Tobias--Wisaw's friend.

ESSA

You are welcome here.

TOBIAS

I don't know that I want to be here. I have a feeling that I'd be a whole lot safer playing piano in a whorehouse in New Orleans.

ESSA

I don't understand you, young man.

TOBIAS

You've never been a slave. Oh, I'm sure you're proud of the fact, but it saved us. There were too many of us to kill. There are too few of you to worry about.

ESSA

What's he saying?

WISAW

Pay him no attention. He doesn't understand our problems.

TOBIAS

Perhaps not. You're a defeated people before you really start. There has been just enough resistance with violence and murder so that they fear you enough to exterminate you.

WISAW

You don't know what you're saying...We've helped them. We let them come into this valley peacefully. I helped build their church...You don't understand, we have a special relationship.

TOBIAS

Your father? Didn't he have this special relationship?

WISAW

Our religion...I've told you...Is it not reasonable that God, the God would appear to us all?

TOBIAS

Would they believe it?

WISAW

They must. They might.

TOBIAS

Is that church a temple to your God?

WISAW

This country was settled by them on the principles of religious freedom.

TOBIAS

Did they consult you people who were living here?

WISAW

What can we do? There are too many of them.

TOBIAS

Exactly.

ESSA

Don't be smug, young man. This is a house, a valley of sorrows.

TOBIAS

I am...genuinely...sorry.

ESSA

We cannot ignore the rules of hospitality. Share food with us. We will pass a pipe of peace.

CORAL

Come indoors, then.

ESSA

No.

CORAL

I don't think I would have much of a stomach in a white man's house.

TELLE

I wouldn't.

CORAL

I'll bring food.

TELLE

I'll help you.

(They exit)

WISAW

Mother.

ESSA

Wisaw, my son...Let us not talk now. How can we put into words...? Leave my thoughts alone. I want to remember him...That's one of the things about death, when a person gets old--a person forgets so much so soon. I don't know whether it is more cruel to experience death this way than it is when one is young... but I do know, I want to remember him.

WISAW

Mother.

ESSA

So let us speak no more of it for the present. Please. Good. Let me look at you. Have they hurt you? Oh, your limbs, your body is leaner--hard. You're a man now. I think you've made me truly old. Who's that?

WISAW

What?

ESSA

Over there...coming this way.

TOBIAS

It's a man.

ESSA

Necczuh.

TOBIAS

He's carrying a drum. Who is he?

WISAW

Necczuh.

(Enter NECCZUH, the savage of Carlin paintings. The Indian of pouches, bow and arrow, and drums. He is braided, feathered and buckskinned.)

NECCZUH

You've returned. Wisaw, you're back. To return at a moment like this.

ESSA

Enough of that.

NECCZUH

I didn't wait. Wisaw, I avenged your father.

ESSA

No.

NECCZUH

I--

WISAW

Wait! How? How did you avenge my father?

NECCZUH

With blood.

WISAW

By blood.

NECCZUH

What they did was horrible, haven't they told you?

WISAW

Told me what?

ESSA

No. Not now. I wasn't...No.

NECCZUH

Your father was drunken...They knew he couldn't resist a bottle. They knew he would rage in on your sister... They were right, he did. They scalped him, Wisaw, and they castrated him. Your mother had to watch him die this way.

WISAW

My God.

NECCZUH

I avenged him. Blood for blood.

WISAW

My God. Don't you know that when the victor sins, it is called an incident--when the enemy does it, it's called an atrocity?

CORAL

It does no good now to think of that. It's done.

WISAW

Nothing ever is done. It's all this way. It's all the same pattern.

NECCZUH

It's done, Wisaw. I've come to fetch you. We can go to the mountains and seek out the war parties.

ESSA

Because you carried a drum, I had thought that you came to mourn my husband.

NECCZUH

There isn't time.

CORAL

Yet you are the tribal ritual drummer.

NECCZUH

You know that I couldn't leave the drum. It's sacred.

CORAL

Then you know that this family is known for its wisdom. Its young men are raised to be wise, and that the gifts of wisdom are patience, calm, orderliness and peace.

WISAW

If these things are not present, then wisdom is not present.

NECCZUH

But they'll be coming.

CORAL

Who will be coming? The soldiers?

ESSA

They're not looking for us.

WISAW

We never act in rage nor in violence.

NECCZUH

You think they care?

WISAW

They know me. They know they can trust me.

NECCZUH

Things have changed. These men don't know you. They are here to protect the railroad, that's all.

ESSA

He may be right about that.

NECCZUH

We shall go to the mountains and strike at the railroad. They will be forced to treat with us. We can make them promise--

TOBIAS

They don't keep their promises.

NECCZUH

Who is this?

TOBIAS

Nobody, a fool who believed--never mind.

NECCZUH

You must come with me. It won't be safe here.

ESSA

If we aren't safe here, it is because you were rash--

NECCZUH

He was your husband.

ESSA

I see a kind of satisfactory justice but--

NECCZUH

But?

WISAW

The cost? Shall I wake my daughter? She barely remembers me from minute to minute. I want time for things...time to teach her to laugh with, a time to mourn with me, and time to teach her the goodness of my father--You'll give us time.

NECCZUH

A time to die.

CORAL

You despair too easily. Despair creates a--a senseless violence.

NECCZUH

You all dream.

WISAW

Perhaps...Tobias, do we dream?

TOBIAS

If you do, it is the kind of dream that I want to believe in, to live.

WISAW

I believe it is the dream of every man worth being called a man.

ESSA

I want to sing the mourning song.

WISAW

Will you play with us?

NECCZUH

It isn't safe.

WISAW

It will be if you stay with us. Devlin will help. He knows our ways. These people aren't ignorant. He'll speak. There'll be an investigation.

NECCZUH

What will become of me?

ESSA

Legend is filled with the torment of that question, What will become of me? Stay! We will mourn my husband, their father. Across the valley, our people will come... It's time to take care of the dead now...Honor and respect their dreams. We shall protect you...Sit.

(Slowly, unconvinced, NECCZUH sits and takes his drum. As he plays, LEGEND moves to address the audience.)

LEGEND

Peculiar, all men die and other men always mourn. It's as if the common bond of humanity is suffering...Or is it that we feel sorry for ourselves, our moment of loss is really the moment in which we recognize how brief our lives really are? Perhaps.

(By now, there is a mourning song based on the lullaby theme. It is a dirge, hopeless and tinged with bitterness.)

LEGEND

From all over the valley, lights appeared. Others heard and knew. Disaster, even small ones, communicates itself rapidly. They, the people of Wisaw, the family of Essa, responded. Their song was heard across the valley. Perhaps others heard it.

(Across the panoramic background, small groups appear singing the mourning song and carrying torches. On LEGEND'S final line in accompaniment to the beat of the music and alternating with the sky's cold mournfulness is

seen facsimiles of the Atlantic press of the period featuring such not untypical scare headlines "New Indian Atrocities Threaten Rails," "Military Fears For Peace," "Brutality Calls For Strength." Perhaps Horace Greeley's advice, "Go West, Young Man, Go West;" and a recruiting poster of the period--or any other--could be used. In any case the movement of the groups should be peripheral and re-enforcement to the central group.)

LEGEND

Such moments are not rare in history...A nation in grief is not unusual to Americans. Hope is always present, eternally with Americans. People renew themselves from ashes and dust.

(The cyclorama is night. LEGEND has been moving away during this moment. The singing continues a moment. CORAL has brought the pipe. Symbolically, it is a moment of peace, offering peace to a man who joins the mourners.)

LEGEND

They seek peace, tranquility...

(LEGEND'S light fades. The torches and the pipe gleam, almost providing all the illumination. The cyclorama has neither stars nor posters, it is now very close to the rich nothingness of the opening. DEVLIN enters.)

DEVLIN

You're still here. Thank God.

ESSA

We are mourning.

DEVLIN

The soldiers will be here soon.

WISAW

My father is dead.

DEVLIN

Why did you do it? They're coming in force. We were afraid that this would happen.

NECCZUH

The soldiers are coming?

(The song continues without a drumbeat.)

DEVLIN

I don't know why I've come to warn you.

WISAW

Is that why you've come?

DEVLIN

I thought we were as brothers.

NECCZUH

I can't stay here!

TOBIAS

Then you'd better run.

NECCZUH

I--I--I--

(NECCZUH runs off without his drum.)

DEVLIN

Wisaw, the bodies of those men were--were mutilated. I know war is horrible, but--but--

WISAW

Have you seen my father's body?

DEVLIN

The school! The railroad! I can't face you. You betrayed us. Take my warning or no.

(DEVLIN exits. CORAL crosses to her husband. TOBIAS, who holds the pipe by now, looks frantically at the house, then almost frenzied he goes to it.)

CORAL

I regret that your homecoming could not contain all the love I dreamed for you.

(Flares of gunfire break the darkness and silence the song. In the dim light of the torches, as the family dies, is the escape of TOBIAS and the child. There is a moment of silence. A light picks out NECCZUH who is nearby whimpering.)

NECCZUH

I--I--I--

(He is joined by TOBIAS.)

TOBIAS

He was tired of fighting. How much fighting must a man do?

NECCZUH

We'll go on. We'll fight from the mountains.

TOBIAS

You're simple. You'll be conquered. No. I'll take the child. She'll be safe.

NECCZUH

I can't stay. It's best. She'll be safe with you.

TOBIAS

I'll try to keep her as safe as I am. Do you people welcome strangers with a child?

NECCZUH

Not in the mountains. I must go.
(NECCZUH flees.)

TOBIAS

I don't know...I don't know what will become of us,
little one. I'd take you to New Orleans...That'll have
to wait. I'd like you to know what this means. (He
takes the pipe.) And this (he takes ESSA'S firewell).
You hold it. That's right. There's no place for us
both...but I hope to see you grown before I leave you.
I promise that.

(TOBIAS takes the child and
they walk through the carnage.
Finally, LEGEND moves across
the stage in his golden light.)

LEGEND

1865! The flowers are stained red...the great war is
over, the war about man's rights. Man could conquer the
wilderness, bring civilization. It's easy to be indig-
nant a century later...What happened to Tobias and the
child? Perhaps she grew into womanhood and married and
had children of her own...Tobias perhaps went to New
Orleans and found safety in a bawdyhouse playing a piano...

(The sound of a honky-tonk piano
is heard to close.)

And us, what happens to us?...Does the land shine, the
grass sing?...

Curtain

Intermission

ACT THREE

(The scene is the landscape of the future, a high-rise city in the fashion advocated by Norman Mailer. Still all this is seen through a large upstage window, and beyond this foreground effect remains the vista of the mountains. Most of the stage area has become a laboratory which in a silly way suggests a Dr. Frankenstein horror movie. Strapped and chained to a large tilt-top table is LEGEND who is more golden and shining, and in size is now nearly gargantuan. It is an electronic world, a place for McLuhan joy. TV screens or monitors are built into every wall, for example. At rise, door swings open, the entire cast marches onto stage singing a rock and roll version of the "Ode to Joy." They carry signs, which while very attractive, neither make words nor slogans. Example: XPLQ. It is a procession marked by the extension of the demonstrations of the sixties into an organized, almost religious convention. Nearly everyone carries bouquets of colorful flowers and each wears love beads. This is a gaudy crowd. In the crowd in honored positions are WISAW, TOBIAS, DEVLIN, ESSA, TELLE, CORAL and NECCUW, all wearing what might be uniforms--uniformity is the key to dressing these people. For a moment, a strobe light blinks on and off on them, and the whole stage becomes a Mack Sennett movie. The slogans are

waved. The crowd cheers and gestures. The television monitors whir and come on, DEVLIN'S face is picked up. All sound has become a horrifying electronic screech. With a great electronic screech of the greatest possible intensity, NECCZUH mounts the stand and speaks. The crowd cheers.)

NECCZUH

Garble! Garble! Garble!

CROWD

Hooray!

NECCZUH

Gabble, gooble, garble!

CROWD

Yea!

NECCZUH

Vlan, voom, va va va voom! And
(a giant screech)

NECCZUH (shouting)

I! I! I! I!

CROWD

Bravo.

NECCZUH

The new age!

CROWD (chanting)

The new age...the new age...the new age

(The television screens light up in primary colors and flash the words, "the new age", in secondary colors, in time to the crowd's chant and flashes pictures of the principals in the procession.)

CROWD (chanting)

The new age...the new age...the new age...

TOBIAS

As the Secretary of Culture's representative...

MAN

Just a moment, sir, you're off-camera.

(TOBIAS leaps to a prominent point, his face is picked up by the TV system.)

TOBIAS

As representative of the Secretary of Culture, I welcome you here.

(The crowd cheers.)

TOBIAS

I welcome you all here, in brotherhood and in love, products of the great American system...

CROWD

With freedom, justice for all!

TOBIAS

And equality.

WISAW

Yeah, equality!

CROWD

Praise equality--all man's children got equality.

TOBIAS

We have come a long way in the past few years. There's no need to go into the glorious, recent past--the events which have solidified the society of man into four global units, relieved the basic problems of food and vitamin supply and almost entirely have eliminated the question of war.

CROWD

The new age...the new age...the new age!

TOBIAS

And now, now for the first time in the history of man, we are capable of harnessing the entire capacity of man to help man. Man!

CROWD

Man! Man! Man! Man! Man!

(As the chant starts, the screens flash pictures of LEGEND gradually moving in for a close-up. On the fifth "man", WISAW sneaks over and presses a large red button, and quickly a neon tube lights up, a Rube Goldberg machine begins to chug and clunk, a pipe organ affair emits little gasps of vari-colored smoke, and the crowd is moved to cheer. LEGEND whirs and clunks and mechanically raises his head.)

LEGEND

Man is--erhup--the--erhup--erhup--proper study of--erhup--

CROWD

Man! Man! Man!

LEGEND

Elihu Codpiece, first colonist convicted for perversion, 1627, four days in the stocks and fined two yearling heifers, both slightly used. Erhup.

CROWD (ad lib)

What? Goodness a mercy me! What? What? How's that?

LEGEND

Erhup! The journal of Lady Bug--wamp, erhup! Ah planted foah trees an' a lilackah, an Lyndun bombed an orphanage. He said that the press was reedicultin' him; ah tole him nobody could ever seriously reedicule him. Lyndun called 'em bastards an' carried on some; he makes me laugh so. Ah think everyone laughs at Lyndun. Ah have twelve roses in bloom an' Lyndun had 549 casualties, only forty in New Yaork. Erhup.

(The crowd is dismayed. There's a general gasp followed by an explosion with bright flakes of confetti falling from the proscenium. The crowd gasps as LEGEND takes after NECCZUH. People scatter through difficult doors only to find that they have opened a door to a hall which leads them back to the room where LEGEND is blocking the exit.)

LEGEND

The primary ingredient of rocket fuel is bat guano. (LEGEND catches and lifts NECCZUH. The crowd rushes him, he drops his captive into a yellow vat of what appears to be oatmeal or whipped cream. Fireworks go off. LEGEND picks up a stack of what is suspiciously close to pies and throws them. The lights become irregular. DEVLIN, TOBIAS, and NECCZUH all are hit with pies. The crowd rushes out. Several machines explode emitting multi-colored smoke rings. Only WISAW, CORAL, and TOBIAS remain. WISAW goes over and pulls out a large wall plug. All the stage machinery becomes silent. There might be one final small belch of smoke, however.)

WISAW

Phew.

TOBIAS

Well.

WISAW

You've got pie on your face.

TOBIAS

Well, there's egg on yours.

WISAW

Well...

TOBIAS

Well, indeed.

WISAW

I told you he wasn't quite ready.

TOBIAS

Well, you've done it.

WISAW

What have I done?

TOBIAS

The whole thing blew up in our faces.

WISAW

Not mine.

TOBIAS

You've gone and done it. That's all I can say.

WISAW

And you keep on saying it. What have I done?

TOBIAS

After all I've done for you.

WISAW

What have I done? What have you done?

CORAL

We do many things and we do them for many reasons. We do them in the name of love, hate, desire, fear, pride, survival--but you, Tobias, you rushed this. Wisaw-- Wisaw told you he wasn't ready, but you rushed him.

TOBIAS

I didn't rush. I was ready! I asked him if he was ready. He said he was. Well, technically.

WISAW

I have fashioned my Legend beautifully, so delicately wrought...When I experimented with aesthetics, I fed his sensors eight hundred books on art and twenty-nine miles of color film of the great works, and Legend sat down and painted 109 Rembrandts of Coral here as well as 84 Renoirs. Indistinguishable--the Hoving scholars couldn't tell the difference.

TOBIAS

Yes, and the department had to confiscate the paintings because you would have closed all our museums. We defended you, however.

WISAW

Thank you very much. You stopped me from my music experiments.

TOBIAS

In one week, Legend composed 82 operas, 212 symphonies and over 3000 chamber works. He recreated the history of music and bettered the masters. No one would have

cared except for the leaks--you ruined six conservatories and twelve university curriculums.

WISAW

Curricula.

TOBIAS

I've been trying to protect your work.

CORAL

Then why did you burn Legend's Shakespearean tragedy?

TOBIAS

The Huntington Hartford people insisted. The academic community was in a furor.

CORAL

Why?

TOBIAS

In a week, it became possible to undo years of expertise. We had no solution, no retrenchment planned for these people. Why there was even some talk of demonstrations again. All because of you.

WISAW

I didn't know...I didn't think of that.

TOBIAS

I know you, Wisaw, you are the wisest of our bright young men. We have a great deal of hope in you.

WISAW

Thank you.

CORAL

You should have.

TOBIAS

We needed a coup--an international spectacular! If Legend had worked, it would have given us an inestimable edge in the battle for peace. We could have continued your grants for research.

WISAW

Now you won't?

TOBIAS

I don't know. I can't say.

CORAL

You must. In an integrated, equalized society, some sort of fairness must continue. The research which Wisaw has begun must continue.

TOBIAS

Not everyone thinks so. You're his wife, you're supposed to stand by him.

CORAL

Who doesn't think so?

TOBIAS

The Society of Psychologists, for instance. The medical societies.

WISAW

What can be done?

TOBIAS

I don't honestly know. Mend fences, point out the significance of your machine, point out that you're at least a century ahead of your time...I don't know. I'll talk to Devlin.

CORAL

Devlin!

TOBIAS

I'll try to get him to persuade Necczuh.

CORAL

Neither one of them is capable of understanding a sentence, let alone understanding Wisaw's work.

WISAW

You're unfair, Coral.

CORAL

I hope not. What we'll go through is one of those scenes, with argument. Devlin will enter smoking his pipe.

(DEVLIN does, in fact, enter.)

CORAL

His face will be smug and superior. His manner unctious and conciliatory. He'll pace and mouth platitudes. He'll wipe the pie from his face.

DEVLIN

(repeating physically her directions)

If at first, old boy, one doesn't succeed, try reading the directions, eh, old Wisaw. Confusion is the mother of convention.

CORAL

And what will you say?

WISAW

Hope!

TOBIAS

Wisaw had no control. There was an overcharge. It's not his fault.

DEVLIN

Not his fault! Of course not. Of course, not. But who is at fault? The Secretary?

TOBIAS

The Secretary should have seen to the technical aspects. He's had memo after memo. He should have contacted the Secretary of Interior.

(Enter NECCZUH)

NECCZUH

Ridiculous, I forwarded the memos. I had far too much to do. No, we have to concern ourselves with a basic question. Don't try to shift the issue into obscurity by seeking blame elsewhere. The basic question is whether or not such a machine as Legend has a moral right to exist. Automaton, yes, but with the moral, philosophic, and aesthetic programming of man himself is a foolhardy experiment from the beginning...As if man couldn't exist by himself and solve man's dilemmas! Tsk.

WISAW

What can be done?

NECCZUH

H'm.

(NECCZUH jots something on a piece of paper and hands it to DEVLIN.)

DEVLIN

H'm.

(He hands the paper to TOBIAS.)

TOBIAS

H'm.

(He hands the paper to WISAW.)

CORAL

What does it say?

WISAW

There are just some things, doctor, that man must not tamper with.

CORAL

Bah!

(NECCEUH and DEVLIN disappear.)

CORAL

This must not happen.

TOBIAS

Many things must not happen, but strangely these things do happen and man survives them. I'll do what I can.

WISAW

Don't be angry with Coral.

TOBIAS

I'm not.

CORAL

Are you positive?

TOBIAS

How could I be angry? If I'm angry, it is because we failed here today, and perhaps I am to blame in some way.

WISAW

So much is unforeseeable.

TOBIAS

Not according to our probability machines...Perhaps if you'll renew your pledge.

WISAW

It's silly.

TOBIAS

Not when you're working on a grant.

WISAW

It just sounds silly.

CORAL

Oh, do it, Wisaw.

WISAW

Very well. I promise to conform to the equal and free society. I do not question it. There.

TOBIAS

Doesn't it give you peace?

WISAW

It's silly. Almost as if I've made a slave of myself to my own freedom.

TOBIAS

Isn't it presumptuous to question your own freedom?

WISAW

I suppose so. I always hoped freedom meant only what one did with it. I suppose so. Words don't have the same meanings they had.

CORAL

Wisaw, you make things difficult for yourself.

WISAW

All I wanted to do was see what the machine would do. I wanted to create my own Legend.

TOBIAS

And you will. There's a new age, a glorious age. Man is on the threshold.

WISAW

Man is always on the threshold, always knocking, and no one ever says come in nor opens the door. I guess I tried to climb in a window, and it's too high to climb.

TOBIAS

I'll tell the secretary that.

CORAL

Please.

TOBIAS

I'll let you know. Goodbye.

CORAL

Goodbye.

(TOBIAS exits.)

CORAL

He's our friend, Wisaw.

WISAW

I know it, Coral. I think I know it.

CORAL

You're disappointed.

WISAW

I?

CORAL

That was ridiculous to say.

WISAW

Nothing is ever ridiculous or absurd in this vaudeville world.

CORAL

It was something of a hairbreadth escape for Necczuh. He looked funny in the vat.

WISAW

Legend has good instincts. The vat is full of truth. Everyone should be at least once totally inundated by the truth.

CORAL

I hope he doesn't catch cold.

WISAW

Can you see him dripping honesty and sneezing great viruses of self-recognition about?

CORAL

I don't understand you.

WISAW

I don't understand myself.

CORAL

I want to understand you.

WISAW

I'm not sure I do. I'd much rather enjoy myself. Coral, I don't want your understanding. I've never asked for your understanding, merely love.

CORAL

You asked me to walk with you once on a beach. A long, long time ago, it was. I offered you wild flowers and you asked me something. The ocean was high and thunderous. I didn't know you. You smiled and took my hand. I remember we walked naked in the mist and drizzle. I wasn't cold, I wasn't frightened. I didn't understand you. I wanted to. I believed you. I wanted to be what you are...What are you, Wisaw?

WISAW

Questions like that are unfair.

CORAL

Do you know when I loved you? I told you that talking to flowers and plants made them grow better. You smiled and turned to a lilac and asked it, "What do you think of the new Ford?"

WISAW

It never answered, although I think it grinned a bit.

CORAL

And when I was pregnant, you started a lottery for anyone who could guess the date, the weight and the size of the delivery.

WISAW

I made it an event.

CORAL

Yes, but you offered the baby as a prize.

WISAW

I think everyone should have a baby. They really treat you nice at a hospital when you have a baby.

CORAL

A person has to have the baby.

WISAW

Why?

CORAL

That's another unfair question. You use it all the time. You come storming in--yelling, "I can't understand how you could do it!" Then while I'm trying to think of what it is I might possibly have done, you almost whine, "Oh, I can guess how you could do it, but why?" I never know with you, Wisaw.

WISAW

Well, security dulls the mind.

CORAL

Damn you.

WISAW

Don't mistake malice for wit. That's the trouble with most academic wives.

CORAL

I love you.

WISAW

Say it again.

CORAL

I love you.

WISAW

The way you say it makes me smile with joy.

CORAL

What are you doing?

WISAW

Winding up Legend.

CORAL

You mustn't.

WISAW

Why?

CORAL

What if he gets away?

WISAW

Legend's a fine, solid chap. Very entertaining. One of the few excellent conversationalists I know.

CORAL

It's like talking to yourself. You programmed him.

WISAW

He makes a good soufflé, too.

CORAL

Wisaw, if you turn on that contraption, I'll be very angry.

WISAW

Too late. Look, he's moving his eyes.

LEGEND

Urp!

CORAL

Wisaw.

WISAW

Look, he's got something all over him.
(CORAL exits as WISAW polishes
LEGEND.)

LEGEND

Did I embarrass you, boss?

WISAW

Don't call me boss, my name is Wisaw.

LEGEND

I like boss.

WISAW

Why?

LEGEND

I don't know. It makes me smile. Because I trust you.

WISAW

But you know I'm not your boss.

LEGEND

I know. I wish you were.

WISAW

Why? I told you bosses were generally disliked.

LEGEND

Without you, boss, I think I'd hide under a bed and blow dustballs all day.

WISAW

What's to be afraid of?

LEGEND

What isn't? They took my paintings away.

WISAW

I told you about that.

LEGEND

And my music.

WISAW

I'm really sorry about that.

LEGEND

Can I help it if I look out a window and see a Corot or hear a million melodies when I look at a smile in human eyes?

WISAW

Of course, not.

LEGEND

Boss.

WISAW

Yes.

LEGEND

You made me more human than humanity. Do I have a soul?

WISAW

I don't know. There's some question about humans, you know.

LEGEND

I'm thankful I don't have sex to contend with.

WISAW

Me, too. Your digital control isn't precise enough for button fumbling yet.

LEGEND

Yet you're working on it.

WISAW

Yes.

LEGEND

Why?

WISAW

You sound like my wife.

LEGEND

Wife. Is that it, boss?

WISAW

Yup.

LEGEND

How do you live with a wife, boss?

WISAW

By guesswork.

LEGEND

I don't know if I'll like it, boss.

WISAW

You liked it when I introduced you to asparagus, didn't you?

LEGEND

Yes. But I was doubtful. I'm still not sure.

WISAW

I want you to know everything, Legend. I've always believed you could--I've always trusted in that belief, Legend.

LEGEND

It's scary, boss, and sad-making.

WISAW

It's humanity, Legend.

LEGEND

I love you, boss.

WISAW

I love you, Legend.

LEGEND

They're going to destroy us, boss.

WISAW

They're going to try.

LEGEND

Even now, the Russians are on to us.

WISAW

Probably. Do you want to smoke?

LEGEND

Sure. It's the one touch of humanity that humans have, enjoying themselves. Farting isn't even limited to man. I can fart now, do you want to hear?

WISAW

No. Here take this pipe...Flower punk.

LEGEND (laughs)

That's very good, boss.

WISAW

I sometimes think I invented you to have an audience.

(ESSA enters in great consternation.)

ESSA

Wisaw, what are you doing?

WISAW

Smoking a peace pipe.

ESSA

With a robot?

WISAW

Why not?

WISAW

Why not?

ESSA

He's done nothing but cause us trouble.

WISAW

Mother, you once asked me to do something with my mind to give the world hope, to help mankind, to relieve despair.

ESSA

But!

WISAW

Yes, mother.

ESSA

It's almost as if you have given yourself a golden calf to worship.

WISAW

I don't worship Legend. He's my friend. He's our better nature.

ESSA

And you have to get that other thing out of my house.

WISAW

Mother. Telle isn't a thing. She's been raised as your daughter.

ESSA

She isn't my daughter. I wish she was.

WISAW

You won't have to pretend much longer.

ESSA

The way things are no one can afford to pretend.
Why didn't you work for peace?

WISAW

I did.

ESSA

I don't understand.

WISAW

I know.

ESSA

Once, it was possible to expect youth to listen to age.

LEGEND

Not really, Primitive societies expected the aged to realize when they outlived their usefulness.

ESSA

You're a rude machine.

LEGEND

I'm sorry.

WISAW

Mother--

ESSA

No one cares anymore what I think. How's the baby?
My only grandchild and I'll bet you haven't seen her all day.

WISAW

I did--just this morning.

ESSA

Some parent! You win the populative ticket for the city three years running and you only have one child.

WISAW

Because we had one, the government wouldn't let us have another because that woman in the suburbs had twins. Anyway, I think the whole situation is ridiculous. There must be a better way of population control.

ESSA

That's not the point. The entire world is in a crisis.

WISAW

The entire world has been in crisis since World War I.

ESSA

Regardless of what you may think, I do not remember World War I. The situation is critical.

WISAW

Every moment of man's existence is critical.

ESSA

You refuse to understand. The international network says you've created a monster. The world is in a panic.

WISAW

Again?

LEGEND

That's very good, boss. When the history of man is reduced to one symbol pictorially, it'll probably be of one man trying to take a crap and being attacked by wasps.

ESSA

Does it have to be coarse on top of everything else?

LEGEND

Am I coarse? Boss?

WISAW

Probably.

ESSA

Wisaw.

WISAW

Mother.

ESSA

Don't you listen anymore?

WISAW

Have you forgotten to trust?

ESSA

I had hope.

WISAW

Then keep it.

ESSA

We could destroy ourselves. You could hasten such
destruction. Mankind could end.

WISAW

What's happened to hope?

ESSA

Is that your answer, my son? My son. Give me hope.

WISAW

Only if you can give me trust.

ESSA

Then...then...I have no choice.

LEGEND

None of us have.

WISAW

None of us ever have had much choice but to offer each other trust and hope.

ESSA

I'll have to live with that I suppose.

LEGEND

There are worse things to live with, fear, spiders, sneezes--boss, I've never sneezed.

WISAW

Maybe you will someday. I never thought about it.

LEGEND

I'd really like to sneeze. Then I'd understand that saying, That's nothing to sneeze at.

ESSA

Oh for pity's sake, Wisaw. Give me a toke from that pipe.

(CORAL enters.)

LEGEND

Woman at two o'clock, boss.

CORAL

It's very disconcerting to be called woman.

LEGEND

Last week you wouldn't let me use your name. I could call you Mrs. Boss.

CORAL

Is this thing under control?

LEGEND

Crowds excite me. I absorb power, you see, from heat, and I've never been revved up to full current. A few of my circuits don't work too well yet. The contacts are dubious.

CORAL

Dubious?

LEGEND

Well, my circuits wobbling are no worse than you forgetting a name. Have the pipe.

CORAL

I don't know why I've come back. I know you won't listen.

LEGEND

Do women always try the offensive defensive boss?

WISAW

Hush.

CORAL

The Afro-Asian bloc has asked that you destroy Legend immediately or they'll destroy us.

LEGEND

They've been threatening that for years.

WISAW

Hush.

LEGEND

I'll hush.

CORAL

I'm afraid.

LEGEND

But why be afraid?

CORAL

I'm afraid.

WISAW

I know.

CORAL

Do you? I'm so afraid I don't know...I think perhaps he doesn't remember any longer how we fell in love, what loving you is like.

WISAW

I remember.

CORAL

Do you?

WISAW

Every moment of every day whenever I smile or whenever I feel vibrantly alive, I remember loving you.

CORAL

Then come away. Lock the door to this laboratory. Never come here again. Please.

WISAW

I cannot leave Legend. He is what I am, he is what we all are!

(There is thunder on the horizon and TELLE enters with the child, young ESSA. ESSA carries the fire-well.)

WISAW

Essa!

TELLE

I am warned. They're coming.

ESSA

Who is?

WISAW

Quick, bolt the doors, my dear, sweet friends.

ESSA

I knew no good would come of all this.

WISAW

Hurry.

(TELLE and LEGEND rush to close doors. Torches appear in the distance. Voices are faintly heard screaming, "Kill the monster!" DEVLIN, TOBIAS and NECCZUH enter.)

TOBIAS

The people are rioting. They're revolting.

WISAW

I'll pass. Pun anyone?

DEVLIN

We're afraid.

NECCZUH

It's dangerous.

WISAW

Truly, we have become a village again with primitive rites and superstition.

NECCZUH

Wisaw--the foreign blocs gave us an hour to destroy
Legend.

TELLE

Then you'll have to destroy me too.
(The crowd gets closer and
louder. The sky becomes darker.)

WISAW

Yes.

TOBIAS

There are two of them...Telle, I...Telle.

ESSA

She's a robot too.

TOBIAS

I loved you.

TELLE

I know.

TOBIAS

There was trust in loving you.

TELLE

That is part of loving isn't it?

DEVLIN

We have no time for that.

NECCZUH

We must destroy them.

CORAL

You can't.

NECCZUH

We must!

(He draws out a laser and flashes it. LEGEND merely becomes more golden.)

LEGEND

You cannot kill us.

DEVLIN

We must!

TOBIAS

No! I can't permit it. I love her.

DEVLIN

You must save us!

WISAW

You have failed to save yourselves. We often joke about it--you know the songs and stories that the whole world is going to hell. Well, it is.

NECCZUH

Don't joke.

WISAW

Who's joking?

DEVLIN

You can't be serious.

WISAW

Why not? Why not at long last allow mankind to do what he so often threatens to do to himself? A hydrogen holocaust--a magma bomb? Great. That's it.

TOBIAS

In God's name--

WISAW

I think it is presumptuous to call on God, He may just be as fed up as I am.

TOBIAS

You can't make this life and death decision.

WISAW

It isn't my choice. I don't control the bombs. Merely a robot or two.

TOBIAS

Have you no sense of humanity?

WISAW

Yes. I feel the wind. I know laughter, I have tasted sun-ripened, sun-warmed fruits with oozing juice. I have felt my child's hand tighten as she holds mine, and I have lain beside my wife and felt tenderness, pride and love as I kissed a small flutter, a pulse in her neck as she slept. I know the joy of work and the anguish of not having praise for my work...It seems all that is left to know about life is age and the end of life... Age holds no great attraction.

NECCEUH

We'll have to destroy them ourselves, Tobias.

TOBIAS

I can't. I love her.

NECCEUH

She's not even human.

TOBIAS

So what's human?

DEVLIN

Destroy them. Kill them, Tobias.

TOBIAS

Kill?

TELLE

Is it true then? Most men do kill the thing they love best? Is this human?

LEGEND

You must not be frightened. Do not fear humans.

TELLE

What a strange, fearful, lovely thing life must be.

LEGEND

Hold my hand.

WISAW

Man cannot destroy man.

NECCEUH

I can! I can! I can! I! I! I!

WISAW

Somehow the essence of what man is will survive.

NECCEUH

Use your gun, Devlin.

WISAW

Guns won't work. Nothing will. You can't kill hope. They are our hope.

NECCEUH

You built them--you know how to destroy them. Do so. Mankind may be in your hands.

WISAW

Why?

CORAL

Please, Wisaw. Tell them.

DEVLIN

Don't force us to violence.

WISAW

They are in any ordinary fashion indestructible since they haven't begun to live.

NECCZUH

Gobbledegook. Tell us. Tell. How...To destroy them.
(He throws WISAW down. The crowd is at the giant window. Suddenly there is a siren.)

NECCZUH

Our time is nearly up. I have nothing to lose.

WISAW

Merely the new age.

NECCZUH

Don't play games. Wisaw, I'm afraid. Help! Help!
Kill!

(There is an explosion--it is the holocaust man is most likely to create. The stage is bathed in blinding light. There are screams, people fall, glass shatters. Everything is exploding and burning.)

ESSA

You took away hope, Wisaw. Give us hope.

WISAW

I can't mother. I can't.

NECCZUH

I! I! I! I!

TOBIAS

They're still alive. Look!

(Everyone crawls and attacks the golden pair. Flakes of the facade on LEGEND fall from him. Inside he is green and ugly. They gasp.)

LEGEND

Why have you all been so afraid?

TELLE

Why have you made the future a calamity by fearing it?

(There is no answer, the others are all dead. Carefully, TELLE picks up the pipe and the firewell. She looks at the debris.)

TELLE

I feel pain--sorrow.

LEGEND

We have come to life. He said man could take the responsibility of survival. We have survived.

TELLE

And tomorrow?

LEGEND

The sea will throb angrily on some shores, a seed will germinate, somewhere it will rain, and no matter how strange it will all be, it will have the wild beauty of life with all its terrors and delights. The sweetness of life abides as does earth. The grass shall sing again.

TELLE

Tired old planet.

LEGEND

Shall we go?

TELLE

Sing to me.

LEGEND (nods)

The grass will sing.

(They pause and listen before walking across the rubble into the smoking red sky. Both singing sweetly and unintelligibly. The curtain falls.)

End