

FLOUNDERING FATHER (AND MOTHER TOO!)

Ray Raphael

CAST OF CHARACTERS:

John Charles Fremont, the famous "Pathfinder" -- surveyor and explorer, the conqueror of California, and the first Republican candidate for the President of the United States.

Jessie Benton Fremont -- John's wife, and the daughter of Senator Thomas Hart Benton

Fremont's men:

Charles Preuss, Fremont's German cartographer
Doc Kern, a Yankee hired hand

Mountain Man #1

Mountain Man #2

Two Indian Warriors (possibly played by women)

Kitty, the Fremonts' black servant
Rosalie Vallejo Leese, a California senora

A train conductor

Horatio Oscar Lupine

[Preuss and Kern should be played by the same actor. Kitty and Leese should be played by the same actress. The conductor can be played by any of the other characters.]

PROLOGUE

[Jessie leads the actors in a procession from the back of the theater onto the stage. She positions the characters. On stage is a sign: "Tonight Only. The True Story of John Charles Fremont, the Founding Father of California." This troop of actors and actresses travels to every little town in the state, telling Fremont's tale to all who care to come.]

Jessie [to the audience]: Good evening. Tonight we present the true story of my husband, John Fremont -- the famous explorer and Founding Father of California. So let's have a big round of applause for the great Pathfinder himself, John Charles Fremont! *(Pause. No sign of John. She calls for him.)* John ... now John *(John finally enters,*

making his way with some difficulty towards the stage.)

John *[to the audience:]* Is everybody ready for the show? Are you safe and secure in your soft, padded seats? Good. But did you know that you wouldn't be sitting in this theater tonight if it weren't for the risks I took, the initiative I displayed, back in the nineteenth century? Did they teach you that, those historians? *[In disgust:]* Agh, historians! They have brought us back to life for this unique theatrical event in order to demonstrate their "balanced approach," as they call it. "We must always look at both sides," they say. To demonstrate their honesty, they promise to use the exact words of original documents -- "primary sources," they call them. Well, 'tis true they have done this, but watch out, because these historians, who claim to be so "honest," are sneaky fellows indeed. They might use my words, but they have resorted to all sorts of dirty little tricks to make me look bad. *[Pause.]* Oh, but just you wait, I'll set the record straight. You will soon come to appreciate the heroic deeds of John Charles Fremont, the leader of five important expeditions, the conqueror of California ...

Jessie: and the first Republican candidate for the President of the United States.

John: Yes, my friends, this old General will make good sport of history before the night is out! *[He assumes a prone position upon the settee, as the other characters exit.]*

ACT I

[A nineteenth century sitting room, with a desk, a chair, and a settee. The settee can be turned around, the back painted like a mountain. A costume rack is visible by the side of the stage, as is an American flag. John lies down on the settee, moaning in pain. Jessie hovers over him, reciting in melodramatic style, at first to him, but gradually to the audience. She is not yet 20 years old, but she plays the lady to the hilt, with many gracious mannerisms gleaned from her training as a Senator's daughter. Both John and Jessie are dressed in period, except that John wears exotic elf-like slippers that loop up in front.]

Jessie: My dear John, I do fear the horseback life, the sleep in the open air, has unfitted you for indoor work. 'Twas not long past that you endured the unsufferable hardships of snow upon snow, of rock upon rock. Starving days and freezing nights, wild beasts and hostile Indians -- and now it has all come to this: a nosebleed. How you must suffer, my poor, dear husband! *[She bends over him again, administering some sort of compress. Her compassion for his miserable state is considerable, but it is probably surpassed by the ill-concealed joy she takes in her mothering role.]*

Kitty *[entering with a tray, wearing a black mask]:* How's Massa John, Miz Jessie?

Jessie: Oh, Kitty, he is still not well. It's just one hemorrhage after the next.

Kitty [*setting the tray by the couch*]: Here's da beef soup, Ma'am. An' when da Massa gits himself well, do keep him from pokin' himself again wi' dat pen.

Jessie: He did not "poke" himself, Kitty.

Kitty: Well, we can't go on 'ministerin' t' him fo'ever. There's work t'be done, Ma'am, lots o' work t' be done 'roun' here.

Jessie [*condescendingly*]: Now along with you Kitty, and tend to your chores. [*Kitty leaves. As Jessie dismisses her, John sits up, moaning and holding a bloody handkerchief to his nose. He tries to position himself so he can sip the beef soup. With Kitty gone, Jessie turns her attention back to John.*] Now John, let's not be too hasty. Remember the last time you tried to get up...

John: Never mind last time. I'll be fine. [*He takes a sip.*] Jessie, I've been thinking ...

Jessie [*continuing with her condescension*]: Please, John, no thinking. Not just yet. You've had a difficult time.

John [*obviously ignoring her*]: I've been thinking, and I'm afraid I've had enough of this Report. I feel like I'm back in school.

Jessie: But John, you can scarcely surrender so easily as that! After all those hardships, surely we can find some way to...

John: I'm not "surrendering." I'll simply hand my notes over to the Colonel and be done with it.

Jessie: But our mission, John! Our noble mission!

John: Our mission is to settle the west, not to write about it.

Jessie: But how will the people know about it if you don't bother to tell them? How will they know the beauty -- and the drama -- that beckons them westward to the far reaches of our great continent?

John: Now Jessie....

Jessie [*ignoring him, and trying her hand at flattery*]: You know, my dear, that you're a very brave explorer....

John [*thinking he sees a way out*]: An explorer, yes indeed, an explorer -- and that is precisely why I should be out there exploring instead of lying around here sipping beef soup. Now go tell that father of yours, the Senator, to arrange for my next expedition. Kitty! Kitty!

Jessie *[going into a melodramatic pout]*: Was it for this that I waited those many months?

Kitty *[entering]*: Yes, mass'r.

John: My boots, Kitty. Bring me my boots. *[Kitty exits.]*

Jessie *[continuing with her pout]*: After all that time, my long, lost husband finally returns -- but for what? To spend but a brief hour at home, only to vanish into the wilderness once again?

John: Jessie, I've been here for two months already.

Kitty *[entering with boots]*: Here dey is, Mass'r John. *[Exits.]*

Jessie *[continuing in her grandiose style, possibly accompanied by melodramatic music, as John struggles to put on his boots]*: Oh, how I waited. Every evening at dusk I put a strong light in my window, for at any moment Mr. Fremont might come. Every night I made a little table pretty and put on it the food he would be sure to need. "But the love-lighted watch fire/ Burned vain through the night." Month after month went by, and still I waited. Rumors came in of much hardship, of losses, and finally, one stormy night, "As from the underworld," thin, brown, and hungry -- my John came to me again.

John: Jessie, stop. *[To the audience.]* She's told it a thousand times. *[He's managed to put on only one of the boots.]*

Jessie *[singing, as she drags John (with one boot and one slipper) around the stage]*:
You'd rather be out with your men on the trail,
Crossing a river, a mountain to scale.
Adventure is beckoning you to the west,
Wild beasts and Indians and all of the rest.
But what about those of use you've left behind,
Waiting and watching, half out of our minds?
You owe us something, if you'd be so kind.
We want to live it through you, John
Fremont the brave and the true.

You'd rather be crossing a vast, frigid plain,
Or reaching a summit and staking a claim.
Through howling wind storms, torrents of rain,
All of these deeds merely add to your fame.
But what about those of us you've left behind,
Gazing out windows until we're half blind?
When can we follow? What did you find?

[With a chorus of the rest of the cast]:

We want to live it through you, John
Fremont the brave and the true, John.
You owe us something, you do, John.
We want to live it through you!

Jessie *[focusing once again on John instead of some abstract audience]:* John, I have an idea. I shall write it for you.

John: You will write what for me?

Jessie: The Report, you silly man. You lived it, but I shall write it. Now as soon as you recover

John: Recover from what?

Jessie: From your hemorrhaging. We can't have you dripping blood in the middle of your recitations. *[She drags him back to the couch and resumes her mothering.]*

John *[resisting, trying to sit up as Jessie tries to lie him down]:* I am not hemorrhaging, I simply had a little nosebleed. Caesar had epilepsy, and he was still a great man.

Jessie: And you're a great man, too!

John: There's nothing wrong with a little nosebleed now and again.

Jessie: Nothing wrong at all. It's all that sitting still. It's not very ... well, it's not very masculine.

John *[sitting, then standing]:* Yes, masculine. A man of adventure, a man of my stature, thrives on movement, on excitement, on the outdoor life.

Jessie: Exactly! All you need is a little fresh air, the freedom to move about as you please *[She has opened the door, and John, who is by now on his feet, moves towards it. He breathes the air, and glances outside.]*

John: Yes, the outdoors. I can breathe it, I can feel it in my bones. August 10, as we approach the majestic Rockies. *[He begins to stroll around the room, moving freely and gesturing dramatically as he begins his recitation. But he still wears one boot and one slipper, causing a kind of limp which continues for the rest of the act]* The air at sunrise is clear and pure, and the morning extremely cold, but beautiful. A lofty peak of snow is glittering in the first rays of the sun. A fog has risen from the river, and the long mountain wall cuts clear against the glowing sky.

Jessie *[She has been looking on admiringly, almost worshipfully]:* Yes, John, yes! That's

it! How perfect! I knew you could do it. Now just let me get set here ... *[She has maneuvered into her desk towards the back of the stage, and she readies her pen and paper]* There. Now continue.

John: You mean that's all I have to do? Just talk?

Jessie: That's all. Simply tell what happened, and your little Jessie will take care of the rest.

John *[puffing himself up officiously, and clearing his throat, he dictates]*: Ahmm. To Colonel J. J. Abert, Chief of the Corps of Topographical Engineers: Sir: Agreeably to your orders, and in pursuance to your instructions issued upon ...

Jessie: No, no. Not so formal. Do it more as if you were telling it all to me. And let's start with the good parts. We can always fill in the rest.

John: The good parts?

Jessie: The excitement, the adventure. Now take it from "the long mountain wall cuts clear against the glowing sky." *[She mimics the gestures he had used will delivering this line.]*

John: *[He works himself up, addressing first Jessie and then the audience, obviously pleased with his own rhetoric. He delivers this and all his recitations slowly, painting the pictures he describes through his bodily motions, thereby turning his narrative of the past into present action. A distant howl of the coyote punctuates these recitations, causing John to listen, and helping him to enter within the scenes he depicts.]* Here a view of the utmost magnificence and grandeur burst upon our eyes. A grand bed of snow-capped mountains rose before us, pile upon pile. "Never before," said Mr. Preuss, "in this country or in Europe, have I seen such magnificent, grand rocks." *[Jessie writes diligently, almost feverishly, as he tells his tale.]*

Preuss: *[Approaching Jessie as he enters, then speaking into her ear as she writes]*: What I said, to be precise (and we Germans are always very precise) was this: "Whoever has seen Switzerland and expects something similar here is bound for a great disappointment. These Rocky Mountains are no Swiss Alps." *[The Mountain Men enter from the far side of the stage with their bedrolls. They turn the settee around, revealing a mountain painted on the back. In each of their four appearances, the two Mountain Men maintain basically the same personae, regardless of which of their characters they are playing at the moment. The first is rowdy, carefree, aggressive, slovenly and generally uncouth. The second is slightly more civilized, although still thoroughly a frontiersman. When scalping Indians or chasing women, he is just as bad as the first; but he also has to protect himself from the mischief which Mountain Man #1 has in store for him. In this scene, the Mountain Men mime the expedition which is being narrated by Fremont and Preuss.]*

John [*pretending not to hear Preuss*]: Our arrangements for the ascent were rapidly completed. Early in the morning we left camp, well armed of course. [*The Mountain Men, struggling to emerge from their bedrolls, stagger about, grab their guns, etc. Mountain Man #1 has to be kicked to get him out of bed.*]

Preuss [*still speaking in Jessie's ear*]: There was such a hurry this morning that Fremont became angry when my horse urinated. He whipped its tail when it had only half relieved nature. [*The Mountain Men continue with their disarray.*]

John [*still ignoring Preuss*]: We marched all day, crossing ridge after ridge, each more formidable than the last. [*Mountain Men finally form into a shabby semblance of a march.*] Finally, towards evening, we reached a hole in the mountains, entirely shut in by rocks. Here we set up camp. [*Mountain Men collapse.*] Our table service was rather scant, and we held the meat in our hands; but clean rocks made good plates, on which we spread our macaroni. [*Mountain Men devour their food greedily, with #1 trying to steal some of #2's portion.*]

Preuss [*complaining to the Mountain Men as he enters the action and tries to bring them into line*]: What a disorder in this outfit; dirty cooking. To be sure, how can a foolish lieutenant manage such a thing? I wish with all my heart I had stayed in Washington -- not because of the hardships, but because of that simpleton Fremont. [*He points disapprovingly at John.*]

John [*Still ignoring Preuss, he grabs an American flag, which he carries with him as he mimes an ascent of the mountain*]: August 13. The morning was bright and pleasant, just cool enough to make exercise agreeable. We soon found ourselves riding along the base of a nearly perpendicular wall of granite, terminating several thousand feet above our heads. [*Begrudgingly, the Mountain Men leave their food and tag along after Fremont, with Preuss bringing up the rear, trying to keep them orderly.*] Putting hands and feet in the crevices between the rocks, we mounted the overhanging butress. Finally, after hours of uninterrupted climbing, I sprang upon the summit, a narrow crest about three feet in width, and unfurled the national flag to wave in the breeze where never flag waved before! [*He acts out his precarious position, tetering on top of the cliff, then builds to a crescendo, planting the flag on the mountain in the stereotypical pose of a conquering hero: one foot (the slippered one) mounting the highest point. For the first time, he acknowledges the presence of Preuss.*] Well, Mr. Preuss, let us empty a bottle of brandy on top of the mountain! [*Fremont pours, and they all start to drink. The Mountain Men indulge themselves shamelessly. Then they start hooting and hollering and shouting "Hurrah" in unison. Even Preuss, despite his dour nature, joins the merriment. They shoot off their guns. The Mountain Men run and tumble down the mountain and off the stage, shouting "H'yeee! H'yeee!" Preuss teeters along behind them, leaving Fremont alone on top of the mountain.*]

John [*more subdued, in a post-climactic tranquility, and mesmerized by the buzzing of a*

bee]: Here on the summit a solitary bee came winging his flight from the eastern valley, and lit on my knee. It was a strange place, the icy rock and the highest peak of the Rocky Mountains, for a lover of warm sunshine and flowers. I believe that a moment's thought would have caused me to let him continue his way unharmed -- *[suddenly breaking out of his hypnotic trance]* but I carried out the law of this country, where all nature seems at war, and terminated his short life within the leaves of my collector's album. *[He pauses, book open, ready to clamp down on the bee.]*

Lupine *[emerging from his seat in the audience, dressed in a modern jogging suit]*: No way! Don't kill that bee! *[Ignoring him, John delivers the death blow to the bee, shutting his book with a loud thump. Lupine comes to the edge of the stage and addresses the audience.]* Did you see what he just did? I came here tonight to see to meet my Founding Father, but what do I get? The famous Mr. Fremont kills a poor, defenseless insect on top of the highest peak in the Rockies. *[He climbs to the stage and confronts John directly.]* What are you going to do for an encore, strangle a butterfly?

John: Listen, friend, I don't know who you are, but if you don't

Lupine *[Climbing the mountain]*: Here you are presented with the most marvelous spectacle ever beheld by a living soul, and how do you choose to celebrate? You drink to it, you shoot off your guns, you claim it in the name of your country, and then you proceed to kill it! *[He opens John's collectors album and examines the dead bee.]* Yuk. You squash the first living thing you see! I can't even think of the right words to describe your response. It's just so.... *[He hesitates, looking for the right word. He then notices the flag.]* American!

John: I'm glad you appreciate my patriotism, but you really have no place in this play.

Lupine: You call that "patriotism"? I call it ...

Jessie: How dare you disrupt John's play in such a rude manner!

Lupine *[suddenly realizing what he has done]*: Gosh, Mrs. Fremont, I just got a little upset by your husband's history, that's all.

Jessie: Now come down from that mountain this instant!

Lupine: Sure, but how.... *[He tries to get down, but timidly.]* how do you get off this thing. *[He finally manages to negotiate an awkward descent.]*

John: Are you trying to ruin my play?

Lupine: I'm not trying to ruin anybody's play. I just, you know

John *[gesturing towards the audience]*: Why you think all these people came here

tonight? To see you?

Jessie: They came here to see John C. Fremont. Now I think you need to apologize.

Lupine [*quietly, to Jessie*]: Yes, Mrs. Fremont, you're right. I'm sorry.

Jessie: Not to me, to them. [*She gestures towards the audience.*]

Lupine [*looking vacantly through the lights, and finally muttering sheepishly*]: Sorry. [*He remains frozen on stage.*]

Jessie: You can go now. [*Embarrassed, Lupine slinks back to his seat, shielding the lights from his eyes.*]

John: Who in God's creation was that?

Jessie: I have no idea. Just some scamp from the audience.

Lupine [*as he takes his seat*]: I am not some "scamp" -- I'm just a concerned citizen.

Jessie: You handled him so well!

John [*puffing himself up*]: I've had considerable practice in such affairs, my dear. These "concerned citizens" present no danger at all -- no danger, that is, when compared with the countless savages whom I have mastered in my time.

Jessie: Yes, the savages! Let's do the parts about the Indians. Are you ready to resume?

John: Ready. Which Indians shall we do? I saw thousands of them.

Jessie [*settling back into her desk*]: How about the time when your men chased after them to get back the stolen horses.

John: Yes, yes. That's a good one. [*Prims himself for a new oration.*] In the afternoon we were surprised by the sudden appearance of two Mexicans -- a man and a boy. With a cavalcade of thirty horses, they had come out from Pueblo de los Angeles, near the coast. They had halted at one of the customary camping grounds, but suddenly a party of one hundred Indians appeared in sight, shouting as they advanced, and discharging flights of arrows. [*Enter the Indians, on the warpath.*] The Mexicans managed to escape, and soon they discovered our camp. I received them kindly and promised them aid. Two of my men then volunteered to pursue the thieving Indians and administer the punishment which they deserved. [*Enter Mountain Men, swaggering confidently. They proceed to chase the Indians, as Preuss enters from the opposite side.*]

Preuss [*in Jessie's ear, with disgust*]: Last night the young lieutenant boasted again how

he would fight against the Indians. To kill them all -- kill, kill, nothing less. Next year he wants to march against them with bombs and rockets if the government will give its assent. With a hundred good riflemen we would exterminate all the Indians in the world. *[To John, who has been playing with the silverware on the table, turning spoons into toy guns which shoot tea cups.]* Oh, you little lieutenant!

John *[ignoring Preuss, and continuing with his narration]*: The Indians received Carson and Godey with a flight of arrows shot from their long bows. Our men fired their rifles upon a steady aim, and rushed in. Two Indians were stretched on the ground, fatally pierced with bullets. *[Indians die in dramatic fashion, like boys playing cowboys and Indians.]* The scalps of the fallen savages were instantly stripped off.

Preuss *[as the Mountain Men fight over who gets to wave the scalps around, now chasing each other instead of the Indians]*: Two scalps from the hands of Fremont's men. *[To the audience.]* Are not these whites much worse than Indians? The more noble Indian takes from the killed enemy only a piece of the scalp as large as a dollar. These two heroes, who shot the Indians while creeping up on them from behind, brought along the entire scalp. To me, such butchery is disgusting, but Fremont is in high spirits. I believe he would exchange all of his scientific observations for a scalp taken by his own hand.

John: One of the fallen natives, who had two balls through his body, sprung to his feet, the blood streaming from his skinned head, and uttering a hideous howl. *[One of the Indians springs to his feet, smeared with blood. The Indian turns John's word "howl" into a real, hideous howl, and then staggers pitifully about.]* The frightful spectacle appalled the stout hearts of our men; but they did what humanity required, and quickly terminated the agonies of the gory savage. *[Mountain Men fire upon the Indian at close range, sending him into a second death dance. #1 continues to shoot, even as the Indian falls again.]*

Lupine *[emerging from the audience]*: Cut! *[The Mountain Men point their guns at Lupine.]* Stop history! *[Mountain Men take a threatening step towards Lupine.]* I didn't want to come back, I really didn't, but somebody has to speak out against such atrocities. *[He rushes onto the stage and tries to give CPR to the Indian who has just been shot, but the Mountain Men push him aside and drag off the dead bodies.]*

Jessie: John, it's that man again!

John *[placing himself between Jessie and Lupine]*: I can handle it, dear. Why don't you run along and fetch some more tea. *[She leaves, glancing back over her shoulder with some concern.]*

Lupine *[calling after Jessie]*: Hey, don't leave, Jessie! Don't let your husband order you around! Let him make his own tea!

John: Please, sir, I thought I made myself perfectly clear. We can tolerate no disturbances

...

Lupine [*vehemently, forgetting Jessie and turning the full force of his wrath towards John*]: You can tolerate no disturbances? What about the Indians whom you scalped? Don't you think that they....

John: I didn't scalp any Indians.

Lupine [*sarcastically*]: Pardon me, a small oversight -- but you certainly had no problem with your men taking a few scalps now and again.

John [*by now seduced into the argument*]: 'Twas only the custom of the times -- a custom, I might add, which was practiced by the savages themselves.

Lupine: But the white men started it. With the Indians, see, scalping was a custom which was well-integrated into their social structures, for in a hunting and gathering society such as theirs.....

John [*disdainfully*]: Look, mister, I don't know who you are, but you clearly don't understand the most basic facts about the savages.

Lupine: Of course I understand. I know, for instance, that ...

John: How could you understand, for you were not even there. How many wild Indians, might I ask, have you met in your day?

Lupine: Well, none really, but ...

John: So tell me, then, how is it that you presume to know more about the Indians than I do -- me, John Charles Fremont, who lived among them for many years?

Lupine: I have my ways. I read the anthropological accounts, and I saw Dances with Wolves three times.

John: Ha! You read about them, and you try to tell me ... [*Pause, as John suddenly hatches his plot.*] Say, I have an idea. How would you like to find out what it was really like back in Indian times?

Lupine: Unfortunately, I think I already know.

John: Here, let's just do a little trade. [*He takes off his jacket and offers it to Lupine.*]

Lupine: What's this for?

John [*forcing the jacket upon Lupine*]: Try it on, see how it feels. Come on, now. You

who like to interfere with others, let me interfere with you for a change. You're not afraid, are you?

Lupine: Of course I'm not afraid, but

John: There, it fits. Now just begin to get into your role. You are John C. Fremont, and you are now responsible for an exploration of the untamed wilderness in the 1840's. Wherever you go, the local savages watch your every move. You are always outnumbered, and you have only your native wit to get you through these foreign lands. Now I'll just stand back here, out of your way, and let's see how you fare.

Lupine [*protesting feebly, but unable to withstand the force of Fremont's directions*]: But I really don't see what good can possibly

Jessie: [*She re-enters the room with a tray of tea. She assumes that Lupine is John, not seeing her real husband, who has placed himself off to the side. She sets the tea upon the table, pouring it as she speaks.*] Oh good, I see that nasty fellow is gone. I really don't understand why our Kitty can't fend him off at the door. But do continue about the Indians. Tell about that time they came at you....

Lupine [*in John's costume, and speaking hesitantly*]: Came at me?

Jessie: Don't you remember? You told me the story last night: "There were some dark looking objects" [*Lupine, confused, looks towards John.*]

John [*coaching Lupine*]: There were some dark looking objects among the hills ...

Lupine [*finally reciting with John, and then on his own*]:dark looking objects among the hills which we had seen for a little time, and supposed to be buffalo coming in to water; but another glance at the dark objects showed them at once to be Indians coming up at speed. [*Enter the Indians, who disappear into the audience.*] They were gaining on us fast. At first they did not appear to be more than fifteen or twenty in number, but group after group darted into view at the top of the hills, until two or three hundred, naked to the breech cloth, were sweeping across the prairie [*The Indians reappear and chase Lupine, who hides behind the mountain.*]

John [*emerging from his hiding, causing the Indians to exit*]: Ah, ha! The Indians are swarming down upon you, ready to count coup on your entire party. So would you cut and run, or would you stand and fight like a man?

Lupine [*sheepishly peeking out from behind the mountain*]: I honestly can't say what I would have done, having not really been there at the time, and not knowing now, from a distance ...

Jessie [*who has been looking back and forth between the two men*]: But you're not my

real John!

John [*taking his cape back from Lupine, and putting it on as he speaks*]: Don't worry, dear, I'm just having a little fun with this poor fellow. [*He turns towards Lupine.*] I say now, speak with no fork in your tongue: Are you too much of a coward to admit you're a coward? [*Jessie, still a bit puzzled, takes refuge by preparing and arranging the tea.*]

Lupine: How'd we get into this, anyway? [*He looks pleadingly around him, hoping for some support from somewhere.*] I thought this play was supposed to be about you. Just leave me out of this for now, and let's get back to what you did to the Indians. [*He starts walking away, towards the steps on stage left.*]

John: See, he's not man enough to fill my shoes. [*He looks down at his feet, which are still covered with one boot and one slipper.*] I knew he would cut and run.

Lupine [*turning back around and facing John*]: I am not running. I just don't see what good can come of my trying to pretend I'm a ruthless Indian killer. The role you make me play just doesn't fit. It's not the "real me."

John: [*turning towards the audience*]: Then what about you? What would you good people have done with hundreds of naked savages swarming down upon you? Would you have felt as sorry for the Indians then as you do now? Think upon it, I urge you. Try to put yourself in my role, since our good friend here is obviously too much of a coward to play the role himself.

Lupine: I am not too much of a coward! I simply refuse to be a participant to your stupid-ass genocide.

Jessie: Really! I shall tolerate no foul language in my house!

Lupine: Is that all you care about? Here you slaughter the innocent natives, and all you can say is....

Jessie: Me? I never even ...

John [*in command of the situation, and leading Lupine to the edge of the stage*]: Now please, since you don't wish to fill my role, I think it only appropriate that you allow me the liberty of continuing on my own. Somebody has to play the part of Fremont, or this play simply can't go on.

Lupine [*breaking free of John, but continuing to exit on his own*]: Okay, have it your way. You can play your own calloused role. I don't want any part of it! But let me tell you, Mr. Fremont, I'm going to find out about you. I'm going to find out what really happened back in the nineteenth century. [*He strides defiantly off stage, marching up the aisle.*] Where the hell is the library in this town? [*He exits from the rear of the theater.*]

John: Oh, these distractions! How can anyone work under circumstances like this?

Jessie: Now where were we? Oh yes, the scalps and the Indians, then that man came in, and then ...

John: Look, I don't know if this is going to work. I feel like I'm getting another nosebleed.

Jessie: Why, certainly it will work. It has to work, because the people need to know what you did. I think we should just go right to the heart of the matter: California. Tell them, John, tell them how you won California for the United States! For the good of your country, tell them!

John: Yes, California! *[He puffs himself up once again, and assumes his most officious stance.]* I had scarcely reached the lower Sacramento, when the Mexican authorities declared their determination to proceed against me. *[Enter Rosalia Vallejo Leese.]* Having carefully examined my position, I determined to take such active measures as should protect my party and justify my own character.

Rosalia Vallejo Leese: Justify his character! I, Rosalia Vallejo Leese, I was there too. About half past five in the morning, a band of seventy-two rough looking desperadoes, under the command of a man named Fremont, surrounded the house of General Vallejo and arrested him. *[Enter the Mountain Men.]* The majority of this marauding band wore caps made with the skins of coyotes or wolves, slouched hats full of holes, or straw hats as black as charcoal. Several had no shirts or shoes. *[Fremont's men linger about, looking thoroughly disreputable; #1 is particularly obscene, scratching his crotch.]*

John *[taken up with his own rhetoric, ignoring Leese and the scene which is unfolding on stage]*: I quickly decided on the course which I would pursue. At daybreak on the 15th, I took the military fort of Sonoma by surprise, with 9 brass pieces of artillery, 250 stands of muskets, some other arms, and a quantity of ammunition.

Rosalia Vallejo Leese: Fremont, who was bent on having his way, told me that he would burn our houses with us inside of them if I did not write a letter to keep off our troops. I consented, not for the purpose of saving my life, but being then in the family way, I had no right to endanger the life of my unborn baby. *[Fremont's men start making menacing moves at Rosalie, with #1 leading the way.]*

John *[still in his own world]*: These enterprises accomplished, California was declared independent, the country put under martial law, the force organized and officers elected. The whole was placed under my direction.

Rosalia Vallejo Leese *[as she is being accosted by Fremont's men, who tussle with each other over molestation rights]*: During the whole time Fremont and his gang were in

Sonoma, ladies dared not go out for a walk unless escorted by their husbands and brothers. Among my maid servants I had a young Indian girl about seventeen years of age, and I assure you that many a time John C. Fremont sent orders to deliver her to one of the officers of the barracks. Disgusting. *[The men chase her off stage, crying "Senorita" and making obscene gestures.]*

John: Independence and the flag of the United States are synonymous terms to the Americans here, and accordingly I directed the flag to be hoisted with a salute the next morning.

Jessie *[emerging from her desk]*: That's marvelous, John, simply marvelous! The whole continent was finally ours, clear to the Pacific Ocean. *[Sings]*:

Let's a cup of tea
To Manifest Destiny,
And the role God has given you
In fulfilling his great plan.

John *[singing]*:

Let's have a toast, my sweat.
His grand design is now complete.
Let's drink to liberty
From sea to shining sea.

Jessie *[singing]*:

God smiled down upon us
And watched our nation rise.

John *[singing]*:

In the war of Independence
He stood right by our side.

Jessie *[singing]*:

And when you met the savage,
He helped you win the fight.

John *[singing]*:

We're created in his image.
We know God must be white.

Cast *[from offstage]*: We know God must be white!

John and Jessie *[singing]*:

Let's drink a cup of tea
To Manifest Destiny.
Let's drink to liberty

From sea to shining sea.

[They sit at the table, pouring and sipping tea. As they drink, Lupine approaches the stage.]

Lupine *[addressing the audience as he mounts the side of the stage by the costume rack]:* This time I will go prepared. What I need are some historical precedents, you know, a convincing role. There must be some sympathetic characters in the nineteenth century; they can't all be cardboard heroes. *[He takes an Indian blanket.]* There, that feels better. I think I've found my man: Chief Seattle. Wish me luck! *[He climbs up on the stage and assumes the stereotypical "How!" Indian posture, arms folded with one hand raised. The Indians enter behind him.]*

Jessie *[seeing him first]:* Indians! John, the Indians are coming!

John *[facing away from Lupine, and finishing a drink]:* Relax, dear. If it's that man again

Jessie: No, this time it's the Indians for real! Look!

John *[turning around casually, then confidently sheltering Jessie]:* I can handle it, dear.

Lupine: Hi. I mean "how"... are you. My name is Chief Seattle, and I come in peace. But I must raise certain objections, for you have gone against the spirit of my people. First you raise a flag upon a sacred peak in the Rockies, and now you raise more flags here in California. Flags, always flags. What's with the flags?

John: That I did, and rightfully so. On behalf of the Great White Father in Washington, I laid claim to all the lands of California.

Lupine: "Laid claim!" Man can not "lay claim" to the land.

John: Chief Seattle, I know not whom you represent, but we will take good care of you and your people. You will be hearing from our agents shortly. They will give you beef and beeds, and all the luxuries we bring from afar. Yes, good Chief, we will pay you well for your land!

Lupine: I fear, my son, that this cannot be done. *[The lights fade slowly on the rest of the stage, as Chief Seattle, now in the spotlight, starts his speech. At first he reads from a book he got from the library, but gradually the words take on a life of their own. The speech is delivered slowly and powerfully, without even a trace of the foolishness which Lupine has hitherto displayed. Jessie retreats to her desk, while John soon reclines, bored.]* The earth cannot be sold at any price. How can you buy or sell the sky, the warmth of the land? We do not "own" the freshness of the air and the sparkle of the water, so how can you buy them? The idea is strange to us.

Every part of this earth is sacred to my people -- every sandy shore, every mist in the dark woods, every clearing and humming insect. The sap which courses through the trees carries the memory of the red man.

The shining water that moves in the streams and rivers is not just water but the blood of our ancestors. Each ghostly reflection in the clear water of the lake tells events and memories in the life of my people. The water's murmur is the voice of my father's father.

Our dead never forget this beautiful earth, for it is the mother of the red man. The perfumed flowers are our sisters. The deer, the horse, the great eagle, these are our brothers. For what is man without the beasts? If all the beasts were gone, men would die from a great loneliness of spirit.

[With increasing anger:] We know that the white man does not understand our ways. One portion of land is the same to him as the next, for he is a stranger who comes in the night and takes from the land whatever he needs. He treats his mother, the earth, and his brother, the sky, as things to be bought, plundered, sold like sheep or bright beads. His appetite will devour the earth and leave behind only a desert.

[Directly to the audience:] You must teach your children that the ground beneath their feet is the ashes of our grandfathers. So that they will respect the land, tell your children that the earth is rich with the lives of our kin. Teach your children what we have taught our children, that the earth is our mother. Whatever befalls the earth, befalls the sons of the earth.

This we know. The earth does not belong to man; man belongs to the earth. This we know. All things are connected with the blood which unites one family. All things are connected. Man did not weave the web of life; he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself.

[A heavy silence heightens the impact of the speech. The lights rise slowly on the rest of the stage. Lupine settles into a sort of post-climactic exhaustion.] I tell you, there's nothing like some historical precedent to get it right. There's enough power in that speech to... *[He looks at John, who has fallen asleep, snoring conspicuously.]* Didn't you even hear!? How on earth can you fall asleep in the middle of the greatest speech ever made? *[John grunts and groans, awakening.]*

Jessie *[taking off Lupine's blanket, revealing his disguise]:* John, it's that frightful man again. I'm going to get my father, the Senator. You keep him occupied till we can get reinforcements. *[Jessie exits, again looking over her shoulder as she goes.]*

John: "Nobody owns the land." Nonsense!

Lupine: But the Indians didn't even have any concept of ownership -- at least not until you white men came along to ruin it all.

John: Of course somebody owns the land. Why do you think the world needs surveyors like me? To determine who owns what, that's why.

Lupine: Just listen: "How can you buy or sell the sky, the warmth of the land?" Can't

you even relate to that, or are you too spiritually calloused?

John: It's just words. In fact, how do you even know that Chief Seattle made that speech?

Lupine: Hey, I went to the library. It says so right here in this book.

John: Anyone can make a speech. "How can you buy or sell the sky, the warmth of the land?" *[He mimicks Seattle's delivery, with exaggerated tones.]*

Lupine: Right on! "We do not own the freshness of the air..."

John: Oh, it sounds noble, but it doesn't make any sense. Look at you, for instance. Don't you own any land?

Lupine: A couple of acres, off in the hills. It's really not much, but ...

John *[aggressively, like a cross-examining lawyer]*: And who did you buy it from?

Lupine: Actually, I got it from the title company.

John: And before that? Who sold it to them?

Lupine: I think they got it from some guy in L.A.

John: "L. A."?

Lupine: Los Angeles, you know, "Puebla de los Angeles."

John: And before that -- who owned it before the guy in "L. A."?

Lupine: I don't know. Probably some other guy.

John: Come on, use your imagination. Who owned your land 200 years ago?

Lupine: The Indians, obviously, insofar as they owned land at all, but, as I just showed you, it was an entirely different concept of

John: Quit beating around the bush. If you don't think the whites should own any land, then why don't you just give yours back?

Lupine: Give it back?

John: Sure, give it back. You're a white man, you stole the Indians' land, and now it's time for you to give it back.

Lupine: Me? Hey, you're the one who stole their land. I wasn't even alive at the time.

John: But you're the one who's stealing it now, not me. I'm dead, a ghost, nothing more than a character in a play. [*He points to the "Tonight Only" sign.*] You're still alive, and it's you who are squatting on the Indians' land. If you were truly honest, you'd get off my back and give your land to the Indians.

Lupine: What Indians? [*The Indians move towards the front of the stage.*]

John: Any Indians. Aren't there any Indians still alive?

Lupine: Maybe there's a few, but for the most part, well, they're not really Indians anymore.

John: What do you mean, "not really Indians." Weren't their ancestors Indians?

Lupine: Of course, but it's all different now. They dress like cowboys and drive around in four-by-fours and, you know

John: No, I don't know. All I know is that you keep on stealing their land and using me as a scapegoat. [*Addressing the audience, condescendingly:*] Oh, you people who think you know better than we did back in the 19th century, you "concerned citizens" who cry and moan for the fate of the Indians. Give it back, I say, if you feel (as this man does) that it is stolen property. It was not for the likes of you that I conquered California on behalf of the United States of America. It was not for the likes of you that I

Lupine: Stop! You still don't understand. I don't own the land, you don't own the land, they [*indicating the audience*] don't own the land, even the Indians didn't own the land, so we can't really give it back. Nobody owns the land, except maybe God.

John: Then give it back to God. Just move away and let Nature take over.

Lupine: Then where do I live?

John: I rest my case.

Jessie [*bursting back onstage*]: John, I can't seem to find the Senator anywhere. I simply don't know what we're going to do. Kitty says she can't do anything about it because that man never even bothers to knock at the door or anything. He just barges right in as if he owned the place.

John: I know. He seems to think he owns everything.

Lupine: I think I own everything?! You've got it all backwards. You're the one who

John: You act like you own this stage, the way you interrupt us every time there's some little line that doesn't meet with your approval.

Lupine: Well, what do you expect? You can't expect me just to sit back and observe while you kill an innocent bee and scalp the Indians and steal all the land -- I can't just watch these things happen and not say anything about it.

Jessie: In that case, maybe you shouldn't even be watching this play in the first place. Kitty! Kitty!

Lupine: All you characters from the nineteenth century, you were nothing but a bunch of ethnocentric, chauvinistic pack of thieves!

Kitty [*entering*]: Yas'm?

Jessie: Kitty, please escort this scamp out of our house, and make sure he never returns. [*Kitty starts to obey.*]

Lupine [*to Kitty, who has grabbed him from behind*]: Kitty, don't let these honkies boss you around. Just because you're black, it doesn't mean you're their slave.

Jessie: Just watch who you call "black." Kitty's a good girl.

Lupine [*ignoring Jessie, and struggling to get free of Kitty, who has him in some kind of a headlock*]: But you're a free woman, Kitty. Stand up and speak for yourself! Cast off the yoke of white oppression!

Kitty: Wha's dis man talkin' 'bout, ma'am?

Jessie: Nothing, Kitty, nothing. He just wants to re-write history according to his own script. Just take him away.

Kitty: Yas'm Anythin' you sez. Dis fella here, he ain't got no muscle t'all. Jes a sack o' chicken feed, das all he be. [*She starts dragging him offstage.*]

Lupine [*protesting as Kitty chases him around the stage*]: I object! History can not remain unchallenged.

Kitty: Now you get yo'self right off this stage.

Lupine: There's nothing wrong with a refusal to accept genocide.

Kitty: I's goin' ta whoop you side da head.

Lupine: Somebody has to stand up and speak, or these things will just keep happening

over and over. *[He tries to crawl away on hands and knees.]* Mankind has to learn from the lessons of history! We've got to crawl out of the dark ages! We've gothey, not so rough. *[Kitty has grabbed him by the ear, but he breaks loose.]* Kitty, don't you even want to be free? If you just wait around for a few more years, Martin Luther King will have a dream for you.

Kitty: Who?

Lupine: Kitty, someday blacks will be able to vote. Women will be able to vote. Black women will be able to vote! Wouldn't you like that, Kitty?

Kitty *[momentarily tempted, but then resuming her chase]*: Oh, you scalawag. Don't you come 'round here no mo'.

Lupine: Kitty, I have a dream. I've been to the mountaintop. Kitty ... Kitty...*[He is finally offstage. A loud crash, and Kitty gives a wild laugh.]*

Jessie: I don't like that man, John. He's so intrusive, he's so rude! What do you think we should do?

John: Forget all about him, dear. He's harmless. I've seen his type before -- the historian type. The kind of fellow who can never make any history of his own, so he tries to meddle with the history which other people have made.

Jessie: A troublemaker, that's what he is. Did he ruin your concentration? Can you continue with your Report?

John: My Report?

Lupine *[from offstage]*: Tell them about your court martial, John!

Kitty *[from offstage]*: You shut yo' mouth. *[Another crash, and a moan from Lupine.]*

Jessie *[calling to Lupine]*: He was innocent!

John: My court martial? Do we really have too?

Jessie: But you were innocent! Don't you think we should prove to them all that you were innocent?

John: No, there's nothing to be gained by that. Remember how rough it was on you? You passed out on the floor. You lost your baby. There's nothing to be gained by going through it all again.

Jessie: Well, perhaps you're right. Let's just go straight to the Fourth Expedition.

John [*uneasily*]: The Fourth? No, not the fourth! I'd I'd I'd say we've had enough of this whole business for awhile. [*He puts his hands over his face.*]

Jessie: Your nose again?

John: No, I'm perfectly fine. Really I am. I just need a little break, that's all. [*He collapses onto the couch, as he was at the beginning of Act I.*]

Jessie [*mothering John, helping him settle into a nap*]: A break. Oh John, that's a marvelous idea. A break! I think we all could use a break. [*To the audience:*] Let's just take a short intermission. Kitty will be serving tea in the lobby, for all who care to come. But when you return, I beg of you, please behave yourselves. [*Firmly, almost belligerently, admonishing the audience with her finger:*] Let's have no more disturbances from the audience! Just stay out of history, you would-be historians, stay out of history! It all worked out in the end, didn't it?

[*During the intermission, Kitty serves refreshments in the lobby, as promised, staying in character and interacting with the audience.*]

ACT TWO

SCENE ONE: New York, 1856

[*From offstage, we hear chants from the crowd: "John and our Jessie! John and our Jessie!" Kitty is seated on the settee, sewing. Jessie enters with a stack of mail and papers. She waves to the crowd outside, then proceeds to read the first article.*]

Jessie: Oh, Kitty, listen to this: "In about a fortnight, John Charles Fremont will be President of the United States of America. There is no name which can find such favor with the masses." Ah, good. Here, Kitty. You can practice your reading. [*She hands some of the papers to Kitty.*]

Kitty [*in broken rhythm*]: Yes'm. "He conquered California with 62 men. He was the great Pathfinder through the Rocky Mountains. He also won the heart and hand of Senator Thomas H. Benton's daughter, and let me tell you, that is no small feather in his cap."

Jessie [*taking the article from Kitty*]: Yes, yes. He must see that one. Ah, but what's this? "Fair Jessie, it seems, is far more interested in John's success than he himself appears to be." No, not that. John might not understand. [*She rips it up.*]

Kitty: "And who will not recall that the self-proclaimed Governor of California kept a pu... a pubic"

Jessie [*looking over Kitty's shoulder*]: "... a public harem, into which he lured our sisters, mothers, and daughters?" Absolutely not! Such frightful rubbish! [*She rips it up vehemently.*] Oh, these vile men of politics who would destroy his good name! It is enough that I must meet these slanders, without letting my poor John set eyes upon such coarse attacks. I take upon myself his pain, for I am like a deeply built ship; I drive best under a strong wind. [*She sways her hoops back and forth.*]

John [*from offstage*]: Jessie, has the post arrived?

Jessie: Not yet, dear. I expect it any minute now. [*She resumes her reading.*] Here, just one more letter. Oh my, from Elizabeth Cady Stanton, the famous suffragette herself: "Our hopes rest on you, Mr. Fremont. I would almost lay down my life to have you elected. I only regret that I will be forced to stay at home with the children while my husband goes to the polls to cast his vote." Here, Kitty. Take these to the master. [*Kitty gathers her sewing and exits with the mail. Jessie moves towards stage center. She takes a brief break from her work, examining herself in an imaginary mirror. She begins to reflect upon the current state of personal affairs.*]

On 5th Avenue I seem to be quite the fashion. I wear fine lace and purple, and I go out nightly -- to a dinner, to a party, thrice weekly to the opera -- for all the talk is that I am to be the next President's wife. [*She pauses for a rare moment of introspection.*] But am I becoming artificial? Where, among these throngs, might I find a true friend? [*From offstage, on the side opposite John's office, come the voices of a crowd: "Jessie! Jessie! Give us Jessie! Fremont and our Jessie!" She goes to the window and waves to the crowd, which responds: "Three cheers for Jessie. Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!" She returns from the window. Renewed by the approval of the crowd, she goes back to singing her own praises.*]

Yes, indeed. "Jessie for the White House," they say. And why not? In the words of the poet: "Being so fathered, and so husbanded, should I not be stronger than my sex?"

Kitty [*entering*]: Miz Jessie, Miz 'Lizabeth Cady Stanton, the great sufferer, be here to see you. I tells her you's busy, but she

Jessie: Elizabeth Cady Stanton?! By all means, Kitty, do show her in! [*Kitty exits, then Lupine enters with a bonnet and dress before Kitty has quite had time to fetch him. He speaks with a parody of a woman's voice.*]

Lupine [*in a stage whisper to the audience, which is responding to his presence*]: Shhh. Don't blow my cover. [*To Jessie.*] I beg your pardon, Mrs. Fremont, but your servant seemed reluctant to admit me.

Jessie: Oh, I am dreadfully sorry, my dear. Here, make yourself some comfortable. Would you like some tea.

Lupine: I hope I am not intruding too heavily upon your most important work.

Jessie: Not at all! Oh, dear Elizabeth, I was just now reading your letter, which was really too kind. I do thank you for your ardent support.

Lupine: It is not only I; we are all behind you, Jessie, all the thinking women of this land.

Jessie: How very sweet of you to say so. Sugar?

Lupine [*as he straightenes his breasts*]: Ahh... yes, two lumps.

Lupine: And yet 'tis strange, is it not, that we, who work so hard on your behalf, are not ourselves allowed to vote?

Jessie: Of course it is strange, but it is the custom still.

Lupine: Yes, the custom -- and how unjust! Which brings me straight to my purpose: Jessie, you are the most respected woman in the entire country. It would give a strong boost to our cause if you would be so kind as to sign our petition to give women the vote.

Jessie: You want me to sign? Why me?

Lupine: They make fun of us now, Jessie, painting us with pantaloons and cigars, calling us "witches" and the like. With you it is different. You are a Senator's daughter, and soon to be a President's wife. They will listen to you, Jessie -- that's why we need your support.

Jessie: Oh, my dear, I fear you have misunderstood my views. I cannot possibly sign your petition, for I do not believe in suffrage for women.

Lupine [*incredulously*]: You do not believe in suffrage for women?

Jessie: No, I don't -- at least not yet. I believe women in their present position manage men better.

Lupine: Is that all we are good for, to "manage men."

Jessie: I manage my John.

Lupine: So I've heard. Is it true that you write all his reports?

Jessie [*with false modesty*]: After a fashion, yes, it is true. It is the great work of my life.

Lupine: And that you manage his campaign?

Jessie: I do only what must be done.

Lupine: And yet you stay at home, allowing your man to have all the adventure -- and to reap all the glory?

Jessie: Self-renunciation lies at the root of great work, and this is to be my part in being of service to my husband and my father.

Lupine [*with increasing antagonism*]: But Jessie, what about yourself? Can't you ever act on your own? Why does a woman always have to perform through the agency of a man?

Jessie: My John is a great man, Elizabeth, but without me he would

Lupine [*sarcastically*]: "A great man!" Why, you are a great woman, Jessie -- at least that's what everybody says: "She is the better of the two."

Jessie [*obviously flattered, but sticking with her false modesty*]: That is but idle talk.

Lupine: But it's true, Jessie. You do have the potential for greatness. So will you now, on the eve of your greatest personal triumph, turn against your sisters, who have waved the flag on your behalf?

Jessie: My sisters? Don't speak to me of them! Susan and Sarah will scarcely even support our campaign.

Lupine [*exasperated*]: Not them, all your sisters. Women! Don't you ever think of the rest of us?

Jessie: I must be stronger than my sex if I am to survive in the world of men.

Lupine: Men! Men! That's all I ever hear about is men! [*He strikes a dramatically feminine pose on the settee.*]

Jessie [*romantically, approaching Lupine*]: Yes, men. Do you not have a man of your own? A big, dark object who comes to you, rough-coated, at night?

Lupine [*enjoying Jessie's attention, his voice almost cracking as Jessie strokes him*]: Ah, men. [*Suddenly he returns to his role.*] No! Men! How vulgar!

Jessie [*bragging*]: My John comes to me that way, when he finally arrives -- a wolf who is hungry!

Lupine [*vindictively*]: And I hear that he comes that way to other women too, I might add. [*Jessie, stunned, sits on the far end of the settee. She remains silent.*] Yes, that's where your blind devotion leads in the end. Men! I tell you, we must push them aside if we are ever to grow on our own. [*He moves seductively towards her.*] We must cast off

the yoke of male oppression. Don't you remember what we said at Seneca Falls? "We we" Excuse me, one moment. *[Forgetting the speech, he searches his purse and removes a book, opens it, then saddles up to Jessie again.]* "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men and women are created equal. But the history of mankind is a history of repeated injuries on the part of man toward woman. *[By now he is thoroughly involved in his speech. As he stand up, his skirt falls down. (Jessie mistakenly has placed her hand on it, holding it down.) Both the audience and Jessie can see what has happened, but Lupine continues.]* He has compelled her to submit to his laws, in the formation of which she has had no voice. He has taken from her all rights in property, even to the wages she earns. He has...." *[He gets carried away with his own rhetoric, forgetting to keep his false setto voice. As his voice cracks and deepens, Jessie emerges from her state of shock and takes the initiative. She sneaks up behind him. Suddenly, she rips off Lupine's dress, causing him a momentary panic. He yells, once again in a false setto voice, as if he's still a woman:]* Men!!! Help!!! *[Jessie then continues to rip off his wig, as he stands in the stereotyped position of an embarrassed nude, covering his privates with his hands.]*

Jessie: I knew it must be you. No true lady would ever behave like that.

Lupine *[recovering his composure, and taking off the last vestiges of his disguise]*: I may not be a "lady," but I am more of a "woman" than you.

Jessie: Nonsense!

Lupine: At least I stand by my sisters. I don't desert them for some man.

Jessie: I should hope not!

Lupine: Look, Jessie, can't you even see that us sisters have to stick together?

Jessie: Us sisters???

Lupine: Certainly. We've progressed along way since your time. Nowadays, a man can be a sister too. Take me, for instance. I wash the dishes, I sweep the floors, I make my own tea.

Jessie: Is that what progress has come to? Can't you get the servants to do it?

Lupine: Not all of us have blacks maids to do our bidding. Good help is hard to find these days. sometimes a man just has to be a sister all by himself.

Jessie *[curious, despite herself]*: You really do a woman's work?

Lupine *[serious, but making something of a fool of himself]*: Of course I do. If you can be a "man" by writing your husband's books and running his campaign, why can't I be a

woman? Every human being has the God and the Goddess within him -- I mean within her, or whatever.

Jessie: I think you're crazy

Lupine: Not crazy, just a good feminist. You know, Jessie, you are a very special woman, regardless of the century. Being a strong women in your time was a hard and lonely business. I understand. That's why you need a caring man, a sensitive man, a new-age man -- a man like me!

Jessie: Shhhh. If my John hears you talking like that, he'll challenge you to a duel.

Lupine: A duel? That's so old-hat. If your John thinks he's so great, I'll challenge him to a to a bake-off!

Jessie: A "bake-off"?

Lupine: Yes, a bake-off. His choice of dish. Come to think of it, I challenge you to a bake-off, too. [*Seductively, moving towards here:*] Com'on, Jessie, what d'ya say? Let's you and me do a little bake-off! A little cornbread, some muffins...

Jessie [*fearfully moving away, then collapsing on the settee*]: Oh, no. I think I'm getting a nosebleed.

Lupine [*following her, soothing her, holding her*]: Relax, Jessie. It's okay. I'm just trying to show that you nineteenth century "ladies" had a lot to learn about feminism and chauvinism and sex ... ism, Jessie, ism.

Jessie [*escaping from his seduction*]: Did I hear you say that you can wash the dishes and sweep the floor?

Lupine [*with feminist pride*]: Certainly I can. And I can do the laundry, too.

Jessie: I bet you can't. I bet you can't even sweep this stage, for instance. Men simply don't know how to do that sort of thing.

Lupine [*defiantly*]: I bet I can! Where's the broom? [*Jessie fetches him one, and he begins to sweep.*]

Jessie: Over there, under the table. There's more dirt there. [*He follows her orders.*] Now here. [*She shows him more dirt, right at her feet. He sweeps it into a pile.*] Well, don't you "new-age men" ever pick it up? [*He goes down on his hands and knees with a dustpan, essentially bowing to her in subservience. She places her foot on his back, in the same conquering posture that John assumed on the top of the Rocky Mountains.*] You know, I think I like this new idea of yours.

Lupine [*still gathering dirt, on his hands and knees*]: I thought you'd like it, once you got used to it. Now all we have to do is teach John how to do the housework, and you'll have a truly liberated relationship. You write the books, you run for president, and he can stay home with the kids. Sound good? What d'ya say?

Jessie: I say that I think we're all out of jam for our crumpets. I assume you also do the marketing.

Lupine: [*standing up, proudly*]: Of course I do!

Jessie: How marvelous. Then you'll go shopping for me?

Lupine: For us, Jessie, and for the cause. [*He removes a recycling shopping bag from his purse.*] No problem. Jam for the crumpets. You can count on me. [*He gives Jessie a final embrace, then exits excitedly.*]

Jessie [*visibly shaken, but trying to collect herself now that she is finally left alone*]: How odd, how very odd. But useful, it cannot be denied -- and quite easy to manipulate. I wonder if I should try it on my John. That would be a sight: Lieutenant-Colonel Fremont, the great Pathfinder himself, doing the sweeping and marketing, while I, Jessie Benton Fremont run for President.

[*Snapping out of her reverie, and addressing the audience:*] Oh well, I guess it didn't happen that way. John never did go shopping. In fact, as perhaps you know, John didn't get elected President either, and I never moved into the White House. Ah, the White House! Buchanan, Jackson, Van Buren, Pierce -- I knew them all. Even Mr. Lincoln. "You are quite a female politician," he told me once, dismissing me with a sneer. And then he dismissed John from his commission as a General. Oh, that Lincoln, he took all the credit for the war, but I ask you: Who was the first Republican candidate for President? John Charles Fremont, that's who! I bet most of you good people don't even remember that, do you?

Yes, the world has been most cruel to my poor husband. After the war, they accused him of fraud. Can you believe it? [*Defensively.*] Why, my sweet John would never do a thing like that! I tell you, he is a good man at heart, no matter what the people say! Don't you remember his great explorations? Can't you appreciate what that man has done? [*Pause. She goes to the costume rack and dons a gray wig. As she walks back towards center stage, her slow gait displays her advancing age. Her speech is more subdued.*]

Well, our choices have been made. What's done is done. Now we are old, in the twilight of our lives. With all this scandal, all this misfortune, it has become the business of my life to clear John's good name. [*Pause.*] But such a lonesome business it is. His mines, his railroad, all his real estate deals -- there is always something to take him away from home. [*She looks around at the empty stage.*] John? [*Pause.*] Where have you gone this time? John? John? Where are you now? I miss you so! John? John? [*She exits, in search of her man. Her last few calls are from a distance, as the lights fade.*]

SCENE TWO
Out West, 1875

[When the lights come on, the stage is set with a trunk. Train sounds come from offstage. The backdrop is that of a western landscape in small, rectangular pieces, as seen through the windows of the train. John has aged considerably, for it is twenty years later. He takes his grey whig from the costume rack before assuming his position on the trunk in the boxcar.]

John *[seated by himself, gazing out a window, and lost in a melancholy reverie, composing a poem]:*

Long years ago I wandered here
In the mid-summer of the year
 Life's summer too.
Backward, amidst the twilight glow,
Some lingering spots yet brightly show
 On hard roads won;
Where still some grand peaks mark the way,
Touched by the light of parting day
 And memory's sun.

Lupine *[aside to the audience, as he enters with a large pile of books under his arm]:*
Looks like time has whitewashed John's memory, but I'll soon reveal his true colors.
[He puts on a black mask and shuffles over to John, impersonating a black porter.]
'Scuse me, suh, but I dasn't know you was in dis here car. *[He scratches his head and stares at John.]*

John: That's quite all right. Think nothing of it.

Lupine: Why, thank you, suh. *[He continues to scratch and stare.]*

John: Are you staring at me, boy?

Lupine: No way. I mean, no suh. I ain't staring. I just be lookin' at you, suh.

John: Hasn't anybody ever taught you not to stare?

Lupine: Beggin' yo' pardon, suh, but if you don' mind my sayin' so, you reminds me of some mighty famous person.

John: I do?

Lupine: Yes suh, you shure 'nuff do. Somebody I seen in da picture books when I'se a

little boy.

John: Well, it is possible that you have seen my picture in a book. As a matter of fact, I've been in numerous publications through the years.

Lupine: I knows it, I jus' knows it. You dat great frontier hero, ain't you?

John: Well, I suppose some people might consider me a hero, but it really wasn't much.

Lupine: Why, you 'bout da bravest man da good lord put down on da face o' dis earth.

John: Perhaps I have done my small part in opening the West, but

Lupine: Lordy, lordy! Just wait 'til da folks back home hears 'bout me talkin' face-ta-face wid da one an' only

John: It's really nothing, I ...

Lupine: Kit Carson.

John: Kit Carson? I am not Kit Carson.

Lupine: You ain't? Shoot.

John: In point of fact, I am the one who made Kit Carson famous. If it weren't for me, nobody would ever

Lupine: Daniel Boones?

John: Daniel B...B....B.... Fremont, damn it, Fremont!

Lupine: Free who?

John: I am John Charles Fremont, the leader of five historic expeditions. Got that, boy? Fremont. Five expeditions.

Lupine: Now dat you mentions it, dat name do ring a bell.

John: Ring a bell? Why I Oh well, what can you expect from an uneducated darkie. You obviously haven't read my reports. But say there, what are you doing with all those books?

Lupine: Books? Oh, dem books. Lord knows dey ain't mine. Got no use fo' books. Dey's lef' here by someone, an' I'se jus' lookin' after 'em 'til da man come back.

John: I see. Can't read. Of course not.

Lupine: But Massah Fremont, suh, you mus' knows how to read.

John: I certainly do. I can read and write. Actually, if you must know the truth.....

Lupine: Beggin' yo' pardon, suh, but ever since I's a wee chil' I's wanted to learn me how to read. You don' s'ppose, if'n you has a little time to spare [*He presents John with one of his books.*]

John [*taking the book, which is Fremont's report*]: You want me to teach you how to read?

Lupine: Not if'n it's any trouble, suh, bot only if'n

John [*looking over the book, then suddenly surprised*]: Boy, do you know what this book is?

Lupine: No, suh.

John: Do you know who wrote this book?

Lupine: No, suh.

John: Tell you what: I will teach you how to read. I happen to know for a fact that coloreds can become literate, it they try hard enough.

Lupine: Dat so?

John: Certainly. My wife Jessie once taught our colored servant how to read. Here, try this. [*He reads as he points out the words.*] "The long mountain wall cut clear against the glowing sky."

Lupine [*going over the words with his finger as he reads*]: "Da long mountain wall cuts clear 'gains' da glowin' sky." Dat's nice. What is dis here book, anyways?

John [*showing off the title*]: "Report of the Exploring Expedition to the Rocky Mountains in the Year 1842," by John ... Charles ... Fremont!

Lupine: Fremont? Dat's you! You wrote dis book?

John: I certainly did.

Lupine: All by yo'self? Widout no help?

John: Well ... ah

Lupine [*examining the book*]: I likes da picutres. Real purty.

John [*as they examine the book together*]: That was my first expedition, see, and over here is from my second.

Lupine [*thumbing through the book*]: An' looky here. Dis says number three. Dat mus' be yo' third exposition.

John: Indeed it is. That was when I conquered California.

Lupine [*as he thumbs through to the end*]: Lordy, lordy. But where's da res'?

John: The rest?

Lupine: You jus' says you's da leader of five expositions. All's I sees here is three. Where's number fo'?

John: The fourth expedition?

Lupine: Yassuh, dat's da one. Where's it at? How come it ain't here?

John [*defensively*]: That party was simply not constituted like the others. Cannibals, that's what they were -- Old Bill Williams and the Kern boys and some of the rest.

Lupine: The Kern boys? Who's they?

John: It's not true, I tell you, not true! Let me warn you, boy: Don't you ever believe a word of what the Kerns have to say.

Doc Kern [*entering, from the side reciting his journal. As he speaks, the Mountain Men enter from the other side and mime the grueling journey which he describes. Fremont and Lupine look on from their seats of the train*]:

SATURDAY DEC 2nd: Deep snow in camp. A very high wind, & bitter uncomfortable.

SUNDAY: Boots cut to pieces, burst, and rapidly becoming no protection ...

WEDNESDAY: Very cold & clear, so that each hair of mule & man was covered with frost, & icicles hung down from moustache below the chin ...

FRIDAY: One stocking frozen to my foot, & all stuck together so that it must be thawed before being pulled off. [*Disdainfully*:] Still, with the wilfully blind eyes of rashness and self-conceit and confidence, Fremont pushed on.

John [*defensive and belligerent*]: Of course I pushed on! Was I to turn back so soon, at the first signs of discomfort among my men? Is that the stuff of which explorers are

made? But Doc Kern, he was just a little green, still wet between the ears.

Kern: SATURDAY: When we reached the top, it was so cold & windy that none could see ahead, & the drifting & falling snow obscured every thing. It was a day that tried the stoutest hearts, & the whole party came very near to total destruction. My eyelids stuck together, & for a time I saw nothing but red. What will a few days bring forth, deliverance or destruction? *[Both Mountain Men are now in desperate straights, pushing and shoving rather than working together.]*

TUESDAY: Sorrell, his system wrought by hunger, cold, and exhaustion, took a violent fit. Totally snowblind. Poor fellow, he traveled as long as his strength would allow, and then, telling us we would have to leave him, he lay down on the river bank to die. *[Mountain Man #2 falls to the stage, while #1 promptly picks up energy. He eyes the dead body suspiciously.]*

John *[defensively]*: It wasn't me, I tell you, it wasn't me! It was that old scoundrel Williams, he's the one who led us astray.

[A contemporary description of Old Bill Williams: "He was a dead shot with a rifle, though he always shot with a 'double wabble;' he never could hold his gun still, yet his ball went always to the spot on a single shot. Though a most indefatigable walker, he never could walk on a straight line, but went staggering along, first on one side and then on the other. He was an expert horseman; scarce a horse or mule could unseat him. He rode leaning forward upon the pommel, with his rifle before him, his stirrups ridiculously short, and his breeches rubbed up to the knees, leaving his legs bare even in freezing cold weather. He wore a loose monkey jacket or a buckskin hunting shirt, and for his head covering a blanket cap, the two top corners drawn up into two wolfish, satyr-like ears, giving him somewhat the appearance of the representations we generally meet with of his Satanic Majesty, at the same time rendering his tout ensemble exceedingly ridiculous. He was a perfect specimen of his kind, an embodiment of the reckless and extravagant propensity of the mountaineers, and he pursued his lucrative but perilous vocation from an innate love of its excitement and dangers."]

Mountain Man #1 *[staggering around the stage, exhausted but somehow exhilarated]*: H'yeee! Warn't that me own name been callt?

John: There he is! That's the fellow right there!

MM #1: This old hoss, *[indicating himself]* he ain't a-goin' t'let no cold en hunger rub him out. War's the grub?

John: Just look at that man! I tell you, my only mistake was that I never should have trusted such a creature to be our guide in the first place.

Kern *[having descended from his isolated spotlight and entered the action, hovering around the dead body with Mountain Man #1]*: Men, I've been thinking. We are

starving. In two or three days, except something is done, we will all be dead. Yet here lies a mass of useless flesh, from which the life has departed, which is destined to be the prey of wild beasts. Now I propose, instead of leaving it to become food for wolves and coyotes, we make use of it to save human life. *[During this speech, coyote howls, of gradually increasing intensity, can be heard from offstage.]*

Mountain Man #1 *[who has been hunkering over the body, sharpening his knife and wetting his lips]:* I'll be derved ef I let a hunk o' this here meat go a-wastin' on some consarned varmint. Y'know what I sez? I sez this flesh are some powerful good medicine fer an ol' timer. *[Breaks into song, prancing around the stage in awkward show-tune style.]*

'Cause I'm a meat eater, and that's how I'm gonna stay.
I'm a meat eater, and I like it that way.

I don't want no 'taters; no greens, no beans for me.
'Cause when a real man's gotta eat, you can't beat meat.

Give me ham hocks, pork chops, buffalo stew.
If that ain't enough, I'll take a bite outa you.

'Cause I'm a meat eater, that's what I am.
I'm a meat eater, 'cause I'm a manly man.

Now you can boil it, broil it, bake it -- I really don't care.
When it comes to eatin' meat, I like mine bloody rare.

Now some people think it's wrong to dine on their fellow man.
But when a real man's got a hunger, he eats what he can.

I'm a meat eater, a regular carnivore *[howls like a wolf]*
And when I eat meat, all I wants is more! *[End singing.]*

Chow time! *[Returns to the carcass, sharpens his knife some more, and calmly speaks.]*
A clean cut twixt th' ribs, en he warn't never knowed the diffrence. *[He begins to pantomime the act of butchering, as Kern gathers a plate and waits to be served his share.]*

John *[looking almost pleadingly at Lupine, as they both observe the act of cannibalism in progress]:* Look! Just look at that old cannibal! It was all his fault, I tell you, all his fault. *[To Kern and #1, as he tries desparately but unsuccessfully to get them away from the body:]* Now cut that out!

Mountain Man #1: Which part?

John: I'm still the leader of this outfit, and I'll have none of this cannibalism on my expedition! *[During the scence that follows, the cannibals indulge in their feast. Mountain Man #1 does so with obvious relish, making comic, self-satisfied gestures which coincide with every mention of the word "cannibalism."]*

Lupine *[Pulling John back]*: Calm down, Massuh. They's just doin' it fo' pretend.

John: Cannibals! Nothing but cannibals!

Lupine: Suh, you's a mess. Maybe I go gets yo' wife. She calm you down.

John *[straightening himself up]*: No, no, no. Jessie mustn't see me like this. My hair.... my boots.... they're all scuffed up.

Lupine: You right 'bout that, suh. You all scuffed up.

John: Here, boy. Shine my boots.

Lupine: Shine yo' boots?

John: You heard me. Shine my boots. *[Lupine looks at him, insulted and amazed. Although he instigated this role play, he balks at receiving this kind of treatment.]* Well, what are you waiting for?

Lupine *[hatching a plot as he humors John]*: Yes, suh. Anything you says. Shine yo' boots. *[He starts to shine.]* Spit on 'em nice, make 'em shine. Fix you up real nice. Den we bring in yo' sweet little lady.

John: "Sweet little lady"?

Lupine: 'Scuse me, suh, but any man can see that she's a cute little thing. *[He gestures with his hands to indicate the shape of her figure.]*

John: Boy, do you realize what you're saying?

Lupine: She's a fine looker, sho' 'nuff. She gets that hoop skirt a-moving more'n it should, and

John: Boy!

Lupine: and my my eyes takes on a life o' they own. They just pops right outa my head.

John: Boy!

Lupine: I looses all control.

John: Do not proceed any further, I warn you!

Lupine: I sees her ankles

John: Enough!

Lupine: I sees the whiteness of her skin.

John: I'm warning you, boy.

Lupine: I sho' does dream good at night, when I sees yo' sweet little lady.

John: That's it! You've gone too far! *[He puts up his fists, ready to fight.]* I don't usually fight with colored boys, but sometimes....

Lupine: Just watch who you calls "Boy." I'se a grown man, an' I's ready to fight. *[He puts up his fists. During the following scene, John stands rigid and tight like an old-time boxer, while Lupine dances around like Mohammad Ali.]*

John: Stop dancing around like that.

Lupine: Scared o' my shuffle?

John: Stick 'em up like a man.

Lupine: White man knows that blacks got natural rhythm.

John: Stand still and fight fair, damn it.

Lupine: Float like a butterfly and sting like a bee. I am the greatest. *[He pokes and jabs at John, clearly getting the better of the fight. He knocks John down.]*

John: Since you refuse to fight like a gentleman, I am forced to resort to more drastic measures. *[He draws out a sword.]*

Lupine: So that's your game. Well, I gots an answer to that. *[He pulls out a pen. They duel, pen versus sword, as Lupine delivers his next lines. He begins to break out of character, dropping his accent.]* John C. Fremont, suh, I think you are something of a cannibal yourself.

John: Me? I would never...

Lupine: You built your career on the flesh of other human beings.

John: No, absolutely not!

Lupine: Whites and Indians alike, you let other men die so that you might prosper.

John: Why, you good-for-nothing darkie!

Lupine: And that, Mr. Fremont, makes you nothing more than a two-bit, low-down, good-for-nothing cannibal. *[By now he has John pinned.]* See, the pen is mightier than the sword. *[He walks away, victorious.]*

John: Hey, how'd you all of a sudden learn how to *[He raises himself gradually as Lupine walks away victoriously. Half-heartedly, John raises his sword once again.]*

Lupine: Oh, I'm onto your game. After your court martial, you felt you had something to prove. *[At the mention of "court-martial, John's sword falls a few degrees.]* That's why you ignored the warnings of the trappers and the Indians. *[John's sword falls some more, as he's gradually emasculated.]* That's why you led your men to perish. *[The word continues to fall.]* And that's why you are no better than all the rest of the savage white male American males who stole the land from the Indians. I rest my case. *[He has worked himself into a frenzy, thoroughly seduced by his own rhetoric. John, almost defeated, remembers the earlier mention of "I rest my case" and suddenly sees through the disguise. He hatches a plot of his own.]*

John *[facetiously, with an phoney air of repentance which continues into Lupine's next speech]*: Oh, no! You found me out. *[He puts away his sword.]*

Lupine *[pompously, self-righteously]*: See? He knows it's true. *[To the audience, with childish delight]*: I got him! I got him! I got him!

John: Yes, it's true. I am selfish. I am arrogant. And I really am a cannibal, a regular savage. I learned it from the Indians, see, and now I simply must have human flesh to survive. Black flesh especially. I like mine well done! *[He starts to circle Lupine, much like Jessie did when she saw through Chief Seattle's costume, and also like Williams and Kern have been doing around the dead body. By the gleam in his eyes, he reveals that he no longer has to be placed on the defensive. Instead, he is playing with his prey, like a cat with its mouse.]*

Lupine *[wrapped up in his own rhetoric, and therefore oblivious to the change which has come across John]*: You're a defeated man, John Fremont, because deep in your heart you know that you're no better than Old Bill Williams and Doc Kern and all the rest of those frontier cannibals. *[In his ranting, he backs into Mountain Man #1, who is hardily enjoying his meal.]* Oh, excuse me, Mr. Williams. Sorry.

John: Actually, if you want to know the truth, I'm even worse than Old Bill, 'cause I don't

bother to wait till a fellow is dead! Every once in awhile, I get these mysterious pangs of hunger, this absolute craving*[As he circles Lupine menacingly, Lupine finally recognizes that he's in danger. He tries to back away. John takes a few mock lunges at him with his mouth, then moves quickly to take off the black mask.]* Of course, just as I thought! It's you again.

Lupine *[relieved that John was only after his mask, not his flesh]*: Yes, it's me again, your historical conscience. You know, John, you might be able to fool a lot of people in this audience with your macho explorer's game, but I'm onto your number. You can't fool me. That's why I went to the library, see, to learn about all you frontier leaders who lived by the law of the jungle, who never thought twice about

John: Why, you are a ... you are a historian! *[As if it's a dirty word.]*

Lupine *[grabbing some books from the costume rack, to justify his position]*: Well, I just went to the library, that's all. I wanted to learn more about...

John: You're a historian, and you accuse me of being a cannibal! Ha! Who makes their living by preying upon the deeds of dead people? Historians, that's who!

Lupine *[thumbing through his books, and not very convincing]*: I just wanted to find out about my founding fathers who...

John: You take some colorful figure from the past and attach yourselves to him like a leech.

Lupine: Hey, all I did was read some books and ...

John: You shadow him, you hover around his carcass, you dig into his most private affairs, then you tell everyone what a scoundrel he was -- and you call that "history."

Lupine: I was only trying to.....

John: Well, I've got news for you: I am no scoundrel! *[Raising his hands with a double peace sign, like Richard Nixon making a political speech. Then, gesturing to the audience:]* Why do you think all these good people came to see me tonight? To see a scoundrel? No, to see a hero! An American hero! A man who once climbed the great peaks of the Rockies.... a man who conquered California ...

Lupine *[tapping him gently as John holds forth to the audience]*: John ...

John: ... a man who named the Golden Gate

Lupine: John....

John: a man whose exploits are chronicled in history. For all of eternity, the name of John Charles Fremont will be remembered: George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, John Charles Fremont

Lupine [*louder this time, finally getting John's attention*]: John!

John: Oh, you again.

Lupine: I'm afraid I've got bad news for you, John. Most people these days don't even know who you are.

John: What?

Lupine: Maybe they named a street after you, or a school, or maybe a little town -- but that is about it.

John: No capitals? No states?

Lupine: Actually, if you must know the truth, you're no more than a footnote to history.

John: Liar!

Lupine [*finding a spot in one of his books*]: Here, read for yourself. Page 783: 'After John Charles Fremont was defeated in the election of 1856

[*Pause. John and the audience wait for more, but it never comes.*] That's it, John. That's all you get in the textbook.

John: Impossible! After all I've done... [*Sings:*]
Thinking back after all I've done,
The territory that I won.
The benefits that you now reap.
The privilege that you keep.

Lupine: Hold it, John. You're too tense. Relax. [*He starts massaging his shoulders from the back.*]

John [*reacting against the physical contact*]: How dare you! You insolent young How dare How ... [*beginning to enjoy it, despite himself*] down, a little bit to the left.....
This is an outrage. [*Sings:*]
Thinking back after all I've done,
The territory that I won.
The benefits that you now reap.
The privilege that you keep.
I put this country in your hands,
Yet I feel no-one understands.

Lupine [*still massaging, repeating in song*]: Yet he feels no-one understands.

John [*as he sings, Lupine moves from standard massage to exaggerated aura-brushing from behind. John continues unsuspectingly*]:

Performing as a man should do.
From East to West, traveling through.
My dedication never swerved.
My people called, I gladly served.
Now events are out of my hands,
And I feel noone understands.

Lupine [*still aura-brushing*]: He still feels noone understands.

John: Yes, I feel

John and Lupine [*together*]:noone understands [*they hold the last syllable, leading into a prolonged "Om."*]

Lupine: You know, John, I think Professor Rolle understands.

John [*by now loose, relaxed, but helpless*]: He does?

Lupine: Yeah, he wrote a psychohistory.

John: A psychohistory? What'd he say?

Lupine [*reading from another book*]: "At an early stage, Fremont found it necessary to compensate for his own illegitimacy. Deprived of Freud's Oedipal struggle, he became a restless, driving, unfulfilled person. Eventually, Fremont's fantasies seemed to overtake his sense of reality." John, do you have some feelings you would like to share?

John: Well, I never did really know my father, and ... [*He suddenly snaps out of the trance, grabbing the book and throwing it away*]: No! Liars!

Lupine: Good, John, good.....

John: And cannibals! [*At the mention of the word "cannibal," Mountain Man #1 makes a particularly audible grunt and starts dragging the carcass offstage. As he withdraws, he continues with his meal.*]

Lupine: That's it, John. Keep coming.

John: Oh, you historians!

Lupine: Nice work, John. Yes!

John: Nothing but cannibals, every one of you! *[He chases after the retreating Mountain Men.]* Jessie! Jessie! Where are you? I need you quick. *[He searches in the wings.]* Jessie? Jessie?

Jessie *[finally entering from the side opposite from where John has been searching, she once again mistakes Lupine for John]*: Oh, John. I've been looking for you everywhere, and finally I heard you call, and John, I do miss you so.

John: This man here, do you know what...

Jessie *[Seeing John, she notices her mistake]*: You again?

Lupine: Hi, Jess. *[He waves cutely.]* Hey, you still look pretty good.

Jessie: Do I?

Lupine: Here, I have something for you. *[He gives her a small package.]*

Jessie: Jam? For the crumpets!

John *[grabbing the jam and coming between them]*: This man here, he claims that I'm just a footnote in history! Tell him, Jessie. Tell him how important I am.

Jessie: Of course you're important, dear. I'm sure history has looked most favorably upon you and your great deeds.

Lupine: Not true, Jessie. Here, read for yourself. *[He hands her the book.]* Check out page 783.

Jessie*[after reading it quickly to herself]*: Hmmm. The election. What a shame. So where's the rest of it?

Lupine: That's it, sis. That's all he gets.

Jessie: But what about you mean don't people even read our reports anymore?

Lupine: Not exactly a best seller these days.

John *[to Jessie]*: I thought you promised my reports would make me famous.

Jessie *[a bit shaken]*: Well, they did make you famous, at least for awhile.

John: Don't these so-called "historians" even know that I was the man who won the

West?

Jessie [*admiringly*]: And how the West was won!

Lupine: Hey, who even cares how the West was won. It should have been, “How the West was shared.”

John [*still belligerent*]: Shared?

Lupine [*calm, slow, and patronizing, like a kindergarten teacher*]: Yes John, shared. You should have shared the West with us Indians ... us blacks ... us women.

Jessie: Us Indians? Us blacks? Us women?

Lupine [*in his most idealistic tone*]: We are all a part of God's creation: blacks, whites, Indians. And animals too -- buffalo, coyotes, bees. [*He looks admonishingly at John, in reference to the killing of the bee.*]

John: Humbug!

Lupine: Humbugs too. Any kind of bug, any kind of a living soul.

John: Nonsense! The West belongs to the brave white men like myself who had the strength and courage to master it. [*He struts over to the costume rack and grabs the American flag which appeared in Act I. As he delivers the next line, he takes the pose he assumed when he mounted the peak of the Rockies, planting the flag in an imaginary rock.*] In the name of almighty God, I claim this glorious piece of earth on behalf of the United States of America! [*Breaking almost into song*]: This land is my land....

Lupine [*in cadence with the song, and grabbing the flag for himself*]:This land is our land.

John [*grabbing the flag back, and pointing to one side of the stage*]: From California

Jessie [*finding the melody*}: ...to the New York Island....

John [*singing*]: ...From the Redwood Forest

Jessie:to the Gulf Stream waters...

John: ...This land was made for me....

Lupine [*still in time with the song, and grabbing the flag*]: ...no, us!

[*They freeze between verses, as the Mountain Man stagger on stage in front of them.*]

They walk and sing with drunken abandon.]

Mountain Men *[alternating lines]:* This land is my land;
This land ain't your land.
I've got a shot-gun,
And you don't got one.
I'll blow your head off
If you don't get off.
[Together] This land is private property!

Indians *[entering while singing]:* This land not my land.
Was stole by the white man.
He gave us beads for
Manhattan Island.
From mighty nation
To the reservation
This land does not belong to me.

Kitty *[entering while singing]:* This land ain't my land.
Can't even buy land.
I pick yo' cotton
But something's rotten.
You talk of freedom,
I'm not believin'.
How come it don't belong to me.

John *[coming out of the freeze, and grabbing the flag back from Lupine]:* I roamed and rambled ...

Jessie: I followed your footsteps....

John: ...to the sparkling sands...

Jessie:of her diamond deserts...

John:and all around me.....

Jessie: ...your voice kept sounding ...

John: ...This land was made for me....

Lupine:no, us! *[He grabs the flag.]*

John *[grabbing the flag as the song ends]:* You have no right to carry this flag!

Lupine: Do too!

John: Do not!

Lupine: Do too!

Mountain Man #1: Do not! Let's go! *[He snatches the flag and exits, leading the others offstage.]*

Lupine *[trying unsuccessfully to take it back]*: I'm a good American citizen. Just because I don't appreciate some of the things you did in the name of our great country, that doesn't mean ...

John: You don't appreciate our flag. You don't appreciate our country. You don't appreciate me, your Founding Father. It's a wonder I even bothered, for the sake of people like you! *[He gestures disdainfully towards both Lupine and the audience.]*

Jessie: An ingrate, that's what you are, young man. You followed us around, you weasled your way into our lives, and then you betrayed us!

Lupine: Now that's not fair, Jessie. I want to respect my founding father -- and mother too! Let's not forget the deeds of great women like yourself. Because you really did try, in your own special way, to cast off the yoke of male domination

John *[to Jessie]*: What's he talking about now?

Lupine:to break the patriarchal structure ...

Jessie *[answering John]*: Don't worry about it, dear...

Lupine: ...of American society.

Jessie: ... he's just a little "off."

Lupine *[not hearing them, and continuing in his own vein]*: Look, Jessie. I'd like to appreciate John's exploits. I'd like to be proud of him -- his raw, vital energy, his restless wanderings. He lived out a dream: to venture into the unknown, to travel in a world where he never knew what he'd find on the other side of the mountain.

John: Well, finally. That's more like it.

Lupine *[to John]*: Hey, why do you think I came to this play tonight? I want to respect my ancestors, I really do. *(To the audience, as the lights recapture the mood of the Chief Seattle speech in act I. Lupine speaks slowly and calmly for a change, pausing deliberately between each sentence, tapping momentarily into the same inner strength*

which he had while playing Chief Seattle.) Everybody needs a connection with the ongoing saga. This we know: we don't exist in a vacuum, with no debts to pay to our past. Think of the freedoms we enjoy; these freedoms are sacred to our people. These are great gifts from our father's fathers. We should accept them thankfully, joyfully. Teach your children that the people who lived before us worked hard for what we have today, and we should never take their deeds for granted.

Jessie [to John]: I knew we could convince him.

John [to Jessie]: I guess he's not as bad as we thought.

Lupine [overhearing Jessie and John, and snapping out of his self-induced reverie as the lighting returns to normal]: Oh, but I am as bad. [He looks John straight in the eyes.] I'd like to feel grateful -- but I don't. [He pushes John away.] I'm ashamed to say I'm ashamed of my ancestors. Take you, for instance: why do I hate you so much? I look at what you did to the Indians, and it just makes me want to throw away my heritage.

John [scornfully]: So why don't you just choose Chief Seattle for your ancestor, since you love the savages so much?

Lupine: Oh, I'd love to, but I'm a white, American male, so I'm stuck with you.

John [ironically]: Too bad.

Lupine: You are my heritage, John Charles Fremont, whether I like it or not. Look, it says so right here in this textbook on psychogenetics. Let's see.... where was that, anyway.... [He searches through his books.]

John [to Jessie]: Do we really have to put up with this creature?

Jessie: We never should have allowed him on stage. But leave him to me. I've learned how to deal with this fellow. [She saddles over to Lupine, addressing him seductively.] I'm sorry about this misunderstanding, really I am. I don't think my husband should have made that remark about you and Chief Seattle.

Lupine [looking up from his book, willing (as always) to engage Jessie in conversation]: Oh, that's okay, Jessie. He's just stressed out because I told him he's not such a hot-shot in history.

Jessie: Personally, I think you gave an excellent rendition of Chief Seattle's speech. It was very stirring.

Lupine: You really think so?

Jessie: Of course! You know, we women are more sympathetic to the plight of the

Indians than our menfolk.

Lupine: Exactly! If it weren't for male chauvinism, I think this whole thing about wars and conquests and territorial

Jessie: And you looked so handsome in that Indian headress! Such a proud, noble Indian!

Lupine [*nostalgically*]: That was a satisfying role to play, Chief Seattle. He was a wise and holy man: "This we know. The earth does not belong to man; man belongs to the earth."

Jessie: That's wonderful! You say it so well. Here, let's get that headress back on you. Now you can give the whole speech again. [*She moves him over to the costume rack.*]

Lupine [*obviously pleased, but playing hard-to-get*]: But the audience has already heard it once. They might get bored.

Jessie: Not with you delivering it, they won't. You give such a convincing performance. [*She succeeds in getting the headress on him.*] There, that's nice. It becomes you so well. Now... what was that about the earth?

Lupine [*settling into his role, delivering the speech slowly and deliberately, and losing himself in his own rhetoric*]: ""The earth cannot be sold at any price.""

Jessie: Perfect!

Lupine: "How can you buy or sell the sky, the warmth of the land?"

Jessie [*suddenly changing roles, from the seductress to the helpless victim, the maiden in distress*]: Help! John! Conductor! There's an Indian on board! [*John jumps to her rescue and manages to grab Lupine's arms.*]

Lupine [*continuing his speech while the others talk, oblivious to what is happening*]: "We do not 'own' the freshness of the air and the sparkle of the water, so how can you buy them? The idea is strange to us." [*The conductor arrives. The conductor could be played by the same actress as plays Kitty and Rosalie Leese, or by the actor who plays one of the Mountain Men.*]

Conductor: What seems to be the problem here, ma'am?

Jessie: This Indian ambushed our train! I don't know where he came from. I was simply sitting here with my husband, when he suddenly appeared. I think he's crazy. I fear he's going to scalp me!

Lupine [*pleading with Jessie*]: But Jessie! Listen! "Every part of this earth is sacred to

my people. Every sandy shore, every mist in the dark woods, every clearing and humming insect is holy."

Conductor: He must have escaped from the Reservation. They're having those Ghost Dances over there, and ...

Lupine [*desparately*]: Good, the conductor. Maybe you can help me. I'm trying to find my Founding Father and Mother, but everywhere I look I seem to run into racism and sexism and chauvinism....

Jessie: See, he's crazy.

Conductor: I see what you mean, ma'am. [*He rings the whistle to stop the train. Everybody jolts. He grabs Lupine and starts to drag him off.*]

Lupine: Hey, take your hands off me. I'm a paying passenger! I'm a citizen of history! [*As he's pushed offstage and down the aisles, he continues his yelling.*] John Fremont, I'm going to get back at you for this! I'll never watch any more western movies if you treat me this way! You callous pig, you imperialist fraud! If you had just let that bee live... [*To the conductor:*] Let go! [*Calling out from the back of the audience*] I'm gonna stop the train of progress!

John: How bothersome.

Lupine: I'm gonna grind this stupid system to a halt!

Jessie: Very uncouth.

Lupine: I'm gonna change the course of history! I'm gonna call a .. a.. demonstration! [*He breaks loose and storms back to the front of the audience, followed by the rest of the cast, holding picket signs with any and all sorts of topical or historical political slogans.*]

John: A demonstration?

Lupine [*to sections of the audience*]: How can you people just sit back and watch as these white male chauvinists commit genocide in your name! [*The demonstrators cheer.*] Have you no conscience? [*Cheers.*] Stand up and speak! [*Cheers.*] Sit down and protest! [*He's dragged off again.*]

Jessie: A rabblrouser, that's what he is.

Lupine [*plaintively, and from afar*]: Jessie, we could have been sisters! Don't you understand? I want to connect with my ancestors. You're my Founding Father and Mother! I'm you're son. [*His voice fades permanently away.*]

John: Our son, indeed!

Jessie: And after all we've done for him. *[They enter the role of martyred parents.]*

John: We gave him California....

Jessie: ...the oranges

John: the redwoods.....

Jessie: ... the wine

John: ... the gold.

Jessie: And to think, the sacrifices we've had to make!

John: The Sierra Nevadas in the middle of winter.....

Jessie: long, lonely nights as I waited for you to return

John: ambushed by Indians at Klamath Falls

Jessie: my writer's cramp from preparing your Reports!

John: Saddle sores!

Jessie: Raising the children alone!

John and Jessie: And what thanks do we get?

Jessie: We gave him most of our lives...

John:never a thought for ourselves... *[The train suddenly jerks, causing them to react in unison, as John and lupine did earlier.]*

Jessie: John, what was that?

John *[looking out the window]*: There's some people on the tracks around the next turn!
[The backdrop now shows modern demonstrations, with protestors carrying their signs for peace, equality, ecology, etc.]

Jessie *[looking with him]*: Oh, no! It's that silly man again! Now he's lying down on the tracks.

John: Can't he ever accept the fact that this train must go on?

Jessie: Look, he's still got that funny headdress on.

John: Wait, can this be true? I think he's also wearing a ... a... a dress!

Jessie: And he's painted his face ... black!

John: Strange, the way he can't even decide who he is.

Jessie: He's such a confused soul. *[There's a howling sound in the distance.]*

John: Did you hear that?

Jessie: He's down on his hands and knees, howling like a coyote. *[More howling of increasing intensity, continuing throughout the following interchange. The mood is more and more frenzied.]*

John: I say they should just run him over and be done with it!

Jessie: John, how can you be so cruel?

John *[ignoring her]*: I say, this trip is taking altogether too long.

Jessie: John, I've been thinking....

John: Let's just crunch them all, all these fools who don't believe in progress, all these ne'er-do-wells who want to get in the way of history.

Jessie: John, that man must be right.

John: I can hear their bones a-crackin....

Jessie *[sternly]*: John, listen to me when I talk to you. *[She finally gets his attention.]*

John: What?

Jessie: If you are his Founding Father, he must be your son. *[The coyote howls again.]*

John: Him?!?

Jessie: And they must be your children. *[She indicates the audience with a sweep of her hand.]*

John: Them? I don't even recognize them.

Jessie: Well, they're growing up. They have their own ways and lead their own lives.

John: Well, if they're my children, I've got to tell them about my great deeds. *[To the audience.]* "The long mountain wall cut clear against the glowing sky."

Jessie: It's done, dear. You've told your story.

John: But they still don't know about my fifth expedition. You see, I was riding along on the open plain when....

Jessie: John! We've done what we can. The rest is up to them. They're still alive. History is in their hands now.

John: As usual Jessie, you are right. *[To the audience.]* We made our history. *[To Jessie.]* Didn't we?

Jessie *[to John]*: For better or worse, we did. *[To the audience.]* You may reject us as your heroes, but are your heroes today really any better?

John *[to the audience, as he gently embraces Jessie]*: Let's just see what your children's children will say about you and your heroes when you are dead and gone.

Jessie: No more than characters in a play. *[Lights fade.]*

END