

PERUSAL SCRIPT

RAIN-IN-THE-FACE

by **Eric Samuelsen**

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RAIN-IN-THE-FACE

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Characters:

Rain-In-The-Face—or Ite Omagazu, in Lakota. Hunkpapa Lakota (Sioux.) 58 years old (ca.)

Buffalo Bill Cody

A Male Actor—white, plays various characters, including Ingles, Customers, Kent Thomas, James Dorsey, Mayfield

Lillian — daughter to Rain

Annie Oakley

Elizabeth Custer—George Armstrong Custer's wife

Setting: The cabin where Sitting Bull lived when he was killed in 1890, dismantled and now reassembled. A wooden frame cabin, with bullet holes in the walls, bloodstains visible on walls and floors.

Time: Chicago Columbian Exposition: World's Fair, August, 1893

NOTE: Language may be adjusted if it exceeds local standards.

RAIN-IN-THE-FACE by Eric Samuelsen 3w 3m. About 85 minutes. Single Interior. Costumes: 1890s American and Indian traditional clothing. At the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago, many things were created, re-created and introduced to a willing public hungry for the sensational, the common-place, the truth as it is written, but may not have been lived. In the re-assembled cabin of Sitting Bull, after great expense is taken to move it, Rain-It-The-Face sits to greet the public. Some hate him. Many love him. But they all feared him, the ferocious warrior who killed the Custer brothers — at least that is how it was told in Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's epic poem about the Battle of The Little Big Horn, which Longfellow did not, in fact, witness, while everyone took the poem as gospel-truth. Buffalo Bill Cody hopes to gain Rain-In-The-Face as a member of his performing troupe. Annie Oakley visits in order for Rain-In-The-Face to tell his stories—it is his price—as he knows of her's and Sitting Bull's friendship. The widow of General Custer also visits, to learn the truth about the events that took her husband's life. But what is truth? Is it White truth, or Native truth? Is it man's truth, or woman's truth? This play explores it all and allows the audience to accept what truth they will. Some mature language. **Order # 3291**

Eric Samuelsen taught at Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio before joining the faculty at Brigham Young University in 1992. He became head of the Playwriting program at BYU in 1999. He has also taught as an adjunct faculty member in the Religion department. He retired from BYU in 2012.

As a playwright, Samuelsen has had twenty-seven plays professionally produced in Utah, Indiana, Louisiana, New York, and California. Some of his plays include *Gadianton*, which has seen three professional productions across the country, *A Love Affair with Electrons*, *Family*, *The Plan*, and *The Way We're Wired*. He is resident playwright at Plan-B Theatre Company in Salt Lake City, who designated their 2013-14 season a 'Season of Eric, including productions of six of his plays.

He is a member of the Playwrights' Circle, and the Dramatists Guild. He is three-time winner of the Annual Award in Playwriting offered by the Association for Mormon Letters (AML) and he became president of AML in 2007. In 2013 the organization awarded him the Smith Pettit Award for his lifetime work as a playwright.

He has been a staff writer for the on-line satirical magazine *The Sugarbeet*. He was also featured in the book *Conversations with Mormon Authors*, edited by Chris Bigelow. He is a noted Ibsen translator, and has also published scholarly articles on 19th and 20th century Scandanavian Theatre, and more recently, on LDS drama and film. He blogged at *Mormoniconoclast.com*. Eric died in September of 2019 after a long battle with polymyositis. This has left a huge hole in the Theatre Community within, and outside of, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

RAIN-IN-THE-FACE

SCENE ONE — *The play mostly takes place inside Sitting Bull's Cabin. A smallish room, log cabin style, but with a wooden floor. A table, three chairs, buffalo robes along the periphery, a counter with shelves for food. Bloodstains prominent on the floor. Bullet holes in the walls. Step downstage, and light delineates the yard outside the room, with a stool, a signboard with writing on it, and a small flag pole, flying a small American flag. RAIN IN THE FACE sits. On the table, his war bonnet, a good knife, sheath, a nicely beaded belt, other clothing items. He's got a hand mirror, and is applying war paint. LILLIAN, his daughter-in-law, waits patiently. She is wearing a deerskin dress, moccasins. She hands him a weasel tail; after a moment of hesitation, he weaves it into his hair. RAIN, looks in the mirror, satisfied. He takes the knife, and goes through exercises, scowling and grunting, as though throwing, stabbing and scalping an imaginary enemy. When he's done, LILLIAN helps him put on the belt, the headdress, other final touches. She stands back, looks at him, nods.*

LILLIAN: I'm sorry. I'm so sorry we have to do this.

(She squeezes his hand affectionately. He squeezes back, nods to suggest that he's ready. They go 'outside', RAIN sits on the stool. LILLIAN addresses the audience.)

Welcome! As you entered the Columbian exposition, you saw, just outside the main gate, the tents for Buffalo Bill Cody's Wild West Show. If you've seen that show, you have seen a reenactment of the battle we know as Custer's Last Stand, performed by actors, including, of course, Buffalo Bill himself. That is theatre; this is history. You see before you the cabin of Chief Sitting Bull, the Sioux Indian who plotted, planned, and schemed the vicious murder of General George Armstrong Custer, and the brave men of the Seventh Cavalry.

(LILLIAN ceremoniously lowers the flag to half-mast)

In a moment, you'll have an opportunity to enter the cabin, and see for yourself the bloodstains on the floor of the perfidious villain who plotted Custer's death, righteously killed while resisting arrest for insurrection. And here, to my right, the very Indian warrior who personally killed the good General. Chief Rain-In-The-Face.

(RAIN stares impassively outward.)

You'll all be familiar with these words, from the poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow:

In that desolate land and lone,
Where the Big Horn and Yellowstone
Roar down their mountain path,
By their fires the Sioux Chiefs
Muttered their woes and griefs
And the menace of their wrath.

"Revenge!" cried Rain-in-the-Face,
"Revenge upon all the race
Of the White Chief with yellow hair!"

And the mountains dark and high
From their crags re-echoed the cry
Of his anger and despair.

In his war paint and his beads,
Like a bison among the reeds,
In ambush the Sitting Bull
Lay with three thousand braves
Crouched in the clefts and caves,
Savage, unmerciful!

Into the fatal snare
The White Chief with yellow hair
And his three hundred men
Dashed headlong, sword in hand;
But of that gallant band
Not one returned again.

But the foemen fled in the night,
And Rain-in-the-Face, in his flight,
Uplifted high in air
As a ghastly trophy, bore
The brave heart, that beat no more,
Of the White Chief with yellow hair.¹

(As she recites, Rain reacts very little, but does finger his knife a little during the last line.)

But now, see this great World's Fair. Sitting Bull lies dead, killed just three years ago by his own people, and his cabin lies before you. And Rain-In-The-Face himself, sits here before you. And we can see before us here who lies defeated, and which people did triumph.

(And she goes back to the flag pole, raises the flag.)

We have photographs of Chief Rain-In-The-Face for sale just outside the gate, to which he has affixed his mark. And now, for an extra five dollars, you're welcome into the cabin of the late Sioux chief, Sitting Bull!

(She steps aside. Looks over at Rain. Almost imperceptibly, he nods his approval.)

SCENE TWO — *In the cabin, Buffalo BILL Cody sits across the table from Mr. INGLES. Each has a glass*

¹ Longfellow's final stanza, omitted here, questions the morality of the plains wars, and asks if 'our broken faith wrought all this ruin and strife.' I also omitted two other stanzas, to focus her recitation entirely on the details of the battle.

of whiskey; a bottle is between them. RAIN sits apart from them, again, impassive.

BILL: Mr. Ingles, now, sir, there is little reason for you to take umbrage. I am merely presenting you with a business proposition.

INGLES: You're trying to steal from me—

BILL: Not at all, sir. I am mere pointing out, showman to showman, that you control what in my view could be regarded as an underutilized attraction. If we two were to join forces, however—

INGLES: You're not even part of the exposition!

BILL: A selling point, if ever there was one. Would you care for another glass of this most excellent whiskey?

INGLES: A finger, no more.

BILL: *(Drains his glass, pours for them both.)* This fair offers a fine variety of distilled spirits, to be sure. Scotch from Scotland, wine from France, even vodka from Russia. But I am just parochial enough to prefer an American bourbon. As, for example, this bottle of Old Grand-dad, distilled in Kentucky. Some find it a trifle harsh, and prefer it on the rocks, but I welcome its bite, and take mine neat.

INGLES: I know what you're doin' Bill, trying to butter me up—

BILL: You can keep the cabin. I find it a trifle distasteful, to be honest; Sitting Bull was a man I was proud to call friend. But I can match whatever you're paying Rain-In-The-Face, match and exceed.

INGLES: My license with the exposition—

BILL: I am not, as you so astutely observed, a part of the exposition. I was excluded. Informed, in tones of haughty contempt, that my Wild West Show was deficient in authenticity. So we set up our tents just outside their front gate, and don't have to part with a nickel for the privilege. Whereas the committee retains what percentage of your gross?

INGLES: I'm not here to tell you how much—

BILL: Unnecessary; I am familiar with the details of the contracts required by the Columbian exposition. Columbus himself would have approved; the committee has indeed discovered the secret to minting gold in the Americas.

INGLES: I have the cabin, and I have the injun killed Custer. Now that's a lot, and we been selling them photos of him, in addition to the gate.

BILL: You have the Sioux who purportedly killed Custer.

INGLES: Oh, he kilt him all right; everbody knows that.

BILL: *(Polishing off his drink.)* Just a hint of caramel. Love a full-bodied whiskey. Let me freshen yours as well.

INGLES: *(Feebly protesting as BILL pours)* I said—

BILL: There you go. Mr. Ingles. What you have is Longfellow. What you have is a poem.

INGLES: A poem every schoolboy in America—

BILL: In fact, you don't have Longfellow, unless you have miraculously brought Henry Wadsworth back from the dead. You have a girl reading a poem. They can get that in every Chautauqua in America.

INGLES: They go together, Bill. The poem and the injun. They hear the poem, they see the brave, they imagine him ripping Custer's heart out.

BILL: Which did not happen. It was Tom Custer got his heart tore out. It wasn't George Armstrong; his

body went unmutilated.

INGLES: Who told you that?

BILL: A man who, though savage, I was proud to call a close personal—

INGLES: Sitting Bull. How much money did you make off Sitting Bull?

BILL: It was a reciprocal relationship. Because of me, Sitting Bull went to Venice, rode on a gondola.

Climbed the Eiffel tower. Met the Crown Prince of England; shook the hand of the actual prince himself.

And made a great deal of money, incidentally. Which the Sioux need, if they expect to build lives for themselves as Americans.

INGLES: And you made how much?

BILL: We profited mutually. Mr. Ingles, as you and I stand to do, if we can come to terms. We're in the same business, after all. We're selling the west, we're selling war on the American plains. You have the Sioux chief who killed...a Custer brother. I have the battle itself! I have Custer's Last Stand, reenacted twice daily, Indians attacking soldiers, firing their rifles and riding their horses.

INGLES: And then you ride in after Custer's dead, with that banner.

BILL: "Too late!" Suggesting the eventual triumph of white civilization. Pointing up the tragedy. It's a wonderful show, Mr. Ingles, and how much more spectacular if it can also feature the most famous Indian of them all, nowadays, the Indian who killed Custer! You have him sitting on a stool. I could put him on a horse, with a gun in his hand! Loaded with blanks, but still, a powerful spectacle. You take the cabin, set it up just outside our box office. We both profit!

(A pause, as INGLES hesitates.)

I am prepared to compensate you handsomely.

(Pours himself another whiskey, having already emptied his last.)

What do you say? How about we drink on it?

INGLES: I don't know. I ain't certain.

BILL: I'll go as high as six hundred.

INGLES: I'm actually a bit light-headed from . . .

BILL: *(Tosses back another drink.)* Bottle's close to empty; be a shame not to finish it off.

INGLES: Six hundred. No, I don't...I'll clear better...I'm feelin'.

BILL: I am so sorry, Mr. Ingles, I believe you are unwell! Hair of the dog?

(Brandishes the bottle. INGLES turns away.)

All right then. Let's get you back to your hotel; I will not press my case. The offer remains; let us in the interim part as friends.

(Gestures to RAIN)

Does he speak English?

INGLES: Not much. There's a woman translates for him. I think she's his daughter-in-law. But she ain't here.

BILL: Well, my Sioux's pretty...rusty.

(To RAIN)

Niye wowasi wakamna miye.²

RAIN: Hoh.³

BILL: Pretty sure that's 'no.'

INGLES: *(To RAIN.)* Hey! You want something to drink?

(Rain stares at him impassively.)

Whiskey? Firewater? Well, suit yourself.

(Drains his cup.)

BILL: *(Turns back to INGLES.)* And I believe I will say good day to you, too, sir. And if you would like to see the Wild West Show, I have arranged complementary tickets for you and a companion.

INGLES: Much obliged.

BILL: Let's help you up.

(As he helps him to his feet, Ingles looks at Rain.)

INGLES: So. You. Don't want to work for Buffalo Bill?

RAIN: Hoh.

INGLES: Stupid injun. You didn't understand a word of this, did you?

SCENE THREE — *In the cabin, RAIN sits at the table. Headdress is off; he's eating cracker jack. Enter Buffalo BILL.*

BILL: Hello. Um. . .Hah-u?⁴ Shoot. I apologize for my intrusion; I understood you had a translator, a woman? Is she here?

(Awkwardly signing)

Woman? Translate?

RAIN: Do you want to eat?

BILL: You speak English?

RAIN: Yes.

BILL: Really? So, then, the other night, as I parlayed with Mr. Ingles. . . .

RAIN: As you got him drunk.

BILL: Not at all, as we enjoyed, in mutual conviviality, a friendly....

RAIN: If you want to talk, it's better if we use English, I think. I've heard your Lakota. We pretend that Lillian is needed to translate for me: she is married to my son. She's at the fair conducting business; he is with her. You want to eat?

BILL: What is it?

² Lakota for 'you work for me' meaning 'do you want to work for me?' He should speak the line with a rising inflection, to indicate a question (that's nonsense in Lakota; the point is that Bill's Lakota is terrible.)

³ 'No.' This is a strong, emphatic 'no' in Lakota.

⁴ 'Hello' a greeting only used between two men.

RAIN: They have that corn they pop. It's very good. This is something else, with nuts and molasses. I think it is called Cracker Jack.

BILL: (*Eats*) Very tasty.

RAIN: I do not think it is safe for me to leave this cabin very often. I am Lakota, which means, for white men, feathers and leggings and war paint.

BILL: There are plenty of other foreign folk here.

RAIN: This is true, and if I dress as a white man, I can pass for a foreigner. But it's better if a woman is with me. She's Lakota too, but as a woman, less fearsome. I need to hide myself behind her. You were a friend of Tatanke Iwotaka.

BILL: Sitting Bull. I was.

RAIN: Sometime, we will smoke together. But I am among white men, and I feel that I am becoming one. I see the fair, learn of other people, eat their foods. And now, I have to decide things quickly.

BILL: So what things do you have to decide?

RAIN: To say no to you. But still ask for your help.

BILL: I never take business setbacks personally.

RAIN: For now, I must tell you that you cannot have the cabin. And I do not wish to join your show. That might change.

BILL: Well, that's what I came to talk about, you joining us.

RAIN: I am sorry. In the old times, we would smoke a pipe, we would sit and eat and talk and only after many hours would we bring up the important matter we came to talk about. That is the Lakota way, and it is a better way to decide things; friends should smoke together first.

BILL: I enjoyed many hours talking to Sitting Bull. Smoked with him, too. I was his friend, and I valued that friendship immensely.

RAIN: Yes. He was also my friend. The men you call Sitting Bull, Crazy Horse, Red Cloud. Young Man Afraid. They were all my friends. Gall, a great chief, but not a friend in the same way. All gone now, all gone to the Wanaka Tatanku.

BILL: And here we sit in Sitting Bull's cabin. Strange, ain't it?

RAIN: I imagine them here. Crazy Horse, saying nothing, making battle plans. Young Man Afraid, forceful in speech and action. Sitting Bull, with his wisdom, making us laugh and then think. Gall, bragging about what a good fighter he was, and also how good a lover. And Red Cloud, he would draw up a treaty, and we would exchange medals, and he would think he had done something important.

BILL: I can almost see their ghosts as well. Though this should be a tipi, not a square log cabin.

RAIN: That is also true. Sitting Bull did not die here, in a square. He died outside, in the great circle of the sun and earth.

BILL: So the blood on the floor? Cow blood?

RAIN: Probably. The bullet holes are real. Put 'em there myself.

BILL: So what do you do? You just sit here, in his cabin, and people come in and...do you converse? Do you dance for them, do you smoke together? Shoot arrows? If I put you in the show, I need to know what you can do.

RAIN: I do nothing.

BILL: You ride?

RAIN: I can ride, but my leg is bad. But here, I am the savage who killed the two Custers. Or one of them; they do not always seem to know. I am a warrior. So I try to look dangerous, all the time my bottom itches and I wish I could pass wind. So I dream. I have visions, full of blood, scalping all the white men here, in Chi-ca-go. It is a very pleasant vision.

BILL: (*Amused.*) If you can ride, I can make use of you.

RAIN: You gave him a horse.

BILL: I did.

RAIN: And it was trained to rear up when it heard gunfire.

BILL: Part of the act. He'd paw, like he wanted to shake hands.

RAIN: When Sitting Bull died, his horse did that. Reared up. As it was trained to do.

BILL: I heard that.

RAIN: I will not become that horse.

BILL: I see. I can respect that.

(Pause, as he considers.)

However. Honestly, Rain-In-The-Face, bein' honest now. I do not think that the Crow and Lakota who ride in my show think of themselves that way.

RAIN: I would ride, and have a good rifle to shoot, and every shot, a white man would grab his chest and fall, as though dead. It is a pleasant life for a Lakota. We get to wear our feathers, and shout our battle cry, and ride our horses, and shoot white men. The only problem is, when we're done, they get back up and we have to do it all again the next day. But the game, the...what is the word?

BILL: Pretense?

RAIN: Pretending, yes. It's a way to pretend to be Lakota again, and free. And we get paid for it.

BILL: Real money.

RAIN: And my people need money. That is what we have learned from white men; if we have no money, we have nothing. They will treat us worse than cattle, unless we can make money.

BILL: That may be true.

RAIN: When I was a child, we played a game with a prickly pear cactus. We had our bows, and we would try to shoot it, but one boy would be a buffalo, and if we missed, he would hit us with the cactus. We learned how to shoot, and we learned about pain, and how we could still fight after something hurt us. That is what your show is. A game for children.

BILL: I think it's better than that.

RAIN: It is, because games are good. Child's games teach how to be adults, how to hunt and fight. But then we become men, and have to fight for real. The game you call the Wild West Show makes us children again, and makes us wish we could be men. And fight and hunt as men.

BILL: But, again. We pay you. Handsomely.

RAIN: So there are two ways to consider this question. I must think.

BILL: Remember, I am your friend. I have your best interests at heart.

RAIN: In my heart, I am Lakota. I must want what is best for my people. In your heart, is you. And what your heart needs to keep beating is money. It's not your fault. You're a white man. You do not have friends.

BILL: I was friends with Sitting Bull.

RAIN: Perhaps.

BILL: He rode with us. He saw the world. And if you don't ride with us, what will you do?

RAIN: When I am finished here, I have a job as head policeman in the Standing Rock reservation.

BILL: You do.

RAIN: Cleaning up my people's vomit. Wiping their bottoms, so white men aren't troubled by shit. It is not a job I want to do. But my people need me to do it, and I will need money to do it. I will report to the Indian Affairs agents, who have rules, but only enforce them if they receive a gift.

BILL: Indian police. Indian police killed Sitting Bull.

RAIN: No.

BILL: Sioux police.

RAIN: He was killed by Bull Head, Red Tomahawk and Catch the Bear.

BILL: Acting in their capacity as reservation police.

RAIN: Acting as foolish children. Foolish and afraid. And Bull Head was killed that day as well, by Lakota defending Sitting Bull. It is a terrible thing, when Lakota kill Lakota. The sun rose in the west that day.

BILL: I understand.

RAIN: And if I take this job, I will see Red Tomahawk and Catch the Bear leave Standing Rock. They will have to go to another reservation. They are bad at their jobs.

BILL: You won't kill them?

RAIN: Pull their souls from their bodies with a rope? It is not the Lakota way. But no one will ever smoke with them. No one will ever allow them in a dream lodge, or eat with them, or allow them to speak at a council fire. They cannot stay at Standing Rock. They ate the white man's meat, and they have become his dogs. I have the same bad feelings about you, Buffalo Bill.

BILL: Really?

RAIN: I am sorry to say this. You were a friend to my friend, brother to my brother.

BILL: And I am a friend to the Lakota.

RAIN: But not really.

BILL: I most assuredly am.

RAIN: No. You fooled Tatanke Iwotaka. He liked you; he told me. And now he is dead, and you. . . .

(He pauses)

BILL: What?

RAIN: I will not say it now.

BILL: I was his friend! He called me friend!

RAIN: But I am not him.

BILL: That's for damn sure.

RAIN: But is it not better to say true things, then to drink and pretend and try to make a friend of a man who you have never smoked with?

BILL: Is it good to hate a man because of the color of his skin?

RAIN: As your people hate me?

BILL: So maybe it is true. Maybe you have become white.

RAIN: *(After a pause.)* Maybe I have.

(Considers.)

We have only just met. We have barely eaten together. Let us talk some more.

BILL: I am agreeable.

RAIN: But only if we both agree to tell truth.

BILL: As we both understand it.

RAIN: And bring Little Sure Shot when you come. Sitting Bull told me of her; a small white woman who could shoot a rifle.

BILL: Annie.

RAIN: Yes. She was his friend, he said.

BILL: So you won't join the show? And you don't like white men? And you also have some...problem with me. But you still want me to visit, and bring Annie Oakley, probably the most famous American entertainer anywhere, with me?

RAIN: Yes.

BILL: Well, you don't ask for much, do you?

RAIN: No.

BILL: What the hell.

(Reaches out to shake his hand; they shake.)

You know about handshakes?

RAIN: Yes.

BILL: Because, Bull, he shook hands with everyone. Once he figured it out.

RAIN: He told me.

BILL: And what did he tell you?

RAIN: White men shake each other hands, so the hand with the knife in it stays hidden. But at least you always know it's there. So shake.

BILL: That doesn't sound like the Sitting Bull I knew.

RAIN: Perhaps we knew different men.

SCENE FOUR — *Kent THOMAS, a reporter, sits at the table. LILLIAN is with him. Enter RAIN.*

RAIN: Minnewauken!

(THOMAS looks at LILLIAN quizzically. She speaks impassively.)

LILLIAN: Firewater.

(THOMAS nods understandingly, gestures to LILLIAN, who rolls her eyes, then hands over a bottle of whiskey and a metal cup. RAIN drinks straight from the bottle. He sets it down.)

RAIN: How!

THOMAS: I know that word. He likes it.

(RAIN looks quizzically at THOMAS, who gestures, 'help yourself. RAIN takes another big swig.)

RAIN: Good! Minnewauken good! Heap good!

(Another drink.)

THOMAS: Never knew an injun to turn down firewater.

LILLIAN: Well, see. He trusts you now. Should we start?

THOMAS: That's why we're here.

(Consulting notes.)

Why's he called Rain-In-The-Face?

LILLIAN: You don't know that story?

THOMAS: Why I asked.

LILLIAN: First man he killed. As a young warrior, he killed a Crow fighter, stabbed him in the stomach. Blood spurted everywhere. When it was done, the others in the war party said he looked like he'd been out in a rainstorm from all the blood.

RAIN: *(Finishes his drink.)* You want story. I tell heap big one.

(He gestures to LILLIAN. Speaks in her ear.)

LILLIAN: He says 'I was a bad man. Dangerous. Maidens liked me, but other braves were afraid. I would rather fight than eat, and long swords...soldiers...trembled when they knew I fought. And Rees and Crows felt for their hair every morning when Rain-In-The-Face was near.

THOMAS: Sorry, let me get that down.

LILLIAN: I'm sorry, it's not very coherent.

THOMAS: It's fine. Tell him I want to hear about Tom Custer. Tell me about when he made him take water.

LILLIAN: *(Nods, speaks quietly to Rain, who nods, speaks. She translates.)* I, that is, he . . .

(THOMAS nods, he understands.)

Was at Standing Rock with Gall and Sitting Bull. They were great warriors, who didn't fear an enemy any more than a buffalo calf. We were close to a fort . . .

THOMAS: That'd be Fort Lincoln?

LILLIAN: *(Nods)* And there were Yanktonais...uh...coffee drinkers, let me see, hang-about-the fort Indians?

(THOMAS nods.)

Buffalo and deer were...many, plentiful? And we had many ponies. The girls liked me, and teased me. And one, tall and beautiful, dared me to go to the fort and kill a white man. I told her it was too risky, the long swords were everywhere. She said I was afraid. She said 'if you are a coward, don't go. I'll ask someone else.'

So I went to my lodge, and painted sapa. Uh, war paint, black? And my bow and my knife and war club. And looked for a chance to kill a long sword. I could have killed a Ree scout, but I wanted to show the girl the brass buttons from a uniform.

One day, I saw Long Yellow Hair lead troops out of the fort. And a horse medicine man and one horse holder went to a spring, to water a lame horse. I shot the horse holder, then brained the medicine man with my club, and I cut the buttons off their coats, but Custer rode up with his men, and I did not have time to take their hair. They chased me to Cannon Ball creek, but the big long sword horses tired out. My pony was strong and I escaped. But a Ree scout told Long Yellow Hair who had done this brave deed.

The next winter, I went to the agency store. It was very cold. And Little Hair...that's Tom Custer, I think...

(THOMAS nods.)

He came behind me like a woman, and tied my arms. He took me to the fort, and held me in a room. All

winter, snow came in through the cracks in the wall, but I had no buffalo robe, only leggings and a small blanket. I did not wish to live, but Little Hair forced me to drink water, and to eat, to stay alive until they could hang me. One day Little Hair untied me and told me to run, but I knew he was a coward, and wanted only to shoot me in the back, so I would not. But I told him that I would catch him, and cut his heart out, and eat it while it still beat. And he would see me do it, as he died.

Later, I escaped. I joined Sitting Bull and Gall. But I drew a picture, on buffalo skin, of a bloody heart, and I sent it to Little Hair. The next time I saw him was in the Greasy Grass fight. And I got his heart as I said I would.

THOMAS: So he did it? He killed Tom Custer?

LILLIAN: I shot him. Then I leaped from my pony, and took my knife. I cut out his heart, and bit off a piece while it was beating, and spit it in his face. His eyes were open; he saw me do it. I did not scalp him.

THOMAS: What about his brother? Armstrong Custer, uh, Yellow Long Hair. General Custer, did he kill him too.

(She confers with RAIN, who speaks.)

LILLIAN: I saw him too. He was shot in the chest, but was still alive. He had two guns, and was shouting to his men. I shot him in the head, so close to him the powder burned his flesh. But his hair was going bald, and would not have made a good scalp.

THOMAS: He killed ‘em both. Tom and Armstrong Custer. This son-of-a-bitch redskin killed the only two time Medal of Honor winner, and a Presidential candidate in the same day.

RAIN: Minnewauken.

THOMAS: *(Hands him the bottle.)* Drink up, you sorry bastard.

(Scribbles.)

SCENE FIVE — *Enter Buffalo BILL.*

BILL: Rain? Rain-In-The-Face?

(Enter RAIN.)

RAIN: Hello, Bill. Do you want to eat?

BILL: That’s all right. Ain’t hungry. You been out in the fair, much?

RAIN: The great circle in the sky.

BILL: The Ferris wheel. Yeah, all the Indians like that one.

RAIN: At first, I did not want to ride. It looked like a white man thing that might not be safe. But I watched it carefully, and I saw how it worked. And at the top, I almost felt...alive. One with the great circle of the earth and sky.

BILL: Almost?

RAIN: It was still built by white men.

BILL: Listen, I’ve got someone wants to meet you. Annie?

(Enter ANNIE OAKLEY.)

ANNIE: Hello?

BILL: It's Annie Oakley, Rain. Little Sure Shot.

RAIN: Little Sure Shot. You were a friend of Tatanka Iwotake.

ANNIE: I was honored by his friendship. And angered at his death.

(Looks around the cabin.)

And this, this is an abomination.

RAIN: I do not know that word.

ANNIE: A great evil. Bullet holes and blood, in a good man's home. They murdered him, pure and simple.

RAIN: Yes. They did.

(Pause.)

Do you want to eat?

ANNIE: I would very much like that, thank you.

RAIN: My son's wife would be here. She would like to meet you. But she is at the fair with my son.

ANNIE: What's their favorite exhibit?

RAIN: They like the Idaho building.

ANNIE: The handcrafts. Yes, I like that very much as well.

RAIN: She does handcrafts too. She is very good at belts.

ANNIE: Belts. That's...lovely.

RAIN: I am sorry. I have not seen you shoot. Tatanka Iwotake told me about it. He said you were a better shot with a rifle than any man.

ANNIE: Well. He's right.

(She laughs. RAIN laughs too, after a moment.)

BILL: I would be more than happy to arrange complementary tickets. . . .

RAIN: *(Brings her a bowl of something.)* I think this is called 'Creamed Wheat.'

ANNIE: Cream of Wheat. Yes, I saw that exhibit.

RAIN: I did not think it tasted like anything. Like eating water. But with berries added, it can be good. For white man food.

ANNIE: Not roasted buffalo hump.

RAIN: No.

ANNIE: *(Tries the Cream of Wheat)* How how how.

RAIN: I don't think it's worth how how how.

ANNIE: Excuse me?

RAIN: Say it three times, and you say that it is very good, better than most food.

ANNIE: I get that.

RAIN: It's white man's food. Just one how, and that's mostly for the blackberries.

ANNIE: Well, I was trying to be polite.

(She laughs again, lightly, and RAIN laughs too. He is captivated. But so was every man who ever met Annie Oakley.)

RAIN: I am sorry.

ANNIE: For what?

RAIN: Tatanka Iwotake. He was your friend. He told me about you, how Little Sure Shot was his best white

friend. And you come to see me, and I am, as you said, here. Bullet holes on the walls. It is. . . .

ANNIE: Sad.

RAIN: Yes. Sorrow-making. And not a good way to honor a friend. Or the friend of a friend.

ANNIE: Well, does it really matter? Feeling sorry won't bring Sitting Bull back. I will never see him again, talk to him, listen to his wisdom. That's what matters.

RAIN: Yes.

ANNIE: When I heard of it, I wanted to shoot them. His murderers; I wanted to give them some frontier justice. Have a Sharps 50 cal that'd be perfect for the job, custom fitted with a side scope; they'd never know what hit 'em.

RAIN: You think like a Lakota.

BILL: Sitting Bull said that too.

ANNIE: Here's what I understand. When I was thirteen, my ma couldn't support us all. I was bound over to a family, I was supposed to care for their baby, and they would pay me fifty cents a week and educate me. Instead, I was just a slave; that's all there is to it. Skin, white as theirs, but I was their slave pure and plain. The he-wolf, he whipped me, starved me, froze me half to death, and made me warm his bed at night, and the she-wolf had no Christian kindness to her neither. So, I could stay. Or I could run away, take my chance, without a coat or good shoes, dead of night. Figured that was better. I could die, or I could get away from the wolf, either way, I was out of it.

RAIN: You do think like a Lakota.

ANNIE: I got to the local poor farm, and the woman who ran it saved me, when the he-wolf wanted me back. And they didn't have money enough for all the children, but I always could shoot; taught by my Mom's second husband. So I filled the pot every night, mostly rabbits and squirrels. And two years after that, Mr. Frank Butler came to town, a shooting showman, and challenged anyone in town to a shooting contest. And I entered, and I won. He quit his show that very day, and became my manager, and a year after that, we were married.

BILL: Story gets better every time I hear it.

ANNIE: Shut your mouth, Bill. Tell you one thing, though. If the wolf ever comes to see the Wild West Show? Well. That'll be the first time ever I miss. And you'll be shy one payin' customer.

BILL: That's assumin' Frank doesn't see him first. Or me.

ANNIE: So, Rain-In-The-Face. You wanted to see me. What do you want?

RAIN: For now, just to be friends.

ANNIE: I can manage that, all right.

(Reaches out to shake his hand. With some hesitation, he shakes hers back.)

As for this cabin: don't worry about it. I don't like it. But after all, it's just show biz, right?

(She laughs again, and RAIN joins her.)

SCENE SIX — *Outside the cabin, RAIN and LILLIAN sit in their usual positions, by the sign, RAIN on his stool.*

FIRST CUSTOMER: (*Enters.*) So, that's him, then. Rain on his Face.

LILLIAN: That's him.

FIRST CUSTOMER: I read the Kent Thomas article. All about him cutting Tom Custer's heart out and all.

LILLIAN: Yes.

FIRST CUSTOMER: Tom Custer! Two times, awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor! Twice! For valor in combat! Twice!

LILLIAN: Yes.

FIRST CUSTOMER: And the Longfellow poem, of course.

LILLIAN: Yes.

FIRST CUSTOMER: Why's he called Rain-In-The-Face?

LILLIAN: Born outdoors, on a stormy night. Just a baby, blinking up at the rain.

FIRST CUSTOMER: (*Nods.*) Congressional medal of honor. Two times. For valor in combat. That was Tom Custer. Everyone knows 'bout the General, but the younger brother, he was even more of a hero in my book.

LILLIAN: Indeed.

FIRST CUSTOMER: Just feel like I'm starin' at history. You know what I mean? Like history come to life.

LILLIAN: Many of our visitors have said the same.

FIRST CUSTOMER: And that's really where Crazy Horse died?

LILLIAN: Sitting Bull. But yes, that's his cabin.

FIRST CUSTOMER: My grandkids are gonna hear about this.

LILLIAN: I can well imagine.

FIRST CUSTOMER: I saw Sitting Bull, you know. At the wild west show, back in '85 or '6. Sold me his own personal tobacco pouch.

LILLIAN: Did he indeed?

FIRST CUSTOMER: I'm by way of bein' somethin' of a collector, you see.

LILLIAN: You don't say.

FIRST CUSTOMER: That belt. With the beadwork. Cunning bit of work, there.

LILLIAN: Very much so.

FIRST CUSTOMER: I don't suppose he could be persuaded to part with it?

LILLIAN: Oh. I don't think so, no.

FIRST CUSTOMER: Twenty bucks?

LILLIAN: Certainly not.

FIRST CUSTOMER: Thirty?

LILLIAN: I'm sorry, sir. But that belt is a personal gift. The beadwork was by Black Shawl.

FIRST CUSTOMER: I'm sorry?

LILLIAN: Black Shawl Woman? Wife of Crazy Horse, sister to Spotted Tail? A great woman of the Oglala Lakota, as famous, among women, as Crazy Horse himself.

FIRST CUSTOMER: Now I have to have it. I can go as high as fifty dollars.

LILLIAN: I don't know. It's such an important . . .

FIRST CUSTOMER: Make it sixty.

LILLIAN: Well...I could ask.

(She goes to RAIN, they have a sotto voce conversation. She comes back.)

I'm sorry. Of course, it's a wonderfully generous offer. Rain-In-The-Face is trying to build a school on the reservation, you see, and any donation is gratefully appreciated. But it's a deeply, deeply personal...

FIRST CUSTOMER: Tell you what I'll do, and this time I just flat ain't takin' no for an answer. I'll pay you eighty dollars for that belt. But for that, I'll need a note from you, signed by Rain-In-The-Face hisself, sayin' who give it to him and all that.

LILLIAN: And you don't want the knife?

FIRST CUSTOMER: Why would I...wait a sec. You mean, that's *the knife*? One he used to
(whispers)

kill Tom Custer?!?!?

LILLIAN: He's a poor Indian. Do you think he would own more than one knife?

FIRST CUSTOMER: I'll be goddammed. One hundred and twenty five, and I'll have to skip the rest of the fair. But it's worth it. Goddam if it ain't. You tell him. One twenty five, belt and knife, plus a signed letter.

LILLIAN: I can only ask.

(She goes to RAIN. He stares at the CUSTOMER impassively. After a long interval, he nods abruptly, as though the gesture tears his heart out. LILLIAN goes into the cabin, quickly scrawls something on a piece of paper, while the CUSTOMER stares at RAIN.)

FIRST CUSTOMER: How.

(RAIN looks away, deeply offended.)

Look, I'm sorry. But I really do believe we made us a good deal here. Anyway. . . .

(LILLIAN comes out with a letter.)

'Preciate it.

(He hands over the money. RAIN stands, deeply humiliated. With some effort, he strips off the belt. Takes the knife. Hands them both to CUSTOMER, unable to look at him.)

LILLIAN: And there you are.

FIRST CUSTOMER: Wow. I can't hardly believe it, Rain-In-The-Face's knife, Crazy Horse's belt.

LILLIAN: I believe your time is up, sir.

FIRST CUSTOMER: Goddam.

(As he leaves)

Goddam!

(CUSTOMER exits. When he's gone, RAIN drops his 'deeply wounded' pose, and quickly dashes into the cabin, looks under one of the buffalo robes, where he pulls out another belt and knife, puts it on.)

RAIN: Live one.

LILLIAN: Yes, indeed.

RAIN: Four today.

LILLIAN: Let's hope they never meet.

RAIN: It's a big fair.

(Sits again.)

Next.

SCENE SEVEN — *LILLIAN sits at the table, counting money.*

LILLIAN: Three twenty five. That's three belts. I'll have to make some more tonight.

RAIN: Can I have some?

LILLIAN: How much do you want?

RAIN: I don't know. Hundred. I have an idea. Something Sitting Bull told me.

LILLIAN: All right then.

(LILLIAN hands over some bills.)

RAIN: Sitting Bull told me that he met a teacher, a missionary, who told him the most important word in the white man's language. Progress. At first, he didn't know what it meant.

(LILLIAN begins beading another belt.)

Because it was the most important word, he thought it must be the word that described white men the best. So he thought it meant: can't see anything. Because white men can't see *anything*. They look at the prairie, and they miss everything; they never can see the most obvious things. We look at the grass and the wind and the flight of birds, and we say 'there are buffalo just over that rise,' and we all know it at once, and get our bows and our ponies all together, and white men, if they are with us, are amazed, and ask, 'how do we know that?' when it's the most obvious thing in the world. That's why the soldiers could never find us on their own, but had to use Crow or Ree or Paiute scouts to find us. People who could also see. So Sitting Bull thought, that had to be what progress meant, if it was such an important word; it had to mean 'can't see anything.'

LILLIAN: I'm learning how to see.

RAIN: Yes, you are. Raised by whites as you were.

LILLIAN: It's hard. They taught me numbers and reading, but nothing from my own people.

RAIN: You were a child. I don't blame you for it.

LILLIAN: *(Dryly.)* Thanks.

RAIN: But then he realized that there was a reason they couldn't see anything. It was because they dreamed so powerfully. Sitting Bull was a great dreamer too, and before the Greasy Grass fight had a Sun Dance.

LILLIAN: Everyone knows this. And dreamed of soldiers falling into camp upside down.

RAIN: Which is why we knew we would rub out many soldiers that day.

LILLIAN: Gruesome dream.

RAIN: But a true one. But then he went with Bill to New York, and then on the big boats over to England, and saw the great cities of white men, and he saw buildings so high they touched the sky, and he realized that white men had dreamed all that. Dreamed it, and built it.

LILLIAN: Like the Eiffel Tower. And the Ferris Wheel.

RAIN: Right. They had to be dreamed first. But this is what Sitting Bull also saw. In the cities, white men could not see anything there either. So their children, in the cities, were so hungry you could see their ribs. Children begging for food scraps. Children lying dead in the street, even, floating down a canal in the city where men used boats instead of horses.

LILLIAN: I know.

RAIN: And this could never happen with the Lakota.

LILLIAN: It couldn't, no. Which is why I love our people.

RAIN: But white children were allowed to starve, because the white men could not see them. They could not see anything. That was what progress meant, he realized. Dreams so powerful they blinded you. We can see the world. But we cannot dream as white men dream. That is why they beat us. But it is also why their children starve. So the question is, is that a good dream, or a bad dream? This dream called Progress.

(They work together in silence.)

SCENE EIGHT — *RAIN busies himself in the cabin. Enter INGLES and Buffalo BILL.*

RAIN: Mr. Ingles. Bill. Do you want to eat?

INGLES: What. The. Hell.

RAIN: Why are you troubled?

INGLES: You...speak English?

RAIN: I am just learning it. I make many mistakes.

INGLES: I'll be a son of a bitch.

RAIN: Bill speaks Lakota; you have heard him. Why does it surprise you when I speak in the white man's tongue?

INGLES: Well, damn me anyway. You are definitely getting a feel for it.

RAIN: Thank you. Do you want to eat?

INGLES: What do you got?

RAIN: Well, it's food they're selling at the fair. I don't know what it is. A kind of bread. But inside it, perhaps a fruit.

BILL: I've seen these for sale. They're quite tasty: a 'fig newton.'

INGLES: I seen them too. They any good?

(BILL eats one. Nods.)

RAIN: My son's wife bought them. We also have these nuts. I was told they were called 'goobers,' but that does not sound like they would be good.

BILL: Just another word for peanut. Boiled. They're just fine. Thank you.

RAIN: Also pemmican.

(Handing it around.)

And whiskey.

INGLES: Now we're talking.

(Pours whiskey into a tin cup. BILL has a glass as well; they salute, then drink.)

RAIN: I had hoped that Little Sure Shot would be with you.

BILL: She's on her way.

INGLES: You know what this place needs, Rain. It needs ghosts.

RAIN: I do not understand.

INGLES: Sitting Bull's cabin? Where he died? His ghost ever appear?

RAIN: His spirit.

INGLES: Add something to the attraction, right, Bill? Maybe hide a black behind a wall. Have him call out, real ghostly. Moan and cuss. And chains, we could get him to rattle some chains.

BILL: That'd be an attraction, all right.

INGLES: Or you could do that, whatever it's called, that Ghost Dance you people do. Bring back old Bull for real.

(Tension with RAIN at the mention of the Ghost Dance. BILL notices.)

BILL: Let me top that off for you, Mr. Ingles.

(Pours more whiskey. Enter ANNIE Oakley.)

ANNIE: Hello, Rain-In-The-Face.

RAIN: Little Sure Shot.

(He ceremoniously shakes her hand.)

Do you want to eat?

ANNIE: Why, thank you, Rain. So, Mr. Ingles. I've been teaching Rain-In-The-Face English. Don't you think he's doing splendidly.

INGLES: He's doin' real good. Whiskey?

ANNIE: Oh, I don't drink, Mr. Ingles. Neither does Rain.

RAIN: I do not drink.

INGLES: Huh. A redskin that don't drink. You sure about that? Hey, Rain? Heap big bottle firewater? How how.

ANNIE: Have you told them why they're here, Rain?

RAIN: I wondered if you would like to play a game.

(They all stare at each other, as he produces a deck of cards.)

INGLES: Poker?

RAIN: Yes. Sitting Bull learned to play it, and taught me. And my friends here, at the fair.

BILL: Is this right? You play poker?

RAIN: Yes.

INGLES: For money?

RAIN: Yes.

ANNIE: Quarter ante.

INGLES: What the hell. Cards, with a redskin and a woman?

ANNIE: Does my presence bother you, Mr. Ingles?

INGLES: Just surprised is all. I'll play with anybody.

ANNIE: I've been touring as a professional entertainer since I was fifteen years old, Mr. Ingles. And between shows, there's always considerable time to fill. Frank and I enjoy our cards.

BILL: I can vouch for her skills at the card table, Mr. Ingles. I didn't know you played too, Rain.

RAIN: The Lakota play many games. I am known among my people for playing ... I cannot think of an English word; ohuyuhmunpi. A game with carved bones?

INGLES: All right then. But none of this quarter ante bullshit. Beggin' your pardon, ma'am.

ANNIE: It's all right. Dollar ante, then?

INGLES: Make it worth our time.

(They sit. RAIN and INGLES on opposite sides of the table, BILL to Rain's right, ANNIE to his

left.)

There's lotsa variations on poker. Draw and stud, lowball, flop, bounceback. . .

RAIN: I know how to play five card draw, and seven card stud.

BILL: So we'll limit it to those two. Dollar ante, dealer calls. I'll start, five card draw.

(He shuffles, deals. They ALL ante, examine their hands)

INGLES: All right then. Three.

(He discards three cards, BILL replenishes. ANNIE looks her hand over.)

ANNIE: I'll take three as well.

(Discard, replenish. RAIN stares at his hand.)

RAIN: May I ask a question? All the cards in the same color, that is what you call a flush?

INGLES: That's right.

ANNIE: No, Rain, remember, we talked about this. The same suit; not the same color. All hearts, or all diamonds, not just red cards.

RAIN: Oh, yes. Yes. Then. . . two.

(Discards, receives.)

BILL: And three for me. Mr. Ingles?

INGLES: I'll bid a dollar.

ANNIE: Fold.

RAIN: So. All diamonds? Or all hearts. Not all red.

ANNIE: That's right.

RAIN: Good. See your dollar, raise you a dollar.

BILL: *(Folds)* Too rich for me.

INGLES: There's no way.

ANNIE: Call, raise, or fold, Mr. Ingles.

INGLES: There's no way. Drawing two, and he wants us to think he filled out his flush?

BILL: Call, raise, or fold.

INGLES: All right then. Call.

(Tosses in his hand.)

Two pair, eight over four. Drew my second pair.

(Starts to collect. RAIN stops him.)

RAIN: Three nines.

(Collects the pot.)

INGLES: All right. All right. And all this bull about a flush, that was, what? Running some kind of bluff?

BILL: I'll thank you to remember that there is a lady present, Mr. Ingles.

INGLES: Yeah. Sorry. Sorry, Miss Oakley, or Mrs. Butler, or...anyway. My deal.

(Collects, deals. They ALL ante)

ANNIE: Two cards.

RAIN: One.

BILL: Three again.

INGLES: And one for the dealer.

ANNIE: I'll bid a dollar.

RAIN: Fold.

BILL: Fold.

INGLES: (*Looks at his cards in disgust*) Didn't fill it. Fold.
(*ANNIE collects the tiny pot, ALL ante, then ANNIE deals.*)

ANNIE: Rain?

RAIN: None.

ANNIE: No cards?

RAIN: No.

INGLES: Bullshit.

BILL: Ingles?

INGLES: Sorry.

ANNIE: It's all right. I've lived among theatre folk my whole life. Ain't troubled by strong language.

BILL: Three for me.

INGLES: One for me.
(*Takes the card, smiles in satisfaction.*)

All right. That's more like it.

ANNIE: And three for me. Rain?

RAIN: I will bid five dollars.

BILL: Too rich for me.
(*Folding.*)

INGLES: Huh.
(*Stares intently at RAIN.*)

You're bluffing. Aincha bluffing, you Injun son-of-a bitch? Raise you five.

ANNIE: I fold.

RAIN: I see you, and raise you five.

INGLES: See you, raise you ten.

RAIN: See you, raise you five.

INGLES: Huh.
(*He stares intently at RAIN.*)

You have to be bluffing.

(*RAIN is completely impassive, unmoving.*)

I drew one card. I filled my straight. There's no way. . . .

(*Again, no reaction from Rain. INGLES counts his money.*)

You drew zero.

(*Long pause, as he scrutinizes Rain.*)

Good money after bad, if you ain't bluffin'.

(*Another pause.*)

You got this, doncha? Shit. Sorry, Miss Oakley. Butler. All right. Good money after bad: no. Fold.

(*He tosses in his cards, as does RAIN.*)

I gotta know.

(*Reaches for the discard pile.*)

BILL: Mr. Ingles, that's the discard pile.

INGLES: I just have to know if he bluffed me.

BILL: Which is forbidden by the conventions of the game.

INGLES: I have a right to know if this goddamned sudden English speaking Indian bluffed me!

BILL: Put the cards down, Mr. Ingles.

INGLES: No, now, look.

ANNIE: Mr. Ingles, please. Let's not make this unpleasant. We're guests in Rain's cabin. . .

INGLES: My cabin!

ANNIE: And Bill is right. The rules of the game do not allow you to see Rain's discards.

INGLES: All right, but in most friendly games. . .

ANNIE: If you look at those cards, it would constitute, well, I don't mean to be discourteous—

INGLES: I just need to know if this...Indian—

ANNIE: But some would call it 'cheating at cards.' An offense, which, in Western poker, is commonly met by Western justice.

(And something in her voice makes INGLES look up, and he realizes that he is perilously close to cheating at cards, in a western poker game with the deadliest shot on the planet.)

BILL: So what do you say, Mr. Ingles? Believe it's Rain's deal.

(INGLES tosses the cards towards Rain.)

INGLES: Just curious, was all.

RAIN: *(Dealing.)* This time, the game is seven card stud. Pot limit.

ANNIE: *(Claps her hands like a delighted little girl.)* I always like this one better, anyway.

(INGLES gets up unsteadily.)

INGLES: Just get a breath of air.

(Leaves the game.)

BILL: If you don't mind me asking, Rain. What *did* you have that last hand?

RAIN: Cards.

(Deals third card)

Queen high bets.

19 pages with 7 scenes comprise Act Two