

Texarkana Waltz

A Play

By

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NOTES

Texarkana Waltz was written for nine actors, four play multiple parts:

SHERIFF TRUETT and TWITTY
DEPUTY SLIM and DADDY
MOMMA and PATSY
NURSE BOB, COWBOY BOB, WARDEN BOB and FATHER BOB

Simple or complex, live music is a must.

The design elements must facilitate rapid, seamless transitions and compliment the magical, larger-than-life, operatic and often heroic spirit of the play. The play's final moment is an iconic tableau requiring the literal image of a setting sun.

The play's point of view is good natured, hopeful and generous. Its realization is grand opera. It makes no bones about the artifice of theatre or showing the mechanics of stage magic.

Each plot line has it's own genre, language and style:

Dallas and Morgan's story is a Love Story. They speak in a fairly rapid naturalistic banter, and their style is conventional realism.

Houston's Imaginary Western is a Western, albeit one deeply influenced by Shakespeare's Hamlet. The Cowboys speak in heightened language - iambic pentameter verse. My rules for writing and speaking iambic pentameter are simple. Iambic pentameter verse is always iambic, always pentameter, and one is always best served by phrasing with the verse, as achieved by taking a breath at the end of each verse line. Strictly adhered to, this technique achieves the desired result - heightened language landing on the ear as natural speech.

Heightened also describes a style of playing: heroic; grand; majestic; imposing; dealing with or characterized by events of historical or legendary importance. Heightened describes the marriage of form and subject, style and grounded emotion.

Eddie's story is a Crime/Prison Drama that owes its rhythms to stand up comedy and its performance style to Brecht. Call it vaudevillian alienation. His story is entirely dependent on finding the right rhythm.

Eddie must never appear relaxed. He is the barely contained charge of a massive lightning strike. He is not troubled by impending death and never surrenders to his circumstance. He plumbs his mystery.

Each act should run no longer than 55 minutes. Rhythm and pace are critical to the play's success. The energy of the play must move forward relentlessly. Only then will beats and pauses be meaningful.

The dash is used to indicate overlapping dialogue or a leap forward in thinking. The abrupt change in tempo or thought informs a comic or dramatic moment. The following line, as it might be written -

MR. WICKETT: Get all the Wicketts off the train, the
Hotel Terminus got rooms to let. You like animals, Son?

- asks the actor to realize a transition, or mark the beat, from one thought to the next. This is fundamentally different than the line as written -

MR. WICKETT: Get all the Wicketts off the train, the
Hotel Terminus got rooms to let-you like animals, Son?

- which asks the actor to leap directly into the next thought. In performance this difference, slight as it is, is meaningful.
Good luck.

Cast of Characters

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| <u>Eddie Wickett</u> | A killer with a heart of gold; murders Emma; inherently threatening, frightening and fearsome. |
| <u>Emma Wickett</u> | Eddie's beautiful, laundry obsessed, dead wife. |
| <u>Dallas Wickett</u> | Eddie and Emma's daughter; a tough nut with a sense of humor, passionate for Morgan. |
| <u>Houston Wickett</u> | Eddie and Emma's son; hasn't uttered a word since his mother's murder; ward of the OK State Mental Hospital, Vinita. |
| <u>Cowboy Bob</u> | The singing cowboy; Houston's hero; a quick draw. |
| <u>Nurse Bob</u> | Of the Oklahoma State Mental Hospital; cares for Houston. |
| <u>Twitty</u> | Prison guard. |
| <u>Morgan</u> | Dallas' girlfriend; smart, sexy, wise. |
| <u>Warden Bob</u> | The gruff, likeable Warden of Oklahoma State Penitentiary. |
| <u>Deputy Slim</u> | Sheriff Truett's deputy. |
| <u>Sheriff Truett</u> | Good natured; Cowboy Bob's sidekick; an instrument of justice. |
| <u>Mr. Wickett</u> | Eddie's father, divorced from Mrs. Wickett; the center of his universe; fancies himself profound, deep, charming; a well-dressed smoker. |
| <u>Mrs. Wickett</u> | Eddie's mother; passionate, forceful; a sentimental fool. |
| <u>Father Bob</u> | Sincere, earnest; a demonstrative and fiery speaker. |
| <u>Patsy</u> | Father Bob's faithful companion. |

Scene

Oklahoma State Mental Hospital, Vinita; Dallas and Morgan's Seattle home; the wild west of Houston's imagination; Oklahoma State Penitentiary, McAlester; the Wickett family farm; Mrs. Wickett's mobile home; Our Lady of Texarkana Mission's Room of the Healing Dirt; the State Line Cemetery.

The electric chair is stage right, raised on a platform not much wider than the chair. The Mental Hospital and various rooms are manifest stage left. Apartment, wild west and cemetery are center stage.

Time

Present, past, distant past.

The Prologue takes place in 1975 or 1976. Houston is about eight years old, DALLAS about six.

Houston's imaginary Western takes place in an imaginary time and place - The West as manufactured by Hollywood and serial Westerns.

Eddie's scenes take place on the last day of his life, September 25, 1977.

Dallas and Morgan's odyssey with Houston takes place in the early '90s.

PROLOGUE

SETTING: Various Oklahoma locations.

AT RISE: EDDIE, EMMA

EDDIE/EMMA

What happened is this:

EDDIE

His name was Eddie. Eddie saw a beautiful girl standing in line at the Admiral Twin Drive-In concession stand.

EMMA

Her name was Emma. Emma was standing in line to buy a pop and noticed Eddie watching her.

EDDIE

Emma was the most beautiful thing Eddie'd ever seen, would ever see.

EMMA

Eddie had the sweetest eyes, was handsome, sure and smooth, and rough and dangerous in a way that made her ache to be with him.

EMMA/EDDIE

Eddie and Emma fell in love.

EDDIE

I love you, Emma.

EMMA

Eddie, I love you.

EDDIE/EMMA

Eddie and Emma married. What happened is this:

EMMA

Eddie's daddy owned a little land...

EDDIE

A little farm...

EMMA

A little house...

EDDIE/EMMA

Surrounded by fields left fallow.

EMMA

It's precious, Eddie.

EDDIE

Emma, so are you.

EDDIE/EMMA

Though barren land surrounded them...

EMMA

Eddie's seed took root.

EDDIE/EMMA

Though barren land surrounded them...

EDDIE

Emma's womb was fertile.

EDDIE/EMMA

Eddie and Emma made a little man.

(HOUSTON enters)

EMMA

For no good reason Eddie named his little man...

EDDIE

His name is Houston. My little man is Houston.

EMMA

Houston.

EDDIE/EMMA

Not too long after, Eddie and Emma made a little woman.

(DALLAS enters)

EMMA

For no good reason Eddie named his little woman...

EDDIE

Her name is Dallas. My little woman is Dallas.

EMMA

Dallas.

EDDIE/EMMA/HOUSTON/DALLAS

What happened is this:

EMMA

Emma loved her brood and loved her man and loved clean clothes.

EDDIE

Eddie loved his offspring, loved his wife and loved to drink and smoke all night, get wild - woo!

DALLAS

Dallas loved pretending she was a Princess, Eddie and Emma were King and Queen, and Houston was miserable wretch who had to obey her every command.

HOUSTON

Houston loved reading Adventures of Cowboy Bob, pretendin' he 'n Cowboy Bob was best o' pals. They'd ride the range roundin' up dogies, shootin' bad guys and singin' cowboy songs.

(COWBOY BOB and his BAND appear, in the middle of song)

HOUSTON/COWBOY BOB

SINGIN' TY YI YIPPI YI YEA
HEAVEN IS HOME ON THE RANGE
BY THE RIVER TONIGHT
BY THE CAMPFIRE LIGHT
SINGIN' TY YI YIPPI YI YEA

EDDIE

Eddie.

EMMA

Emma.

HOUSTON

Houston.

DALLAS

Dallas.

EDDIE/EMMA/HOUSTON/DALLAS

Happy family.

HOUSTON/DALLAS

What happened is this:

EMMA

Emma loved to wash and iron and fold, to press fresh sheets, to starch her brand new blouse. Emma used to say...

EMMA/DALLAS/EDDIE/HOUSTON

You're straight with the world when you have on a brand new, white, lace blouse.

EDDIE

Eddie loved to watch her work, to stand around for hours admiring Emma.

HOUSTON

Houston loved pretending he's in a gunfight. He'd get shot and die a noble death defending justice, honor and the American way.

DALLAS

Dallas loved pretending she was holding court, making laws and taking tea. She was merciful and wise and loved riding ponies.

EDDIE

Emma was the most beautiful thing Eddie'd ever seen, would ever see.

EMMA

Eddie had the sweetest eyes, was handsome, sure and smooth, and rough and dangerous in a way that made her ache for him.

DALLAS/HOUSTON

Emma looked to Eddie...

EDDIE

Emma's eyes so bright with love...

EMMA

I love you, Eddie.

EDDIE

Emma, I love you.

COWBOY BOB

Thank you so much. We got time for one more? Okay, let's hit it, Texarkana Waltz, shall we, boys?

(Music)

EMMA

Cowboy Eddie, you low-down thevin' varmint, you like a dance?

EDDIE

Miss Emma, pleasure's mine.

(Eddie and Emma dance)

COWBOY BOB/EDDIE

OH, MY TEXARKANA BABY
LORD I LOVE HER LA DEE DA
HER DADDY CAME FROM TEXAS
HER MA FROM ARKANSAS

(Dallas cuts in, dances with Eddie)

COWBOY BOB/EDDIE (cont'd)

OH, MY TEXARKANA BABY
SHE'S MY TRUE LOVE DOE SEE DOE
HER SKIN IS WHITE AND MILKY
HER HAIR IS BLACK AS COAL

(Emma cuts in)

COWBOY BOB/EDDIE (cont'd)

SHE'S MY TEXARKANA BABY
HOW I LOVE HER DEE DEE DEE
HER KISS IS SWEET AS HONEY
SHE MEANS ALL THE WORLD TO ME

EMMA

I love you, Eddie.

EDDIE

Emma, I love you.

(Eddie and Emma kiss)

COWBOY BOB

Ladies and gentleman, it's time the boys and me were
travelin' on. Before we go, we thank you so much for tuning
in to KVOO radio to join us live here at the Cain's Ballroom
in beautiful downtown Tulsa, Oklahoma. We sure do appreciate
it. Good night ever'body!

(Cowboy Bob and his band disappear)

EDDIE/EMMA/HOUSTON/DALLAS

What happened...

EDDIE

Without a word or warning...

EMMA

Eddie broke a bottle...

(Eddie breaks his beer bottle)

EMMA/EDDIE

Took a swing...

EMMA/EDDIE/HOUSTON/DALLAS

Cut Emma's throat from ear to ear.

(Eddie cuts Emma's throat)

DALLAS

Emma's blood flowed freely, covering Eddie's clothes, and
Houston's clothes, and Dallas' clothes, fresh sheets, and
Emma's brand new, white, pressed blouse.

EMMA

You never get blood out. Blood don't come out. You scrub and soak, the stain remains.

EDDIE

Eddie stood above her, watching Emma's life spill out across the floor.

EMMA

Emma looked above her, watching Eddie watch her die, his eyes as dead as hers.

DALLAS

Dallas put her arms around her daddy, held him tight.

HOUSTON

Houston shot his daddy.

(Houston shoots his cap gun at Eddie)

EDDIE

But daddy wouldn't die.

DALLAS/HOUSTON

The air was sweet and burning...

EDDIE/EMMA

From the smell of Emma's blood.

DALLAS

Dallas watched the white lace blouse...

DALLAS/EMMA

Turn red from Emma's blood.

HOUSTON

Houston was motionless...

DALLAS/EDDIE

Silent...

DALLAS

The souls of his new boots...

DALLAS/EDDIE/EMMA

Were wet with Emma's blood.

EMMA

It happened.

END OF PROLOGUE

ACT IScene 1

SETTING: Dallas' Seattle apartment; Houston's room in the Oklahoma State Mental Hospital; McAlester Penitentiary; the Wild West of Houston's imagination. The action moves fluidly, instantly, from place to place.

AT RISE: Dallas and Morgan'S Seattle apartment. Dallas is looking out a window, taking in a STORM, drinking a beer, thinking. MORGAN enters

| | |
|---|--------|
| Dallas. | MORGAN |
| Morgan. | DALLAS |
| Come to bed. | MORGAN |
| I will. | DALLAS |
| Now. | MORGAN |
| In a minute. | DALLAS |
| Do you ever sleep? | MORGAN |
| I sleep. | DALLAS |
| You never sleep when I sleep. | MORGAN |
| I sleep. | DALLAS |
| What are you doing? We've got this huge day tomorrow. You should be asleep. | MORGAN |

DALLAS

You should see this storm. God, I miss storms.

(Morgan goes to Dallas. LIGHTENING FLASH,
THUNDER)

MORGAN

Lovely. Let's go to bed.

(Morgan takes Dallas' hand, starts to pull
her away from the window. Dallas pulls
Morgan back to the window. THEY embrace,
kiss)

DALLAS

You're the prettiest thing I've ever seen.

(TRANSITION TO: Houston holds open a book,
Cowboy Bob in the Showdown at Rio Bravo,
for NURSE BOB to read)

NURSE BOB

(Reading, as Cowboy Bob)

Black Eyed Charlie, it don't have to end this way.

(As BLACK EYED CHARLIE)

Turnin' yellow, Cowboy Bob? Rode a long way to see you die.

(Closes book. To Houston)

Saw the damndest thing today. Young girl comes in, ten years
old if she's a day, and Lord have mercy, Houston, poor girl
had cut her wrists. Don't mind tellin', 'bout tore me up.
Little wrists all bandaged. And damnit all, the look in that
girls eyes. So weary o' the world, she's only ten. 'Bout
broke my heart. What kind o' world's she livin' in, you know?
Huh! World old as Adam.

(As Nurse Bob attempts to move the book for
a better angle, Houston resists, tightening his
grip)

Easy. Let me get light.

(Houston lets Nurse Bob adjust the book.

Reading, as Cowboy Bob)

Black Eyed Charlie, it don't have to end this way.

(As BLACK EYE)

Turnin' yellow, Cowboy Bob? Rode a long way to see you die.

(Cowboy Bob)

Damn shameful waste o' time. Black Eye, you get the one
chance I give every man; turn 'round and walk away, and we'll
let bygones be.

(BLACK EYE)

Like hell. Prepare to meet your maker, Cowboy Bob.

(Cowboy Bob)

Some other day. Right now, got to do my chores.

(TRANSITION TO: Eddie strapped in the electric chair. He is wearing a light blue tee-shirt and prison issue pants. An electrode is secured to his lower leg. Straps across his upper torso, arms and legs hold him firmly in the chair. His stillness is menacing. TWITTY enters.)

Eddie. TWITTY

Twitty. EDDIE

You like a smoke? TWITTY

A smoke be good 'bout now. EDDIE

(Twitty lights a cigarette, holds it to Eddie's mouth so he can smoke)

What's on your mind? TWITTY

Nothin'. A little song I used to sing. EDDIE

How's it go? TWITTY

(Eddie starts humming Texarkana Baby Waltz. As Dallas picks up the tune: TRANSITION TO Dallas and Morgan dancing, kissing, necking, touching. Dallas takes a last long swig from her bottle. She stops cold, takes a step back, pauses, goes to the window. Morgan follows, puts her arms around Dallas. Dallas pulls away. Morgan steps back, goes to the doorway)

What is it? MORGAN

Nothing. DALLAS

Is it me? MORGAN

No. DALLAS

MORGAN

I need you to listen.

(TRANSITION TO: Houston; Nurse Bob, still reading)

NURSE BOB

Black Eyed Charlie draws his duster back. Sweat trickles down his cheek. Cowboy Bob stands statue still, as calm as you please. The blacksmith's weather vane, yanked about by a burning wind, lets out a screech from hell.

(To Houston)

Good Lord, Houston, I'm 'bout to wet my pants.

(Back to the book)

Black Eye makes his move. But before his fingers reach the ivory handle of his Colt forty-five, Cowboy Bob draws and fires-KAPOW! Black Eyed Charlie is dead before he hits the dust. A grimace tinged with disbelief is chiseled on his face for all eternity.

(TRANSITION TO: Twitty and Eddie)

EDDIE

OH, MY TEXARKANA BABY
LORD I LOVE HER LA DEE DA
HER DADDY CAME FROM TEXAS
HER MA FROM ARKANSAS

(WARDEN BOB enters)

WARDEN BOB

Twitty.

TWITTY

Warden Bob.

WARDEN BOB

Eddie.

EDDIE

Warden Bob.

WARDEN BOB

Governor phoned, Eddie, said he's going to bed.

EDDIE

Well.

WARDEN BOB

Supreme Court passed on your case, Eddie.

EDDIE

Well.

WARDEN BOB

Nothin' personal, Eddie. Hell, you're a got-damn ideal inmate, hate to see you go, but here's the way it is: Looks like today's your day.

EDDIE

What day is it, Warden Bob?

WARDEN BOB

September twenty five, nineteen hun'ret, seventy-seven. Eddie Wickett's thirty-third year o' life and his last day on earth. Hell of a day.

EDDIE

Warden Bob?

WARDEN BOB

Yes, Eddie.

EDDIE

Sounds like a damn fine day to me.

(Warden Bob exits. Twitty lights another cigarette, shares it with Eddie)

TWITTY

Eddie.

EDDIE

Twitty.

TWITTY

Can you sing me the rest o' your song?

EDDIE

OH, MY TEXARKANA BABY
SHE'S MY TRUE LOVE DOE SEE DOE
HER SKIN IS WHITE AND MILKY
HER HAIR IS BLACK AS COAL

(TRANSITION TO: Dallas and Morgan, as before)

MORGAN

It's not the fact you never sleep or never want to leave the house. That's weird but not so weird it freaks me out - not yet, but yes, the day will come when that will freak me out. It's you're so protected. There's more going on with you then you let on and I need in on that.

MORGAN (CONT'D)

You say it's nothing but clearly it's something, what? What is it? One minute we're fine the next, it's, I don't know. I love you but I won't be marginalized, or, I don't know, excluded, or, whatever it is you do, it's not allowed.

DALLAS

What do I do?

MORGAN

You get this look in your eye and all of a sudden I'm a pain in your ass or something and I don't know who you are, not Dallas, not my Dallas. I don't want to fight about it. I don't want to turn this into this huge, horrible thing on our trip. I just need you to know, whatever it is, whatever's going on, you got to let me in. You don't, it's... Makes me sad. We have huge day tomorrow, let's go to bed.

DALLAS

I need to ride out this storm.

(Morgan exits. TRANSITION TO: Nurse Bob, reading; Houston, enthralled)

NURSE BOB

(Reading)

Cowboy Bob takes a long, hard look at the fallen man, then slowly returns his six-shooter to it's holster. 'Got cattle need tendin',' he grumbles to the silent mob, 'I best be headin' home.' Sheriff Truett and Deputy Slim exchange a knowing look - a case of self defense if ever a one there was. As Undertaker measures Black Eyed Charlie for his coffin, Cowboy Bob rides west into a setting sun.

(Closes book)

Good God Almighty! And that's but Chapter One. Houston... Well, damnit all. No easy way to tell hard news, so here's how it is. State cut us off. Whole hospital, we're lockin' up for good. And we all have to go. Why, even ol' Nurse Bob. Now, don't you worry none. See, Dallas, your sister, Dallas, you remember her, she cares about you, boy. Noon tomorrow she'll be here. That's right, Seattle, all that way. She's comin' here to move you to your brand new home. Life is change, Houston. Don't try to fight it. All comes down to choice: Best any of us do is choose to make the best o' things. Aw, you know I'll come down there to visit. You owe me a nice long talk. Good night, Cowboy Houston. Sweet dreams.

(Nurse Bob exits. The world is transformed into the wild west of Houston's imagination. Houston practices his quick-draw once, twice, as Cowboy Bob sneaks in from behind)

Damn quick.

COWBOY BOB

HOUSTON
(Turns and draws on Cowboy Bob)
Don't move!

COWBOY BOB
Don't shoot!

HOUSTON
Damn. Cowboy Bob!
I tell you what, keep sneakin' up on folks,
And I'll be tellin' how I knew you when.

COWBOY BOB
Since when'd you get so fast?

HOUSTON
Not only fast,
(Draws)
My aim is true.

COWBOY BOB
I bet it is, but truly,
You got a need to quick draw?

HOUSTON
Never know,
(Draws)
Might need to kill a man.

COWBOY BOB
You never know.

HOUSTON
Ol' Wicked Ed might show.

COWBOY BOB
He might.

HOUSTON
He does,
(Draws)
He'll get what's comin'.

COWBOY BOB
Best to be prepared.

HOUSTON
That's what I figure.

COWBOY BOB
'Cept, you ain't prepared.

HOUSTON

'Damn quick,' said so your-

COWBOY BOB

You're quick, not quick enough.
To wear a gun, to be a shootist, Houston,
You got to be at least as quick as me.

HOUSTON

What say you, me, we see how quick quick is.

(Houston and Cowboy Bob face off. They
stand motionless. After a moment, Cowboy
Bob draws; Houston's gun is still in its
holster)

HOUSTON (cont'd)

Good Lord.

COWBOY BOB

(A patient, gentle instructor)
Good thing we're friends.

(TRANSITION TO: Eddie and Twitty; Dallas,
as before. A specter, EMMA'S GHOST, can
almost been seen upstage)

EDDIE/DALLAS

SHE'S MY TEXARKANA BABY
HOW I LOVE HER DEE DEE DEE
HER KISS IS SWEET AS HONEY
SHE MEANS ALL THE WORLD TO ME

DALLAS

Daddy.

TWITTY

Eddie.

EDDIE

Twitty.

TWITTY

That's a hell of a song.

(TRANSITION TO: Cowboy Bob and Houston)

COWBOY BOB

Listen up. Keep weight on this side. That way, no need to
move to draw.

(Cowboy Bob demonstrates, Houston imitates)

COWBOY BOB (cont'd)

Now pivot as you draw.

(Cowboy Bob demonstrates)

Profile, see, makes a smaller target.

(Houston imitates)

COWBOY BOB (cont'd)

Good. Y'draw needs work, gun's high; time it takes to get from here to here, you're dead. Shoot from the hip.

(Cowboy Bob demonstrates)

No wasted motion, wasted time. Barrel's clear, you fire.

(Houston imitates)

COWBOY BOB (cont'd)

Good. Last thing, can't kill a man with looks; don't look'im in the eye - look'im in the chest. Hand moves, weight shifts, he's yours. What say we see how quick you learn.

(Cowboy Bob and Houston again face off.

This time, Houston is much improved)

COWBOY BOB (cont'd)

Good. Now practice, hundred times a day, a hundred days and more; repetition, 'till your body knows its work without your head. A shootist lets his body do its job; a shootist keeps his head plumb out the way.

HOUSTON

Damn good lesson, Cowboy Bob.

COWBOY BOB

If you learn anything at all, learn this: Live life so you don't have to draw. Hell of a thing, killin' a man. It sticks.

(DEPUTY SLIM calls from offstage)

DEPUTY SLIM

Hey! Cowboy Bob!

HOUSTON

It's Deputy Slim

COWBOY BOB

Hey, Slim!

(DEPUTY SLIM, a letter in hand, enters)

DEPUTY SLIM

Don't ask, cause I don't know, but what I know
Is some dumb cuss seen such and such.

COWBOY BOB

Well, what?

DEPUTY SLIM

Damn foolish nonsense 'bout a damn fool ghost.
Dumb cuss is in the graveyard.

HOUSTON

Doin' what?

DEPUTY SLIM

Don't ask 'cause I don't know, but Sheriff Truett
Says give this note to Cowboy Bob-

COWBOY BOB

Right here.

DEPUTY SLIM

And here's your note. Let me tell you-

COWBOY BOB

Please do.

DEPUTY SLIM

If half o' what this madman says is true-

COWBOY BOB

We aint got time for this.

DEPUTY SLIM

You head out now,
Ride hell for leather, cut through Dead Man's Pass,
You'll hit the bone yard right about sunset.
Don't ask, 'cause I don't know.

DEPUTY SLIM/COWBOY BOB/HOUSTON

It's in the note.

DEPUTY SLIM

But Sheriff Truett says better not waste time
Be plenty time enough to get caught-up
Once you get settled in.

COWBOY BOB

Say, Slim, ol' friend,
Don't mean to put you out, but you don't mind,
Might be I better see your Sheriff's note.

DEPUTY SLIM

Stop jawin' 'n read 'is 'ing already, geez!

(Deputy Slim hands the note to Cowboy Bob,
who reads)

DEPUTY SLIM (cont'd)
Ol' Houston, workin' on his quick-draw.

HOUSTON
Yep.

DEPUTY SLIM
Yeah. Time was, I's right quick. Well, quick enough,
I'm here, grown old and slow.

COWBOY BOB
I better bolt.

(Cowboy Bob followed by Deputy Slim, then
Houston, start to exit)

DEPUTY SLIM
The hell you goin'?

HOUSTON
Reckon I'll tag along.

DEPUTY SLIM
Not this time, son. Sheriff says you stay here.

COWBOY BOB
So long, Houston. Remember what you learned.

(Cowboy Bob and Deputy Slim exit. Houston
draws)

HOUSTON
It sticks.

END OF SCENE 1

ACT IScene 2

SETTING: Waiting room, Oklahoma State Mental Hospital, Vinita.

AT RISE: Morgan, Dallas. *

MORGAN
How 'bout song titles?

DALLAS
Okay.

MORGAN
Uh... Tulsa.

DALLAS
Tulsa? Okay. Go.

MORGAN
Living on Tulsa Time.

DALLAS
Don't Make Me Come To Tulsa.

MORGAN
Tulsa Queen.

DALLAS
Twenty-four Hours to Tulsa.

MORGAN
Uhhhhhh-shit. Crap.

DALLAS
Fourteen Hours from Tulsa.

MORGAN
You're kidding.

DALLAS
Machine to Tulsa. Teardrops to Tulsa. Halfway To Tulsa.
Almost To Tulsa. Tulsa Straight Ahead. Tulsa County. Tulsa.
Passing Through Tulsa. Tulsa Turnaround. Loser Tulsa
Turnaround. New Tulsa Blues. Tulsa Chili Bop. Tulsa Hop.
Tulsa Rag. Tulsa Stomp. Tulsa Shuffle. Tulsa Waltz. West
Tulsa Story. Wild Nights in Tulsa. Tulsa Love Affair. Day
That She Left Tulsa. Don't Let the Sun Set On You, Tulsa.
Take Me Back To Tulsa, I'm Too Young To Marry. *

MORGAN
You suck.

DALLAS

Hey, you're the one picked Tulsa.

(Beat)

MORGAN

I'm sorry about what I said.

DALLAS

Don't be. It's not you. I know I get weird. I'm sorry.

MORGAN

I just don't want you to think -

DALLAS

- I don't.

MORGAN

I just don't want things to go without saying.

(Nurse Bob enters carrying a file box)

NURSE BOB

His files are here. His things. All's here. They'll ask for this when you check in.

(Hands Dallas a file)

Now, he's no trouble, like I said, but he's inclined to wonder off, so keep an eye. And ever now 'n again he'll say a thing, you'll want to think he's sayin' it to you. He's not. Least, never has. He's ready. We'll be few.

DALLAS

Thanks.

(Nurse Bob exits. Dallas opens the box, peeks in, puts the lid back. Morgan takes the box, opens it, removes a Bible)

MORGAN

Your parents make you go to church?

DALLAS

My grandma.

MORGAN

Mine did, Lutheran, my mom, my dad just went along.

DALLAS

Baptist. My grandma told me unbeknownst to me my soul had been possessed by demons, that's why I was wild.

MORGAN

Nice. During confirmation class we had a parents night. Room's filled with kids and parents and Pastor Kanippa, his lesson's on original sin. We're born with sin? How are we born with sin? Babies haven't sinned. How is it within the realm of possibility a tiny little newborn baby has sinned? I'm a sinner, I get it, but a little newborn baby? We go back and forth, I'm defending newborns, he's defending Christianity, I'm thirteen, he's old as God and finally I just say, 'Bullshit. This is Bullshit.' Mom's crying, dad's laughing his ass off, Pastor Kanippa's about to pop a vein and I'm running out of the room in tears. A month later, I took communion, so...

DALLAS

I'd lay awake at night and pray to God to take me...so I could be with Him and kick His ass.

MORGAN

My dad, he came home one day and said he was writing a book on cosmetology and he'd be going on a research trip and do I want to go - I'm ten, I'm like, hell yeah. So, finally we go and we go to Chile - we're in Chile, and it's the middle of the night and we go to a mountain top - a Chilean mountain top in the middle of the night: cosmology, not cosmetology. We're at an observatory not a make up counter. I'm crushed. And then a woman in a lab coat puts me in a chair. We're way up on a platform, and she has me looking through a telescope at a spiral galaxy and she's explaining how what I'm seeing is a galaxy as it was, millions of years ago, how history is gathered, magnified and focused, lands in my eye, is transmitted to my brain, how my brain produces images my mind can study and wonder over and ask why. Ask why, she said, get really good at math, 'cause God? - God's in the numbers. My dad took me half way 'round the world for a personal consultation with a cosmologist.

DALLAS

She was hot, wasn't she -

MORGAN

- She was hot.

(Morgan and Dallas rummage through the box.
Morgan pulls out a file, flips through it,
reads. Dallas pulls out Houston's toy gun.
Morgan reads, looks at Dallas)

DALLAS

What?

MORGAN

You didn't tell me this.

DALLAS

What?

(Dallas takes the file, reads)

MORGAN

Is this what happened?

DALLAS

I told you.

MORGAN

No, you told me -

DALLAS

- I told you this.

MORGAN

- you didn't tell me you were in the room. I had no idea.

DALLAS

Well, now you know.

(Beat)

MORGAN

Why couldn't we find a facility for Houston in Seattle? He's not going to have anybody in Dallas.

DALLAS

Grand Prairie.

MORGAN

Wherever. Why?

DALLAS

It was recommended. It's a good place. Others here will be there.

MORGAN

What about your grandparents?

DALLAS

See, that'd be just plain mean.

(Dallas digs in the box)

MORGAN

I just want to understand. I won't judge you. It's just, sticking him in some random institution in the middle of nowhere, I don't get it.

(Dallas pulls out a book)

Cowboy Bob - DALLAS

- I mean - MORGAN

DALLAS
 - God he loved Cowboy Bob.
 We're going to see my family, we're going to drop him off,
 then you and me, the two of us, go home. And he'll be fine,
 trust me.

(As Dallas reads from 'Cowboy Bob and the
 Showdown at Rio Bravo,' Nurse Bob enters
 with Houston)

DALLAS (cont'd)
 'Chapter One. Midnight Ryder was starting his draw when
 Cowboy Bob's bullet passed through his head, the saloon's
 open door, a bottle of rye, a wall, a dresser, and then
 entered a Bible, ripping through Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus
 and Numbers before coming to rest in Deuteronomy, Chapter 32,
 Verse 35,

DALLAS/HOUSTON
 'To Me belongeth-

HOUSTON
 - vengeance and my recompense.'

NURSE BOB
 Houston, I'd like you to meet a good friend of ours. This is
 Morgan.

MORGAN
 I'm glad to finally meet you.

NURSE BOB
 And you remember Dallas. Your sister, Dallas.

(Dallas, still holding the toy gun,
 approaches Houston)

HOUSTON
 Don't shoot!

(Dallas hands Houston the toy gun, gives
 him a reluctant hug; He does not respond)

DALLAS
 Silly man.

(Beat)

NURSE BOB
I'll help you load up.

(Nurse Bob grabs the box)

MORGAN
How far is it to your grandpa's?

DALLAS
An hour maybe.

NURSE BOB
Houston, time to head out.

(Houston considers the gun in his hand,
tests its weight, spins the barrel)

HOUSTON
We ride for Rio Bravo break o' dawn.

(Houston races off. ALL follow)

END OF SCENE 2

*

ACT IScene 3

SETTING: The electric chair. *

AT RISE: Eddie. Twitty enters.

Eddie. TWITTY *

Twitty. EDDIE

Your Daddy's here to see you. TWITTY

Daddy? EDDIE

Your Daddy. TWITTY

Daddy. EDDIE

You like to see him? TWITTY

Reckon so. It's my Daddy. EDDIE

(Twitty exits)

De-doi-de-doi-de-doi-de-hun-de-dud! EDDIE (cont'd)

(MR. WICKETT enters. He never looks at Eddie)

Son. MR. WICKETT

Daddy. EDDIE

You're in a pickle now, Son. MR. WICKETT

Reckon so, Daddy. EDDIE

MR. WICKETT

Eddie confetti, tee legged, tie legged, bow legged Eddie. I'd say our train run out of track.

EDDIE

I'd say you're not a liar.

MR. WICKETT

Get all the Wicketts off the train, the Hotel Terminus got rooms to let-you like animals, Son?

EDDIE

Love animals, Daddy.

MR. WICKETT

Deer came up in the yard today, doe, fawn. 'Where's the buck?' I said. Don't see the buck. 'Where's the buck?' He's there, edge o' the woods, twelve point buck-it was beautiful, Son.

EDDIE

Sounds beautiful, Daddy.

MR. WICKETT

Eddie, it was beautiful-you like poetry, son?

EDDIE

Love poetry, Daddy.

MR. WICKETT

Your Daddy's a poet, Son, I ever tell you?

EDDIE

Reckon you did.

MR. WICKETT

You like to hear an old man's poem? I'd like to read it to you, Son, that is, if you don't mind.

EDDIE

Heck no, Daddy, I don't mind. A poem be good 'bout now.

MR. WICKETT

I got no title, Son, it just begins.
 I'd like the memory of me
 To be a happy one.
 I'd like to leave an afterglow of smiles
 When life is done.
 I'd like to leave an echo whisp'ring softly down the ways
 Of happy times, and laughing times,
 And bright and sunny days.
 I'd like the tears of those who grieve
 To dry before the sun

MR. WICKETT (cont'd)

Of happy mem'ries that I leave
When life is done.
Remember me, Eddie.

EDDIE

I will, Daddy.

MR. WICKETT

(Materializing a cigarette, as if by magic)
You smoke, Son?

EDDIE

Yes, Daddy, I smoke.

MR. WICKETT

Well. It'll kill you, Son, it's killing me--do you believe in God?

EDDIE

Can't say I do.

MR. WICKETT

(And now a lighter)
Well, me neither, never saw the point, the end? Huh! That's all she wrote. What do you say?

EDDIE

Huh! That's all she wrote.

(Mr. Wickett and Eddie laugh long and hard.
Mr. Wickett lights his cigarette)

MR. WICKETT

A cotton boll's a wondrous thing, Son. Used to watch the migrants pickin' cotton. Nimble fingers dart in past the jagged edges of a boll and pluck a fluff of cloud. You can't imagine. When I's yea-high to a mule, my Daddy strung an eight-foot sack across my back, and made me pick my weight in cotton by days end. Couldn't tell you what I weighed, you beat me with a stick. A fool can see a boll of cotton weighs like angel's breath. My shadow's long, my hands are drippin' blood, my touch is turning cotton red, but Son, I PICK MY WEIGHT.

EDDIE

Well.

MR. WICKETT

Son, tell me, why did you kill Emma?

EDDIE

I loved Emma, Daddy. I loved her, and I was havin' a bad day.

MR. WICKETT

Well. Everybody got a bad day comin'. Love is crazy, Son. It makes a man do crazy things.

EDDIE

Daddy, how'er my kids?

MR. WICKETT

Dallas and Houston are fine, Eddie, they're just fine.

EDDIE

I'm no good, am I, Daddy?

MR. WICKETT

You're good, Son, I see that--do you like history, Son?

EDDIE

Not much for history, Daddy.

MR. WICKETT

Greatest books of history sit beside my chair, read 'em all. When you read history, Son, if you learn anything at all then you learn this: People are idiots, blinded by ignorance, frightened by the dark. I see the light, Son, see into your heart, I see the good. Do you know why?

EDDIE

No, Daddy, tell me why.

MR. WICKETT

Because I love you, Son, and love-

(Mr. Wickett coughs uncontrollably for a long time. He puts his cigarette out)

EDDIE

I love you too, Daddy.

(Mr. Wickett stops coughing)

MR. WICKETT

Your Momma and I had a moment once so beautiful 'bout broke my heart. The world stopped. Time stood still. I think about it constantly. Keeps me alive. You had a moment, Son?

EDDIE

Yes, Daddy, I had a moment. One.

MR. WICKETT

That's good, I'm glad for you, one moment in a lifetime, Son, just one, well then, that's all you need. One moment, Son, is all you need. Now, you remember that.

EDDIE

I will, Daddy. I'll remember.

MR. WICKETT

DEVIL COME TO TONTITOWN
A NIGHT AS BLACK AS COAL
DEVIL COME TO TAKE ME DOWN
BUT I AIN'T GOT NO SOUL

EDDIE/MR. WICKETT

I AIN'T GOT NO SOUL, DEVIL,
I AIN'T GOT NO SOUL.

(Mr. Wickett exits singing)

EDDIE

DON'T WASTE YOUR TIME
WHAT'S MINE IS MINE
BUT I AIN'T GOT...
(Making the realization)
No soul.

END OF SCENE 3

ACT IScene 4

SETTING: State Line Cemetery, night.

AT RISE: SHERIFF TRUETT enters, cautious, quiet. He stops, listens, starts to exit. Cowboy Bob enters stealthily.

COWBOY BOB

Nice night.

SHERIFF TRUETT

You hold right there, by God, or eat hot lead!

COWBOY BOB

You're mighty kind, but I done had my supper.

SHERIFF TRUETT

That Cowboy Bob?

COWBOY BOB

My flesh and blood.

SHERIFF TRUETT

Damn fool!

You oughta be ashamed 'yourself, by God!
Be sneakin' up on me might get you killed!

COWBOY BOB

Why, Sheriff Truett, my apology,
Don't mean to scare you none.

SHERIFF TRUETT

Nobody's scared!

You coulda got yourself shot up is all.
In fact, let me go wonder off a ways,
And you sneak up on me again, what say?

COWBOY BOB

Done growed a little old for hide and seek.

SHERIFF TRUETT

Your old, all right, but, damn, I'm glad your here.

COWBOY BOB

I'm glad you're glad. Now, tell me, why're we here;
What grave concern can so compel a man
To walk in dead o' night among the dead?

(Houston sneaks in up stage)

SHERIFF TRUETT

Just hear me out; if what I heard is true
Only a fool would come out here alone.

COWBOY BOB

(Whispering)

We're not alone.

(Cowboy Bob draws on Houston)

Hold it!

HOUSTON

Don't shoot!

SHERIFF TRUETT

Don't shoot!

It's Houston.

COWBOY BOB

Damnit all to hell, Houston.

SHERIFF TRUETT

You head on home, you hear.

HOUSTON

But-

SHERIFF TRUETT

Head on home.

Appreciate you tryin' to help, Houston,
But we got work to do. We need your help
We'll let you know.

COWBOY BOB

We'll shoot some more tomorrow.

Same time, same place. Now how's 'at sound?

HOUSTON

Sound's good.

You need me, let me know.

SHERIFF TRUETT

You got my word.

(Houston exits)

COWBOY BOB

What got your goat?

SHERIFF TRUETT

A man comes up to me,
Says, 'Sheriff Truett, you take me for a fool?'

COWBOY BOB

You say?

SHERIFF TRUETT

'No more 'n any other fool.
Now why you ask?'

COWBOY BOB

He says?

SHERIFF TRUETT

He says to me,
''Till last night up is up and down is down,
The sun comes up each mornin', sets each night,
Chickens go "cluck," cattle go "moo," my wife,
She'd die afore she'd take a drink, but now,
Just might be down is up and up is down,
The sun comes out at night and sets at dawn,
That chicken's moo and cattle cluck, and Sheriff,
If I's to see my wife drunk off her ass,
Buck naked, on a hog, in broad daylight,
Ride into church and curse the Lord a streak,
I wouldn't bat an eye.'

COWBOY BOB

You say?

SHERIFF TRUETT

I say,
The hell went on last night?

COWBOY BOB

He says?

SHERIFF TRUETT

By god,
If he don't up and start to swear and pledge,
And make all kinds o' silly oaths and such;
Spittin', swearin' on graves-his mother's grave,
A cousin' twice removed-his mother's side,
Some man he didn't know but thought his tomb
Was mighty nice; he's swearin' on his horse,
His daddy's mule, a neighbor's cow, some dog;
He made me fetch a bible, swore on that;
Draws X across his heart and makes a curse;
Says any man who says his words aint so,
Got hell to pay.

COWBOY BOB

So what's he say he saw?

SHERIFF TRUETT

So I say, 'What the hell's all this about?'
And then he gets all still and goes all pale,
His lips tremble, hands shake, his eyes go wild
And I'll be damned if he don't start to cry.
In all my years I never seen a man,

SHERIFF TRUETT (cont'd)

Not even one whose neck is in a noose,
So scared. Why, he scared me, he's so damn scared.
A wicked, awful howl escapes his throat,
Followed by words made all of fear; a sound
To turn hot blood to ice. Now, here's the gist:
Cold sober, sane, and all about his wits,
Beneath a moon so bright a man could read,
He laid his eyes on Emma Wickett's ghost.

COWBOY BOB

Don't pull my leg.

SHERIFF TRUETT

Swears every word is true.

COWBOY BOB

Most any fool can lie and swear it's true.

SHERIFF TRUETT

That's why we're here; we'll hide 'n wait 'n pray
His story doesn't hold 'till light o' day.

(Pause)

SHERIFF TRUETT (cont'd)

By God, this night is black as pitch. And cold.

(A WOLF howls in the distance. Soon more
wolves join in. The moon comes out)

COWBOY BOB

Some say a howlin' wolf is lonely soundin'.
But when you're on the prairie all alone
Their chorus sure is welcome company.

(Emma appears. Her throat is a gaping
wound, her face is beautiful, her blouse
is covered with blood)

SHERIFF TRUETT

Good Lord have mercy on my soul.

COWBOY BOB

Get down!

SHERIFF TRUETT

In heaven's name, what thing from hell is this?

COWBOY BOB

Your fool's no fool, it's Emma Wickett's ghost!

SHERIFF TRUETT
 By God, it is, and damn, but she looks pissed!
 I'm hell for leather.

COWBOY BOB
 Don't move!

(Emma disappears)

SHERIFF TRUETT
 Good lord!

COWBOY BOB
 She's gone!
 Okay. Now I believe your fool.

SHERIFF TRUETT
 Oh, damn!

COWBOY BOB
 You hurt?

SHERIFF TRUETT
 Hell no. Done peed my pants is all.
 Well, this is king hell weird.

COWBOY BOB
 It's weird alright.

SHERIFF TRUETT
 The hell do we do now?

COWBOY BOB
 The hell I know.
 I reckon we tell Houston.

(Cowboy Bob exits)

SHERIFF TRUETT
 Cowboy Bob,
 Oh, what the hell.

END OF SCENE 4

ACT IScene 5

SETTING: The Farm. The front porch.

AT RISE: Houston, Morgan, Dallas;
Mr. Wickett enters. He has had a laryngectomy and speaks using an electrolarynx.

HOUSTON

What's come to pass was meant to be.

(Mr. Wickett takes a long, hard, menacing look at Houston)

MR. WICKETT

Let's have a sing-a-long.

AMAZING GRACE, HOW SWEET THE SOUND

(He laughs)

How's that for singin'? All together now!

MR. WICKETT/MORGAN

AMAZING GRACE, HOW SWEET THE SOUND

(As Dallas tries to stop Morgan's singing, Houston executes a quick draw, drops his toy gun. Beat)

MR. WICKETT

Too hot. Go make us tea.

(Mr. Wickett gives Houston a once over, exits. Houston practices his quick draw, drops his toy six-shooter)

MORGAN

Okay, look, I know it's a family thing, that's not what's bothering me. What's bothering me is you won't admit it.

DALLAS

You know, if I thought I did I would. I don't think I do - this is stupid.

(Houston draws and holds on)

MORGAN

You're right. You're right, I'm being, I don't know. I'm sorry.

DALLAS

How sorry?

Damn sorry. MORGAN

Prove it. DALLAS

(THEY kiss)

You're not forgiven. DALLAS (cont'd)

(Kiss)

Who needs forgiveness... MORGAN

(THEY kiss)

It's just, I want you to know I'm willing to take this on. MORGAN (cont'd)

And that's big of you - DALLAS

You need him - MORGAN

- But you can't speak to what I need. DALLAS

Far be it for me to cast a pall over the Wickett family love fest, but from where I sit it's painfully obvious you need him. MORGAN

I need you to butt out. DALLAS

(Mr. Wickett enters)

Tea. Steeping. Let it cool. You see that little cottage up the road? Quite nice. Well worn, and loved. Welcome to stay the night. Good company, it's good. You see that little cottage up the road? MR. WICKETT

*
*

We're going to spend the night at grandma's. We have to go soon. DALLAS

You're welcome all the same. Got quite a view. You think? MR. WICKETT

MORGAN

Lovely. I love the way there's... nothing.

MR. WICKETT

Desolation has a beauty all its own. A prairie heart is cruel; so lovely, but aloof. Sometimes get deer. Come in the yard. Wild dogs. Dallas.

DALLAS

Grandpa.

MR. WICKETT

Dallas, my palace, tee-legged, tie-legged, bow-legged Dallas. If wishes were horses. Eddie loved his children.

DALLAS

Tell me about him.

MR. WICKETT

My daddy was a striking man-

DALLAS

- no, Eddie.

MR. WICKETT

- My mother was a beauty. Momma took us to town, buy clothes, dry goods. Town's twenty miles. We shop. We spend a night, my momma's aunt. Next day, head back. Still miles 'till home, and we see smoke. Thieves tied my daddy to his bed, used bailing wire, and burned our house. Neighbors from miles come 'round. Men, women, children. Not a tear. Not from my momma. Not from me. No one. And that's the man my daddy was. My momma, miss her still. You see that little cottage up the road?

DALLAS

We didn't see a cottage.

MR. WICKETT

Just up the road. Up by the baptist church.

HOUSTON

(Draws)

You need me, let me know.

(Mr. Wickett, in a casual, off-handed way, slaps Houston. Houston drops his toy gun)

MR. WICKETT

Play me for a fool.

(Dallas slaps Mr. Wickett. He falls to the floor)

MORGAN

Dallas!

MR. WICKETT

Drive by that little cottage by the church.
 So warms my heart. A simple wooden fence
 And trees on both sides make a canopy.
 I always thought that I would someday own
 A place like that, or some old house that's all
 Dilapidated, weathered, worn, and then
 I'd make it really beautiful inside.
 You open up the door and walk inside,
 So beautiful inside. And warm. And safe.
 Please have some tea. Sit down to supper. Talk.

*
*
*

(Mr. Wickett gets up off of the floor)

MR. WICKETT (cont'd)

These things. They happen. Got no meaning. None.
 That boy knows it. Me and him, we're good.

DALLAS

We have to go.

MR. WICKETT

Your grandpa's a poet. I ever tell you?

DALLAS

Yeah.

MR. WICKETT

I wrote a poem. You like to hear it?

DALLAS

And then we have to go.

(Dallas and Mr. Wickett exit. Morgan picks
 up the toy gun, hands it to Houston,
 touches his cheek, takes his hand)

MORGAN

You okay? I'm sorry that happened.

HOUSTON

Sometimes your hard road, there's your only road.

(Morgan and Houston exit)

END OF SCENE 5

ACT IScene 6

SETTING: The electric chair. *

AT RISE: Eddie. Twitty enters.

Eddie. TWITTY *

Twitty. EDDIE

Your Momma's here to see you. TWITTY

My Momma? EDDIE

Your Momma. TWITTY

Momma. EDDIE

You like to see her? TWITTY

Reckon so, it's my Momma. EDDIE

(Twitty exits)

De-doi-de-doi-de-doi-de-hun-de-dud! EDDIE (cont'd)

(MOMMA enters. She never looks at Eddie)

You seen your daddy. MOMMA

Yes'm. EDDIE

Crazy as a blue jay. That's not news. MOMMA

I know it. EDDIE

God, I loved that man. MOMMA

EDDIE

I know you did, Momma.

MOMMA

Lord I adored your daddy. Would've slept on boards to be near him. Asked for nothing. Offered all I had. I offered up my life. I was a fool. Well, she was young. Face, soft and innocent. Eyes, full of fire. Breasts, firm. Legs, long and lean. And she was hungry. Eddie, you know what she hungered for?

EDDIE

No, Momma. What did she hunger for?

MOMMA

Your daddy...Eddie, was a brilliant sun, a blazing torch to break the black o' night. We came together without hope or fear for consequence and fed upon each other 'til there's nothin' left but bone.

EDDIE

That's nice, Momma.

MOMMA

Your daddy tried to kill me once, have you been told?

EDDIE

Yes, momma, you told me.

MOMMA

Wheat. All directions, wheat. Your momma was a beauty, Eddie, and your daddy, way he looked at me: You grow up farmin' dirt, a handsome man gives you a look, why, there's a world o' hope. Past grandma's farm, on past our cemetery, on a hill, we'd drive on up and park. I loved what we became. Who would've thought. One afternoon my lover turns and looks at me, and in his eyes, Eddie, nothing. Nothing. 'N 'at was 'at. Your daddy worked me o'er 'till he was spent, Then sped off raisin' devils in the dust That danced n' skipped across the fields, while I Rose up into a blue and cloudless sky. When I fell back to earth, all I could think Was that this dress will sure be hell to mend.

EDDIE

I bet it was, momma.

MOMMA

We had a moment, one, so beautiful, when all our world was as we'd dreamed. One little moment, Son, but what a reckoning is here. I'm sorry, Eddie, sorry as I can be.

EDDIE

For what, Momma?

MOMMA

Your life.

EDDIE

Don't be sorry, Momma, I ain't. I had a fine life. Lookin' back from where I sit, it's been okay. Walking barefoot. Ridin' a bike. Coasting down a long hill with no hands. Running for no reason. Screaming at the sky. Sunlight. Sunburn. Peeling skin. Scabs. Taste of blood when you bust your lip. Drinkin' water. Bathing. Swimming. Diving. Skipping rocks. Coffee. Eggs over easy. Bacon. Pancakes. Maple syrup. Brown paper bags. Dew. Freshly cut grass. Dogs barking. Cut wood. Burning wood. Paint. New shoes. Old shoes. New jeans. Old jeans. Old boots. New cars. Driving fast. Motor oil. Morning. Horses. A ticking watch. Old bars. Scars. Cheap liquor. Groove on a finger from a ring. Voice of the woman you love. Her smell. Her kiss. The rhythm of her breathing in the night. Looks filled with words. Sad songs. Sunsets. Life ain't been bad, Momma. Not bad at all.

MOMMA

Good. You's always ornery, but you had a lot of good in you, could see it. You know why?

EDDIE

'Cause you love me?

(Momma sobs for a long time)

EDDIE (cont'd)

I love you too, Momma.

(Turning on a dime, Momma stops crying)

MOMMA

You like my dress? Made it myself.

EDDIE

Momma, how're my kids?

MOMMA

We'll do what's right by Dallas and Houston, Eddie, have no fear of that.

EDDIE

I know you will, Momma.

MOMMA

Why'd you kill Emma, son? You tell me why. I need to know.

EDDIE

I's havin' a bad day, Momma. Ever'thin' went straight to hell.

MOMMA

I fear for you, Eddie. Fear for your soul.

(Momma starts to exit)

EDDIE

Momma?

MOMMA

Yes, Eddie?

EDDIE

I ain't got no soul.

(Momma gasps in horror)

END OF SCENE 6

COWBOY BOB

Now, we don't know for sure. We think
We seen your ma.

HOUSTON

Seen Emma?

SHERIFF TRUETT

She was here.

HOUSTON

My mother.

SHERIFF TRUETT

Right before our eyes. As real...
Tarnation, it was her.

COWBOY BOB

As real in death
As she appeared in life.

HOUSTON

Her wound, did she...

COWBOY BOB

She bore the ragged cut across her throat
That sent her soul from this world to the next.

SHERIFF TRUETT

A gruesome record of a brutal death.
Hell, we don't have to tell that tale to you,
What seen it all. Now been, what, twenty years
Since last I seen your momma, 'till last night.
And damnit all to hell, no day goes by,
Don't cuss myself a streak, ol' feeble fool!
For lettin' Eddie get away. His neck
Was meant to wear my noose.

HOUSTON

What's come to pass
Was meant to be.

SHERIFF TRUETT

Now, aren't you sharp. Look here,
This thing aint done, whatever come to pass;
A justice left undone leaves hell to pay
And, Houston, hell's come lookin' to collect.
By God, got goose bumps just to think of it!
Last night, my eyes saw a sight so king hell weird
My mind been cussin' m'eyes 'n call'n' 'em liars.
All too damn strange, and this, strangest of all:
The wicked mutilation of Emma's flesh
Set off the faultless beauty of her face;

SHERIFF TRUETT (cont'd)
 Who thought a man would live to see such things.
 Done peed my pants. I'm sorry, boy, but that's-

(Emma enters)

SHERIFF TRUETT (cont'd)
 Sweet Jesus, Joseph, Mary 'n all the saints!

COWBOY BOB
 It's back!

HOUSTON
 It's Emma!

SHERIFF TRUETT
 Shit!

(Emma exits, frightened. Houston starts to
 follow Emma)

COWBOY BOB
 (Restraining Houston)
 Don't move!

HOUSTON
 Come back!

COWBOY BOB/SHERIFF TRUETT
 Come back?

SHERIFF TRUETT
 You lost your mind!

HOUSTON
 I'll follow her!

COWBOY BOB
 Like hell you will.

SHERIFF TRUETT
 Don't be a fool.

HOUSTON
 Let go!
 Goddamnit, let me go!
 (Houston breaks free, draws his six-shooter)
 Wild horses couldn't keep me down, barbed wire,
 The mighty Mississippi, mountains, hell;

HOUSTON (cont'd)
 If all the earth conspired to keep me here,
 I'd find a way to her. Now let it be.

(Houston exits)

SHERIFF TRUETT
 Now this is king hell weird.

COWBOY BOB
 It's weird alright.

SHERIFF TRUETT
 The hell does all this mean?

COWBOY BOB
 The hell I know.
 I reckon we should follow.

(Cowboy Bob exits)

SHERIFF TRUETT
 Cowboy Bob!
 Now'f 'at don't put a hitch in your giddy up...

(Sheriff Truett follows. Emma enters,
 followed by Houston)

EMMA
 I'm bleeding.

HOUSTON
 Momma.

EMMA
 Eddie! Look at me!

HOUSTON
 I'm Houston.

EMMA
 We were having so much fun!

HOUSTON
 It's me.

EMMA
 You fool. You've ruined everything.
 Don't hurt me more; can't this be hurt enough?
 Just look at all my blood.

HOUSTON

If I do harm
Or violate our love in any way,
My honor has no worth, my word, no weight,
My life, no meaning; if I prove unfit
To be the keeper of your faith and trust,
Then damn a wretched, weak, unworthy son.

EMMA

A son?

HOUSTON

I'm Houston.

EMMA

Houston, yes.

HOUSTON

Your son.

EMMA

My child. My little boy. My Houston.

HOUSTON

Yes.

EMMA

Forgive me.

HOUSTON

What? Forgive? Forgive for what?

EMMA

I loved an evil man. Can you forgive for that? I loved a low down good for nothin', smelly, rotten, evil, smooth-talkin', lyin', cheatin', whisky-drinkin', tobacco-smokin', momma's-boy, panty-waste, two-bit, sad-assed, cheap, yellow-backed, lilly-livered, horse-thievin', greasy-fingered, nappy-headed, ugly, clumsy, gimp-eyed, wart-covered, scab-pickin', illiterate, no-account, money-grubbin', left-handed, snot-nosed son of a bitch. Your daddy ruined my new blouse. My brand new, white, lace blouse. Dear God! Oh, how I loved to put it on, how Eddie loved to pull it off. Now look, IT'S RUINED! Blood don't wash out. You scrub, and soak, and scrub, and soak, and scrub, and soak, and still there's blood. That lard-ass, tobacco-chewin', red-eye-winkin', goofy, bow-leg, flat-foot, wart-covered, lice-ridden, frumpy, pencil-neck, ear-wax-eatin', boil-suckin', puss-brained, hump-back, lamb-lovin', dirt-farmin', droopy-lip, slobberin' bastard has to pay. Until revenge is wreaked on Eddie Wickett, my soul bides time in hell. I don't belong here; here I'll stay until the evil Eddie Wickett's made to pay.

HOUSTON

If I could trade my soul for yours I would.

EMMA

If you knew what hell is, you wouldn't dare.
 Hell's nothing you've imagined, son. Hell seems
 Familiar, so comforting, so safe,
 So ordinary, everyday, so plain,
 And that's what makes the place so evil. Hell
 Seems just enough like home to make you think
 That you belong. Now, Eddie, he belongs.
 But me? I know I don't belong. To me
 Belongeth vengeance and my recompense.

HOUSTON

Give me this chore! Let me collect the fee!

EMMA

Will you strike down your murderous father?

HOUSTON

In all actions I am your faithful son
 And willing instrument to your salvation.

EMMA

Ride hell for leather 'cross the Rio Grand,
 Descend on Rio Bravo, Mexico;
 Flush Eddie out, visit revenge on him,
 And foul the gutters with his blood.

COWBOY BOB (O.S.)
 Houston!

(Emma starts to vanish)

EMMA

Kill Eddie!

SHERIFF TRUETT (O.S.)

Houston?

EMMA

For me!

COWBOY BOB (O.S.)
 Houston?

HOUSTON

Mother!

(Emma disappears)

HOUSTON(cont'd)

If Eddie Wickett lives and breaths, I swear
My vengeance will envelope him; my wrath
Will rend his heart; my furious rebuke
Will leave his flesh fallow. My recompense
Is Eddie, in a world of endless pain.

(Sheriff Truett enters, out of breath)

SHERIFF TRUETT

He's over here! By god, you got the sense
God gave a bed-bug. Boy, you lost your mind?
'Cause I know I'm plumb mad, or I'm a fool-
I'm both; I have to be a crazy fool,
Be chasin' crazy fools like you.

(Cowboy Bob enters, also out of breath)

COWBOY BOB

Next time,
You're on your own, you hear.

HOUSTON

Well, howdy, boys.

SHERIFF TRUETT/COWBOY BOB

'Well, howdy, boys?'

COWBOY BOB

That all you got to say?

HOUSTON

We ride for Rio Bravo break o' dawn.

SHERIFF TRUETT

The hell's in Rio Bravo?

HOUSTON

Eddie's neck.

Be sure 'n bring more rope.

(Houston starts to exit)

COWBOY BOB

Whoa, hoolihaner.

Put up your piggin' string 'n stay a spell.

SHERIFF TRUETT

You sayin', let me get this straight, you say
Ol' Eddie Wickett's down in Rio Bravo?

HOUSTON

That's what I say.

COWBOY BOB
And Emma told you this?

HOUSTON

Yes.

SHERIFF TRUETT
She should know, her throat the one got cut
And she's the one what got no justice done.

HOUSTON
I'll take her at her word.

SHERIFF TRUETT
Damn straight, by god.

COWBOY BOB
Don't get me wrong, you say her word is good
That's good enough for me, but you for sure,
You certain now, you got no doubt at all?

HOUSTON
Let's say I've got a shadow of a doubt,
What then? Can't do no harm, might do some good.
We ride for Rio Bravo break o' dawn.

(Houston exits)

SHERIFF TRUETT
Catch as catch can, 'n better late 'n never!
A second chance to stretch ol' Eddie's neck,
See justice done, if that aint worth a ride,
What is?

COWBOY BOB
That boy got one thing on his mind,
Revenge; justice just doesn't figure in.
Come on, we'll ride along. Our friend needs friends
However this plays out.

END OF SCENE 7

END OF ACT I

ACT IIScene 1

SETTING: Mrs. Wickett's mobile home.

AT RISE: Sheets, blankets, quilts and pillows are available for makeshift beds. MRS. WICKETT, Dallas and Morgan, in night clothes, Houston in longhandles and holster.

(Houston sings his part of Tall In the Saddle, as sung in ACT II, Scene 3. Dallas and Morgan help Houston get ready for bed)

HOUSTON

(Singing)

ON THE GREAT WIDE OPEN PRAIRIE

(Pause)

ON THE GREAT WIDE OPEN PRAIRIE

(Pause)

TY YI YIPPI YI YEA

HEAVEN IS HOME ON THE RANGE

(MRS. WICKETT, enters. She is very old, walks with difficulty, and is blind)

HOUSTON (cont'd)

TY YI YIPPI YI YEA

DALLAS

That's so familiar.

MRS. WICKETT

Tall In the Saddle.

DALLAS

You know this?

MRS. WICKETT

Oh, hell yes. Cowboy Bob...

TALL IN THE SADDLE, SUN IN MY FACE

MRS. WICKETT/HOUSTON

ON THE GREAT WIDE OPEN PRAIRIE

MRS. WICKETT

ROUNDIN' UP DOGIES, I'M IN MY PLACE

MRS. WICKETT/HOUSTON

ON THE GREAT WIDE OPEN PRAIRIE

MRS. WICKETT/HOUSTON/DALLAS
 SINGIN' TY YI YIPPI YI YEA
 HEAVEN IS HOME ON THE RANGE

MRS. WICKETT/DALLAS
 BY THE RIVER TONIGHT
 BY THE CAMPFIRE LIGHT

MRS. WICKETT/HOUSTON/DALLAS
 SINGIN' TY YI YIPPI YI YEA

(Dallas and Morgan take the bedding and
 begin to make make-shift beds on the
 floor)

MRS. WICKETT
 No one writes music anymore. When Eddie was a baby, had a
 little house not two blocks from the Cain's Ballroom. And
 every Friday, Cowboy Bob would broadcast live. We'd take your
 father, he was five or six, and we were friendly with the
 band. Handsome boys, and charming. Cowboy Bob knew everyone,
 so generous and easy going. Kind of person, talk to anyone.
 And talk about a flirt... And Cowboy Bob would sit your
 father on his knee and sing, make up little ditties on the
 spot and we'd all laugh.

DALLAS
 Morgan, look at this. Isn't this somethin'?

MRS. WICKETT
 Isn't what something?

DALLAS
 Your quilt.

MRS. WICKETT
 Before my diabetes took my eyes.
 Did every stitch by hand, cut every piece
 From rags, old dresses, blankets, anything
 Too old, too worn, too tattered to be used;
 Remains - you take the pieces that remain
 And turn them in to something beautiful
 And useful. Have enough to keep you warm?

MORGAN
 I'm good.

DALLAS
 Do you remember, there's this song...

(Dallas hums a few bars of Texarkana Waltz.
 After a bar or two, Mrs. Wickett hums
 along)

DALLAS(cont'd)

Do you remember all the words?

MRS. WICKETT

Words come to me, I'll let you know. Feel bad there's not more room, can't offer you a bed.

MORGAN

No, this is great.

MRS. WICKETT

Need anything, you let me know.

DALLAS

We will. Thanks, grandma.

MRS. WICKETT

Bathroom light's on.

DALLAS

Thanks.

(Mrs. Wickett pauses in the threshold)

MRS. WICKETT

He ask about me?

DALLAS

Yes, grandpa asked about you.

MRS. WICKETT

Good night

DALLAS/MORGAN

Good night

(Mrs. Wickett exits. Houston laughs)

DALLAS

What are you thinking?

MORGAN

I don't know.

DALLAS

You don't know or you won't say?

(Beat)

MORGAN

Maybe I should go.

DALLAS

Home?

MORGAN

Yeah.

(Beat)

MORGAN (cont'd)

I'm not here to experience Oklahoma's beauty and wonder, I came to help.

DALLAS

Oh, you've been a big help.

MORGAN

Can we talk about Houston?

DALLAS

We have.

MORGAN

Can we talk about what happened?

DALLAS

I told you what happened.

MORGAN

I read what happened.

(Beat)

MORGAN (cont'd)

Why am I here?

DALLAS

Damned if I know.

MORGAN

That's it, piss me off. You can't abandon Houston, not to some institution a million miles from home, and you know better. What you don't know is that when it comes to communication, you're no better than your brother. You two are distinguishable only by degrees and not that many. What I believe to be true in my gut and with all my heart, is that on the far side of loss and grief and pure rage at a universe and a God who, based on a preponderance of evidence, loves a good tragedy, past all of that, is the woman - based on everything I know - the woman you were born to be. That woman? I want you to be that woman, because the woman you are now is a pain in the ass. I started seeing you because I thought you were hot, I thought -

(Mrs. Wickett enters with a framed 8 x 10)

MRS. WICKETT

- Dallas.

DALLAS

Grandma.

MRS. WICKETT

(Holding out the photograph)
Who's this?

DALLAS

Some girl.

MRS. WICKETT

Some girl! Describe this girl.

DALLAS

Jet black hair. Black, piercing eyes. Full lips, somewhat mischievous. Glass beaded necklace, matching earrings. Print dress, low cut. Can't be related, this girls gorgeous. Maybe she's a model, came with the frame.

MORGAN

She's beautiful.

(Mrs. Wickett enters)

MRS. WICKETT

Oh, pish! Go on!

DALLAS

You were.

MRS. WICKETT

That picture's made when I was near your age.
It's hard to comprehend. Can you believe
That this, this, putrid, pruned up peck o' chaff
Was ever beautiful as her?

DALLAS

I can.

MRS. WICKETT

So funny, every morning when I rise
I think I look like her; I think I'm young
And smooth and raven haired and shapely legs;
I think I'm fetchin' - somedays all day long;
No simple minded glance into a glass
Reminding me she's gone. She's yours to keep,
You want her. If you don't-

DALLAS

Of course I do.

Thank you.

MRS. WICKETT

Sleep tight.

DALLAS
Don't let the bed-bugs bite.

(Mrs. Wickett exits)

MORGAN
Where was I?

DALLAS
You thought I was hot -

MORGAN
- I started seeing you because I thought you were hot, and I thought we'd have screaming good sex -

DALLAS
- And?

MORGAN
- and you delivered, but I stayed - I stayed, I'm here now, way, way the hell East of Eden -

DALLAS
- Way past Nod.

MORGAN
- because I fell in love and because I love you I'm telling you life is an evolutionary process: when you're through changing, you're through. You refuse to let me get involved in Houston's life, your life's off limits - what do we have, what remains, why am I here? You have to see how this bodes ill for us.

DALLAS
Listen, what I can say has been said, what I can share, you've got; you need more, I don't know what to tell you. My mom and dad and my grandparents - my grandma, if you knew; horrible, horrible people, cruel, selfish. My mom and dad, can you imagine the arrogance, the selfishness, the heartlessness, so heartless, doing what they did-

MORGAN
-Your dad did.

DALLAS
It takes two. Houston, I'm not responsible for him, not that old man, and not for her. I made it out, I'm out, I lived, I got a life: after all I've been through, you think I'm going to throw it away for these people, you don't know me. And you don't know Houston; where he is, all I know, if it were me, I'd pity the poor soul who comes along and shatters my peace.

DALLAS (cont'd)

We're going home. We're taking Houston to Grand Prairie,
we're getting on a plane and we're going home.

(Mrs. Wickett enters singing, holding a
box, 4"x6"x9". A Texarkana Family tableau)

MRS. WICKETT

OH, MY TEXARKANA BABY
LORD I LOVE HER LA DEE DA
HER DADDY CAME FROM TEXAS
HER MA FROM ARKANSAS
Texarkana Waltz. Good night ever'body.

HOUSTON

King hell load a stars don't hold a candle next to one of us.

(Mrs. Wickett holds out the box)

MRS. WICKETT

Dallas?

DALLAS

Grandma?

MRS. WICKETT

Dallas, I have Emma's ashes.

DALLAS

Momma?

MRS. WICKETT

Your momma's ashes.

DALLAS

My momma.

HOUSTON

Shhh! Listen.

MORGAN

Houston...

MRS. WICKETT

What's wrong?

MORGAN

It's Houston.

HOUSTON

Wait.

MORGAN

Shhh!

MRS. WICKETT

Can't wait, never get to sleep. It's not my place to tend to your mother's remains. Houston can't take responsibility. This burden falls to you. I'm sorry, but it's time. I've waited years and years for you, and now it's time. Take Emma home to Texarkana. Take Emma home to Eddie. YOU TAKE HER HOME OR NONE OF US WILL EVER REST IN PEACE!

(Dallas takes the box from Mrs. Wickett)

MRS. WICKETT (cont'd)

Let's go to bed now. Get some sleep.

(Mrs. Wickett exits. Beat)

MORGAN

Oh, baby.

(Dallas is lost. She sits the box down, turns to Houston, goes to him, buries Her face in his chest. She dissolves. We hear the muffled cries of unbearable grief. Morgan reaches for Dallas. Mrs. Wickett appears in the doorway. Dallas weeps for a long time)

HOUSTON

And I'll be damned if I know how to help.

END OF ACT II, SCENE 1

ACT IIScene 2

SETTING: The electric chair.

AT RISE: Eddie. Twitty enters.

TWITTY

Eddie.

EDDIE

Twitty.

TWITTY

Father Bob is here to see you.

EDDIE

Father Bob?

TWITTY

Father Bob.

EDDIE

Who's Father Bob, Twitty? What does Father Bob want?

TWITTY

He's a man of God, Eddie, here to save your soul. You like to see him?

EDDIE

Sounds like a good time, Twitty. Let the man of God in.

(Twitty exits)

EDDIE (CONT'D) (cont'd)

De-doi-de-doi-de-doi de-hun-de-dud!

(FATHER BOB enters. He looks at Eddie, but delivers his arias to the audience)

FATHER BOB

Son.

EDDIE

Father Bob.

FATHER BOB

Brought the Word of God to see you through your hour of need, Eddie.

EDDIE

Got no need, Father Bob.

FATHER BOB

(Taken aback)

Do you believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of Heaven and Earth, in Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son Our Lord, who lived, and died on the cross, and rose again from the dead, in the Holy Ghost, the Holy Christian Church, the Communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, in life everlasting?

EDDIE

Nope.

FATHER BOB

Jesus Christ died on the cross for your sins, Eddie. The Lord God, in His infinite wisdom, sent His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross so you, Eddie Wickett, might find eternal life.

EDDIE

Well that was damn nice of him, Father Bob.

FATHER BOB

Yes it was, Eddie, damn nice. Surrender to the beauty of His death. Ask Jesus Christ to mend your broken heart. Ask God to send the love divine, the Holy Ghost, into your heart. Say, 'Jesus, pity this poor sinner. Come into my heart, Lord, bring me home.' Now, SAY IT, EDDIE!

EDDIE

Can't say it, Father Bob.

FATHER BOB

Jesus loves you, Eddie. God loves you. His love is strong and true. His love is peace, Eddie, peace beyond all understanding. Son, God's love is great. No sin's beyond forgiveness. The Kingdom of Heaven is open, Eddie. The pearly gates will open wide to all who accept Jesus as their personal Savior. The Kingdom of Heaven, Eddie, eternal peace, salvation. All you have to do is ask the Son of God, ask Jesus Christ into your heart, make Jesus Christ your Savior, son, say, 'Jesus Christ, have pity on this sinner, enter my heart, Lord, bring me home.' Now, say it, Eddie, SAY IT!

EDDIE

Aint got it in me, Father Bob.

FATHER BOB

Then do it for the children, for Dallas, Houston. Don't let your sin rest heavy on their heads. Lift up your eyes to God. The wage of sin is death, but God restores eternal life. Ask Jesus Christ to bare the burden of your sin and spare your children.

EDDIE
Can't lift my eyes up, Father Bob.

FATHER BOB
Are you a sinner, Eddie?

EDDIE
Don't feel like a sinner.

FATHER BOB
You don't.

EDDIE
Nope.

FATHER BOB
You're a killer, Eddie.

EDDIE
Am I?

FATHER BOB
Killing is a sin.

EDDIE
Is it?

FATHER BOB
You'll burn in hell for all eternity.

EDDIE
Will I?

FATHER BOB
Unless you bring the Holy Ghost into your heart.

EDDIE
Killin' always a sin, Father Bob?

FATHER BOB
Yes, Eddie, always.

EDDIE
God sent Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son, to live, and die on the cross for me?

FATHER BOB
For your sins, Eddie, for forgiveness. For the sin of all mankind.

EDDIE
Way I figure, Father Bob, God's a killer. Who forgives God?

FATHER BOB

I'm going to pray for you, Eddie. Pray for salvation o' your soul.

EDDIE

Father Bob?

FATHER BOB

Yes, Eddie?

EDDIE

I ain't got no soul.

(Father Bob peers into the abyss)

END OF ACT II, SCENE 2

ACT IIScene 3

SETTING: A campfire on the open prairie.
Magic time.

AT RISE: Cowboy Bob, Sheriff Truett and
Houston, in longhandles, hats and
boots, settled in for the night.

COWBOY BOB
TALL IN THE SADDLE, SUN IN MY FACE

ALL
ON THE GREAT WIDE OPEN PRAIRIE

COWBOY BOB (cont'd)
ROUNDIN' UP DOGGIES, I'M IN MY PLACE

ALL
ON THE GREAT WIDE OPEN PRAIRIE

COWBOY BOB (cont'd)
SINGIN'

ALL
TY YI YIPPI YI YEA
HEAVEN IS HOME ON THE RANGE

COWBOY BOB (cont'd)
BY THE RIVER TONIGHT
BY THE CAMPFIRE LIGHT
SINGIN'

ALL
TY YI YIPPI YI YEA

COWBOY BOB (cont'd)
Sunset was mighty fine.

SHERIFF TRUETT
Sunset was by god awesome, Cowboy Bob.

HOUSTON
Sunset was so-so.

SHERIFF TRUETT
(Disputing Houston's assessment)
That streak cut 'cross northeast to south?

COWBOY BOB
The one, had red and...

HOUSTON
Wouldn't say it's red.

COWBOY BOB
You'd say it's...

SHERIFF TRUETT
Seemed to lean a touch to orange.

COWBOY BOB
Some orange, sure, but toss a little red in...

HOUSTON
Sky so blue...

SHERIFF TRUETT
A wisp of purple 'round the edge...

COWBOY BOB
More greenish blue...

HOUSTON
Like turquoise.

SHERIFF TRUETT
Yeah.

COWBOY BOB
One time
Back in the days when I'd get paid a buck
For every bronc I broke-

SHERIFF TRUETT
Good money, then.

COWBOY BOB
Hell yes it was. And one time this ol' horse,
Forget his name, was givin' me some grief
And I got throwed. That horse came down on me...
I wore his hoof print on my ass for weeks.

SHERIFF TRUETT
By god, that smarts.

COWBOY BOB
Yeah, smarts like hell. Thing is,
My ass turned every color known to man,
And 'round day four, my cheek was just the shade
O' that broad streak cut 'cross the sunset sky.

HOUSTON
Looks like the sun was setting on the seat
You're setting on to see the setting sun.

SHERIFF TRUETT

The sun must set afore the moon will rise,
Unless you're Cowboy Bob. Well, don't ya know?
His moon must rise to show off his sun set.

COWBOY BOB

A cloven moon's no place to set the sun,
Especially on so bruised and sore a seat.

(ALL laugh)

SHERIFF TRUETT

Sometimes I get a hankerin', you know,
Might settle down. Might get a little land,
A mule, and maybe, if it suits me right,
Might like to farm.

COWBOY BOB

Farm?

HOUSTON

Farm!

SHERIFF TRUETT

Grow crops and such.

COWBOY BOB

God help us all.

HOUSTON

Good lord have mercy.

SHERIFF TRUETT

What?

What's wrong with farmin'?

COWBOY BOB

How can you sit here

Out on a prairie, free to come and go,
Ride anywhere you please, to fish and hunt-

HOUSTON

I worked a farm, and let me tell you what,
It's no fit life for man nor beast: To sit
Behind a mule's behind all day and plow;
To work two days just diggin' up a stump;
To waste a lifetime chained t'a piece o' dirt;
If there's a hell, most likely it's a farm.

(Sheriff Truett starts to laugh)

COWBOY BOB

Ol' boy's gone loco.

HOUSTON
That explains it then.

SHERIFF TRUETT
If fish took bait like you boys do, by god,
I'd never know a hungry night again.

HOUSTON
Hell, we knew you's just pullin' our leg.

SHERIFF TRUETT
That right?

COWBOY BOB
Oh, sure. I felt your tug right out the gate.

HOUSTON
You, farmin'.

COWBOY BOB
Not a chance.

SHERIFF TRUETT
I had you goin'.

HOUSTON
You say so.

COWBOY BOB
Yeah, you had me goin'.

HOUSTON
Me too.

(Sheriff Truett laughs. Pause. Cowboy Bob
admires the night sky)

COWBOY BOB
Look up.

SHERIFF TRUETT
(In awe)
My word.
How many stars you reckon, Cowboy Bob?

COWBOY BOB
A king hell load o' stars.

SHERIFF TRUETT
A load, at least.

COWBOY BOB
Beside more camp fires than I care to count,
My eyes, grown weary o' the world, look up

COWBOY BOB (cont'd)

And find this wondrous, humbling spectacle.
And each and every time it never fails
To reach the deepest reason of my mind
And bring to question why all this must be.

SHERIFF TRUETT

All this makes me feel mighty small, like I'm
A speck o' dust, a mote, a bit o' nought.

HOUSTON

Ass-backward, that's what you boys are; you're ridin'
A southbound saddle on a northbound horse.

SHERIFF TRUETT

Ass-backward!

COWBOY BOB

What 'n tarnation ya mean by that?

HOUSTON

Oh, simmer down.

(Referring to the stars)

Look at 'em all. 'N not a one of 'em can sing. More stars 'an
hairs on a mare, 'n not a one of 'em can tell a joke. Sure,
they'll be shinin' on our graves, but they won't miss us when
we're gone. See, way I figure, king hell load o' stars don't
hold a candle next to one of us.

SHERIFF TRUETT

Whatever, Houston. Hell, all I know's this:
So long's I'm fit to ride, my horse aint lame,
(Reveals bottle of whisky)
Got food to eat, whisky to drink, good friends,
What care to share a sunset, moon-earth-stars,
Can do their dance and pay no mind to me.

HOUSTON

An awesome thought, deserving of a drink.

SHERIFF TRUETT

Glad you got sense enough to see't. What say
A little liquid fire to warm your guts;
How 'bout it, Cowboy Bob?

COWBOY BOB

Hell, yes.

SHERIFF TRUETT

Hell, yes!

And nigh this side of heaven you won't find
A smoother sippin'-whisky, on my word.

COWBOY BOB

God bless your ornery hide.

SHERIFF TRUETT

Best be to bless

What soul god gave the gift o' distillation;
God bless the alchemist who found a way
To conjure gold from water, grain and fire.

(ALL drink)

COWBOY BOB

Right here, right now, we're livin' mighty fine.

SHERIFF TRUETT

Amen.

COWBOY BOB

Damn shame though...

SHERIFF TRUETT

Don't...

HOUSTON

What?

COWBOY BOB

Such a night

Is our accomplice to a gruesome task.

SHERIFF TRUETT

You had to go 'n say it.

COWBOY BOB

Well, it's true.

HOUSTON

Seems silly now, me makin' all this fuss;
What good'll killin' Eddie do?

SHERIFF TRUETT

What good?!

You lost your mind? What good?! Why-

COWBOY BOB

Listen here,

Whatever comes won't change what's come to pass;
What evil makes, revenge can't mend. Today,
Tomorrow, every day you walk this earth,
The deed is done, the song remains the same.
But we'll stick by, whichever way it goes;
You ride for Rio Bravo break o' dawn,
We ride along; you up and head on home,
We'll head on home.

SHERIFF TRUETT

The hell is goin' on?
 You lost your minds? By god, you lost your minds!
 What good'll killin' Eddie do? Head home?
 You boys head home, let me look after Eddie.
 One way or t'other justice will be served;
 If Eddie doesn't answer for his crime
 In Rio Bravo, Mexico, well, sir,
 He's goin' back to Tulsa one more time,
 To hang, 'cause I'll be damned if that man's neck
 Slips my noose twice.

COWBOY BOB

Remember, here's the thing:
 You have a choice.
 We better stir the fire.

HOUSTON
 Shhhh! Listen.

SHERIFF TRUETT
 Where?

COWBOY BOB
 Don't hear a sound.

SHERIFF TRUETT
 Aint nothin' out there.

HOUSTON
 Shhh.

COWBOY BOB
 Be Indians...

SHERIFF TRUETT
 Or wolves...

COWBOY BOB
 A mustang...

HOUSTON
 Wait!

(ALL hear something)

SHERIFF TRUETT
 The hell you think is out there?

COWBOY BOB
 Hell I know.
 I reckon we'll go check it out.

SHERIFF TRUETT

Houston,

Stay here and keep an eye.

(Sheriff Truett and Cowboy Bob exit.
Houston practices drawing his six-shooter.
To the audience)

HOUSTON

Been thinkin', Eddie cut my mother's throat:
World went about its business, paid no mind;
Killin' Eddie'll be more o' the same, I reckon.
Nature won't move to mourn his petty death;
On nature's scale the least and greatest lives
Always balance. Why should a fallen man
Be honored with more show of nature's grief
Than nature gives the falling of a leaf?
Killin' Eddie, more trouble 'n it's worth.

(Removes holster, throws it down)

Been thinkin', Cowboy Bob says killin' sticks:
Sticks to your soul, I reckon; that's the case,
Killin' Eddie'll be more trouble 'n I need.

(Emma appears upstage)

HOUSTON (cont'd)

Besides, I opine my poor mother's hell
Is her design, made all of fear and hate,
And I'll be damned if I know how to help.

EMMA

I miss white linen, starched 'n pressed, embroidered, trimmed
in lace, brand new, 'n put it on, n' oh! Like puttin' on a
brand new soul, so clean 'n perfect white, each thread in
place, still warm 'n, God, that smell. And Eddie's trembling
hands undoing me. What's more divine?

HOUSTON

Can't you leave well enough alone!

EMMA

Damn. Who knew such a little thing had so much blood. And I
loved him so much. You must learn, cruelty can be kind.
Please, earn my peace. Fetch me my recompense. Give me your
father's death.

(Emma disappears. Sheriff Truett and Cowboy
Bob enter)

SHERIFF TRUETT

Aint nothin' out there.

COWBOY BOB

We're high strung is all.

SHERIFF TRUETT

Can't be too careful. How 'bout you? See anything?

HOUSTON

No. Nothing.

(Picks up gun)

Not a soul.

END OF ACT II, SCENE 3

ACT IIScene 4

SETTING: The Chapel of Healing Dirt of Our Lady of Texarkana Mission.

AT RISE: A large sign reads "Texarkana Mission. Sermon on the hour, every hour, 9 to 5." PATSY greets Houston as he enters, followed by Morgan, map in hand, and Dallas, with Emma's ashes.

HOUSTON (cont'd)

Eddie Wickett!

PATSY

Don't know the name, but you are welcome all the same! Welcome! Welcome to Our Lady of Texarkana Mission. We're so excited you dropped in. Let me fetch Father Bob, we'll get this preachin' underway.

HOUSTON

Face me like a man. Eddie Wickett!

PATSY

Oh, my.

DALLAS

Houston! Stop! Houston, stop.

(He does)

PATSY

You make yourselves at home. You like some tea?

DALLAS

We're looking for a cemetery.

PATSY

Tea's made, ice cold, and brewed. You wait right here, I'll bring you tea.

DALLAS

No thanks, we're good. We're looking for Texarkana Cemetery.

PATSY

Father Bob wouldn't approve, but here's the way things are: Fact is, it's tit for tat. Hear Father Bob's sermon - takes no time at all - and I'd be glad to give directions. Hate to be this way, but what's a shepherd has no flock?

MORGAN

(To Dallas)
Oh, fer chrissake.

DALLAS

If we do this, you'll tell us? I mean, you know how to get to this cemetery, right, you're not just jerkin' us around?

PATSY

Good Lord, yes! I'd never!

DALLAS

Alright, then, get it goin'.

PATSY

Oh, bless you. This man don't get his preachin' in, well sister, it's a hard row, let me tell ya. And you'll be doing such a kindness. Father Bob'll be - we both - will be forever in your debt.

(Patsy exits)

HOUSTON

Coward. Come out you coward!

DALLAS

Hey-hey-hey. Come on. Settle down.

MORGAN

(To Houston)
I promise you'll love it.

DALLAS

You won't believe how lush it is and green.
Grass all year long is green and evergreens -

MORGAN

And sky so blue.

DALLAS

You won't believe how blue.
And all around us, everywhere you turn
Are mountains disappearing into clouds.

MORGAN

And from our door the walk to Puget Sound,
It's twenty minutes, tops.

DALLAS

Sailboats and ships
And fishing boats and tugs, ferries, fog horns.

MORGAN

The rain? It's nothing, drizzle.

DALLAS

It's a mist.
 Sometimes it's misting and the sun's still out...
 You can't imagine. Houston, trust me here,
 So far away, and wet and green, you feel
 So safe. You're always safe with me, trust me.
 Remember that.

(Patsy enters)

PATSY

You made his day, suwannee!
 He's on his way. Oh! His face lit up. You've done a good
 deed. Now, Father Bob is stone cold deaf, deaf as a doornail.
 Don't feel obliged to testify, but hollar if the spirit moves
 you.

(FATHER BOB enters all enthusiasm)

FATHER BOB

Be seated.

(Dallas and Morgan gather Houston. THEY
 kneel or sit on the floor. Patsy starts a
 scratchy tape recording of a hymn, then
 positions herself near Father Bob)

FATHER BOB (cont'd)

Be peaceful pilgrims. Hear the truth.

PATSY

Hear the truth!

FATHER BOB

When God appeared to Father Bob upon the Indian Nation
 Turnpike!

PATSY

Indian Nation pike!

FATHER BOB

McAlester behind me, headin' south along the pike.

PATSY

Along the pike!

FATHER BOB

Beneath a noon day sun, a restless concrete ribbon stretching
 on and on and on eternally before me. Brand new rubber. My
 Galaxy Five Hundred hummin' on and on and on and-

PATSY

On and on and on!

FATHER BOB

Ouachita foothills gently rise and fall. Prairie grass a blur. Now here's my bit: Gone half way to Hugo when my nineteen sixty Ford Galaxie Five Hundred up and dies and I pull off the road. My ignorance is great but, nonetheless, I pop the hood and look within my Galaxie. A multitude of wires and tubes and metal manifest before me, none of which mean squat to me or to my vision seem to need repair. Now what's a man to do half way to Hugo, dead beside the Indian Nation Turnpike, baking like a road kill armadillo in the noon day sun and not a car or truck in sight?

PATSY

Turn to the lord!

FATHER BOB

Turn to the Lord! I get down on my knees and clasp my hands in prayer.

(He does)

Dear God, reveal to me the secrets of the Galaxie, show me the inner workings of the Galaxie, give me the wisdom and the knowledge of the Galaxie so I might make repairs. My prayer was earnest, heartfelt, innocent. No sooner do I say amen, a tumble weed comes blowin' down the road, rolls right beneath my Galaxie and bursts in flame. So there I stand, the idiot I am, my Galaxie becoming ruins, when God appears within the flames.

PATSY

But you can't mean it!

FATHER BOB

God appeared to me! Not Jesus, not an angel or a saint, but God.

PATSY

Almighty God?

FATHER BOB

Almighty God! His voice was sound and light and everywhere, the winds of all the world, the might of every star. Dirt, rocks, grass, concrete, fence posts, fire, air, each speck o' dust, each living thing and all the universe at once becomes his voice and speaks to me alone.

PATSY

And what's he say? Please tell me, what's he say?

FATHER BOB

'Rise up and hear the Word of God,' He says.

(He stands)

FATHER BOB (cont'd)

'Lord God Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth, the God of Moses and of Abraham, the God made manifest in Jesus Christ, the God of love, the God of everlasting life, begs mercy, and forgiveness for His sins.' Now what a fine predicament I'm in: Who forgives God?

PATSY

Who forgives God?!

FATHER BOB

Right there, upon a Trail of Tears, this wretched man of flesh and blood forgave God. Almighty God! Forgave Him for His sins. Then God was gone.

PATSY

God can't be gone.

FATHER BOB

God's gone! No God, no more.

PATSY

But what are we to do?

FATHER BOB

Now what are we to do? Whatever can we do? No God to hear our prayers? Now take your neighbor's hand.

DALLAS

We need to book.

FATHER BOB

Take your neighbor's hand!

(Dallas stands. Father Bob is confused, tries to understand what Dallas and Morgan are saying)

DALLAS

I did this for directions, not revelations.

*

MORGAN

Let him finish.

DALLAS

Where's the cemetery?

MORGAN

Listen to this man.

DALLAS

Forgive God?

MORGAN

Why did you forgive God?

(To Patsy)

Why did he forgive God?

(Patsy produces a small notebook and pencil
and begins writing. Father Bob reads as
she writes)

PATSY

(Shouting in FATHER BOB'S ear)

Why the hell'd you forgive God!

FATHER BOB

The promise of existence is a beauty bound to break your
heart. Unspeakable beauty. Unbearable pain. Whatever can we
do? Between creator and creation, all must be forgiven, else
how do tender hearts survive? You take your neighbor's hand.

(Father Bob grabs Dallas' hand, gets a
strong grip)

FATHER BOB (cont'd)

You take your neighbor's hand.

PATSY

Take your neighbor's hand.

(Patsy latches on to Morgan and Houston)

FATHER BOB

Now we are Gods. Together we confess. Together, find
forgiveness. Hand in hand, we make our heaven here on earth.
Why, it's all that's left to do. You children go in peace.

(Father Bob exits. Patsy turns off the
recording)

PATSY

You lost your way. But now you're found. Hon, State Line
Cemetery's right out back.

HOUSTON

Still sunlight left. Talk all you want, I'm goin' to look for
Eddie. He's here, I feel it in my bones.

(Houston runs out of the church)

DALLAS

Houston!

MORGAN

What the hell?

DALLAS

'Look for Eddie...' He thinks Eddies here. Houston!

(Dallas pursues Houston)

PATSY

What's happening?

*

MORGAN

A reckoning.

PATSY

We do mean well.

MORGAN

You did good. You both did damn good.

(Morgan chases Houston and Dallas offstage)

PATSY

Lord, Father Bob works in mysterious ways.

(Patsy exits)

END OF ACT II, SCENE 4

ACT IIScene 5

SETTING: The electric chair.

AT RISE: Eddie. Twitty enters.

TWITTY

Eddie.

EDDIE

Twitty.

TWITTY

Cowboy Bob is here to see you.

EDDIE

Cowboy Bob, sir?

TWITTY

Cowboy Bob.

EDDIE

Oh boy.

TWITTY

You like to see him?

EDDIE

You bet I do. He's Cowboy Bob.

(Twitty EXITS)

EDDIE (cont'd)

De-doi-de-doi-de-doi-de-hun-de-dud!

(Cowboy Bob ENTERS)

COWBOY BOB

Eddie.

EDDIE

Cowboy Bob.

COWBOY BOB

Sure is fine to see you, Eddie.

EDDIE

Well it's fine to see you, Cowboy Bob.

COWBOY BOB

Been now, how long you reckon, Eddie?

EDDIE

Too damn long, Cowboy Bob.

COWBOY BOB

Cains Ballroom, Tulsa, you's a little thing what, settin' on my knee.

EDDIE

Good days, back when.

COWBOY BOB

Heard you's outta luck, Eddie.

EDDIE

Plum out.

COWBOY BOB

At the end of your rope.

EDDIE

So to speak.

COWBOY BOB

So I wrote you a song.

EDDIE

Oh boy.

COWBOY BOB

A sad song. Thought I might sing it, that is, if you don't mind.

EDDIE

Heck no, don't mind at all, Cowboy Bob. Could use a song right about now.

COWBOY BOB

Good, Eddie, that's good. It's called, 'The Sad Lament Of Eddie Wickett On The Night Of His Execution.'

EDDIE

That's a hell of a title, Cowboy Bob.

COWBOY BOB

You're a hell of a fellow, Eddie.

EDDIE

Bet it's a hell of a song.

COWBOY BOB

And this is how it goes. Shall we, boys?

(The Sad Lament of Eddie Wickett on the
Night of His Execution. Gradually, ALL
ENTER and join in. As the songs ends, ALL
EXIT. During, Twitty checks the straps)

COWBOY BOB (cont'd)

AS A JAILER MAN METES OUT MY MOMENTS
AS A PREACHER MAN MUMBLES A PRAYER
ON A PATH, A PATH OF ENDLESS SORROW
I WALK HAND IN HAND WITH DESPAIR

I RECONCILE MY ACCOUNTING
FOR A LIFE POORLY SPENT
I AM OVERDRAWN, OVERDRAWN ON MISERY
HOLD LEASE ON DISCONTENT

FARE THEE WELL MY TRUE LOVE
A LOVE DIVINE YOU NE'ER BELIED
NOW THIS SAD, THIS SAD LAMENT I SING
HAPPY TRAILS, BY AND BY

IN THE FURY OF HER BEAUTY
IN THE WONDER OF HER LUST
AS MY EYES, MY EYES BEHELD HER LONGING
MY POOR HEART TURNED TO DUST

LIKE CAIN, MY GROUND IS FALLOW
NO SEED SHALL BE RECEIVED
ALL MY BONES, MY BONES SHALL BE SCATTERED
AND YE SHALL BE RELEASED

FARE THEE WELL MY TRUE LOVE
A LOVE DIVINE YOU NE'ER BELIED
NOW THIS SAD, THIS SAD LAMENT I SING
HAPPY TRAILS, BY AND BY

EDDIE

HAPPY TRAILS, BY AND BY
That's a hell of a song, Cowboy Bob. Can't thank you enough.

COWBOY BOB

It'll mend your broken heart.

EDDIE

My heart can use some mendin'.

COWBOY BOB

Soothe your troubled soul.

EDDIE

Cowboy Bob.

COWBOY BOB

Yes, Eddie.

EDDIE

I aint got no soul.

COWBOY BOB

Ever'body got soul, Eddie, when they singin' the blues.

(Cowboy Bob exits. LIGHTS BEGIN A SLOW
FADE)

EDDIE

Damn.

TWITTY

Eddie.

EDDIE

Twitty.

TWITTY

Eddie, this is it.

EDDIE

Nobody else?

TWITTY

No, Eddie, no one else.

EDDIE

Thought my kids might... Hell. Twitty, you been a good friend. Can't thank you enough.

(Twitty readies Eddie for death)

TWITTY

Any last words, Eddie?

EDDIE

I owe a pack to Cisco. Twitty, can you settle up my debt?

TWITTY

Eddie, your debt's as good as paid.

(Twitty exits)

EDDIE

Then, huh! that's all she wrote.

(LIGHTS ALMOST TO BLACK. The sound, fury and flash of a lightening strike followed by an explosion of thunder that rolls off into the distance for a long, long time)

END OF ACT II, SCENE 5

ACT IIScene 6

SETTING: Rio Bravo, Mexico, noon; State Line Cemetery, Eddie's grave.

AT RISE: Houston enters.

HOUSTON

Eddie! Eddie Wickett! Come out you coward!
You slither out from underneath your rock
And face me like a man. Eddie Wickett!

(Cowboy Bob enters)

COWBOY BOB

Houston.

(Houston exits. Sheriff Truett enters)

SHERIFF TRUETT

Shucks damnit all to hell.

COWBOY BOB

What you got goin'?

SHERIFF TRUETT

I'm feelin' peckish

COWBOY BOB

'At a fact.

SHERIFF TRUETT

Damn straight.

Eyes stingin', scratchin' ever'where, head aches,
Back aches, my ass is cussin' up a storm,
My legs gave up the ghost a few miles back,
But as I live and breathe I swear right here,
Right now, upon my honor and my word,
My feet are feelin' mighty fine.

COWBOY BOB

Don't say.

SHERIFF TRUETT

Damn straight. You spend your money on a horse,
Your blacksmith, saddle, tackle, 'is 'n 'at,
If you don't spend good money on your boots,
Well, you're a fool, that's all there is to that.

COWBOY BOB

You got to have good boots.

SHERIFF TRUETT
It's what I'm sayin'.

COWBOY BOB
Don't have good boots, well-

SHERIFF TRUETT
Give it up.

COWBOY BOB
Amen.

SHERIFF TRUETT
(Reveals his flask)
What say we drink to boots?

COWBOY BOB
Sounds good to me.

SHERIFF TRUETT
Here's to the men what give a cowboy sole

COWBOY BOB
God, bless our boots! Lord, keep 'em free o' holes.

(THEY laugh, drink)

COWBOY BOB (cont'd)
Bad feelin' in my gut about this day.

SHERIFF TRUETT
Sometimes your hard road, there's your only road.

COWBOY BOB
Ol' Rio Bravo. Unimpressive place
For such a nasty reputation.

SHERIFF TRUETT
Yep.
Not much to look at.

COWBOY BOB
Nope. And rode so far.

SHERIFF TRUETT
Too far to turn back now.

(Houston enters)

HOUSTON
Still sunlight left.
Talk all you want, I'm goin' to look for Eddie.
He's here, I feel it in my bones.

(Houston exits)

COWBOY BOB

Houston!

Wait! Houston! What's your rush? Let's think this through!

SHERIFF TRUETT

We're here, no need to think - it's time to do.

(THEY FREEZE. Dallas enters followed by
Morgan)

DALLAS

Houston! Houston! Take this path. I'll go this way.

MORGAN

What do you think he's doing?

DALLAS

Settling a score.

(Dallas and Morgan exit)

MORGAN

Houston!

DALLAS

Houston!

(Houston enters; the COWBOYS come back to
life)

HOUSTON

Eddie Wickett!

COWBOY BOB

Be reasonable, Houston;

If you're dead set on seein' Eddie dead,

My gun'll do the trick as good as yours

In half the time.

HOUSTON

I know your tryin' to help,

I know you mean to do a good turn, but

This score is mine alone to settle.

COWBOY BOB

You want to see this through, the choice is yours.

But you do like I say: Shoot from the hip,

Keep weight on this side, pivot as you draw;

Remember, never look 'im in the eye-

SHERIFF TRUETT

Ah, spit 'n my eye why don't ya. Damn it all!
My saddle's chapped my ass all I can take,
Now you two start in makin' matters worse.
We're here, so's Eddie; by the time we leave,
So long as Eddie answers for his crime,
So long as we see justice has been served,
You got no truck with me.

HOUSTON

Justice, revenge,
My murdered mother's recompense, my life,
My honor, all, mean nothing to me now.
I'm here; if Eddie's here we'll have it out.
But being here is not by choice; I'm here
Because all circumstances lead me here
And I'm as curious as anyone
To see how things turn out.

(O.S., the sound of boots with spurs. Eddie enters)

EDDIE

Houston.

HOUSTON

Daddy.

EDDIE

Sheriff Truett, been a long, long time.

SHERIFF TRUETT

Too long, Eddie.

EDDIE

Cowboy Bob, damn fine to see you.

COWBOY BOB

Can't say likewise, Eddie.

EDDIE

What bi'nness brings you down to Rio Bravo? El Camino Real
don't run near by.

(Emma appears)

EMMA

Eddie.

EDDIE

Emma.

HOUSTON

Daddy, it has to be this way.

Does it?
EDDIE

HOUSTON
We have to set things straight.

EDDIE
Is that a fact?

EMMA
I loved you, Eddie.

EDDIE
Emma, I love you.

EMMA
Kill this man. Give me my recompense. Give me my liberty.

HOUSTON
Daddy, tell me why. I need to know.

EDDIE
Some things, son, can't be said.

(Eddie and Houston stand opposite each other. Cowboy Bob and Sheriff Truett back away. Silence. THEY draw. A blaze of gunfire. Eddie, Houston, are mortally wounded)

COWBOY BOB/SHERIFF TRUETT
Houston!

EDDIE (cont'd)
Forgive me, Emma.

EMMA
Sure, Eddie, anything. Now hurry up and die.

EDDIE
Houston...

HOUSTON
Daddy.

EDDIE
Forgive...me...

(Eddie dies. In a brilliant flash of light, Emma's bloody blouse disappears, revealing a brand new, white, blouse. Emma is transformed)

HOUSTON

Mother.

EMMA

Houston, my savior, son, I didn't mean to make a mess of things.

HOUSTON

I know you didn't, momma.

EMMA

Funny thing about life, seldom turns out like you plan. But in the wash it all comes clean. My beautiful new blouse. You're straight with the world when you put on a brand new, white, lace blouse.

(Emma disappears)

SHERIFF TRUETT

Hurt bad?

HOUSTON

Hurt bad enough. Looks like you boys Be headin' back to Tulsa on your own.

COWBOY BOB

Don't say such things.

HOUSTON

Just callin' it like it is.

SHERIFF TRUETT

God, I wish Eddie Wickett were alive So I could break his neck with my own hands.

HOUSTON

My aim was true.

COWBOY BOB

Your draw can use some work.

HOUSTON

In gunfighting, a failing grade is fatal. Hate putting you boys out, but you don't mind, Be nice if you do one more chore before You're done with me for good.

SHERIFF TRUETT

Just say it.

COWBOY BOB

What?

HOUSTON

No sense to feed coyot's and buzzards here
When Texas worms can make a meal of me.

SHERIFF TRUETT

We'll do what's right by you.

COWBOY BOB

I promise you.

HOUSTON

Promise, don't ever draw your breath to speak
Of how the Wicketts fed upon themselves,
Of how their love, tender'd as minted gold,
Was counterfeit, and purchased hate and death;
How blood spilled blood 'till none were left to bleed;
Who would believe so wild a yarn as mine
Is spun from truth?

SHERIFF TRUETT

Most folks'd call us liars.

HOUSTON

You ever speak of me, you tell folks how
Not all my luck was bad, you say to 'em
A man's no better'n the friends he keeps; tell 'em
How I kept comp'ny with the best of men;
There's all the honor any of us need.

DALLAS (O.S.)

Houston!

(Sheriff Truett, Cowboy Bob and Houston
look in the direction of Dallas' voice)

DALLAS (cont'd)

Houston!

(Sheriff Truett and Cowboy Bob look at each
other, at Houston)

COWBOY BOB

Houston, we have to go.

HOUSTON

What do you mean?

SHERIFF TRUETT

It's time.

COWBOY BOB

You made your choice.

We have to go. SHERIFF TRUETT

You can't go. HOUSTON

Houston! MORGAN (O.S.)

In all our years, we ever let you down? COWBOY BOB

Never. HOUSTON

We ever lie to you? COWBOY BOB

Never. HOUSTON

So trust us now. COWBOY BOB

You set things right. SHERIFF TRUETT

This isn't what I want. HOUSTON

We're proud of you. COWBOY BOB

So proud. SHERIFF TRUETT

Houston! DALLAS (O.S.)

You're on your own now. COWBOY BOB

Listen- HOUSTON

Houston! DALLAS (O.S.)

You bore this burden long enough. SHERIFF TRUETT

(Sheriff Truett hoists Eddie over his
shoulder)

Dallas! MORGAN (O.S.)

This isn't what I want. HOUSTON

It's time we go. COWBOY BOB

What happens to me? HOUSTON

Life is so beautiful, Houston. More beautiful than some can bear. You're strong enough. It's time we go. COWBOY BOB

What say we toss this carcass on a horse sometime today, afore my back goes bad. SHERIFF TRUETT

This isn't how I want my life! HOUSTON

Dallas loves you, Houston. She's strong and wise. She'll never let you down. COWBOY BOB

Don't leave me here alone! HOUSTON

So long, Cowboy Houston. You've had the sweetest dreams. COWBOY BOB

(Cowboy Bob and Sheriff Truett, shouldering Eddie, exit)

Don't leave me! You can't leave me! You can't leave me here alone! HOUSTON

(Dallas enters)

Don't leave me here alone! HOUSTON (cont'd)

Houston! DALLAS

I'm begging, please- HOUSTON

I'm here- DALLAS

Don't go! HOUSTON

You're not alone- DALLAS

I killed my daddy! HOUSTON

Houston- DALLAS

Shot him dead for what he did! HOUSTON

Listen - DALLAS

I didn't mean it! HOUSTON

You didn't do it! DALLAS

I'm sorry... HOUSTON

Everything's okay now... DALLAS

Please forgive me... HOUSTON

You're forgiven. DALLAS

I am? HOUSTON

I forgive you. DALLAS

Why'd he have to do it?! HOUSTON

Houston! DALLAS

Why?! HOUSTON

DALLAS

Look at me!

(Morgan enters, joins Dallas and Houston)

HOUSTON

Why?! I want to know! I want to know!

DALLAS

LOOK AT ME. I love you, Houston. I love you and I'm telling you, we will never know.

HOUSTON

NO!

DALLAS

I'm sorry.

HOUSTON

I want her!

DALLAS

I know.

HOUSTON

Don't leave me here alone!

DALLAS

Houston! Houston! Come back! Come back!

(Beat. Houston leaps to his feet. He looks for the COWBOYS. He turns to Dallas)

HOUSTON

Dallas.

DALLAS

Houston.

(THEY embrace)

END OF ACT II, SCENE 6

ACT IIScene 7

SETTING: Eddie's grave.

AT RISE: Twitty kneels at Eddie's grave. WARDEN BOB enters.

Twitty. WARDEN BOB

Warden Bob. TWITTY

(Pause)

Eddie... WARDEN BOB

Yeah. TWITTY

Eddie, he was... Eddie was a killer. WARDEN BOB

Well. TWITTY

You and me, we have to bear the burden. WARDEN BOB

(Pause. Warden Bob exits. Twitty places a cigarette on Eddie's stone. He whistles Texarkana Waltz as He exits)

END OF ACT II, SCENE 7

EPILOGUE

SETTING: Eddie's grave.

AT RISE: Houston, Dallas, with Emma's box,
Morgan, enter.

MORGAN/DALLAS

What happened is this:

DALLAS

Her name was Dallas. Dallas saw a beautiful girl dancing in a pool of light on the dance floor of the Wild Rose.

MORGAN

Her name was Morgan. Morgan was dancing by herself when she noticed Dallas watching her.

DALLAS

Morgan was the most beautiful woman Dallas had ever seen, would ever see.

MORGAN

Dallas had the wisest eyes, was sensuous, certain and striking, and slightly sad and raw in way that made her burn to be with her.

DALLAS/MORGAN

Dallas and Morgan fell in love.

DALLAS

I love you, Morgan.

MORGAN

Dallas, I love you.

DALLAS/MORGAN

What happened:

MORGAN

Dallas had a brother.

DALLAS

Houston. My brother is Houston.

HOUSTON

Houston had to think.

HOUSTON/DALLAS

Houston thought long and hard...

HOUSTON

About a lot of things. Revenge...

Justice... HOUSTON/DALLAS

Love... HOUSTON/DALLAS/MORGAN

Forgiveness... HOUSTON

Dallas. DALLAS

Morgan. MORGAN

Houston. HOUSTON

DALLAS/MORGAN/HOUSTON
Happy family. What happened is this...

(Cowboy Bob appears, sings Texarkana Waltz.
Houston, Dallas and Morgan scatter Emma's
ashes over Eddie's grave. Houston leaves
the book)

COWBOY BOB
OH, MY TEXARKANA BABY
LORD I LOVE HER LA DEE DA
HER DADDY CAME FROM TEXAS
HER MA FROM ARKANSAS

OH, MY TEXARKANA BABY
SHE'S MY TRUE LOVE DOE SEE DOE
HER SKIN IS WHITE AND MILKY
HER HAIR IS BLACK AS COAL

(Houston, Dallas and Morgan take hands,
cross upstage into a SETTING SUN)

ALL
SHE'S MY TEXARKANA BABY
HOW I LOVE HER DEE DEE DEE
HER KISS IS SWEET AS HONEY
SHE MEANS ALL THE WORLD TO ME

COWBOY BOB
Good night everybody.

(Dallas and Morgan kiss as lights...)

FADE TO BLACK