

***Dear Johnny Deere***

by Ken Cameron  
based on the songs and lyrics of Fred Eaglesmith  
with additional music and lyrics by David Archibald

Draft 6  
June 23, 2012

Blyth Festival, Post-Production draft

### **Playwrights' Notes:**

This play is a piece of story-telling theatre rather than an attempt at verisimilitude, and its theatricality should therefore be an essential part of its aesthetic. All of the performers will be joining in one another's songs from the side of the stage even if they are not part of the action in a realistic sense.

Therefore the actors should remain onstage and help create the sense that the community is watching the action unfold and that we are all sharing in the telling of this story. Some might sit with the band and play along, if they can make a musical contribution. Others might whittle, or fiddle with a piece of equipment, until it is their turn to take the stage.

In a similar vein, there is no realistic setting, no kitchen with running water, no animals or horses onstage. There are instead hints of locations, bits and pieces of farm equipment and scenic elements that evoke the audience's imagination rather than complete it.

The most prominent elements of the set are two farmhouses situated one directly beside the other, separated by only a few feet and one whitewashed fence. Other key elements include a hint of an antique John Deere B tractor with its distinctive green hood and large rear wheel: Johnny's Mechanic Shop where he repairs cars and retreats from responsibility: Johnny's mighty big car and its bench seat; and the dirt of the farm that is so much a part of the character's lives. There are several different spaces off the farm that the script calls for that the set should also provide hints of: the liquor store, a neighbouring farm auction and the Last Chance Saloon.

**Special thanks are due to**

Eric Coates, Michael Petrasek, David Archibald, Neil Bartram, Kelly Robinson, Mary Elgersma, Deb Shouldice,

Jeff Culbert, Rebecca Auerbach,

Tyler Rive, Esther Purves-Smith, Tony Eyamie, Duval Lang, Lisa Humber, Michael “Spider” Bishop, Cameron MacDuffee

Alberta Playwrights Network, David Belke, Trevor Reuger, Michelle Kneale, Tracey Carroll,

Christopher Hunt, Marshall Hopkins, Doug Curtis,

**The Following Special Thanks must be reproduced in the program:**

This play was developed with the assistance of The Blyth Festival and the Banff Centre for the Arts, and with financial assistance from the Canada Council for the Arts and the Alberta Foundation for the Arts.

## **Characters:**

This is a play for a cast of four actors, each of whom must sing.

### **McAllister, 65, a farmer and publisher of a small town newspaper**

McAllister is jaded and grumpy, the creases in the corners of his eyes worn by years of peering into other people's business. He has seen and reported on it all, from foreclosures to farm accidents, and he is quick to throw up an uncaring façade. He is just as quick to rush to judgment and not shy about telling anyone and everyone he meets exactly why their opinion is wrong. But in truth, he is a softie underneath, and his façade hides an embarrassment at how easily he is moved to care.

### **Johnny, 40ish, a farmer**

Johnny's skin is weathered by forty years spent planting crops in the heat and splitting wood in the cold; and his face is creased from squinting into the sun looking for rain and from heading out to work in a downpour. He generally has his sleeves rolled up and grease on his fingers. If we could see closely we'd see that Johnny's fingers are always covered in grease, embedded deep in the beds of his fingernails. He's not a man prone to talking about how he feels or why he feels the way he does; he'd rather pick up a heavy implement and do something about what troubles him. If last night he was drunk, there is little trace of it today, other than a husky voice: like many a hard-drinking man, Johnny is rarely hung-over, but almost always grumpy in the morning.

### **Caroline, 30ish, a farmer**

Caroline is a good decade younger than Johnny: young enough to have her whole future in front of her, old enough to know that future isn't likely to measure up to what she'd thought it was going to be. There's a restlessness in Caroline's eyes, a wildness that comes not from seeking a good time, but from insisting on living a full life. It's an energy that convinces you she'd be willing to throw it all away if she felt that's what she needed to do to remain true to what she believed in. And that makes her just as dangerous as Johnny, in her own way.

\* Caroline also voices the Auctioneer

**Hendrik, 70, Johnny's father**

Hendrik is a Dutch immigrant to Canada, who has escaped the hardships of post-war Europe to make a new life and find a new family in the promised land. Having lost his wife shortly after she gave birth to Johnny, Hendrik finds raising a young boy by himself to be hard and lonely. This loss, coupled with his Calvinist upbringing has left him severe and stern.

**Mike, 40-55, a land speculator**

Mike is a former resident of this town who moved to the big city to work for several years in the provincial roads and transportation planning department. Mike was never a popular kid in school, but he has made a success of himself as an adult. His return to the town, to seize upon the real estate deals which he suspects may lie in the wake of the province's plans to build a major highway nearby, are his chance at not only profit, but redemption.

**Collector, age indeterminate**

The Collector makes a brief appearance in the second act. His eye for a deal and his friendly negotiating skills make for a memorable character turn.

\* Hendrik, Mike and the Collector are all intended to be played by the same actor.

## **Song List**

### **Act One:**

Yellow Barley Straw

White Trash

White Rose

Spookin' The Horses

Small Motors

John Deere "B"

I Wanna Buy Your Truck

Benchseat Baby

Wilder Than Her

Time To Get A Gun

### **Act Two:**

Yellow Barley Straw Reprise

Ordinary Guy

White Rose Reprise

Small Motors

John Deere

Freight Train

Worked Up Field

York Road

Wilder Than Her Reprise/Finalé

## Act One

*[Johnny sits in his workshop with an unopened envelope in his hand. Caroline looks at the field taking stock of their life together. McAllister stands on the opposite side of the fence with his petition. Mike stands aloof, waiting to pounce.]*

***[MUSIC: Yellow Barley Straw.]***

ALL *[singing]*:                   He's got a heart made of Yellow Barley Straw  
  all wrapped up in Calico patches,  
  and plum-chuck full of love.  
  He looks out over the fields  
  every year's losses, every year's yields.  
  every year's dreams, a hundred bushels to an acre

*[Johnny takes the unopened envelope and turns it over a few times in his hand.]*

  And tomorrow, y'know,  
  the bank is gonna come and take it, take it all away.  
  He got a letter in the mail it was only,  
  why it was only yesterday.

*[Johnny stands and looks out at the field. He puts the letter away in his pocket, unopened.]*

  But he just goes on believing,  
  and you can't sow crops if the ground ain't even.  
  So he tills the soil, he drills the seed 'til dawn.  
  His heart is made of yellow barley straw ...

*[The rest of the cast retreats to stools or furniture around the stage or joins the band if they can make a musical contribution. McAllister stands centre stage: he will be our Narrator for tonight.]*

**[MUSIC: McAllister's Narrator Theme.]**

McAllister: That's the thing about farmers, they'll go on believing even in the face of foreclosure, floods and financial disaster. They ain't got the business sense God gave a beaver.

The name's McAllister. I run the local. The Local Paper. My father gave it the most imaginative name he could think of at the time: "The Local Paper". You can imagine that in the thirty years since I took it over I've come up with a pretty long list of better names. But people in these parts don't like change, so "The Local Paper" it has remained.

*[A light on Johnny and Caroline.]*

As a newspaperman it's my job to tell our stories, but you'll have to help me out a bit. If you're up for it. Though judging by the looks of you ... It's all about this here dirt, that there creek, and a tractor that I'm not about to haul up those stairs back there. You'll have to imagine the tractor. For that matter you'll have to imagine the creek. And the dirt too I suppose. That's what I mean by helping me out. But first, you'll have to imagine the Liquor Store.

*[Lights indicate a change of scene, into the world of the play, in front of the Liquor Store.]*

*[Thunder rolls in the distance. A light rain begins to fall. McAllister stands with his reporter's steno pad and a pen at the ready. He tries to stop Mike.]*

McAllister: Hey there, hey there! I'm taking a poll for the local paper.

Mike: I'm sorry.

McAllister: Oh come on. Your bottle of Rye will still be there when you're done talking.

Mike: Not much point. I don't really live around here anymore.



McAllister: Well, I'll be danged. Schroeder. Michael Schroeder, isn't it? You moved away back in the 90's.

Mike: Yeah. That's right. You're –

McAllister: McAllister.

Mike: You run the local paper, right? What's it called again?

McAllister: The Local Paper.

Mike: ... Good name. I'm surprised you remember me.

McAllister: It's my business. First question –

Mike: I told you, I don't live –

McAllister: I need an outsider's opinion. First question: the new highway, good or bad?

Mike: That's easy. Good.

McAllister: Second question: what are you, an idiot? How can a four-lane highway that re-routes traffic from Main Street to the middle of nowhere possibly be good for the town?

Mike: All those construction workers have to –

McAllister: Sure, in the short term. But half the businesses in this town rely on providing service to traffic coming through.

Mike: The real estate prices will more than offset –

McAllister: A one-time bump in real estate prices is hardly compensation for driving customers away –

*[Mike, unwilling to listen to a lecture, shakes his head and enters the liquor store.]*

Where're you going? Mike? Mike?

Mike: Sounds like you don't need an opinion from an outsider after all.

McAllister *[to the audience:]* I guess the thing about taking a poll is that people expect questions, not answers.

**[Music: White Trash.]**

*[Caroline exits the liquor store carrying a bottle of wine and a case of beer and crosses to the car where Johnny is waiting.]*

McAllister                      Ah. The heroes of our tale. Johnny Deere. And his wife Caroline.

McAllister *[singing]*: When he met her she was a Beauty Queen  
                                    who wanted something more.  
                                    Now she's hanging out with him  
                                    in front of the liquor store.

*[Caroline puts the case of beer and bottle of wine in the back seat of the car, then sits down in the passenger seat.]*

Johnny *[singing]*:      And it won't start when you shut it off,  
                                    so she has to get the beer.  
                                    She puts it in the backseat  
                                    and she quietly says to me:

Caroline *[singing]*:    When exactly did we become white trash?  
                                    How come we got seven dogs living in the garage?  
                                    How come the only 8-track in our car is Johnny Cash?  
                                    When exactly did we become white trash?

Johnny *[singing]*:      And she tells all our friends  
                                    that I've got my PhD

Caroline *[spoken]*:      But it stands for post-hole-digger

McAllister *[singing]*:    it ain't exactly a degree

Johnny *[singing]*:      And there's curtains on the windows  
                                    and we hardly watch TV

Johnny *[singing]*:      And that double wide is triple wide  
                                    now that she's with me.

McAllister *[singing]*:    And she says:

Caroline *[singing]*:    When exactly did we become white trash?  
                                    How come we got seven dogs, who burned down the garage?  
                                    How come the only 8-track in our car is

Johnny *[singing]*:      Johnny Cash?

Johnny & Caroline *[singing]*:    When exactly did we become white trash?

Johnny: One case?

Caroline: Maybe it'll help you cut down a bit.

Johnny: We're just gonna have to come back tomorrow.

Caroline: And then you can go in all by yourself.

Johnny: I got a bottle of rye at home.

Caroline: You're not that much fun to be around when you drink rye all weekend.

Johnny: Then how about another case of beer?

*[Caroline hesitates, then sighs and gets out, but Johnny remains inside the idling vehicle. McAllister intercepts Caroline before she enters the Liquor Store. Johnny peers impatiently.]*

McAllister: Caroline!

Caroline: Hello Mac. Another survey?

McAllister: I'm tryin' to find out what people think about the new highway.

*[Caroline tosses off a comment as she enters the store.]*

Caroline: Why don't you just recycle what I said about those windmills?

McAllister: Wait. I actually want your opinion.

*[Caroline returns from the door slowly, suspiciously.]*

Caroline: My opinion?

McAllister: Yes.

Caroline: You've never asked my opinion before. About anything.

McAllister: What do you think?

Caroline: It'll cut down on speeding I suppose.

McAllister: Speeding!? Are you seriously –

Caroline: I thought you wanted my opinion?

Caroline: Remember when the Mulligan boy was killed? That guy was going, like, ninety, right down Main Street.

McAllister: Errr. I'll have to work that into my editorial.

Caroline: And it might provide some jobs for folk around here.

McAllister: What about the jobs it'll take away?

Caroline: I – what?

Johnny: Caroline!

McAllister: We're about halfway between the city and the Lake, so by the time most people get here they need to stretch their legs, buy some gas, grab a coffee. Maybe stop in at Elinor's Antique Shop over there.

Caroline: Only if they're really bored.

McAllister: Sure—

Caroline: Have you seen the stuff in there? None of its antique. Its junk that she rubbed with sandpaper so it looks "distressed".

McAllister:            They put a highway out there, it'll suck the life right out of this town.

Johnny *[from the car]*: Caroline!

Caroline *[to Johnny]* Hold your frickin' horses!

McAllister:            You ever been to Duncaster down south?

Caroline:             No.

McAllister:            Of course not.

***[MUSIC: White Rose.]***

McAllister: Well the whole town came out to watch  
The day they paved the parking lot  
Somebody hung a ribbon up  
And then they cut it down  
And that big White Rose up on that sign  
Was innocence in all our lives  
And you could see it's neon lights  
Half a mile out  
Gas was fifty cents a gallon  
And they put it in for you  
And they pumped your tires and checked your oil  
And washed your windows too  
And we'd shine those cars as bright as bright  
And we'd go park underneath that light  
And stare out at the prairie sky  
There was nothing else to do

But now there's plywood for glass  
Where the windows all got smashed  
And there's just a chunk of concrete  
Where those old pumps used to stand  
There's a couple of cars half out of the ground  
And that oil sign still spins 'round and 'round  
But I guess the White Rose filling station's just a memory now

And that neon sign was the heart and soul of that old one-horse  
town  
And it's like it lost it's will to live  
The day they shut it down

McAllister  
& Caroline:

And now there's plywood for glass  
Where the windows all got smashed  
And there's just a chunk of concrete  
Where those old pumps used to stand  
There's a couple of cars half out of the ground  
And that oil sign still spins 'round and 'round  
But I guess the White Rose filling station's just a memory now  
I guess the White Rose filling station's just a memory now

Caroline: That's so sad. You figure that could happen here?

McAllister: I *know* it will happen here.

Johnny *[from the car]*: Caroline!

Caroline: OK, OK, I'll get your beer.

McAllister: What's that all about?

Caroline: Ask him. Go ahead. Find out why he can't even shut Lucille off.

*[Caroline goes inside the liquor store. McAllister approaches Johnny's side of the car, protecting himself from the rain.]*

McAllister: Johnny.

Johnny: Mac.

McAllister: Everything all right?

Johnny: Wish it would stop raining.

McAllister: First it doesn't rain for weeks then it won't stop. Seedlings just barely get started then they gotta learn how to swim.

Johnny: You worried about that creek at all?

McAllister: That creek hasn't flooded since 1975. Mind you, it hasn't rained this much since 1975.

Johnny: If it floods that lower field, that's most of my harvest.

McAllister: Relax. It won't flood unless they open the spillway up on Miller's Ridge. And they aren't going to do that without warning everyone downstream. At the very least they'll call me and have me put a notice in The Local Paper.

Johnny: Huh.

*[Pause.]*

You seen a coyote running about?

McAllister: Out at our place you mean?

Johnny: I lost a few chickens.

McAllister: You figure a coyote got them?

Johnny: Chickens don't just wander away, Mac. Not if you feed 'em right. Can I borrow your rifle?

McAllister: Mine? What did you do with your Dad's rifle?

Johnny: I got rid of it when the government said I had to pay \$50 a year for something I wasn't usin'. Is it still in your shed?

McAllister: Maybe. I don't really recall. Old Lucille here running all right?

Johnny: Caroline just can't leave it alone for one second.

McAllister: What's Caroline got to do with it?

Caroline: She told you to ask me about Lucille, didn't she?

McAllister: What's up with the car?

Johnny: It won't start if I shut it off. I gotta get under the hood. Caroline hates it because she's gotta work the starter. And all she does is flood it. And of course it's too much trouble for her to get the beer for a change.

McAllister: So ... everything's all right then?

Johnny *[sighing]*: Same as ever.

*[Caroline comes out of the Liquor Store with a second case of beer at the same time as Mike. He holds the door for her.]*

Mike: Let me get that for you. Caroline? Caroline Gamble? It's Mike Schroeder. You probably don't remember but we went to high school together.

Caroline: Oh, hi! Of course I remember you.



Mike: Gosh, I haven't seen you since prom.

Caroline: Before that really. I never made it to prom.

Mike: Oh, right. Because of the ... er ... trouble. What have you been up to?

Caroline: I'm married.

Mike: Of course you are. Anybody I know?

Caroline: Johnny Deere.

Mike: Really?

Caroline: Yeah.

Mike: Johnny D. That's – Well, I wouldn't have thought it, is all.

Caroline: Me neither.

Mike: So you're both living out on his place? Maybe I'll drop by sometime.

Caroline: Sure.

*[Caroline starts towards the car. She turns back.]*

Or maybe see you in town. I'm seeing a movie tonight. I'll be at the Saloon after.

Mike: Right. See you there. Maybe.

Caroline: Maybe.

*[Caroline crosses to the car where Johnny is waiting and puts the second case of beer in the back seat.]*

Johnny: Was that Mike Schroeder you were talkin' to?

Caroline: What about it?

Johnny: Did he say what he's in town for?

Caroline: No. Let's go before this piece of crap stalls again.

McAllister: Uh .... Bye.

*[Johnny puts the car into gear and reverses away without saying goodbye.]*

**[Music: White Trash Reprise.]**

Johnny *[singing]*: And she tells all our friends  
that I've got my PhD

Caroline *[spoken]*: But it stands for post-hole-digger  
it ain't exactly a degree

Johnny *[singing]*: But there's curtains on the windows  
and we hardly watch TV

Johnny *[singing]*: And that double wide is triple wide  
now that she's with me.  
And she says:

Caroline *[singing]*: When exactly did we become white trash?  
How come we got seven dogs, who burned down the  
garage?  
How come the only 8-track in our car is

Johnny *[singing]*: Johnny Cash?

Caroline *[singing]*: When exactly did we become white trash?

Johnny & Caroline *[singing]*: When exactly did we become white trash?

*[McAllister is back to his Narrator role, with appropriate lighting and **Narrator's Musical Sting**. In the background Johnny and Caroline arrive at their farm and unload the car, not speaking to one another.]*

McAllister:           They say “in the country everyone knows everyone else’s business”. But that’s bull-roar. When your nearest neighbour is a mile or two up the road, you can pretty much chop a cord of wood in the buff.

Johnny and Caroline, they don’t get to pick and chose what they share with their neighbour. This is their house, and this here, not near twenty feet away, is mine. Peculiar thing, a pair of houses so close together in the middle of the country. I won’t go into the story of the old man who built them, of the two loving brothers who lived there and the wedge that came between them. That’s a story for another time. And frankly, it still gets me riled up.

Just trust me when I tell ya that it’s pretty-near impossible to hide what goes on behind closed doors from a neighbour that practically lives in your front frickin’ yard.

**[MUSIC: Yellow Barley Straw.]**

ALL *[singing]*:           He’s got a heart made of Yellow Barley Straw

*[The garage. Rain drums on the corrugated metal roof. Johnny is repairing a lawn mower engine. Caroline enters the garage holding a few sheets of paper in her hands. She is wearing a slinky dress and bright coloured make-up.]*

Caroline: I just got off the phone with Johnstone's.

Johnny: What'd they want?

Caroline: Their money apparently. Mavis says we we haven't made a payment since February.

Johnny: They give you a month's grace.

Caroline: Its June now.

Johnny: I know what month it is Caroline.

Caroline: Says she wouldn't mind if it wasn't for the fact we still owe for that diesel from March.

Johnny: Huh.

Caroline: "Huh"? That's all you have to say? "Huh"?

Johnny: I have to get this mower fixed for Jim.

*[Pause.]*

Caroline: I told her I was sure there was some mistake. So I went downstairs to that rat's nest you call an office—

Johnny: Just leave that stuff alone—

Caroline: —and here it is, right on the bottom of the pile. Third notice, overdue.

Johnny: It was January Caroline. We had to have heat.

Caroline: You'll never guess what was right on top. Phone bill. Two months due.

*[sarcastically]:*

And what's this? Visa. That's over a thousand dollars Johnny.

Johnny: I got a system down there in that office and –

Caroline: What kind of system is that Johnny? Putting overdue bills on the bottom of the pile until they feel sorry for themselves and just slink away all on their own?

Johnny: You can't get blood out of a stone Caroline. I can't pay them with money we don't have.

*[Caroline flips through the pages, and holds one up. She marches down the steps and waves it under his nose.]*

Caroline: This one's been paid.

Johnny: That's seed Caroline. God willing, it stops raining someday and it gets a chance to grow.

Caroline: You can pay this, but not these?

Johnny: Nothin' goes into the ground, Nothin' goes into the bank.

Caroline: The Seed Mill will wait. Bell won't wait.

Johnny: I see Doug MacIntosh every week.

Caroline: Is that what it takes Johnny? You just deal with whatever's right in your face? There's over three hundred dollars of interest here alone.

Johnny: What're you wearin'?

Caroline: I'm going out with Janet. I told you that weeks ago.

Johnny: Is that ... blush?

Caroline: It's called make-up Johnny. Women wear it when they want to look "made-up".

Johnny: You're going to the movies.

Caroline: We might go out for a drink. We haven't decided.

Johnny: Janet Manning hasn't decided if she's having a drink or going to a movie?

Caroline: No.

Johnny: I got a hundred dollars right here that says Janet Manning has every night scheduled between now and Labour Day.

Caroline: Don't change the subject Johnny.

Johnny: If I call right now, she's going to tell me she's getting ready to go out to a movie tonight?

Caroline: She better be. I don't want to be late.

Johnny: Yeah. She better be.

*[Pause.]*

Caroline: Do you want to talk about something?

Johnny: No.

Caroline: No. You never want to talk about anything, do you? We're in deep trouble here Johnny.

Johnny: We'll get the bills—

Caroline: I'm not talkin' about the bills, you jackass.

*[Caroline starts to exit. She comes back.]*

You made me a promise. And you're not living up to it.

*[Caroline stalks off.]*

Johnny: Don't take my car.

Caroline *[going]*: Wouldn't dream of it. I want something that'll start.

**[Music: Spooking' The Horses.**

*[Johnny grabs his bottle of rye from its hiding place in his workbench and pours himself a glass. Both the bottle and the glass are familiar friends. Johnny doesn't like to drink from the bottle, but he doesn't want to wipe the glass out with his dirty cloth either. He settles on blowing the fuzz that has collected on the bottom of the glass and wiping it out with his cleanest finger. He's left his mix inside the house, but he doesn't really care.]*

Johnny *[singing]*:                You're spookin' the horses  
   They're wild and they're scared  
   Well that bright coloured make up  
   and those clothes that you wear  
   And I seen you dancin'  
   Last night 'neath the tree  
          You're spookin' the horses  
          And you're scaring me.

*[Caroline is dancing beneath the tree in the moonlight. It's a slow dance, with her back to the audience. Desire runs through the muscles of her shoulders as she hugs herself for comfort. She also has a glass, filled with white wine, that she manages to make seem like it's balanced on her hip while she sways to the music.]*

Caroline *[singing]*:                Where the road meets the highway  
   those bright city lights  
   must have shone through my windshield  
   and got into my eyes  
   And I guess I thought  
   that they'd set me free

Johnny *[singing]*:                You're spookin' the Horses  
   and you're scarin' me.

*[Caroline is alone, but she knows there's a man somewhere watching her. And it isn't Johnny. And she doesn't mind.]*

Caroline *[singing]*:                I'm not tying my hair back anymore  
   And I'm wearing dresses like I never before  
   And I'm driving faster than you've ever seen

Johnny *[singing]*:                You're spookin' the Horses  
   and you're scarin' me.



*[Mike hands her another glass of wine. Is this just an actor handing a fellow performer a prop? Or is he part of the scene? And is that a little bit of flirtation that passed between them? Or just a friendly smile?]*

Johnny *[singing]*:

I can hear the gears grinding  
Where you make the turn  
And up on the skyline  
Those headlights just burn  
And the horses go runnin'  
And my heart just screams.

You're spookin' the Horses  
and you're scarin' me.  
You're spookin' the Horses  
and you're scarin' me.

*[Lights fade on Caroline and Mike ... and on Johnny and his bottle of rye.]*

McAllister: I've seen that boy out of a lot of jams in my time. I've done my share for him. And his father...

**[MUSIC: Underscoring begins.]**

At the risk of steering us all into the ditch, I'm gonna take a wide cut across the headland and turn about fifteen years in the other direction. Try to keep up. This is where you need to use that imagination I was talking about earlier. The houses are the same, but my brother who was living here had passed on. And in his place, a single father off the boat from Holland. He set up a small motors repair shop right next door.

*[Lights on Hendrik, Johnny's father.]*

**[MUSIC: Small Motors.]**

McAllister *[speaking]*: He wore railroad coveralls  
with his name written on his chest.  
He talked Model A's and T's.  
He rolled cigarettes.  
And he'd get lost inside his thoughts,  
he'd let those tanks run dry.  
One by one those little engines'  
sputter and they'd die.

McAllister *[speaking]* &  
ALL *[underscoring vocally]*: And he liked small motors,  
flywheels on the side,  
single piston engines  
made out of cast iron.  
He liked small motors.  
We'd start 'em one by one.  
We'd stand around and we'd listen  
to them little engines run.

*[A Young Johnny (maybe 15) emerges in a rage, slamming the screen door behind him. Hendrik is close behind him.]*

Johnny: I can so!

Hendrik: Such en mighty big car. Never run.

Johnny: I'll make it run. You'll see.

Hendrik: Much water flow through de Rhine before dat hapen. En big car is not en small motor.

Johnny: Just watch me.

Hendrik: Small motor first. Den maybe en tractor. Only after – maybe – en mighty big car.

Johnny: Other kids my age have cars.

Hendrik: You have not even en license.

Johnny: I will in a year. I can drive it then.

Hendrik: Study at de school. Dat's what your mother wants you to do.

Johnny: How do you know what my mother wants? She's dead.

*[Hendrik slaps Johnny. Johnny is about to hit back with the wrench in his hand. They stare one another down. Johnny throws his wrench on the ground and exits. Hendrik picks up the wrench and stares at it.]*

McAllister: Teenagers. They know it all at that age.

Hendrik: Never speaked to my Vader like dat. Never. Hard just me since his Moeder, she passed.

McAllister: Teenagers are like horses. You give them a little lead and they tend not to pull as hard. You might try cutting Johnny a little slack.

Hendrik *[turning on him]* Enough from you. You have not even en wife. Not even en Children. Can't even fix own fence.

McAllister *[to audience]*: Yep. Hendrik was a real Canadian immigrant success story. If only he hadn't been such a grumpy bastard.

Hendrik: Dis fixed? All my cow will get out and you fault. You fix.

McAllister: Later. I need to cover the auction for the paper.

Hendrik: Auction?

McAllister: Lindstrom over on the fifth concession died last month. He was an old timer, so it'll be a lot of antiques. There's bound to be a bargain.

Hendrik: Bargain?! Johannes. Come.

*[Hendrik looks at McAllister expectantly. He rubs his hands together.]*

Murky water make good fishing.

*[McAllister hadn't intended to invite Hendrik, but now that he has invited himself along McAllister doesn't quite know how to extricate himself from the situation.]*

McAllister: My brother used to say nothing brings a town together like a church picnic. But that was just another stupid thing he used to say. A church picnic is just a bunch of Anglicans drinking tea with other Anglicans and Presbyterians eating sandwiches with other Presbyterians, and Pentecostals doing ... whatever it is Pentecostals do with other Pentecostals.

**[MUSIC: underscore begins]**

Forget the churches. What binds a town together is faith. Faith that they can find a good deal.

Let's use that imagination again, if you got any left.

The furniture's over here, a big pile of it on the front lawn. Some of its kinda cheap, plastic lawn chairs and the like. The kitchen stuff, silverware, pots and pans and appliances are all over here.

And over here is the farm equipment. This is where all the farmers are gathered. And most of them are gathered around one old tractor. Hendrik saw that tractor as soon as he and Johnny pulled up.

***[Underscoring transforms into Music: John Deere 'B'.]***

McAllister *[singing]*: Well I watched him from the window  
as he parked across the lane  
His face was red and sunburned,  
his clothes were torn and stained  
He wasn't a collector,  
he hadn't come here for a bargain  
He needed that old tractor  
to farm his old farm

McAllister *[singing]*: It was a John Deere B  
With a row crop front end  
Hand crank and a flywheel  
The original paint  
But it won't work another field, farm another farm  
Some restaurant down in Oshawa should park it on its  
lawn

Johnny: I don't want a stupid tractor.

Hendrik: First – tractor you will learn fix. Same as mighty big car.

Johnny: Oh yeah? If I get it started, will you buy that car for me?

Hendrik: Why car, when tractor you even cannot fix.

McAllister:*[Singing]* I watched him check the oil,  
I watched him set the spark  
He pulled on that old pump,  
until he finally got it started  
He listened to the motor,  
then he set the touch  
When he got it goin'  
I watched him slowly smile

*[Johnny fiddles with the tractor until it roars to life.]*

McAllister *[Singing]* It was a

All *[Singing]*: John Deere B

With a row crop front end  
Hand crank and a flywheel  
The original paint  
But it won't work another field, farm another farm  
Some museum up in Ottawa should park it on its lawn

Hendrik: Ha! Good, Johannes! Good!

Johnny: So. You're going to buy me this tractor?

Hendrik: I thought car you want?

Johnny: You said, "First tractor. Then Car."

Hendrik: "Maybe car," I say. But for you tractor I buy. I promise.

**[Underscoring continues.]**

*[Caroline provides the voice of the Auctioneer while McAllister and Johnny look idly on. Hendrik gets increasingly nervous as the bidding goes higher.]*

Auctioneer: Yew K! Here we go. They don't make 'em like this any more. A  
John Deere B!  
I want a bid, I want a bid  
What're you gonna bid, what're you gonna bid  
Who'll give me ten thousand – ten thousand dollars  
I want a bid, I want a bid  
Nine. Nine. Who's gonna start at nine.  
Come on, folks. Built in the Heartland of America.

Johnny: Don't let 'er go  
It's almost yer duty  
The oil pressure's fine  
She's a hard-workin' cutie  
In the blink of an eye  
I'll be riding that beauty  
Up and down the lane

Auctioneer: I want a bid, I want a bid  
What're you gonna bid, what're you gonna bid  
Six. Who'll start us a six. Six. Six. Six.

Four thousand. It's a steal at four.

Hendrik: One thousand.

Auctioneer: One thousand from the back. Gotta start somewhere.  
I got a bid, I got a bid  
What're you gonna bid, what're you gonna bid  
I got one thousand dollars.  
Looking for one and a half -- one and a half -- one and a half.  
**ONE AND A HALF!**  
Lookin' for two – two – two thousand.

Hendrik: Two Thousand.

Auctioneer: **TWO!** Thank you, sir.  
I want two and a half – two and a half – two and a half

Johnny: Yeah, look at her there  
She's one of a kind  
We gotta take 'er home  
Don't change your mind

Hendrik: You might even take a little time  
To thank me one day.

Auctioneer: **TWO AND A HALF!**  
Give me three, three, three thousand. Look at this machine!  
Got two and a half, got two and a half.  
Gimme three, three, three.

Johnny: She's a tiny bit worn  
From the dirt and the dust  
She's got a lot of class  
And a touch of rust

Hendrik & Johnny: But, that logo on her side  
Is the one to trust  
She's a **CLASSIC!**

Auctioneer: Got three. Got three. Gimme three and a half, three and a half,  
three and a half.  
I got a bid, I got a bid



What're you gonna bid, what're you gonna bid.  
THREE AND A HALF!

*[The bidding continues underneath.]*

*[Underscoring transforms into Music: John Deere 'B'.]*

McAllister *[Singing:]* When the bidding started  
I saw him twitch his eye  
Then I saw them narrow  
When the price went too high.

*[Hendrik looks Johnny. He doesn't say a word. They both return to Hendrik's car and depart.]*

McAllister *[Singing:]* He turned and looked a couple times  
before he got into his car  
Quietly he turned around  
and drove out of the yard

**[Underscoring continues.]**

Auctioneer: I got a bid, I got a bid  
What're you gonna bid, what're you gonna bid.

Bidder: Four.

Auctioneer: I got four. Gimme four and a half -- four and a half -- four and a half. Four and a quarter, four and a quarter. John Deere B. Four and a quarter. Got four thousand. Going once, twice...

McAllister: Five thousand! (as narrator)

Auctioneer: Sold!  
Congratulations Mr. McAllister.

McAllister: You see, the thing about an auction is that one does tend to get carried away by the excitement of it all. I knew how much Johnny wanted that tractor.

*[The sound of an old tractor sputtering to life and driving down the road. Johnny and Hendrik comes out of the house and stares at the tractor.]*

***[Underscore transforms into Music: John Deere 'B'.]***

McAllister *[signing]*: Well he watched me from the window  
as I parked across the lane  
His face was red and sunburned,

his clothes were old and stained  
He wasn't a collector,  
he wouldn't put it on display  
You'd see him on that tractor  
Each and every day

*[Hendrik is so pleased he wants to give McAllister a hug, but he's just not that kind of man. McAllister knows this and doesn't expect any thanks. He just hands Hendrik the keys. Hendrik nods.]*

McAllister *[Singing]*                      It was a

All *[Singing]*:                      John Deere B  
With a row crop front end  
Hand crank and a flywheel  
The original paint  
And it will work another field, farm another farm  
No museum up in Ottawa's gonna park it on its lawn

McAllister *[Singing]*                      No museum up in Ottawa is gonna park it on its  
lawn

*[Hendrik smiles at Johnny for the only time in the play.]*

McAllister:                      About the only thing Johnny and his Dad could agree on in all the  
time I knew them was that tractor.

***[FLASHBACK ENDS.]***

***[MUSIC: McAllister's Theme.]***

McAllister (cont'd): I helped one relationship in that boy's life.

*[Lights on Caroline sitting at a stool by the bar.]*

But I didn't figure there was much chance I'd be able to help this time. It was just coincidence that I had to go into town that night.

*[A sign lights up that says "The Last Chance Saloon". The twangy strains of a country band in a bar begin and transport us into the local watering hole.]*

***[Music Take It All Away. Throughout the scene below, the band plays almost inaudibly. (See Appendix for song lyrics).]***

*[Mike comes over and starts talking with Caroline, in dumbshow. Caroline invites him to sit down.]*

McAllister (cont'd): Every town has a bar like The Last Chance Saloon: the kind of place where beer is served in mason jars, there's a vat of pickled eggs on the bar, and there's two kinds of music available on the jukebox: country and western.

*[McAllister sees Caroline and Mike. He sneaks close enough to eavesdrop without being noticed.]*

Mike: I have seen the future, etched in blue lines.

Caroline: You're clairvoyant, are you?

Mike *[nodding]*: Highways department. Blue lines on a topographical map of this township that show where this highway everyone's talking about is going to be built. I saw it when I worked for the province.

Caroline: No one knows where it's going to be built.

Mike: I do. I worked for the land acquisitions department.

*[McAllister leans in and interrupts. Caroline and Mike immediately put more space between them.]*

McAllister: If the government is going to go around expropriating farms it seems to me that there'd likely be a little more formal process involved than just sending out some guy in a nice truck.

Mike: I *used* to work for the government. And I'm not expropriating anything. I'm offering a fair price.

McAllister: And is that legal? You using what you know from working for the government to make a quick buck?

Mike: There's lots of different definitions of what's legal.

McAllister: No there's not. But there are of different definitions of who's a criminal ... and who actually ends up in jail.

*[McAllister stands up and leaves, rudely. Caroline shouts after him.]*

Caroline: Mac! Mac!

Mike: Do I look like a criminal to you, Caroline?

Caroline: A little better dressed maybe.

Mike: Why thank you. How about that dance you promised me?

Caroline: I never promised you any dance.

Mike: Yes you did. Back in high school, you promised me one dance at the prom. And you never showed.

Caroline: I'm a married woman, Michael Schroeder.

Mike *[holding out his hand]*: Then there's no harm in one dance.

Caroline: How about you give me a smoke instead?

Mike: We can't smoke inside.

Caroline: It's nice enough outside.

*[Caroline leads the way outside. Mike follows.]*

Mike: I think I have a light in my truck.

Caroline:               Whoa. Nice truck there Mike. How's it drive?

Mike:                    Like a dream. Four wheel drive, ABS brakes. Great in winter driving conditions. Not great on gas though.

Caroline:               What's it haul? Maybe a ton? Two?

Mike:                    You know, I'm not sure.

Caroline:               Is that the one with the anti-sway thingamadooodle? So your load don't get out of control on you when a gust of wind comes up?

Mike:                    I think they mentioned that at the dealership. Yeah.

Caroline:               You do a lot of hauling up there in the city then?

Mike:                    Not really.

Caroline:               Must have some occasion. Basement renos. Rebuilding the back deck. Treehouse for the kids.

Mike:                    That's not really my thing.

Caroline:               Take stuff to the dump at least?

Mike:                    The city picks it all up. Curbside. You know.

Caroline:               So it's just a tall car as far as your concerned, then?

Mike:                    An expensive tall car.

*[Music: I Wanna Buy Your Truck. Caroline starts to seduce Mike with the lyrics of the song]*

Caroline *[singing]*:

So many mornin's, so many days  
I just dream out my window, about going away  
I dream of white lines, cigarette stops  
Broken down shoulders, rusty old trucks

I wanna buy your truck  
I don't like what I'm doing  
I wanna give it up  
I wanna try something else  
I like the way that it shines  
Hey, I'm really stuck  
In this life of mine  
I wanna buy your truck

And the dust devil drive shafts, the mirrored mirages  
The oil-can silhouettes, falling down garages  
Chrome-grill reflections, just out of the lights  
Onto the pavement, into the night

I wanna buy your truck  
I don't like what I'm doin'  
I wanna give it up  
I wanna try something else  
I like the way that it shines  
Hey, I'm really stuck  
In this life of mine  
I wanna buy your truck

When I get to the ocean, I'm gonna drive right in  
And when it stalls, I'm gonna get out and swim

Caroline & Mike *[Singing]*

I wanna buy your truck  
I don't like what I'm doin'  
I wanna give it up  
I wanna try something else  
I like the way that it shines  
Hey, I'm really stuck  
In this life of mine

Caroline *[Singing]*

I wanna buy your truck

I like the way that it shines

Hey, I'm really stuck  
In this life of mine  
I wanna buy your truck  
I'm stuck in this life of mine  
I wanna...

*[Pause. Caroline kisses Mike.]*

**[MUSIC: Dissonant Underscoring.]**

*[Elsewhere, that same night. The rain has stopped, but the air still feels wet. Crickets fill the summer air with the incessant sound of their chirruping. Nocturnal tree-frogs bleat a call to their wayward mates. Johnny is now asleep at the table, his bottle of rye whiskey in front of him. There is a noise outside. The barking of the dogs wakes Johnny up with a start.]*

Johnny:                    Wa'that? Caroline? Tha' you?

*[Johnny rubs the sleep from his eyes and moves to the window. He doesn't see anything but he's sure he heard something. He steps outside into the night. Silence.]*

*[Something is different now. Even the crickets and tree-frogs lie mysteriously still. Johnny shakes his head and focuses on the strangeness of it all.]*

*[Something moves over by the old John Deere and he jumps.]*

Johnny:                    Who's that? Someone there? Caroline is that you?

*[Mike emerges from behind the tractor. We're not sure if this is a dream or not, but we're pretty certain that Mike isn't real.]*

Mike:                    Have you had a chance to think about our conversation from last week, Johnny D?

Johnny:                    You again. What're you doin' here in the middle of the night?

Mike:                    Maybe I'm not here. Maybe this is just a dream. Maybe I'm out with your wife.

Johnny:                    Quit talkin' about my wife.

Mike:                    If you want. It's your dream. Did you tell Caroline about our conversation?

Johnny:                    No.

Mike :                    Why not?

Johnny:                    I guess I'm afraid she'd say yes.



Mike: If you won't sell, I'm sure it's only a matter of time before those bills catch up to you.

Johnny: You know what I been thinking'?

Mike: No. What've you been thinking?

*[The underscoring turns into MUSIC: a Dissonant version of Time to Get A Gun.]*

Johnny *[speak-speaking]*: My neighbour's car got stole last week  
right outta his driveway.

Mike: Is that so?

Johnny *[speak-speaking]*: We heard the dogs a barkin'  
we never paid them any mind.  
Caroline says she's gonna lock the door from now on when  
we go away.  
And I been walking around this farm a-wondering if its  
time...

Time to get a gun.

***[MUSIC: Dissonant Underscoring.]***

McAllister: Johnny was twenty-two when he met Caroline. She was seventeen. She was set to graduate high school. He did better with his hands than his brains. He showed us all just how much better when he took the rusted out shell of a 74 Lincoln Continental and not only made it run again, he made it the envy of the whole town.

Johnny: 28 feet from bumper to bumper. The last of the sweet old time gas guzzlers. Hard to drive, harder to park. Elvis had one and so did Hank. It doesn't look like money, it looks like the bank.

McAllister: He called her Lucille. And that's how Caroline met Johnny. In those days, just like today, you didn't meet Johnny without first meeting Lucille.

*[FLASHBACK: Johnny and Caroline are twenty years younger. And so is Lucille, the mighty big car that threatened to stall in front of the liquor store earlier in Act One.]*

Caroline: They say that when a guy has to have a mighty big car, it's because he's got a mighty small something in another department.

*[Johnny looks at Caroline, in shock. No one – especially a girl – has ever spoken to him this way. Far from reacting badly, he is amused at her audacity. Its nighttime, and there is a party going on offstage, out by the gravel pit. The rest of the high school gang is hanging out down there. Caroline has come up the hill to meet the older guys.]*

Johnny: That so? And what're you drivin'?

Caroline: I'm not driving anything. I get boys like you to drive me wherever I want.

Johnny: Not talkin' like that you don't.

Caroline: I'm Caroline.

Johnny: Johnny D.

Caroline: You gonna offer a girl one of those Molson's, Johnny D?

Johnny: I don't give beer to underage girls. But I'm sure someone down by the fire will.

*[Caroline doesn't go anywhere. She's intrigued, and not about to be intimidated.]*

Caroline: Come on, I graduate high school next week.

Johnny: Well, excuuuuuse me. So, what're you doing up here with the grown-ups?

Caroline: Maybe I like it here.

Johnny: Wearing city jeans like those? You gotta be pretty sick of this small town already.

Caroline: Wherever you go, there you are.

Johnny: Huh?

Caroline: Its Buddhist. We learned it in Social Studies.

Danny: I think I remember that class.

Caroline: It means your problems are part of who are. When you run away eventually, you just keep running back into yourself.

Johnny: So that's Buddhism, huh?

Caroline *[sizing him up]*: You work real hard at your image don't you?

Johnny: So?

Caroline: Wherever you go, there you are.

*[Pause while Johnny considers just how he's going to use his carefully chosen words to take her down a peg or two.]*

Johnny: Lemme guess. You moved her – what – six months ago?

Caroline: Seven.

Johnny: You got a single Mom back in the city. In Junior High, you got good marks. Church every Sunday. Track team.

Caroline: Basketball.

Johnny: Then came high school. Smoking behind the bleachers. Getting' kissed by the senior boys. Breaking Single Mom's heart. Send her to Deadbeat Dad up north. Straighten her out. Except Daddy's Little Girl has him wrapped around her little finger.

Caroline: Who told you that?

Johnny: It's in your eyes. The way you walk.

Caroline: That's a nice way to talk to a girl you just met.

*[Johnny takes a swig of his beer and doesn't see Caroline wipe away a tear. Or at least he pretends he doesn't.]*

Johnny: If you're gonna analyze me, I guess I'm gonna analyze you right back.

Caroline: I guess I deserved that.

*[Johnny holds out his bottle for a toast.]*

Johnny: Truce?

Caroline: Mine's empty. I'm going to need another from your back seat if I'm going to cheers you.

*[Pause, while Johnny absorbs the hint buried within this question.]*

Johnny: Lucille's not meant for sitting. She's meant for riding.

Caroline *[leans in suggestively]*: Then maybe you should take me for a ride.

*[Johnny opens the car door for her, and tumbles in after her.]*

*[MUSIC: Benchseat Baby.]*

Johnny *[singing]*: Well I know you're used to those little sport jobs  
With the console in between  
Bold-faced leather, fancy headrest,  
a pocket for your cold cream.  
I know you're used to staring out the window  
watching the world go by,  
Well, it's a different kind of automobile,  
It's a different kind of ride

It's got a Bench Seat Baby  
It's got a Bench Seat Baby  
It's got a Bench Seat Baby  
You don't have to sit over there

I know you're used to them little dance tunes  
cranking out of the player  
Here's a lesson in country and western  
Its gonna drive you crazy  
So undo your jacket, lay back your head,  
won't you relax just a little  
And unless you got somebody else coming,  
slide over into the middle

*[Caroline laughs and shakes her head at him. But she snuggles up next to Johnny anyway. She joins in the chorus.]*

Johnny & Caroline: It's got a Bench Seat Baby  
It's got a Bench Seat Baby  
It's got a Bench Seat Baby  
You don't have to sit over there

Johnny: Well, its five feet from inseam to inseam,  
I had it custom corduroyed.  
And there's no reason why it needs to recline,  
it was made for a girl and a boy.

Johnny & Caroline It's got a Bench Seat Baby  
It's got a Bench Seat Baby  
It's got a Bench Seat Baby  
You don't have to sit over there

Johnny:  
It's got a Bench Seat Baby  
It's got a Bench Seat Baby

Caroline:  
It's a mighty big car  
It's a mighty big car

Johnny:  
It's got a Bench Seat Baby  
You don't have to sit over there

Johnny & Caroline:  
It's got a Bench Seat Baby  
You don't have to sit over there

*[Caroline and Johnny kiss. Car headlights illuminate the cab. The sound of a car horn causes Johnny to straighten the wheel without breaking the kiss. Lights fade.]*

**[MUSIC: Underscore begins.]**

McAllister: There's a place out in the country where couples go to be alone called "Kissing Cliff". Johnny and Caroline didn't bother to go there. They parked their car out near Johnny's house, overlooking the creek and the lower field. The headlights illuminated those tender shoots, struggling to make their way in the world, marching in endless rows into the future. Johnny and Caroline strode like giants amongst that field of potential. I saw it all from my kitchen window.

*[Johnny and Caroline walk through a cornfield, where the seedlings are no higher than their ankles, hand in hand.]*

Caroline: ... There's an entire religion based on sitting quietly and not thinking so much. Isn't that cool? All you're supposed to do in this whole religion is get rid of the crap that keeps you from being honest with yourself. It's so practical! And those temples in that Social Studies textbook – not like churches, all imposing – they're cute! Like tiny little houses for tiny little monks. I think they have a kind of temple in the city. I'm going to check it out when I get back.

Johnny: You're going back to the city?

Caroline: Soon as I can. That's the place to make some real money. Then maybe I can do what I want. Open my own store. Maybe a restaurant. We'll see.

*[Pause.]*

I was supposed to be the Prom Princess.

Johnny *[mocking]*: Oh My God! I'm holding hands with a Beauty Queen!

Caroline *[laughing]*: No. It's just prom. Every high school has one.

Johnny: I'm holding hands with the Prom Queen!

Caroline: Not the Prom Queen, but you know, the Princess.

Johnny: Oh My God! I'm holding hands with the second-in-command to the Prom Queen!

Caroline: Stop it. Not even a Princess anymore. I had to forfeit my tiara or whatever.

Johnny: *[still mocking]*: What'd ya do?

*[Pause. Caroline is trying to stop the tears. Johnny drops all of his mocking and turns serious.]*

What'd you do?

Caroline: They caught me drinking at the school dance. It was nothing worse than what the other girls were doing.

Johnny: How'd they catch you?

Caroline: I was passed out on the lawn. They had to make an example out of someone. So I got suspended.

Johnny: From the prom?

Caroline: From school. Both actually.

Johnny: Oh. That sucks.

Caroline: It really sucks. I was on the decorating committee.

*[Caroline is crying.]*

I organized this whole Asian theme. Like in that social studies class. I got everybody to make these Buddhist temples out of paper maché. I was gonna hang them from the ceiling on little strings. It's stupid. But I really liked them.

Johnny: That's not stupid. It sounds Nice. Really nice.

*[Johnny lets her put her head on his shoulder.]*

Passing out drunk on the lawn at a school dance ... that's stupid.

*[Caroline laughs. She looks up at Johnny and smiles. His sense of humour is just what she needs right now. They keep walking down the row of corn into the darkness, like ghosts. McAllister looks down the rows after them.]*



McAllister: The next weekend was prom.

*[Hendrik is working on a motor in the shop. Johnny approaches Sheepishly.]*

Johnny: Vader.

Hendrik: Finally, returns the Son Prodigal. Maybe now that generator he will fix?

Johnny: Vader. De wind wait uit een heel andere hoek<sup>1</sup>.

*[Hendrik looks up from his labour, concerned.]*

I need your help.

McAllister: Hendrik had more than a few spare parts lying around the shop, so the three of us spent that week hooking everything up to a car battery and hanging them from the trees.

McAllister: Come prom night Johnny told Caroline he was going to take her someplace special. But he drove her out to the field instead. The sun was just starting to set, so it was kind of hard to make out the table standing in the middle of the field.

*[Lights on a table and two chairs sitting in the middle of a vast cornfield, surrounded by tender corn shoots. McAllister shows us the place setting, like a Maitre'D.]*

It was set with a white tablecloth, silverware and wine glasses. An appetizer in Tupperware. Soup in a thermos. And here – wrapped in tinfoil to keep it warm – “Macaroni Dorate”.

Johnny *[to Caroline, sheepishly]*: That’s Italian for Kraft Dinner.

*[A dozen papier maché Buddhist temples descend from the ceiling. Each of them is lit from within by a tiny twinkling light.]*

McAllister: It was Hendrik that flipped the switch. Then we both made ourselves scarce. He came over to my house and we both peered out my back window.

---

<sup>1</sup> Translation: “The wind blows from another corner.” Meaning: The situation has changed.

**Music: Wilder Than Her Reprise**

Johnny *[singing]*: Well I'm wilder than her  
What else can I say  
But I guess that's why she fell in love with me  
She's a house on fire,  
She's got all those charms

I'm a house on fire too,  
but I got four alarms

And I'm wilder than her  
Drives her out of her mind  
I guess she thought that she was just one of a kind  
But she's summer storm  
I'm a hurricane  
One just blows through town, one blows the town away  
And I'm wilder than her  
When we go driving in our cars  
Racing through the night  
Caroline: I can drive as fast as him  
Johnny: But she stops at all the lights

Caroline: She thinks its cause I'm crazy  
I'm probably right

Johnny: But I think that the reason is that I'm twice as wild  
And I'm wilder than her

Johnny & Caroline: Drives her/me out of her/my mind  
Johnny: I guess she thought that she was just one of a kind  
She's a summer storm

Caroline: He's a hurricane  
Johnny: One just blows through town,  
Johnny & Caroline: one blows the town away  
And I'm wilder than her

Caroline: When he takes my hand  
and he looks me in the eye,  
I see something that I've never seen in my life,

Johnny: She takes the fire, turns it down low,  
Caroline: He takes the night, and makes it not so cold,  
Johnny: She takes the distance,  
Both: Breaks it into miles,  
Johnny: She makes my life just

Both	A little less wild
Johnny	Cause I'm
Both:	wilder than her
Johnny:	Drives her
Both:	out of his mind
Johnny:	I guess she thought that
	She was just one of a kind
Both:	But she's summer storm
Johnny:	I'm a hurricane
Both:	One just blows through town,
Johnny:	One blows the town away
Both:	And I'm wilder than her
	And I'm wilder than her

*[They continue to dance as the light fades.]*

McAllister:            They danced the night away in that field, until the sun came up the next day. The music from the car stereo kept Hendrik and me up most of the night. In the morning Lucille wouldn't start. Guess that stereo has a mighty big draw on that little bitty battery. Caroline had to ride to town on the back of that old John Deere B. They reached the town limits just as all the other kids were stumbling home in their tuxedos and gowns: and there's the ex-prom princess on the back of a tractor. There's still debate over who had the better prom. But not in my mind.

*[Johnny and Caroline slowly lose their energy and buoyancy. Age and the care of years wears away their youth until they have once again become as they were through the first part of Act One.]*

*[FLASHBACK ENDS.]*

*[MUSIC: McAllister's Sting, now turned dissonant.]*

McAllister:            But I guess it doesn't matter how they were. We're talking about how they are.

*[Thunder rolls in the distance.]*

*[Lights. It's now suddenly the next day, a bright morning. Johnny is fiddling with a rifle, he accidentally swings it in McAllister's direction.]*

McAllister: Watch where you're pointing that thing.

Johnny: You know what they say, Mac. "Guns don't kill people."

McAllister: People kill people. With guns. That mine?

Johnny: Yep.

McAllister: I haven't seen that for 30-odd years.

Johnny: I figured its time to get some protection. Deal with that damned coyote.

McAllister: So you thought you'd help yourself to my gun

Johnny *[changing the subject]*: Glad to see the sun for a change. I was getting worried about that Spillway.

McAllister: I told you they'll have to contact the press before they—

Johnny: Yeah. Yeah. What you got under your arm this time?

*[McAllister hands Johnny the sheaf of papers.]*

McAllister: Petition. I'm collecting signatures against the new highway. Trying to tell the province that a highway is going to kill this community.

*[Johnny hands the sheaf of papers back.]*

Johnny: That's not what he tells me.

McAllister: Who's that?

*[Silence. Johnny does not answer.]*

Has someone been talking to you Johnny?

*[Pause.]*

Who's been nosing around here Johnny?

Johnny: Some fellah from Toronto.

McAllister: What fellah?

Johnny: Mike Whatshisname. Says the overpass is gonna go right through here.

McAllister: Well, that's not news, everybody –

Johnny: Right through *here*.

McAllister: Oh.

Johnny: He's offering to buy the place. Cash.

McAllister: You're a farmer Johnny. Your father bought this land with money he scraped together –

Johnny: Land that ain't even fit for growin' rocks. I'm tired of farming with a pick and shovel.

McAllister: You're a farmer.

Johnny: No I'm not. Last year it would'ha cost me more to harvest that lower field than I'd have gotten to sell it. I plowed it under and took the crop insurance. You did the same.

McAllister: Don't listen to me, for cryin' out loud. What do I know? What does Caroline think about all this?

Johnny [*almost laughing*]: Caroline? She went out on the town last night. All done up in her tightest dress.

McAllister: Yeah I saw that.

[*Pause.*]

Johnny: Ya did?

McAllister: Yeah.

Johnny:                   Where'd you see that, exactly? The Last Chance Saloon maybe?

McAllister:             So she went out for a drink.

Johnny:                   Was she with anybody?

*[Just then there is the sound of a car pulling up the driveway. Johnny and McAllister look offstage in that direction. McAllister is relieved. Johnny is not.]*

McAllister:             Here she is now. So its was just ... y'know ... a heat-of-the-moment kind-of-thing. Don't you think?

Johnny:                   Yeah, thanks Mac. Run along now.

McAllister:             Its good she's back. Right?

*[Johnny picks up the gun again.]*

Johnny:                   Excuse us for a while. I gotta have a chat with my wife.

*[Johnny heads off towards the sound of the car. He stops just out of the light, in front of Caroline. They remain frozen, suspended in McAllister's story. McAllister turns towards the audience.]*

McAllister:             Are you as worried as I was? Because, in this context, you can kind of see why there might be something to worry about. "Husband Shoots Wife ... With Newspaperman's Gun." So, what I did next was kind of justified. Don't you think?

*[Johnny and Caroline re-enter the playing space. McAllister bends down behind the workbench in the drive shed, so he cannot be seen by them but he is perfectly visible to the audience.]*

Johnny:                   It's nearly noon.

Caroline:                What, you think I don't own a watch?

*[Silence.]*

Caroline:                I was out with Janet.

*[Silence.]*

Caroline: We had a few too many. I didn't think it was safe to drive.

*[Silence. Caroline picks up the empty bottle of rye.]*

Caroline: Looks like you had a little party of your own.

Johnny: It's not a party if you're drinkin' by yourself.

Caroline: No. Then you're just a drunk.

Johnny: I'm not the one who couldn't come home last night.

Caroline: We were having a good time.

Johnny: Not with Janet Manning you weren't. McAlister saw you.

*[Pause.]*

Caroline: That nosey, inquisitive little –

Johnny: Aw, don't be too hard on him. He wouldn't tell me anything.

*[Pause.]*

I just wanted to see how worried you'd be if he had.

*[Pause.]*

So. Who *were* you with?

Caroline: Shove it.

Johnny: Were you with Mike? Your old boyfriend?

Caroline: We never went on a date.

Johnny: So you thought you'd correct the error, is that it?

Caroline: I don't need to talk about it.

Johnny: Yes, you do. I may be a lot of things. But I am still your husband.  
So you do need to talk about this.

*[Pause.]*



Caroline: We didn't go to a movie. We went to the bar

Johnny: To hook up with Mike.

Caroline: It was a coincidence. He bought me a drink.

Johnny: So you slept with him.

Caroline: I didn't.

Johnny: Don't lie to me Caroline. You can make fun of my education, you can complain about my car, you can go off on me about the bills. But you cannot lie to me.

*[Pause.]*

Caroline: I slept with him.

Johnny: Jesus.

Caroline: Don't you swear at me.

Johnny: Well, who the hell else do you want me to swear at?

Caroline: I've been running a home, helping out on the farm, holding down a part-time job at the Five and Dime and to top it all off, I'm responsible for the emotional health of this relationship too.

Johnny: Not this again.

Caroline: Yes, this again. I'm the one doing the heavy lifting John.

Johnny: Is that what its called these days.

Caroline: This is a great excuse for you to put up that brick wall you're so good at, isn't it?

*[Johnny thinks about striking out at something: maybe her. He chooses to leave the garage instead. Caroline tries to stop him.]*

Caroline: Where are you –?

Johnny: Don't. Just don't.

*[Johnny leaves the shed in a fit of fury and bumps into McAllister who has been eavesdropping behind the workbench. MacAllister stands sheepishly.]*

Caroline:                Why don't you just move in? It's a better view.

*[Johnny stalks off. McAllister begins to plead with Caroline, but in the end he hasn't the heart.]*

McAllister:            Boy do I feel like the world's worst neighbour. I, uh ... I .... I'll be going.

Caroline:                I think you'd better.

*[McAllister starts to walk away. Johnny comes running back onstage and runs into the house.]*

Caroline:                We're either going to face what's going on –

Johnny:                 Not now.

Caroline:                Well, then when? When?

**[Underscore begins.]**

*[Johnny exits the house with his rubber boots and the portable telephone. Caroline follows him out. Johnny dials a number with one hand and tries to remove his shoes and put on his rubber boots as quickly as he can manage with the other.]*

Caroline:                What's the matter now?

Johnny:                 The creek is flooded. The south field is under three feet of water.

McAllister:            Three feet? Overnight? It's not even raining. How—?

*[Johnny waves to them to be quiet, so he can listen to the phone better. It's clearly some sort of recorded message. After a moment he slowly lowers the phone and turns to face McAllister.]*

Johnny:                 How do you think? They opened the spillway on Miller's Ridge.

*[No one speaks.]*

McAllister:                That's ... not possible. They would have called the paper.

*[Caroline turns and glares at him.]*

Caroline:                Who reads your paper anymore, Mac? Honestly, how many readers do you have left? Is it any wonder they didn't bother to call the local rag?

*[McAllister is stunned. The truth in what Caroline has said has caused his world to come crumbling down. He hardly knows what to say.]*

McAllister *[whispering]*: Paper.

Caroline:                What?

McAllister:                It's called The Local Paper. Not The Local Rag.

Caroline *[to Johnny]*: How bad?

Johnny:                The whole thing.

Caroline:                All of it?

*[Johnny nods.]*

Think anything's gonna grow when it dries up?

*[Johnny shakes his head. Silence.]*

*[There is a ruckus offstage, in the henhouse. Johnny grabs the gun, thinking it could be the coyote. He sees it running off in the distance, and shoots at it at it. Many times, over and over again, grunting in fury each time. Pause.]*

[Music: Time to Get A Gun.]

I saw my wife get stole last night  
right outta my driveway.  
I heard the dogs a barkin'  
I never paid them any mind.  
And maybe I am gonna lock the door from now on when I  
go away.  
And I been walking around this farm a-wondering if its  
time...

Time to get a gun.  
That's what I been thinkin'.  
I could afford one  
if I did just a little less drinkin'.  
Time to put somethin'  
between me and the sun.  
When the talkin' is over  
it's time to get a gun.

Last week a government man was there  
when I walked outta my back door.  
He said I'm sorry to bother you son,  
but it don't matter anymore.  
Cause even while we're talkin'  
right here where we stand  
they're makin' plans for a four-lane highway  
and a big old overpass.

Time to get a gun.  
That's what I been thinkin'.  
I could afford one  
if I did just a little less drinkin'.  
Time to put somethin'  
between me and the sun.  
When the talkin' is over  
it's time to get a gun.

Caroline says she's worried  
says I'm acting like a kid.  
She's never known anybody had a gun  
and her Daddy never did.  
But I think it should be up to me  
cause when it's all said and done

somebody's got to walk into the night  
well I'm gonna be that one

Time to get a gun.  
That's what I been thinkin'.  
I could afford one  
if I did just a little less drinkin'  
Time to put somethin'  
between me and the sun.  
When the talkin' is over  
it's time to get a gun.  
When the talkin' is over  
it's time to get a gun.

– **END OF ACT ONE** –

## ACT TWO

**[ACT TWO begins with another overture:Music Yellow Barley Straw.**  
*Johnny takes the unopened envelope and turns it over a few times in his hand.]*

ALL *[singing]:*                   He's got a heart made of Yellow Barley Straw  
   all wrapped up in Calico patches,  
   and plum-chuck full of love.  
   He looks out over the fields  
   every year's losses, every year's yields.  
   every year's dreams, a hundred bushels to an acre

*[Johnny stands and looks out at the field. He puts the letter away in his pocket, unopened.]*

His heart is made of yellow barley straw ...

*[Lights: it's a bright summer day, with not a cloud in the sky. But the tension on the ground is icy. Johnny comes out of his front stoop. McAllister stands and tries to get his attention.]*

McAllister: I read somewhere that the real test of a man is when he can admit that he's made a –

*[Johnny studiously ignores him and continues to his shop. McAllister stops mid-sentence. After a moment a car door slams offstage and Caroline enters from the driveway with her keys in her hand. McAllister begins again.]*

McAllister: There are lots of things in my life that I'm sorry for –

*[Caroline deliberately turns away and heads towards Johnny's shop. Johnny exits with some tools in hand and nearly bumps into Caroline. They stand awkwardly in front of one another for a moment. McAllister interjects:]*

McAllister: Is this how we're going to –

*[Johnny pushes past Caroline without speaking and heads off to Lucille (the Mighty Big Car). Caroline throws up her arms and crosses to the house. McAllister tires to express his sympathy.]*

McAllister: OK, look, all I want to say –

*[Caroline slams the screen door behind her, cutting him off. Johnny slams Lucille's door shut loudly, and glares at Caroline. Caroline slams the screen door several times in rapid succession. They glare at one another.]*

McAllister: Given that no one was talking to anyone else it was an oddly noisy week.

Caroline: Mike wants to buy the farm. He told me he talked to you last week.

Caroline: Were you ever going tell me? Or was it like the bills in the basement, something you just hoped would go away?

*[Pause.]*

Are you going to say anything? Anything at all?

***[Music: Ordinary Guy.]***

Johnny *[singing]*: I could understand if he had money.

Caroline *[speaking]*: He does have money.

Johnny *[singing]*: I could understand if he had a nice car.

Caroline *[speaking]*: Actually his car is really nice..

Johnny *[singing]*: I could understand if he was funny,  
I could understand if he was some sort of movie star.

Caroline *[speaking]*: Don't be dense. It's not about any of that.

Johnny *[singing]*: But he's just a plain old ordinary guy,  
with a plain old shirt and a plain old tie,  
  
I don't know you thought he'd be,  
but he won't fight or even disagree  
and he doesn't even look a little bit like me.

Caroline:  
You're not even listening.

Johnny:  
If this was what you wanted

Are you?

Why didn't you just say so?

Are you?

He's everything that I'm not

OK, fine.

And you don't even know.

Johnny & Caroline *[singing]*: He's just a plain old ordinary guy,  
with a plain old shirt and a plain old tie,  
I don't know you thought he'd be,  
but he won't fight or even disagree  
Johnny *[singing]*: and he doesn't even look a little bit like  
Caroline *[singing]*: not a tiny bit like  
Johnny *[singing]*: he doesn't even look a bit like me.



Caroline: Maybe we should sell then.

Johnny: Is that what you want?

*[A car pulls in the driveway. Johnny squints to see who it is. Mike enters. He nods at everyone in greeting.]*

Mike: Good morning John. Mr. McAllister.

*[Mike extends his hand to Caroline.]*

And it's Caroline, right?. I'm Michael Schroeder.

McAllister: Oh, give it up.

Mike: I beg your pardon, sir?

Caroline: He saw us the other night.

Mike: Johnny ... you can see how an innocent drink between two friends might be misinterpreted by a nosey son of –

Caroline: There's no use pretending. I told Johnny what happened.

Mike: What the heck did you do that for?

Caroline: Cause he's my husband.

Mike *[to Johnny]*: We just had a drink, and a couple of turns on the dance floor.

Caroline: Stop it Mike.

Mike: Look, Johnny, I –

*[Johnny glares at him.]*

Sure, I'm not the most welcome face – I don't see why all this has to stand in the way of a good business deal.

*[McAllister scoffs.]*

Mike: It is a good deal I'm offering. A chance to get out from under. Pay those bills. Start fresh. I'll tell you what: I've got all the paperwork right here, just in case. We don't need a realtor. We don't even need a lawyer. We'll just do it under the table between the three of us, save a bundle on fees.

McAllister: What you're doing isn't right.

Mike: Now just a second. I left the ministry six months ago. My exclusion period is over. It's perfectly legal.

McAllister: There's difference between what's legal and what's right.

Mike *[to Johnny & Caroline]*: Can I level with you guys? Government pay is crap. I know, I know, people are always up in arms about government pensions and benefits. But when you compare that to what a man with vision and a little bit of foresight could make in the private sector. There's nothing wrong with a man wanting to apply his smarts, is there? Is there?

*[Pause.]*

Caroline: There's a funny thing about the Wheat Board that I've never figured out. Maybe you can explain it to me. Farmers can sell wheat to them at \$6.50 a bushel. And then the wheat board waits until the middle of winter when people in India or China or Europe or wherever are real hungry. Then the Board sells it for \$8.50 a bushel. What I could never figure out is ... why don't we didn't hold onto the wheat and sell it ourselves?

Mike: So you're saying I'm like the Wheat Marketing Board?

Caroline: I'm saying maybe we should hang onto the farm ourselves until the highway comes along.

Mike: You're a smart woman Caroline. And smart people like you and me can stand to make a lot of money. *If* we're willing to wait. You can take your chances and speculate that maybe in three or five years that highway will come through here. But it might not. It might take a more easterly route, bypass this town altogether. There might be a recession. This neighbour of yours might get that petition together. Or. You can let me take those chances. The only sure thing at this moment is ... that there's money on the table right now.

*[Silence, while everyone considers things. Music: I Wanna Buy Your Truck.  
Johnny begins to sing, almost under his breath.]*

Johnny *[singing]*:                    I wanna buy your truck  
   I don't like what I'm doin'  
   I wanna give it up  
   I wanna try something else  
   I like the way that it shines

Johnny & Caroline *[singing]*:    Hey, I'm really stuck  
   In this life of mine  
   I wanna buy your truck

Johnny:                                With that lower field underwater that's half the harvest gone.

McAllister:                         Johnny ... Caroline ... Please ...

Caroline:                             Maybe the bank will loan us the money to plant that field again.

Johnny:                                I went in last week. We're up to the hilt.

Mike:                                  You'll get a better offer from me then you ever will from any bank.

Johnny:                                This farm is done Caroline.

Caroline:                             And we're not far behind. Is that what you're saying?

Johnny:                                I think you've made that real clear lately.

*[Pause. Johnny turns to Mike.]*

I'm not gonna shake your hand, cause if I get that close to you, I  
might punch your lights out. But you got a deal.

*[Mike takes a contract out of his file folder and hands it to Johnny while  
McAllister narrates. He keeps a safe distance while he points out where to  
sign.]*

*[McAllister can only shake his head ruefully at his neighbour's decision, and bemoan what has befallen his beloved town. He turns to the audience.]*

**[MUSIC: White Rose Reprise.]**

McAllister [*singing*]:      And the girls would spend a couple of bucks  
Just to meet the boys working at the pumps  
They'd grow up and fall in love  
And they all moved away  
Strangers used to stop and ask  
How far they'd driven off the map  
But then they built that overpass  
And now they stay out on the highway

McAllister & Caroline *[singing]*: And now there's plywood for glass  
Where the windows all got smashed  
And there's just a chunk of concrete  
Where those old pumps used to stand  
There's a couple of cars half out of the ground  
And that oil sign still spins 'round and 'round  
But I guess the White Rose filling station's just a memory  
now  
But I guess the White Rose filling station's just a memory  
now

McAllister: I bet by this point you're wondering: why do I care so much? No more neighbours practically in my front lawn. Soon, there'll be a Wal Mart right where I'm standing and I'll be a rich man. I should be dancing for joy. It broke my heart to see my brother lose that farm thirty years ago. And then, when Hendrik's turn came ...

Another wide turn around the headland and back we go thirteen years.

Oh bollocks. I know that look. Why you people need everything spoon-fed to you in chronological order is beyond me. There is such a thing as an emotional arc to a story, y'know. Try to steer clear of the fence posts this time ...

*[MUSIC: McAllister's Theme takes us into, and underscores, a FLASHBACK.]*

*[Lights up on the tractor and on Hendrik & Johnny working on the antique tractor. Hendrik is whistling "John Deere B" while he works.]*

McAllister: Even though they had a newer model, Hendrik and Johnny kept that old tractor running. And they never tired of showing it off.

Hendrik: She is de "John Deere B Long Frame". Met en big battery. First tractor met en electric starter. Ever.

Johnny: Not that the starter has ever worked.

Hendrik: Starter underneath tractor, behind crank. Stupid. Every time she stalls I must my head under frame put. By one hand jiggling

*[grunts as he gets into position]*

met odder hand pedal pushing.

McAllister: That tractor killed him.

*[Johnny exits. Hendrik busies himself hooking up the cultivator to the old tractor.]*

McAllister: I always come home for lunch on Thursdays. Hendrik's cows got through that fence again. On my way back to the paper I let him know. He was in the middle of cultivating the field, so he already had the John Deere runnin'. It just made sense to drive that over. It stalled, like it always did. Hendrik walked around the side, the way he had a hundred times before. He stuck his head under that long frame, the way he had a hundred times before...

Nobody will ever know what exactly happened, even though I've puzzled over it a hundred times ... Maybe he got it running and then he heard a funny rattle, and leaned forward while it was moving ... but Hendrik went under the wheels and got caught in that cultivator ...

*[Hendrik loses his balance. He is trapped under the dashboard. The sound of the tractor continues, as Hendrik's arm thrashes, then goes still.]*

McAllister: I always put the weekend paper to bed on Thursdays. It was well past dark when I got back. The tractor wasn't in the drive shed. I knew that wasn't good.

*[McAllister finds Hendrik lying in the open field.]*

The cultivator had dragged him a good forty or fifty feet before it finally left him bleeding in the stubble. He was barely conscious when I found him, but by the time they loaded him in the ambulance ... The doctors put enough blood in him to fill a man up three times over. But it just kept comin' outta all them holes.

A cultivator's a damned thing.

*[MUSIC: Underscoring ends.]*

*[Caroline sits down beside Johnny. Johnny has a pad of paper and pencil in his hand. They sit in silence.]*

Johnny: Thanks for comin' over.

Caroline: How're you feeling?

*[Johnny nods in agreement.]*

Johnny: All right I guess.

Caroline: You guess?

Johnny: I'm not doin' real well with this eulogy.

Caroline: Why don't you just say how you feel?

Johnny: I don't know how I feel, really.

Caroline: How come you never know how you feel?

Johnny: Lay off Caroline.

Caroline: Seriously, how –

Johnny: No seriously. Lay off.

*[Pause.]*

Caroline, now that Dad's gone, I'm gonna be takin' over the farm and the small motor business too. The only thing is ... that house is awful big for one person.

Caroline: What're you asking?

Johnny: I'm asking you to marry me Caroline.

Caroline: Just like that?

Johnny: Oh, sorry.

*[Johnny gets down on one knee.]*

Caroline, will you marry me.

Caroline: No, I mean – “the house is awful big for one person, so will you help me fill it out a bit.” Asking someone to marry you isn’t just about looking for a roommate. I need to know you’re going to be there.

Johnny: I live here.

Caroline: I mean – Look, you have to promise me that once a week you’ll talk about one feeling.

Johnny: What like, every Friday at five or something?

Caroline: Just mention it every once in a while, that’s all I’m asking.

Johnny: Geez, what is this, work?

Caroline: Yes. It’s your new job. And you’re gonna hate every minute of it, but you’re gonna have to promise.

Johnny: Oh Man ... OK. Deal.

Caroline: All right then, get started. What was your favourite time with your father?

Johnny: When he’d shut up.

Caroline: Johnny, you made me a promise.

Johnny: They’re my feelings. I’ll talk about them how I want.



[MUSIC: SMALL MOTORS.]

Johnny *[singing]*: We'd bang on this and bang on that.  
He'd adjust the timing.  
Turn a mag and set the screw.  
Then he'd fix the idle.  
Finally, he'd make them run  
as good as they were gonna be.  
And everything he knew, y'know,  
he taught it all to me.

And he liked small motors,  
flywheels on the side,  
single piston engines  
made out of cast iron.  
He liked small motors.  
We'd start 'em one by one.  
We'd stand around and we'd listen  
to them little engines run.

*[Lights. McAllister reveals small headstone. We need not re-create an entire graveyard, not even a hole in the ground: as with everything else in this play, a hint of a gravestone will suffice to draw the entire scene.]*

McAllister: I went to the funeral, of course. Caroline looked nice. I thought Johnny was gonna choke himself with that tie.

*[Johnny and the rest of the cast haul several items all powered by small motors onstage: a lawn mower, a generator, a leaf blower, a water pump, an unidentifiable nondescript motor attached to a hunk of plywood. They set them around the grave.]*

When we got to the gravesite, Johnny had surrounded the grave with half a dozen small motors. There were half a dozen more in the back of a pickup.

*[Johnny looking uncomfortable in a suit stands to give the eulogy. He clears his throat.]*

Johnny *[singing]*: Boys I know you're in your suits  
and you've come to say goodbye.  
I can tell you miss him too  
by the tears in your eyes.

But I'm askin' you a favour  
from a boy who's broken-hearted.  
Help me get these suckers down,  
help me get them started.

ALL *[singing]*: Cause he liked small motors,  
flywheels on the side,  
single piston engines  
made out of cast iron.  
He liked small motors.  
We'd start 'em one by one.  
We'd stand around and we'd listen  
to them little engines run.

Johnny *[Singing]* We'd stand around and we'd listen  
to them little engines

All *[Singing]* run.

*[They start the various engines all at once. Together they sound for all the world like a small mechanical orchestra. Some are high-pitched altos, some are deep-toned basses, others rich and silky baritones. Together they sound as heavenly as an agnostic choir. The sound fades. Johnny says a silent goodbye to Hendrik. Johnny has teared up. He tries to wipe the tears away but Caroline grabs his hands. Johnny laughs in embarrassment, trying to make light of his feelings.]*

Caroline: I'd be proud to be your wife.

*[Caroline kisses his mouth gently.]*

McAllister: I'm the one that bought that tractor for Hendrik and Johnny. So I've kept an eye on Johnny for thirteen years. And I'm not about to stop now.

*[MUSIC: Yellow Barley Straw (Reprise). The song returns us to the present, and ENDS THE FLASHBACK.]*

ALL *[singing]*:                      Every year's losses, every year's yields.  
    Every year's dreams, a hundred bushels to an acre.

*[Johnny takes the unopened envelope and turns it over a few times in his hand.]*

    And tomorrow, y'know,  
    the bank is gonna come and take it, take it all away.  
    He got a letter in the mail it was only,  
    why it was only yesterday.  
    But he just goes on believing –

*[Caroline comes out of the house with a suitcase in her hand.]*

Caroline:                      I'm going to stay with Janet for a while. When the sale is finalized,  
    maybe then I'll think about a place of my own.

*[Pause.]*

    Aren't you going to say anything?

Johnny:                      Leave your keys in the mailbox when you go.

*[Caroline exits.]*

*[Johnny pours himself a glass of whiskey. There is a long silence. Days pass. A non-descript man, a COLLECTOR of antiques, politely knocks on the door of the Garage.]*

Collector: I saw your ad on Craigslist.

Johnny: Uh-huh.

Collector: Is that it there?

*[The Collector waves at the corner of the Shed. At first it's not clear what he's pointing or wants to buy. Johnny nods.]*

Collector: I know an agricultural museum that'll take it. They're doing a whole display on how they used to live in the old days. Original threshers, cream separators, that kind of thing. But they'll never take it at the price you're asking.

Johnny: I know what I got. Seven thousand dollars.

Collector: We're not on the Antiques Roadshow here.

Johnny: I did my research. That's the asking price on the internet.

Collector: Well, asking is one thing. Getting's another entirely.

*[Pause.]*

Johnny: I need five thousand for seed, fertilizer and fuel.

Collector: Seed? How you gonna plant seed if I buy your tractor?

Johnny: I got a '78 Massey out back. My Father was a helluva mechanic. We worked on that John Deere every day.

Collector: How's the starter?

Johnny: Sometimes you gotta jiggle the contacts a little.

Collector: Five thousand, huh?

*[Johnny nods.]*

All right.

*[The Collector writes out a cheque for Johnny. While he does, Johnny imagines what he'd tell his father. MUSIC for JOHN DEERE.]*

Johnny *[singing]*

This letter that I write to you Dad,  
I will not sign my name.  
Though I did not want to tell you,  
I felt I had to anyway.  
Its rained for weeks and it flooded the creek  
and I lost the whole crop of grain.  
And the man at the bank won't loan me the money  
to plant that field again.  
So today, Dad, I sold the old John Deere.

The man who bought it's gonna fix it up  
and put it in a museum  
Well I guess that's where this whole thing's gone  
A picture for people to pay to look upon,  
"That's how they lived in the old days son"  
The sheep's in the meadow,  
Can't find the cows,  
Little Boy Blue's got a job in town

Yesterday Old McAllister came by  
and I said I've had enough  
Between the government and the subsidies,  
well I just can't keep up  
And if welfare cheques was farmin',  
well I said I'd just rather not.  
And he didn't say nuthin', Dad,  
as I watched him drive off.  
But today, Dad, I sold the old John Deere

The man who bought it's gonna fix it up  
and put it in a museum  
Well I guess that's where this whole thing's gone  
A picture for people to pay to look upon,  
"That's how they lived in the old days son"  
The sheep's in the meadow,  
Can't find the cows,  
Little Boy Blue's got a job in town

*[The ghost of Hendrik appears in Johnny's imagination. While the music underscores.]*

Hendrik:                Always stay straight and true, and dings will work out. You'll see.

Johnny *[singing]*        I hope this letter finds you well,  
                              I'm sorry how it just goes on.  
                              But I had to tell somebody, Dad,  
                              and you were the only one.  
ALL:                        And today Dad I sold the old John Deere.

*[Johnny catches McAllister spying over the fence. McAllister has seen him sell the old tractor. They glare at one another.]*

McAllister: I can't get a fix on you, son. One minute you're ready to give up, never mind the thirty years of sweat and blood spilled on this land—

Johnny: Mind your own business old man.

McAllister: — the next you're selling your most prized possession so you can replant a field that ain't even yours anymore.

Johnny: Everybody else is too polite to say it, so I'll do the favour. You're a nosey son of a bitch. Mind your own business.

*[Johnny stalks off. McAllister absorbs these thoughts for a moment. He shouts after Johnny.]*

McAllister: Maybe I will. Maybe I'll even build a twenty-foot high fence right here, so I won't have to see you ruin your life.

Johnny: Good!

McAllister: But it won't make me wrong. A man doesn't plant a field of corn unless he's thinking of the future. A future with his wife in it.

*[Johnny slams the door. Lights remind us that McAllister is the narrator and that time passes at his whim.]*

McAlister: It's funny how long you can ignore someone when you put your mind to it, even in a town this size. I went five weeks. Johnny got his seed in. But the wettest June on record turned into the driest July in decades. And Johnny was right back where he started.

*[The twangy strains of a country band in a bar begin and transport us into the local watering hole. Throughout the scene below, they play Take It All Away, almost inaudibly. (See Appendix for song lyrics).]*

McAllister: And through it all I didn't say a word. Until the eighteenth birthday party for my summer intern, from the community college. Good with a camera, but couldn't spell worth crap.

*[A sign lights up that says "The Last Chance Saloon". Caroline sits on a stool at the bar.]*

You'll never guess who was at the bar.

*[McAllister freezes. Caroline hasn't seen him yet, and he waffles between sneaking away and going up to say something. He takes two steps away, thinks better of it and returns, then contemplates sneaking away again. Finally Caroline makes the decision for him.]*

Caroline: I can see you Busybossy.

McAllister: I wasn't sure if a hello from me would be welcomed.

Caroline: Maybe if you stick with hello and don't ask any questions.

McAllister: Right. Well. Hello.

Caroline: Hello Mac.

McAllister: So.

*[awkward pause.]*

How have you been?

Caroline: That's a question, Busybossy.

McAllister: So it is.

*[Pause.]*

Why are you calling me Busybossy?

*[Caroline cocks an eyebrow.]*



That's another question, isn't it?

Caroline: So's that.

McAllister: Right. So.... Nice day isn't it? Dang it! Yes it is a nice day, and you've been fine, and you're calling me Busybossy because you think I stick my nose in where it doesn't belong. How's that for not asking questions?

*[Caroline cocks an eyebrow.]*

Oh for Pete's sake, fine, have it your way.

*[McAllister stands and grabs his drink. On the other side of the stage Mike enters and starts to surreptitiously walk over.]*

Caroline: Sit down, Mac.

McAllister: I don't generally like being punished, no mater how much fun it is for –

Caroline: I said sit down!

*[Caroline grabs McAllister by the shirt collar and forces him to sit in the stool beside her, just as Mike saddles up to the bar.]*

Mike: Hi there Caroline.

Caroline: Mike.

Mike: You're looking good tonight.

Caroline: I'm having a drink with my neighbour.

Mike: All right if I join you for a bit?

Caroline: It's a private conversation, Mike.

Mike: Well, I'll just sit here and mind my own business until you're done.

Caroline: You're making me uncomfortable, Mike.

*[Mike takes this entirely the wrong way and leans in lecherously.]*

Mike: Is that right? Why exactly am I makin' you uncomfortable?

Caroline *[rolling her eyes]*: It was a one night stand. Five weeks ago. Nothing more than that. I don't know how you got it into your head that I give a flying – anything – about you, but I don't. You were just there.

Mike: And maybe I can be there again when you've got an itch you need to scratch.

Caroline: Just get out of here, you loser.

Mike: Loser?

*[Mike grabs her wrist.]*

Don't you call me a loser.

Mike: I've put up with a lot of crap from you, ever since high school.

Caroline: Mike don't –

[MUSIC: Freight Train.]

Mike: *[singing]*

Well I just come down from Ottawa  
I have a great big wagon with a million dollars  
I was thinkin' about the girl I'd lost those years before  
I hadn't seen you for some time  
I thought that I might go on by  
When your memory came floodin' in  
And you closed that door

Wish I was a freight train baby  
Wish I was a diesel locomotive  
I'd come whistlin' down your track  
Crashin' in your door  
Wish I was a freight train baby  
Wish I didn't have a heart  
And you'd need a shovel full of coal  
Just to get me started  
Wish I was a freight train baby  
Wish I was a freight train

Mike: *[singing]*

Well every time I talk to you  
And I hear your jealous lies  
I feel like I've been left abandoned  
On some old railway side  
And every time I hear your voice  
My water just gets cold  
My stoker will not stoke  
And my boiler will not boil

Wish I was a freight train baby  
Wish I was a diesel locomotive  
I'd come whistlin' down your track  
Crashin' in your door  
Wish I was a freight train baby  
Wish I didn't have a heart  
And you'd need a shovel full of coal  
Just to get me started  
Wish I was a freight train baby  
Wish I was a freight train

Mike: *[singing]*

Well every time I fell behind  
And I could not get ahead  
I wish someone would pull the lever  
And give me a little sand  
And every time I slip behind  
Even further back  
I wish some switchman would come out of the fog  
And change my track

Mike: *[singing]*

Wish I was a freight train baby  
Wish I was a diesel locomotive  
I'd come whistlin' down your track  
Crashin' in your door  
Wish I was a freight train baby  
Wish I didn't have a heart  
And you'd need a shovel full of coal  
Just to get me started  
Wish I was a freight train baby  
Wish I was a freight train . . .  
Wish I was a freight train baby  
Wish I was a –

*[McAllister shoves Mike from behind. Mike spills his drink on his shirt. He turns around slowly, drawing himself up to his full height.]*

Mike: You made me spill my beer old man.

McAllister: And I'll make you spill a lot more from your upper lip if you're not careful. I was welterweight champion two years in a row in the navy. I killed two Jerrys with my bare hands, and I've been looking for a hat trick. Care to try your luck, Schroeder?

*[McAllister does not exactly make an imposing figure, but Mike must be drunk enough that he's seeing double, because he slowly thinks better of pursuing this action.]*

Mike: Ah. She's not worth it.

*[McAllister watches him go and then sits back down in his stool.]*

Caroline: You were in World War Two?

McAllister: Heck no. I'd be ninety-one today if I was. I was just counting on the fact he's too drunk to do the math. Look at my hands, they're still shaking.

Caroline: Barkeep! Get this man another beer.

McAllister: I think I'll need something a little stronger than that.

Caroline: Make that a whiskey. Thanks Mac.

McAllister: I try not to be a "busybossy", but it's hard sometimes.

Caroline: You can stick your nose in that kind of business anytime you like. Cheers.

McAllister: Cheers. You're here by yourself then?

Caroline: Janet and Boomer needed some quiet time, without the roommate. How's the newspaper business?

McAllister: Awful. My readers are dying off and the younger generation gets all their news from the Internet. Not that The Local Paper was ever big on news: it's mostly births and deaths and graduations and whatever else folk want the neighbours to know about their kids. But your generation, all that gets done on Facebook. No one needs The Local Paper anymore.

*[Pause. McAllister looks at his hands, which tremble slightly with adrenaline.]*

My hands are still shaking.

Caroline: Thanks again Mac.

McAllister: I thought you and Mike – well, never mind what I thought.

Caroline: A man cheats on his wife so he can get some action. A woman cheats on her husband for many reasons, not all of them good and not all of them smart, but none of them simple.

McAllister: Here's to that.

*[Pause.]*

He reseeded the lower field.

Caroline: Where'd he get the money?

McAllister: He sold the Old John Deere

Caroline: He didn't!

McAllister: So he could plant one more crop.

Caroline: Why bother, if he's selling the place?

McAllister: If logic played a part in farming, then we'd all starve to death within a month. But a farmer farms the farm because he is a farmer. That's who he is and that's what he does.

Caroline: Let's hope it rains then. We had three weeks of nothing but, and now not a drop.

McAllister: Just his luck: first a flood and now a drought.

*[Pause.]*

What are you waiting for, Caroline?

Caroline: What do you mean?

McAllister: If you really wanted to leave, you wouldn't be staying on your best friend's couch. You'd have your own apartment, maybe move to the city like you always wanted.

Caroline *[musing]*: I'm waiting for him to live up to his promise. When we got married I told him he was going to have to open up. I even gave him a schedule. Thirteen years later, I'm sick of the sound of my own voice.

McAllister: How long are you willing to wait Caroline?

*[A silence hangs between them during which McAllister tries with all his might not to offer another one of his opinions. Finally:]*

McAllister: You can join our table if the spirit moves you.

Caroline: I'm not much company right now thanks. I might head back to Janet's after this.

McAllister: I couldn't stick around and see Caroline like that any longer. I'd been broken enough that week. I didn't make it more than more than a block and a half before I saw Johnny coming up the road without a jacket.

*[Lights on Johnny, in a daze. He's not so far gone that he's talking to himself, but he is clearly distracted by some internal demons, and not paying attention to the cars that are passing him.]*

Now keep in mind by this point its ten o'clock at night. It's July, sure, but the nights get chilly. And here's Johnny walkin' – walkin' mind – along the side of the road. By the time I got my car turned around and came back the other way, Johnny had arrived at the gate of Janet's house.

*[to audience:]* I thought maybe Johnny'd had a few too many. But I was standing close enough that I could tell he didn't smell of drink. I could see his eyes too. He was sleepwalking.

*[Caroline, returning from the bar, enters to see Johnny fall to his knees in front of a worked up field. She stands aloof, with her arms crossed watching him and comments. Coming from another direction, Mike enters, on his way back to his truck at the bar.]*



*[Johnny falls to his knees while he sings **Worked Up Field**. The slashes (/) indicate where the following actor's text begins to overlap.]*

Johnny *[singing]*:

I'm kneeling at the edge of a worked up field  
praying' for the rain to fall.

I'm kneeling at the edge of a worked up field  
prayin' for the rain to fall.

I pray and pray and pray all day,  
it don't rain at all.

Johnny *[singing]*:

I'm standing at the end of the platform  
waiting for the train to come.  
I'm standing at the end of the platform  
waiting for the train to come.

Man comes out of the station  
said that there train don't run .

Johnny *[spoken]*:

Who's that? You the conductor? Sell me a ticket  
outta here. I wanna go somewhere else. Far away.

McAllister *[spoken]*:

He's just out there I don't even know why, but  
he's kneeling in all this turned up dirt, just losin'  
his mind he's prayin' and screamin' for rain and  
people are driving by and he's not stopping.

Caroline *[spoken]*:

I have no clue what its all about. He was out by  
the train station. I don't see what the difference is  
he's behaving' the same way, he's screamin' and  
talkin' and prayin' for things.

Mike *[spoken]*:

It just can't happen. It's not realistic. He just  
keeps getting disappointed. He just keeps tryin'  
and tryin'. Its like he's got blinders on.

McAllister:

There's no trains through here anymore Johnny.

Johnny *[singing]*:  
I was standing at the end of the road  
calling' out her name

Johnny *[singing]*:  
I was standing at the end of the road  
callin' out her name  
But the only word I heard  
was the sound of my own pain.

*[Johnny emits a low guttural growl, some  
somewhere deep in his belly.]*

*[Another growl, this time more of a howl.]*

*[Johnny releases a shout, at the top of his voice, a  
yowl of pent up rage and fear. Pause. Then:]*

Johnny *[singing]*:  
Feelings. I'll show you my feelings.

Mike *[spoken]*:  
He's not realistic at all.

Caroline *[spoken]*:  
He was yelling for me tonight.

He wants the train and then he wants rain, now  
he wants me, he just wants stuff, I don't what he  
feels, but he's pretty into it, / he's really tryin', he's  
prayin', he's screamin' and just goin' for it, and if  
he ain't talking about his feelings its pretty clear  
he's feeling them.

Mike *[spoken]*:  
It just can't happen. It's not realistic. / He just  
keeps getting disappointed. He just keeps tryin'  
and tryin'. Its like he's got blinders on.

McAllister *[spoken]*:  
He's kneeling in all this turned up dirt, just losin'  
his mind.

Caroline *[spoken]*:  
That can't be a bad thing, when someone's that  
... I dunno what's the word... / Passion.

Mike *[spoken]*:  
Passion's a good thing. / Passion for rain, may  
not be realistic, but it's a good thing.

McAllister *[spoken]*:  
Passion for trains is nice, I don't think it'll make  
the train come any faster.

Caroline *[spoken]*:  
Passion for me too, can't say there isn't.

Johnny *[singing]*:

I'm kneeling at the edge of a worked up field  
prayin' for the rain to fall.

I'm kneeling at the edge of a worked up field  
prayin' for the rain to fall.

I pray and pray and pray all day,  
it don't rain at all.

Johnny:

Kneel down beside me.

*[Johnny grabs McAllister's shirttail and forces him  
to kneels down. Johnny looks up at the sky soberly.  
He pauses for a long time. Then:]*

RAIN ! GIMME SOME FRICKIN' RAIN ! RIGHT  
FRICKIN' NOW ! RAIN !! RAIN !!!

*[whispering to McAllister:]*

Do you think that'll do it?

Johnny:

I pray and pray and pray all day,

it don't rain at all.

Caroline *[spoken]*:

Back to the fields. He's on, like, this conveyer  
belt, or this ....

What would it be? One of those things with the  
horses that go round and round?

Just wants it to rain, wants me, wants the train,  
goes back to wanting the rain.

McAllister:

Oh, I dunno. My knees aren't what they used –

Caroline *[spoken]*:

I guess that's your life, you just get up in the  
morning, you want and want and want and then  
you sleep and then you wake up and then you try  
again.

McAllister:                That's when it really hit me. If I didn't want Johnny and Caroline to end up like my brother, I couldn't just sit and watch. I had to do something.

*[McAllister helps Johnny to his feet.]*

Caroline, Johnny's got some agreement he needs you to sign.  
You better come over tomorrow.

*[Mike stands in the shadows, listening. Neither Caroline nor McAllister notice him. Caroline nods at McAllister:]*

Caroline:                I'll be there at ten.

*[Morning Light dawns. Birds twitter to one another announcing their locations to their mates, proclaiming their enthusiasm for the day they will spend together. There is a ruckus offstage, in the henhouse. Johnny enters at a clip with Mac's rifle. He sees a coyote running off in the distance, aims and shoots. He misses it.]*

Johnny: Yeah. You better run.

*[A car door slams offstage. McAllister enters. Caroline enters.]*

Caroline: Hello Mac. Johnny. Well, where is it?

Johnny: What?

Caroline: The agreement?

Johnny: What agreement?

Caroline: Mac says you need me to sign something or other.

Johnny: I ain't got no agreement for you to sign.

*[Pause. Caroline and Johnny slowly turn and look at McAllister. He shrugs sheepishly.]*

McAllister: I thought it was about time the pair of you had a talk.

Caroline: For cryin' out loud. Don't waste my time Mac.

McAllister: Once upon a time this farm was owned by a Grumpy Dutchman. And once upon a time this Old Geezer who'd lived here all his life, bought that Grumpy Dutchman a tractor that didn't work properly. And that tractor killed that Dutchman right out there in that field. Right. There. For thirteen years I have sat on this porch and stared at that spot. And for thirteen years I have kept trouble at bay for Hendrik's boy and the woman he loves. And I'm not stopping now just because you want me to. I seen one man come to a bad end on this farm. I'm too old to see another.

*[A car door slams offstage. Mike enters, with a thick professional-looking folder under one arm.]*

Johnny: What are you doing here?

Mike: I might ask you the same thing. I was driving down the road and what am I surprised to see? A couple of people still living on my farm.

Caroline: I was just leaving'.

Mike: You better be, bitch.

Johnny: Don't you talk to her like that.

Mike: I'll talk anyway I want, to a pair of trespassers. You've had fair warning. I'll get the sheriff if I have to.

McAllister: Hold your horses. You have to give these two notice or something, don't you?

Mike: I've given them notice. I sent a registered letter two weeks ago.

Caroline: What letter?

*[Johnny pulls the unopened envelope from his pocket.]*

Caroline: Why don't you open these things when they arrive? Just cause you don't know what's happening it doesn't mean it isn't happening.

Mike: And what's happening is that you're trespassing.

Johnny: Wait a minute. I just replanted the lower field.

Mike: That field is mine.

*[Johnny still has the rifle in his hands. He aims it at The Mike.]*

Johnny: I said wait just a minute!

Mike: Whoa!

Caroline: Johnny!

Johnny: This is our home.

Mike: Watch where you're pointing that thing, you redneck.

Johnny: Shut up. Sit down. I said sit down.

Mike: Okay, okay.

McAllister: Johnny—

Caroline: Just calm—

Johnny: Shut up. All of you. I got a few things I want to say.

***[MUSIC: YORK ROAD.]***

Johnny [*Singing*]

Well the rains left the day you went  
and I never thought they would.  
You turned away like all the rest  
and I never thought you could.

Nothing' but rain for six weeks straight,  
and the crops weren't any good.  
I might as well start looking for food  
with a rifle in the woods.

*[Johnny has momentarily turned his back on Mike. Mike tries to rise from his chair, but Johnny turns in that instant and aims the gun squarely at his chest. Caroline puts her hand to her mouth. Mike slowly sinks back into his chair.]*

ALL [*Singing*]:

So don't turn your back on me  
I might have a gun  
Listen to what I have to say  
and then you can carry on

These are desperate days,  
what's a man to do?  
Time's got a little lien on me,  
but I have no one to lean on to

*[Johnny has his back to McAllister. Through the following verse McAllister reaches very slowly for the telephone.]*

Johnny [*singing*]

Nineteen hundred and ninety-six  
I took on this farm  
It was the year the Canadian government  
Put a tax on country charm.

When I told him I needed some time  
he asked where my money had gone,  
Me living' in a two-room shack  
that I couldn't hardly keep warm.

*[Johnny sees McAllister reaching for the telephone. He knocks it off the table and onto the floor. He kicks it with his foot and it skitters across the garage floor. He aims the rifle at McAllister.]*



ALL *[Singing]:*

So don't turn your back on me  
I might have a gun  
Listen to what I have to say  
and then you can carry on  
These are desperate days,  
what's a man to do?  
Time's got a little lien on me,  
but I have no one to lean on to

When I was just a boy  
my Daddy said to me,  
Always stay straight and true  
and things will work out you'll see.

Well if my Daddy was here today  
to listen to me sing my song,  
I'd look him in the eye  
and I'd tell him he was wrong.

*[Caroline moves closer to Johnny. Johnny senses the movement out of the corner of his eye and turns on Caroline with the rifle. But he cannot bring himself to point the gun at her. Caroline advances closer.]*

ALL *[singing]*

So don't turn your back on me  
I might have a gun  
Listen to what I have to say  
and then you can carry on.

*[Caroline is now standing so close that she can take the end of Johnny's wavering gun and slowly, slowly turn it aside.]*

ALL *[singing]*

These are desperate days,  
what's a man to do?  
Time's got a little lien on me,  
but I have no one to lean on to

Johnny *[singing]*

Time's got a little lien on me,  
but I have no one to lean on to

Caroline: Yes you do.

Johnny: You slept with another man.

Caroline: OK, OK, I slept with Dufus here. Can we move on now? Can we talk about what's going on with us?

Johnny: I think we just figured it out.

Caroline: That's just a symptom.

Johnny: It's not a sneeze Caroline. It's adultery.

Caroline: You can't pay the visa so you slip it to the bottom of the stack. You won't talk about what's going on with us, so that gets slipped to the bottom of the pile too. Come on Johnny. Why are you so afraid to talk to me? What are you afraid of?

Johnny *[all of this comes out in one big rush of pent-up emotion]:*

THAT NO ONE LOVES ME! Because I'm a White Trash and I've got no education and I drink too much and my car won't start and I'm loser! Those are my feelings. You like them? Cause I don't. My feelings are scared and weak and I hate them. When I have to talk about my feelings I feel weak, I feel unlovable, I feel alone. I frickin' hate feeling alone. I want to protect myself, shut down, curl into a ball and disappear. Only no matter how hard I try I'm still here.

*[he laughs at himself as he winds down]*

See. Who'd ever want to feel ... all this junk inside... feels stupid being like this ...

*[slowly Johnny's raw emotion turns into a profound sorrow]*

I don't want to be small anymore Caroline. When I met you I felt ten feet tall and as big as a house. If there's one feeling I've ever had that mattered, it's that one. I want to feel that way again. With you.

Caroline: But that's who you are, Johnny Deere ... You are all I've ever wanted.

Johnny: Yeah?

Caroline: Yeah.

Johnny *[laughing at himself again, relieved]:* Phew. That's a load off, isn't it?

Caroline: Sure is. Think we can let Mike go now?

*[Johnny lowers the gun and lays it on the workbench.]*

Johnny: Sure. I've run out bullets from shooting at that stupid coyote anyway. Go on get out of here.

Mike: This doesn't change a thing. I want you off my land. I'll see you two in court.

Johnny: Yes. You will.

Mike: Darn straight I will.

Johnny: And you'll see us in court again. And again. And again. Until you either run out of money or run out of steam. Cause we ain't goin' anywhere. Are we Caroline?

Caroline: No. No we're not.

Johnny: You go ahead and take us for all we've got. Cause we ain't got nothin' to lose.

Mike: You haven't got a leg to stand on.

Johnny: No I don't. But I am one stubborn son-of-a-gun. I don't learn real fast, but I'm good at beating my head against a brick wall over and over again until it breaks in half. Just ask her.

Caroline: Oh, he really is. That's why I fell love with him.

Johnny: We're here and we're stayin'. And we ain't ever givin' in.

Mike: We'll see.

*[McAllister feints at Mike. Mike exits: Johnny shouts after him.]*

Johnny: Yeah. You better run.

*[Turning to Caroline]* And you. You better get your stuff moved back into that house.

*[They kiss. Lights. **Music: McAllister's Sting.**]*

McAllister: Farming isn't pretty. You have to clear the land, pick the rocks, rip out all the roots. You need to strip everything away, plough it up, break it down. That's how you make room for new growth. By

turning the soil over so the seed can take root. That's what farming is: you need to destroy before you can grow.

Mike went back to Toronto or Ottawa or wherever he's from. He did try to take Johnny and Caroline to court. And me too, for aiding and abetting an attempted assault. We were all terrified that we'd end up in jail. I think the blind fear finally put Johnny in touch with his feelings.

Fortunately the recession hit a few months later, the province abandoned plans to build that highway, and Mike went bankrupt. I guess this is one instance where farmers were helped by the economy for a change.

Later that week Johnny asked me for a favour. Though it had been a long time, I still had all the decorations in my shed. When Caroline came home from work it was all set up.

*[Lights on a table and two chairs sitting in the middle of a vast cornfield, surrounded by tender corn shoots. The papier maché Buddhist temples descend from the ceiling again, each of them lit from within by a tiny twinkling light. McAllister shows Johnny and Caroline to their seats like a Maitre'd while he continues narrating.]*

We didn't know it at the time, but each of us was standing before a worked up field, waiting for the rain to fall. And in the end, it did.

*[Thunder rumbles in the distance. The first drops of rain begin to fall on the lower field. Johnny and Caroline remain at the table, laughing like children in the rain.]*

**Music: Wilder Than Her Reprise**

Johnny [singing]: Well I'm wilder than her  
What else can I say  
But I guess that's why she fell in love with me

Caroline: But, I'm a house on fire,  
I've got all those charms

Johnny: I'm a house on fire too,  
But I got four alarms  
And I'm wilder than her

Caroline: When he takes my hand  
And he looks me in the eye,

Johnny & Caroline: I see something that I've never seen in my life

Johnny: She takes the fire  
Johnny (with Caroline): Turns it down low  
Caroline: He takes the night  
Caroline (with Johnny): And makes it not so cold  
Johnny: She takes the distance  
Caroline (with Johnny): Breaks it into miles  
Johnny: She makes my life  
Johnny (with Caroline): Just little less wild

Johnny (with Caroline): 'Cause I'm wilder than her  
Caroline (with Johnny): Drives me out of my mind  
Johnny: I guess she thought that  
She was just one of a kind

All (focus on girls): But she's summer storm  
All (focus on boys): I'm a hurricane  
Caroline & Cappy: One just blows through town  
Johnny & the Boys: One blows the town away  
Johnny: And I'm wilder than her  
All: I'm wilder than her  
Johnny & Caroline: I'm wilder than her

*[Johnny and Caroline embrace, tender as young lovers.]*

**– THE END –**