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Whatever Kindles

by Tricia Gates Brown

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Preamble (to be printed in programs)

Christian Peacemaker Teams, or CPT, began in 1987 as an effort of Mennonites, Quakers, and Brethren to explore alternatives to war. CPT sends individuals trained in methods of nonviolent intervention into areas of conflict around the world. In its short history, CPT has done violence reduction work in five of the seven continents, and has grown to include hundreds of trained corps members, ordinary people dedicated to honoring life by doing the risky work of Christian peacemaking.

Though the following stories are fictional, they are inspired by actual events in the life of CPT. The characters in this play are fictional characters. To learn more about CPT, see www.cpt.org.

Staging / Sets / Costumes

The set for the play will not be realistic. At any given point in the play, several locations are represented on the stage simultaneously as different characters are in different parts of the world. The backdrop should ideally consist of screens onto which are projected images. Images from specific parts of the world (i.e., an Iraqi skyline) can be used to place actors geographically as they speak. Imagery of violence/war can also be projected during transitions between certain scenes.

The stage will have various levels of risers with exits/entrances at the back (center) of the stage, and on the sides.

Two soldiers can stand “on guard” on the sides of the stage throughout the play, with an occasional changing of the guard.

Props are carried on and off stage between scenes by available actors—sometimes actors in the scene, sometimes not.

Whenever possible, actors wear red CPT hats when playing CPTers. CPTers can wear one costume throughout the entire play. Chorus members can wear basic pants and shirts, adding various identifying garments when playing different characters (i.e., a flack-jacket when playing a soldier).

Cast

Alex: 20s. Must sing and play guitar well.

Cheryl: 20s, Caucasian

Bill: 60s

Jeff: 20s

Maria Inez: 30s, Colombian. Must speak with Colombian accent.

Diane: 40s, African American. Must speak with Southern accent.

Grace: 60s, Caucasian

(The following characters are played by eight CHORUS members)

Translator CPTer

Palestinian Boy

Soldiers and Paramilitaries

Mañe

Mañe's Wife

Bill's Wife

Dahlia

Sarah

Friend of Team

Cheryl's Mom

Pastor

Visitor

Alex's Mom

Alex's Dad

Benjamin

Shepherds

Settlers

Police

Mr. Al-Jabouri

Mr. Al-Jabouri's sons

Mrs. Al-Jabouri

Paulo

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ACT ONE

(Before the play begins, the backdrop screens display a composite image of Earth shot from the moon by Apollo 13 astronauts. As the play begins the stage goes dark and several images of war and/or protesters appear on screens during the intro song. From backstage ALEX begins playing, on his guitar, We are a Gentle, Angry People as the seven CPTers enter and take positions across the front of the stage, and ALEX and four CHORUS members enter and sit in a cluster centered at the back of the stage. ALEX sings “We are a gentle angry people and we are singing, singing for our lives,” then his cluster join him in repeating the line. Group stops singing. Composite image of the School of the Americas appears as ALEX speaks.)

ALEX

I remember my first time singing that. I was one of the song leaders at the SOA protest in Fort Benning, Georgia. S.O.A., you know? (*Ruefully*) School of the Assassins... I mean School of the Americas!

CHORUS

CHORUS US-based training ground for leaders of Latin American regimes

CHORUS Torture manuals

CHORUS The careful implementation of paramilitary tactics

CHORUS How to plot effective disappearances

ALEX

Believe it or not, it’s a real place.

(Sets down his guitar and stands up.)

Anyway, we’d sing in these pretty voices, then all yell out “ANGRY” whenever we got to that word. Like we were picking some kind of fight with our peace songs. We were indignant, you know. Though none too righteous!

But the group next to us... Here were these people all wearing red hats (*Looks down at CPTers*). Looked like they were praying or something. They were all just singing so... well... peacefully. They were a flotsam and jetsam kind of crowd.

CHORUS

CHORUS Old people

CHORUS Overweight people

CHORUS A couple Amish looking folks

CHORUS Young punks

CHORUS A middle-aged guy in a button-up shirt and fleece-sweatshirt.

ALEX

I'd been taught the song earlier that day. I was leading my little group from Reed College—from which I proudly hail—among this enormous group of protesters. Me and my friends, we were pumped, you know? There's, like, *thousands* of people there, like a mighty tide of energy right in the face that war monster. Down with the School of the Americas! We felt so powerful, you know? ...Man, *we* loved *protesting*.

...But when I noticed the red hat people, I stopped yelling the word “angry.” I started just singing it. So did others in our group. We just sort of calmed down, you know? And that was my first contact with CPT—Christian Peacemaker Teams.

(ALEX and friends exit. CPTers stand in groupings according to the places where they primarily work. Images on screens help place them geographically.)

CHERYL

I entered CPT right out of college. I guess I was trying to find my place in the world, you know? What I could contribute. ...I ended up in Colombia. I was raised to believe I could do anything. With God alongside me, I could accomplish *anything*. I guess I was inspired by CPT—by the earnest desire to build peace in the world, to be peacemakers. That's what I'll be, I decided, I'll be a peacemaker.

MARIA INEZ

The war in Colombia, *my country*, started before I was born. All my life I have lived with the questions of war ... and peace. In Colombia, you are *forced* to choose, no one has the luxury of ambivalence, you can't just turn the channel and look the other way. War is a question *everyone* must address. ...CPT—for me it is a part of the answer.

(CHERYL and MARIA exit together.)

BILL

I was one of the first CPTers—late '80s. I've worked in Hebron, the West Bank, for years. I started before retirement as a reservist—using my vacation time to serve for two, three weeks at a time. But after retirement I went full-time. ...It wasn't what my family was expecting.

GRACE

Peacemaking was always a part of my identity, I suppose. I grew up Mennonite. ...Now here I am 64 years old! CPT has become my life, and Hebron feels like home! ... The Palestinian people I've befriended through the years are like family to me. I have watched their children grow up and have children. I have helped them rebuild their homes after demolitions, helped them replant their olive trees uprooted by settlers. ... I have attended too many funerals to count, watched these friends lose so, so much.

(BILL and GRACE exit together.)

DIANE

I've witnessed oppression since I was a child. But I was always told "Diane, you can make a difference! You can make a difference!" ... And well, I just always believed that. I heard about CPT as a graduate student and the work intrigued me—a faith-based organization devoted to reducing violence, supporting nonviolence. Boy, I thought, we could sure use another one of those!

JEFF

I learned all this stuff in college about politics and history and war. As graduation got closer, I just kept asking myself ... *What are you going to do about it? What kind of life are you going to live?* I'd led a pretty sheltered life, I guess—pretty inexperienced. But suddenly I had so many ideas in my head I needed to work out somehow, about the world, about war. ... So I graduated, trained for CPT, then flew off to Iraq.

(JEFF and DIANE exit together. Scene shift. Hebron images. BILL enters, followed by GRACE.)

BILL

I was in Hebron, the West Bank, when the second *intifada* started. I had served there with Christian Peacemaker Teams many times.

GRACE

The soldiers were rounding up Palestinian men like I'd never seen. You could just feel the tension in the air—and it's always a little tense.

BILL

We could tell something big was set to explode.

GRACE

We were out on street patrol a lot at the time, since we were the most experienced members of the team. We'd stop and strike up conversations with soldiers or police when we could, and we'd let them know our concerns. Often officials recognized us. We could get a point across when Palestinians were simply ignored.

(During next line a soldier and three CHORUS members enter, CHORUS members standing in a line before one soldier as if at a checkpoint.)

BILL

During the *intifada*, checkpoints sprang up everywhere. At every one you could see Palestinians lined up, often women with small children, trying to get into the next town to buy groceries, men needing to get to their jobs or to their fields.

GRACE

This was before the separation wall—just checkpoint after checkpoint.

(Two SOLDIERS and PALESTINIAN young man enter. The young man is naked except for his underwear, he is handcuffed behind his back. One SOLDIER forces him to kneel and crouch to the ground in an uncomfortable position. BILL walks over to SOLDIER 1. GRACE stands behind him with a camera taking pictures. BILL and GRACE speak calmly, in an effort to diffuse, not escalate, tensions.)

BILL

Excuse me, but what is this young man charged with?

SOLDIER 1

Back away! Get to the end of the line!

GRACE

My name is Grace and I am with Christian Peacemaker Teams...

SOLDIER 2

Get to the end of the line!

BILL

We live in Hebron and work as human rights monitors. I am actually going to stay right here with this boy until you release him.

SOLDIER 1

I am not going to tell you again!

BILL

Well, I am not leaving. What are his charges?

(BILL walks over to PALESTINIAN, takes off his coat and drapes it over the boy.)

SOLDIER 1

He is a terrorist. Now back away!

GRACE

(Directly to SOLDIER 2) Do you have a supervisor here? What is your name, young man? I don't think I've seen you before.

SOLDIER 2

He said back away!

BILL

We would like to speak to your supervisor. This boy is freezing.

SOLDIER 1

I demand that you leave.

GRACE

The boy is in pain, and this is a violation of his rights. Like Bill said, we will not leave. *(To audience)* We were trying to remain calm, to keep the soldiers from getting too excited.

SOLDIER 2

He is a *terrorist*. You are aiding criminals!

(COMMANDER approaches.)

BILL

Are you the commander here? Where are this boy's clothes?

SOLDIER 1

(To COMMANDER) We are investigating this man. ...These people came here making trouble and they refuse to leave.

COMMANDER

(Speaking calmly and with authority) You are not allowed to take photos in military areas. Put the camera away or we will confiscate it.

SOLDIER 1

They must leave!

BILL

No, we must do our jobs. We are documenting human rights abuses, and this boy has not been arrested for a crime. We will not leave. *(To COMMANDER, extending his hand, which is not*

taken.) My name is Bill, I am a member of Christian Peacemaker Teams. *(To audience)* They knew who I was.

COMMANDER

You will have to put the camera away or it is ours.

GRACE

What are the charges against this young man? Have you asked for his papers? Are you the one in charge of these soldiers?

COMMANDER

Give me the camera and get to the end of the line.

(GRACE puts the camera in her pocket.)

COMMANDER

Now, we are processing papers on this man. He is suspected of conspiring with Hamas. *Get to the end of the line, or you will be arrested.*

BILL

We cannot leave until you have pressed charges against him or let him go.

GRACE

I ask you to please reconsider your actions. It is beneath you to steal this man's dignity.

SOLDIER 1

You are helping terrorists!

BILL

If this man has committed a crime, charge him with a crime. We will not leave until you have either charged him or released him.

COMMANDER

You will be charged with an offense if you do not leave.

(BILL takes off his shirt and shoes. As he does this, GRACE takes pictures of the scene.)

BILL

(To audience, as he is undressing.) I wanted to show that as long as the boy was suffering, I would suffer too. (He kneels next to the boy, begins to pray, and starts taking off his undershirt.)

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good,
His love endures forever.
Give thanks to the God of gods,
for his steadfast love endures forever. *(Prayer is Psalm 136:1-4.)*

(As prayer is happening, COMMANDER puts handcuffs on BILL and pulls him to his feet. He hurriedly escorts BILL offstage in a rough manner as GRACE follows. SOLDIER 1 and 2 and PALESTINIAN BOY exit. PALESTINIAN WOMAN from the checkpoint repeats Bill's prayer, in Arabic, as she walks over and gathers Bill's shoes and shirt. Another person in checkpoint says the Psalm in English.)

PALESTINIAN WOMAN

Oorfaao ilshokurl lil-rabb li-anna rahmaatahoo ila al-abad tedoomo.
Oorfaao ilshokurl li-allah il-allahi, li-anna rahmaatahoo ila el'abad tedoomo.
aHmadduu rabb al-arbaab, li-anna ila al-abad raHmatahu.
aS-Saani3 al-3ajaa-iba al-3iDHaaam waHdahu, li-anna ila al-abad raHmatahu

(PALESTINIAN WOMAN and TRANSLATOR exit. Scene shift. Colombia images. CHERYL enters from back.)

CHERYL

We were singing this song. Can't even remember what it was. We knew the body was up ahead 'cause we saw the vultures circling the water, probably fifty yards upstream. We had been praying and singing, and I'd felt pretty strong—till I saw the vultures. ... A dead body in the water, bloated, probably decapitated, the way dead bodies usually are on the Opón River. Colombia.

(GRACE enters. Spot on GRACE.)

GRACE

Within thirty minutes, the authorities freed the boy.

... Bill was released four hours later.

(TRANSLATOR CPTer enters and kneels next to CHERYL.)

CHERYL

Just a week earlier we were riding in that same boat. Same river. We were on our way to visit some friends. It was a scorching hot Colombia day, and we were in a playful mood. Someone had fashioned these makeshift water-skis and we were doing our best to tow each other behind

the boat. Laughing—amusing whatever audience we had on the shore—mostly farming families we accompany along the river.

(MANE enters from side of stage.)

CHERYL

¡Mañe! ¡Hola, Mañe!

MANE

¡Hola! No tengo que jalarlas toda la distancia. ¿Sí?

TRANSLATOR CPTer

He's not going to have to tow us all home, is he?

CHERYL

No, maybe we can tow you this time! Why don't you take a turn?

TRANSLATOR CPTer

No, talvez te jalamos esta vez. Tu turno, ¡ya!

MANE

Tengo mi orgullo a considerar. Pues, es más divertido mirarlas.

TRANSLATOR CPTer

He said he has his manly pride to consider.

CHERYL

Okay, then—we're off! Goodbye, Mañe! *(CHERYL waves.)*

MANE

¡Hasta luego!

CHERYL

(Addressing audience again) But there were paramilitaries at a checkpoint too. We wanted to show them that peacemaking is not all serious, like war. Even they laughed at us!

(CHERYL and other CPTer exit.)

(Scene shift. Iraq imagery. DIANE and JEFF enter and sit at card table playing cards. Three CHORUS members enter and scatter across opposite side of stage.)

DIANE

(Stands and addresses audience.) When I told my friends and family I was going to Iraq, they were like...

CHORUS

CHORUS Girl, you are *crazy*!

DIANE

I *know* what they're thinking.

CHORUS

CHORUS Here you are over forty, not even married,

CHORUS just out of graduate school!

CHORUS You are throwing away your life for some pipe dream!

DIANE

(Laughs.) When I became a pacifist, I'm sure my church and family thought I'd lost touch with reality. The church back home tends to be very supportive of the military. After all, that *is* where the bulk of the young people end up after high school. But I'm saying: what about MLK, what about South Africa? ...If *anyone* can speak authoritatively about nonviolence in America, speak with integrity, it's Black Americans! ...But I know they are just afraid for me.

JEFF

Iraq was my first "assignment," so to speak. I went right after college. It sort of shocked everyone. I mean, I don't come from a liberal background or anything. Was raised Catholic. In high school I got involved with a church youth group, ended up attending Calvin College. Majored in philosophy. ...There's not much you can do with a philosophy degree but more school! And I needed a break.

I wanted to do some kind of service, I guess—get out of my head a little. And there is a dire need for *peacemakers* in the world—for people willing to act out of conscience to confront oppression and violence.

(Stands) ...I don't know. I read a lot of Tolstoy in college. I guess I was influenced. Tolstoy said, "War is so unjust and ugly that all who wage it must try to stifle the voice of conscience within themselves."

...(Pauses, then voice becomes more insistent) We just keep digging our hole deeper and deeper, you know?

CHORUS

CHORUS One person ascends to power with noble goals—
CHORUS equality, freedom, peace.
CHORUS Then they adopt the same tactics as the last guy—
CHORUS just to maintain control.
CHORUS It's a cruel merry-go-round,
CHORUS everyone vying for power,
CHORUS returning evil for evil.

JEFF

History looks like this endless cycle of violence. (*A thoughtful pause*) ... I think Jesus came to stop it.

(*ALL exit. Scene shift. New York City imagery. Alex enters and stands at center stage.*)

ALEX

One day out of the blue I sit down to watch some TV while I eat my Lucky Charms. Getting ready to head to class. I turn on the TV and drop my spoon.

(*Image of explosion of top of World Trade Center tower appears on screen as seven CHORUS members enter and scatter across stage behind ALEX, all looking up in astonishment, as if watching the scene.*)

There's an airplane on the screen, hitting a skyscraper, people running around the city streets like ants.

After that, I had to do *something* concrete for peace. ... Everyone was so angry.

CHORUS

CHORUS Kill the terrorists! Nuke them all!
CHORUS Strengthen the borders!
CHORUS Our country has gone mad!
CHORUS Zero tolerance! No immigration!
CHORUS We are playing into their hands!
CHORUS (*Officially and stoically*) We have entered an endless war. We must be willing to make sacrifices for the cause of freedom.
CHORUS Each and every civil liberty we forfeit to our government is a victory for Al Qaida!
ALL CHORUS *United* we stand!

(*CHORUS exits as ALEX speaks.*)

ALEX

I couldn't stand to just sit around and argue with people, you know? Talking *ad nauseum* about the sorry state of things, wondering what would happen next. ...I remembered the CPTers I'd seen at the protest, and I looked 'em up. I wasn't much into Christianity, mind you. But I hadn't known Christians to protest the war machine either.

I joined a CPT delegation, did CPT training for a month in Chicago, then was off to Colombia.

(CHERYL and TRANSLATOR CPTer enter. ALEX walks over to stand by them as CHERYL tosses him a red CPT hat. Other CPTer hands him a backpack that he puts on. As this happens, scene shifts. Colombia imagery.)

CHERYL

The thing about Colombia is it's all about fear.

ALEX

We're not talking about armies attacking each other. Nothing like that.

CHERYL

The guerrillas and paramilitaries, they control the civilian population through fear—kidnappings, death lists, murders... Sometimes, especially the *paras*, strike at *communities* they suspect of being sympathetic to their enemies.

ALEX

They target the leaders of these communities.

SOLDIER 1

(At "post" on side of stage) Te advertimos. No salgas de la fila.

TRANSLATOR CPTer

We're warning you. Don't step out of line!

SOLDIER 2

(At "post" on side of stage) Torturaremos a tu familia, a tus amigos. Tus días serán nombrados.

TRANSLATOR CPTer

We will torture your family, your friends. Your days will be numbered.

CHERYL

Our friend Mañe ... was such a target.

ALEX

Mañe's family had been threatened—if they retrieved his body, another murder. So they asked us to find him—so the community could give him a burial.

(TRANSLATOR CPTer hands them each a handkerchief, and they all exit. MARIA INEZ enters and walks to front and center of stage.)

MARIA INEZ

I love my country. So I do this work.
The blood never stops flowing it seems.
Decades of civil war and the blood never stops.
The guns do not bring peace.
They turn us into slaves, a whole nation in slave to fear.
It is time for a new experiment in Colombia,
an experiment in nonviolence, and so I do this.
We must stop killing each other, controlling each other.
It is all because of fear.
And money.
God-forsaken money. The ground springs forth money,
and many Colombians trample each other to get it.
The oil money, the drug money, the gun money.
We are so rich in things we don't want!
Things most Colombians do not even want!
What *do* we want? We want to eat.
(Smiles) We want to sing and dance and create.
We want to love.
But the rich want gold, the rich want
oil, the rich want us to use their guns.
So, what then? Money is the grand inquisitor.
(Loud, like an auctioneer) Who will kill their brother for a dollar,
for a hundred, for a hundred-thousand dollars?
You think you can survive off the land?!
HA!, money says.
...But I say YES. I say a day will come for Colombia
when the guns are laid down, and the land is freed
from the bondage to coca,
and the poisons that fight the coca,
the poisons sprayed from the air that pollute our yucca,
our mangoes, our fish.
Peace is the only way out.

(CHERYL enters with TRANSLATOR, ALEX, MANE, and MANE's WIFE. As CHERYL speaks they join MARIA and all sit down together.)

CHERYL

...We had stayed outside Mañe's house on so many occasions, eaten with his family, sang songs late into the evening. The people of his village didn't want the *paras* to come, and they didn't want the guerrillas to come, so we would stay.

ALEX

We'd lounge in hammocks and visit until the mosquitoes descended.

CHERYL

Those were some of the best times of my life!

(ALEX plays end of a song with much bravado and everyone laughs.)

CHERYL

(To MANE and his WIFE.) It is amazing your girls can sleep with all this noise we're making!

TRANSLATOR CPTer

¡Qué increíble que las niñas puedan dormir!

MANE

Las da buenos sueños. No podrían dormir sin cantar.

TRANSLATOR CPTer

It gives them good dreams, he says!

CHERYL

Mañe, ¿cómo se dice, the fish...? *(pointing at fish)*

MANE's WIFE

Son bocachicos. Mi receta especial.

TRANSLATOR CPTer

They're her special recipe.

CHERYL

They are delicioso, ...ricos, very tasty.

TRANSLATOR CPTer

(Over CHERYL's line above) Ricos.

CHERYL

Very tasty.

MANE

Lo mejor para los ECAP.

TRANSLATOR CPTer

Anything for CPT.

CHERYL

Gracias, Mañe. *(To WIFE)* Gracias.

ALEX

Did you catch them yourself?

TRANSLATOR CPTer

Los agarraste?

MANE

Sí, sólo canto, y saltan en el bote.

TRANSLATOR CPTer

He said he only has to sing, and the fish jump right into the boat!

(ALL laugh. ALEX gets up and addresses audience.)

ALEX

We'd visit like that as long as we could stand the bugs. Then we'd zip up into tents and listen to the din.

TRANSLATOR CPTer

But then silence would come,

MANE

...Y terror.

TRANSLATOR CPTer

...And terror.

(MANE rises and exits)

CHERYL

Two weeks later, Mañe was missing.

(MARIA and TRANSLATOR CPTer go to MANE's wife and escort her to one darkened side of the stage where they take positions for a vigil. Light shines on ALEX and CHERYL on opposite side of the stage.)

ALEX

The community knew he had been murdered. They asked us to retrieve the body.

(ALEX and CHERYL take places in an imaginary boat and begin to silently row. After several strokes, CHERYL spots the body.)

CHERYL

(Abruptly) Oh God, Alex, ...there he is.

ALEX

Where?

(CHERYL points. ...ALEX notices, then averts his gaze. He turns and notices CHERYL as she covers her mouth then vomits over the side of the boat. As she heaves, he places a comforting hand on her shoulder. As ALEX speaks images of bloated dead bodies flash on screens.)

ALEX

(As much to comfort himself as CHERYL) It's going to be okay, it's going to be okay.

(He unties a handkerchief from around his neck and ties it across his face, covering his nose.)

...It's okay, Cheryl.

(Light shifts to MARIA INEZ and vigil/litany group as ALEX and CHERYL exit.)

(The women have in front of them a large metal can that will be used for burning paper. One woman hands folded papers, with words of litany, to the other women. MARIA begins reading.)

MARIA INEZ

O Creator, Source of our peace,
from the shadow of death over Colombia,
from the death lists of the armed groups,
from intimidation and fear,

ALL

DELIVER YOUR CHILDREN

MANE's WIFE

from our complicity in the killing,
from profiting by arms sales,
from providing training for those who kill

ALL

DELIVER YOUR CHILDREN

TRANSLATOR CPTer

from the violence of war everywhere,
from enlisting of youth in armed groups,
from the suffering of innocent victims,

ALL

DELIVER YOUR CHILDREN

(One woman hands MARIA INEZ a long piece of paper. She holds it up as she speaks.)

MARIA INEZ

A death list. Fifteen names—all Colombian, all threatened by the paramilitaries with death.

(MARIA slowly lights the list on fire with a lighter and sets it in the can. She begins to speak as the list burns.)

MARIA INEZ

by infusing hope in the midst of death,
by transforming the hearts of those bearing arms,
by enlightening armed leaders in the power of nonviolence,

ALL

DELIVER YOUR CHILDREN

MANE's WIFE

by our rejection of violence as a means to justice,
by our refusal to cooperate in the export of violence,
by our confronting of unjust systems,

ALL

DELIVER YOUR CHILDREN

TRANSLATOR CPTer

by seeing your image even in enemies,
by teaching all children to celebrate life,
by converting economies of greed to ones of sharing,

ALL

Deliver your children. Raise us up from these ashes, O Loving Creator. Grant us peace.

(ALL exit. GRACE enters with DAHLIA, a Palestinian woman, and they take seats at front of stage as DAHLIA works picking particles out of a piece of wool.)

GRACE

(To audience) Oh, I've been with CPT for years. I too was one of the first fulltime CPTers, back in the late '80's. Went to Haiti then. Now I've been in Hebron for most of my time.

I chose not to marry, not to have a family. I always wanted to do peace work. Growing up Mennonite, I wore a head covering—the works. As a girl the most radical thing I considered doing was cutting my hair! Oh mercy, how God cared about my hair!

But there was always this talk about peacemaking growing up, not *radical* peacemaking necessarily, but peacemaking.

Well in high school, I did the unthinkable for my conservative family ...*I cut my hair*. I was immediately branded the black sheep! It was the 60's and I thought: *Hey, why not go into peace work, now that I'm a bona fide radical.*

...But peace work isn't much at all like I thought it would be. What do you say to people who ask what it means to be a peacemaker?

(DAHLIA looks up pensively, answering GRACE's rhetorical question.)

DAHLIA

I tell them it is not a job that you do and then leave to go home at night. It is a way of looking at things, ...looking at things with forgiveness and hope instead of hatred and resentment. It is not being afraid to oppose someone, and not being afraid to forgive.

GRACE

(To audience and DAHLIA) When I first joined CPT, I was often afraid. But I was afraid of violence then, afraid of getting hurt. After all these years, I'm not so much afraid of getting attacked. ...Now I am afraid of having to leave Palestine. I am afraid of having to leave you *(gesturing toward DAHLIA)*, leave my friends. ...*This* is where I want to be.

(GRACE and DAHLIA exit. Light shifts to CHERYL as she enters from back of stage.)

CHERYL

After that day on the river, the nightmares began. ...I became very afraid. Couldn't sleep. It didn't matter where we were—back in the city in the team apartment, or in the *campo*. Intense headaches. I had them every day.

(Slowly drops to her knees.)

We found Mañe's arm first, entangled in some vines at the side of the river.

By the time we unloaded his body out of the boat I had gone numb. I turned off inside. I had to do the work. ...He was white as ash, his skin nothing like human skin. How could that have been Mañe's skin?

It is his skin that haunts my dreams.

(Light shifts from CHERYL to BILL, who enters from side of stage. His wife enters from opposite side.)

BILL

When the attention turned to Iraq, late 2002, I decided to leave Hebron and go there—to help start up a CPT presence.

BILL'S WIFE

Bill, don't go. ...Think of your family.

BILL

(Continues speaking without a response to her, but a bit distracted.) We CPTers were working closely with another peace organization, one with extensive experience in Iraq.

BILL's WIFE

Bill, come home.

(WIFE notices BILL isn't paying attention and exits.)

BILL

Our goal was to position ourselves in strategic locations when bombing started. We would stay at hospitals, community centers, water-treatment facilities. We would make our presence known in the hope we would deter US generals from bombing those places.

After the bombing campaign, we stayed. We were one of the few foreign NGOs operating outside the Green Zone in Baghdad—the zone protected by occupation forces.

(BILL exits. Light shifts back to CHERYL.)

CHERYL

Mañe was a *beautiful* man. So beautiful. Eyes that danced.
His smile was so caring...and soft. How could he be so kind?
...This shouldn't happen! But why was *I* so scared? *I* have white skin. Healthy, living white skin—a kind of protection here. *I* could leave at any time. Where could our friends go?

(MARIA enters and walks to center stage.)

MARIA INEZ

Should my name be on that list? I wonder.
CPTers have been on death lists before.
And I am Colombian.
For North Americans it is different; there is a kind of protection that derives from their passports.
It is why they are effective here—at accompaniment.
But me?
Colombian.
Woman.
My name no different from the others.
(Emphatically) Yet this work is for *Colombians*, despite the risks!

(Four CHORUS members enter and scatter across back of stage.)

MARIA INEZ

No, I do not have an American passport to protect me.
I know the only protection *I* have comes from God.

CHORUS

CHORUS God's protection
CHORUS Faith will make you strong
CHORUS Love your enemies
CHORUS Pray for those who persecute you
CHORUS Do not be afraid

(CHERYL stands as MARIA exits.)

CHERYL

Who am I to condemn killing when I don't have to live this every day of my life?! I came here because I thought I would be brave. I thought my faith in God, in what we're doing here, would make me brave. But I am so damn scared. I thought I came here to help people. *Me* helping someone like Mañe Vargas!

(ALL exit. Scene shift. Iraq imagery. DIANE, JEFF, BILL, SARAH and a FRIEND OF TEAM all enter. BILL sits in chair and reads book. DIANE stands by table. JEFF, SARAH, and FRIEND sit on floor playing cards. Air raid sirens sound in background. DIANE addresses audience. In the middle of her speaking, an Iraqi woman comes in with tea service, sets it on the table and begins pouring tea into small glasses.)

DIANE

In Iraq people welcomed us with open arms—and here US war-planes had dropped bombs all over their cities! The hospitality blew my mind. People were so kind to us!

JEFF

(To audience) At that time, the air raid sirens were still a mainstay of Baghdad life. In our neighborhood, we had electricity about three hours a day ...if that.

DIANE

If we couldn't cook, couldn't get out to the shops, our neighbors brought us food! They would check in on us, make sure we had enough blankets, ask us how we were sleeping. ...But you know, the hospitality I've seen in Iraq didn't surprise me, really—amazing as it was. I have seen that kind of thing all my life! Growing up in the South—Atlanta—racism was all around me, like the *air* I breathed. And you know one thing my upbringing helped me to see? The power *love* can have.

I know it sounds sentimental—but I would see the way some old black woman—*smart as a whip*—would hold her head high when someone talked down to her. She *refused* to return the hatred. That's one of the things I experienced in Iraq. That brave, strong, even *defiant* love.

(JEFF stands and walks toward table, looking at SARAH, who is occupied with card playing.)

JEFF

Sarah. She was the most beautiful woman I had ever seen. She worked with one of the other NGOs in Iraq. Like me, she was just out of college. I hadn't dated a lot. ...But I guess she and I were... drawn to each other

(As JEFF says the last line, SARAH looks up at JEFF and smiles, then returns to cards.)

When I met her I thought: *Hell, this is not what I need. I need to focus, I need to be willing to die here. The Iraqis don't need some human rights worker distracted by a girl!* You know, I had never fallen in love. *Not now!* I thought. *Not here!* Meeting Sarah—it was definitely not part of the plan.

(JEFF picks up tea service and takes it over to SARAH. BILL stands, addresses audience.)

BILL

As soon as the war began—March, 2003—US forces started rounding up Iraqi men, especially young men, separating them from their families who had no idea where they'd ended up. At that time, few people knew where *any* of them were ending up. ...We began to hear stories.

(Photos from Abu Ghraib are project on backdrop as BILL speaks.)

FRIEND OF TEAM

No charges against many of them.

SARAH

Men simply taken.

FRIEND OF TEAM

No one knew their whereabouts.

BILL

Family members would come to our apartment and tell us about their sons, or brothers, or uncles who had disappeared. Occupation forces barging into people's living rooms, throwing all the men to the ground, taking them away.

(BILL takes his wallet out of his pocket and pulls two photos from it. BILL's WIFE enters at back of stage and watches him. BILL pauses while looking at photos, then sits down at table to show photos to DIANE.)

...I have a family, in Ontario, Canada—a wife, two grown sons. They have been very supportive of my CPT work. ...But they are having more trouble with Iraq.

BILL'S WIFE

Bill, come home ... please. (*Waits a moment, then exits.*)

JEFF

In the months after the major bombing campaigns were over, the team was able to get out more. We were crazy busy.

(*Flurry of activity starts as characters on stage remove props and set up two chairs for next scene as they speak.*)

BILL

Traveling the length of Iraq,

DIANE

visiting detention facilities,

JEFF

advocating for the families of detainees,

DIANE

taking Iraqi concerns before Occupation officials.

(*ALL exit but JEFF.*)

JEFF

I rarely saw Sarah, though I thought of her every day. Make that just about every *minute* of every day! Man, I was falling. I was trying so hard, *so* hard to stay focused... People were coming and going on the team. It was a constant struggle to keep continuity in the work, to make sure the ball wasn't dropped in the case of some detainee, to make sure we followed up with US officials. Kidnapping of all kinds, especially of foreign workers, was becoming more frequent.

(*As JEFF says this last line SARAH enters and takes a seat in "car."*)

...Then we got to take a trip together to Karbala—me and Sarah—to meet with a delegation of Iraqi grassroots organizers. I kept trying to turn my emotions off, just when they'd get turned on again (*Smiles at the pun he's made.*) ...It was a hard time.

(*JEFF stops addressing audience at this point and joins SARAH in car. JEFF sits to SARAH's left in the back seat of a car.*)

SARAH

...Yah in my family we all sit around and watch the entire first season of *Seinfeld*. So, it's not like our family doesn't have *traditions* anymore, it's just, well, they're not very *traditional*.

JEFF

...What about skiing? Does your family snow-ski...or snowboard?

SARAH

...We're more the board-game kind of family. ...The one and only time I tried snowboarding I ended up with a fat lip and short-term memory loss.

...What about you? (*Teasing*) Does your family sit around and debate Kant's categorical imperative?

JEFF

Very funny. No, actually my family's pretty athletic ...if a bit too intellectual! My family's been skiing since I was a kid—comes from our Norwegian roots, I think. ...So yes, I snowboard. But I would really...

(A load explosion sounds and the car makes an abrupt, sudden shift. Both fall to the left and JEFF throws himself around SARAH, who stays under him. After a long moment of stillness, JEFF lifts his head to peek out as the car starts to move again.)

JEFF

(With great relief, still holding onto SARAH) Oh God, it was just a tire blow-out—up ahead.

(SARAH turns her head toward him and he notices he's still embracing her. Flustered, he pulls away as they awkwardly meet eyes and begin to laugh.)

JEFF

...Oh man, I'm so sorry.

SARAH

No, don't worry about it.

(JEFF shakes his head and looks out the window. Sarah starts to giggle. They look at each other and both start to laugh. Light shifts to CHORUS who enter and begin speaking as SARAH and JEFF exit.)

CHORUS

CHORUS Live in the present
CHORUS Today's worries are enough for today
CHORUS There are no days off in a war zone

(CHORUS exits. DIANE enters and takes place at table. She sits reading as JEFF enters.)

DIANE

Hey, good mornin' Sunshine. Couldn't sleep either?

(DIANE sizes him up, smiling, as he approaches the table and sits down. JEFF looks up.)

JEFF

Hey, Diane.

DIANE

...Boy, just look at you! ...Can't even sleep! *(Shaking her head)*...Man, what I would give to be in your shoes. Here you come to Iraq—Iraq of all places—and you meet up with the girl of your dreams.*Nothin'* like that ever happens to me!

JEFF

Well, I don't recommend it.

DIANE

What?! Oh, come on. Get over it, Honey.

JEFF

That's the problem... I can't get over it. I can't think of anything else. I can't even *sleep*, for God's sake. ...Lots of good I'm going to do here in this state.

(DIANE stands.)

DIANE

Now listen to you! You *are* doing good. Love is always good. Don't fight it, Jeff. ...I'm serious. You're one of the lucky ones. *Enjoy it. (Nudging him with her arm) Enjoy it!*

JEFF

Oh yes, *enjoy* the sleepless nights, the nervous stomach, obsessing over every word that's passes between us... *all* very enjoyable, yes. *(Shakes his head and laughs)* ...It's just all so new to me, you know?

DIANE

No kidding?! Oh, I had you pegged as a real Casanova!

(DIANE exits, then JEFF.)

(Light shifts to MARIA as she and ALEX enter. MARIA stands at center stage and ALEX sits on the stage several feet away from her. He is listening to music on headphones and whittling a piece of wood. Colombia imagery.)

MARIA INEZ

The CPTers on our team, in Colombia—they are mostly from Canada and the US. And some North Americans are so, well, ...*stiff*, while I am full of passion, full of *la vida*!

It's a challenge for us to communicate.

...I can never do accompaniment alone, or with Colombians—it is too dangerous. Always with North Americans! But back in the city, working with grassroots organizations, doing nonviolence trainings, participating in vigils or protests, my presence is *integral* to this work.

Yet at times I am invisible.

(Walks over to ALEX, takes the ear-phone out of his ear)

Alex, I think we should attend the women's meeting in town today. I need a teammate to go along with me. Can you go?

ALEX

Do we really need to go *talk* with more people? I'm tired of just *talking* to people, attending meetings! I think it's time for some kind of action! When can we go to the river again?

(MARIA shrugs and ALEX storms off in a huff.)

MARIA INEZ

(To ALEX as he leaves) We need to finish our work here first!

(To audience) My greatest difficulties are relating to other team members.

Ironic, since I am so close to the violence here.

Colombia is my *home*.

Yet, the number of times I have had my actions misinterpreted by teammates—

(Shaking her head) ...more than I can count!

(Light shifts to CHERYL as she walks on with CHERYL's MOM. PASTOR enters from other side of stage and goes to stand by two chairs sitting side by side. CHERYL steps away from MOM, addresses audience.)

CHERYL

So I go back home for a break. My mom wants me to go see her new pastor. She's worried about me, you know. She's my mom, for heaven's sake, so I go. (*Turns attention to MOM.*)

CHERYL's MOM

Thank you for doing this.

CHERYL

Thanks, Mom. ...I know.

(*Touches MOM on arm and walks toward chairs.*)

PASTOR

(*Phony-sounding.*) Hello! It's great to finally meet you Cheryl.

(*PASTOR and CHERYL shake hands and sit down.*)

CHERYL

(*To audience*) I try to explain to him about Mañe and his family.

(*To PASTOR.*) I just keep having nightmares about Mañe, about how he was killed. I try to pray, but it doesn't get any easier. The images just play over and over in my head. Mañe and his wife, they treated us like family. You wouldn't believe how welcoming they all were. Mañe was a man...

PASTOR

(*Interrupting*) Cheryl...

CHERYL

(*To audience*) He leans in to me, elbows on his knees, like he's really leveling with me.

PASTOR

(*Confused*) Cheryl, I don't know a whole lot about Colombia, but do you think the man might have secretly been involved with the *drug trade*?

(*CHERYL looks down and shakes her head. She stands up, looks at her MOM, then walks offstage. Light shifts to ALEX scene as PASTOR and MOM exit. ALEX enters. ALEX's MOM and DAD and VISITOR enter from opposite side of stage. Four chairs are set up in an L-shape. MOM and VISITOR sit down, while DAD stands in chair behind MOM.*)

ALEX

(To audience) When I try to talk to my parents about CPT, we always come around to Hebron. Besides working in Colombia, I've spent a lot of time in the West Bank, and it's just so hard for my parents to believe what I tell them. The news they hear about Israel is so biased here in the States.

One time they had this long-time friend over for dinner and he started asking about CPT. He'd taken many trips to *(mockingly)* "The Holy Land."

(ALEX walks toward others, sits in empty seat between parents and VISITOR.)

ALEX'S MOM

Honey, perhaps CPT *is* a bit too political.

ALEX'S DAD

They are too pro-Palestinian!

ALEX'S MOM

The problem is not whose side they're on, the problem is that...

(ALEX talks to DAD over MOM's comment)

ALEX

(Somewhat jokingly) ...Why don't you visit Palestine yourself, Dad, go see what it's like. ...You could go on a CPT delegation.

ALEX'S MOM

That's a good idea, Jack. You and Alex could go together...

VISITOR

What exactly do you do there in Hebron. Do you share the gospel?

ALEX

Well, we do a lot of accompaniment work, and we try to advocate for people...

VISITOR

(Interrupting) You know, Alex...

ALEX

(To audience) The guy has these *searing* blue eyes ...like one of those Sunday School Jesuses. He looks right into my eyes like he's planning to heal me or something.

(MOM and DAD listen politely to the VISITOR.)

VISITOR

I have been to Israel many more times than you. And I have never felt safer than when I am in Israel.

(ALEX shakes his head, looking down. Smiles awkwardly as he speaks.)

ALEX

Wow. ...Wow, dude.

(ALEX stands and walks a few steps toward front of stage.)

(To audience) I can't even *believe* this guy! I don't even know what to say to him! *He has never felt more safe than when he is in Israel.*

(Turns toward VISITOR and sits back down.)

How many hours did you spend in Gaza, dude?! ...How many Palestinians did you talk to?! Oh, I bet you visited loads of refugees, huh? How 'bout those UN tents they live in? How 'bout all those crumbling-down houses? The bombed-out buildings? Oh, I'm sure you got to see lots of those! Man, don't even *tell* me you have visited Israel! You haven't seen the *half* of it. ...Buddy, you were too busy buying little plastic crosses on the VIA—DELA—K-MART!

(ALEX's DAD and MOM speak over ALEX's lines above.)

ALEX's MOM

A-lex

ALEX's DAD

Alex, come on! Now sit down.

ALEX's MOM

(To VISITOR) I am sorry about this. Alex has been under a lot of pressure lately.

(VISITOR begins to grow my defensive in his posture. Crosses his arms and looks seriously at ALEX.)

ALEX

Did you hang out in the settlements, dude?! ...Nice roads, nice gardens, huh?

ALEX's DAD

Alex, that is enough!

ALEX

(To DAD) No! *(To VISITOR)* Did you check out the guard towers while you were there? ...How 'bout the barbed wire? Hey, I'm glad to hear they made you feel so *safe!*

(To audience) This guy, I am sure he ate at *McDonalds* while he was in "The Holy Land."

(ALEX storms offstage.)

ALEX's MOM

A-lex.

(To VISITOR) ...Well ...remind me of the last time you visited Israel?

(Light shifts to DIANE as she enters and MOM, DAD, & VISITOR exit. Scene shift. US imagery. DIANE carries a laptop that she sets on top of a card table that is carried on by someone else. DIANE walks to front of stage.)

DIANE

(To audience.) It was time to go home on a break. That meant, back on the public-speaking circuit again! ...I'm not sure why we call that a break, but that's what we call it!

(Walks over to projector. Addresses "group" as she speaks, scrolling through slides with an invisible clicker in her hand.)

...So though I have recently worked in Iraq, most of my CPT work has been in the West Bank, and I will return there after this break. There we deal with the tension by laughing. ...We *must* laugh... for our survival! The Israeli settlers—the extremist, far-right of the Israeli political spectrum—are so deathly serious. It can start to suck you under if you're not careful.

...Now might be a good time to talk about settlements. ...If you don't know what settlements are, well they're little Israeli cities or villages set up on Palestinian land. Some settlements are old, going back a few decades, and others are relatively new. The new folks might just walk in and erect their tents right in the middle of some Palestinian family's olive grove—uprooting hundred-year-old trees in the process, or they might squat in abandoned buildings in the city, taking over whole neighborhoods in time.

The way settlers see it, this is *not* stealing.

(Five CHORUS members enter on DIANE's last line, scattering across the stage.)

CHORUS

CHORUS We are descendants of Abraham!
CHORUS God gave the land west of the Jordan to Abraham.
CHORUS We can come take whatever Palestinian land we so choose!
CHORUS It does *not* belong to Palestinians!
CHORUS It doesn't matter if we must use violence.
ALL God *wants* us on this land!

DIANE

Now I want to make this very clear. After years of working in Hebron I can tell you, the settlers' attitude is *not* representative of the Israeli people. Settlers are sort of... well... different. And they get lots of slack. All kinds of political clout. Many of the settlers actually come to Israel from the United States.

Try to imagine this: The settlements, which overlook some of the most impoverished villages in the Middle East, and—in areas other than Hebron at least—some of the most over-populated land on earth ...the settlements, they're like Palm Springs.

(Scrolling through photos of settlements that appear on one of the backdrop screens.)

Immaculate gardens, ...well-irrigated lawns, ...shopping emporiums and copious Starbucks coffee houses. Even tax incentives from the Israeli government!

You know Palm Springs, that posh community in southern California? That's the settlements—*no kidding*. ... I'm telling you, the settlements have *got* to be the best government-subsidized housing in the world!

...But it's an egregious abuse of privilege. We've seen it a thousand times, I know, over and over again throughout history—but that does not make it less ugly. ...In Hebron, the settlers like to call us Nazis. Such a *terrible* word. Such a horrible misrepresentation of history. We have to just block it out. I have to keep remembering: this is not personal. This is not about you, Diane. But sometimes it is hard to keep that distance.

...“Nazi nigger,” is what they prefer to call me.

CHORUS

CHORUS I provide water in the desert and streams in the wasteland
CHORUS to give drink to my people,
CHORUS The chosen.
CHORUS Manifest Destiny.
CHORUS The Promised Land.

(ALL exit.)

(Flurry of activity as scene shifts to Iraq. Card table and two chairs are carried on stage. JEFF and SARAH enter from opposite sides of the stage and sit at card table as light comes up. They each pick up a hand of cards and play a fast game of “nerts,” with SARAH’s card finishing last.)

JEFF

Oh! I am defeated again—and here I am with home-court advantage! At least I didn’t burn the soup this time. ... *(To audience)* Who, for the love of God, burns soup?!

SARAH

No, it was very tasty. Thank you. You’re getting good at the soup. Cards on the other hand...

JEFF

So you drive there tomorrow?

SARAH

Yes, our meeting with the Lieutenant is at 9 AM, which means we have to leave around 5. *(Looks at watch as they walk to the door.)* ... Well, my driver is probably waiting downstairs. I really have to go.

(Both stand.)

JEFF

... Well, I hope the meeting goes well tomorrow.

SARAH

Me too.

JEFF

I’m glad you could make it over today.

(SARAH stands close, looking directly at JEFF.)

SARAH

I had fun. Thank you.

(SARAH extends her arms and gives JEFF a hug. They share a deep embrace then release slowly, looking at one another. SARAH gives JEFF a gentle kiss on the cheek and smiles. She turns to exit as JEFF watches her leave. He stands at the door for several moments looking out, then walks to his chair. He takes his cell phone out of his pocket and sets it on the table, then takes a small notebook and pencil out of his back pocket and sits down. He starts writing in the

notebook. JEFF stays in chair as light shifts to CHERYL, entering at back of stage. Screen imagery [i.e., suburban house] places her in the US.)

CHERYL

While I was home, I started reading about post-traumatic stress, I saw a counselor a couple of times. I was in pretty bad shape. CPT suggested that, after my break, I should go to a less-intense project. A team was doing some accompaniment work on a native reserve in Ontario, Canada.

I'd made a commitment, to CPT I mean. But I just didn't know if I could do it. Man, I didn't want to flake out. On my break, I just slept. All I could do was sleep. Who was I kidding? Me, the valiant peace worker—what a joke.

(Walks a few steps, then sits down on stage as ALEX enters on other side. He has his guitar slung across his back.)

ALEX

You know, sometimes I get *so* bloody angry. We're trying to support poor farmers in Colombia who are choosing nonviolence, or Palestinians who are saying "No more violence!", trying to end the tit for tat. But I'm like an inferno of violence inside. And I see these peoples' situations, and they're so grave. I mean, isn't it crazy *not* to defend yourself against violence, even if you have to be violent?

It used to seem so clear to me: *Nonviolence is the answer!* But now I don't know *shit!* You know, the farmers in Colombia—they were teaching *me*. 'Cause I don't get it anymore. I came to CPT thinking I had all the answers figured out.

(ALEX shakes his head, sits down on stage. Light shifts to DIANE.)

DIANE

When I do public speaking, people always want to know, "Well, what is the fix?" What is going to bring peace in these chaotic situations? As if I can tell them the answer! We work to reduce violence—I tell them. To *lessen violence*. Does that save lives? Well, yes, at times it does. Will our work end the wars? ... *(Shrugs shoulders and shakes head.)*

... You know, the question that dogs me is: Do you make a difference? If I am making a difference for peace, I want to be there. ... But do I make a difference? ... What if I am killed? Will the negative effect of my death cancel out any positive difference I might have made for peace?

(DIANE exits. Light shifts to JEFF as his cell phone rings. JEFF stands up and answers with a slight smile on his face.)

JEFF

Hello? Yes, this is he. (*Long silence, head hung and face stricken. Looks up.*) But... are you positive? (*Sounding more frantic*) Oh God. ...Where did it happen? (*Pause*) ...I mean, is there anything I can do? Please, just anything. (*Long pause.*) Okay. Yes. ...Yes.

(*JEFF hangs up, bows head a moment, then walks to chair and puts face in his hands.*)

BILL

(*To audience*) It was a Friday when we heard that Sarah had been kidnapped.

(*Light shifts to BILL as ALEX begins to play We Are a Gentle, Angry People and continues, behind lines, to the end of ACT ONE. BILL's WIFE enters at back of stage.*)

BILL

(*To audience*) When I told my wife about Sarah, she demanded I come home.

BILL's WIFE

Bill, it's not like the other projects you've done. ... This is *different*. This is *too* dangerous.

BILL

There is no way I can leave right now. The team needs me. ... You should see Jeff—he is beside himself. We are trying to support him.

BILL's WIFE

But Brian and Jean are going to have the baby any day now.

BILL

I wish I could be there for that.

BILL's WIFE

Bill, *I want him to meet his grandfather.*

BILL

I'm sorry. ... I cannot come home.

BILL's WIFE

...I haven't been able to sleep. (*Insistent, with a hint of anger.*) Please, just come. Why do you have to be so stubborn?

(*WIFE walks out. BILL looks at JEFF as he speaks.*)

JEFF

Oh God ...what were you thinking, Jeff? What were you *thinking*?! Dammit, you are a *fool*! ... You wasted your time. You wasted your time with her, and now what? (*Looking up, pleading*) Oh God, please, please. Oh...God..., *please*.

BILL

(*To audience*) The NGO Sarah worked for started pulling all their people out of Iraq. Other NGOs and government groups had been leaving over the course of several weeks, in reaction to kidnappings.

JEFF

Nine days since Sarah was kidnapped.

BILL

Unlike CPT, which has a policy not to negotiate with kidnappers, Sarah's NGO was negotiating. *Did the kidnappers want money?* people speculated. *Were they making an ideological statement?* No one knew.

JEFF

Ten days.

(*JEFF stands and starts pacing in front of table.*)

BILL

Some of our friends suggested we leave. They said it had become too dangerous for us.

JEFF

...Eleven days.

BILL

But CPT remained.

JEFF

...*Fif-teen* days. ...Still no Sarah.

(*Lights go black.*)

ACT TWO

(ALEX enters at back of stage and starts playing/singing Riverbottom by Matt Schaaf [recording and chords available from playwright upon request]. Images of war appear on screens as ALEX sings.)

“Anger comes to visit late at night
When you think that you’re asleep, you’re really spoilin’ for a fight.
So we calculate our strategies to win.
The partition and long division of enemies from friends.

Pretty speeches on the radio,
Promises that everybody knows are meant to fade.
Ornaments for your leafless tree,
Words to cover up your deeds.

Roots of a poison tree grow deep. They go out from a violent seed. Roots of a poison tree grow deep. Draw restless water from the riverbottom, oh...”

(Volume trails off during instrumental interlude, and ALEX keeps playing it very softly as he walks off stage. DIANE and GRACE enter with two Palestinian SHEPHERDS.)

GRACE

CPT has been in the West Bank for over ten years, but we only started working in the Palestinian village At-Tuwani in 2004.

SHEPHERD 1

School-kids from the village of Tuba

SHEPHERD 2

can’t walk to school in Tuwani

SHEPHERD 1

without passing a settlement—

SHEPHERD 2

Havat Ma’on.

SHEPHERD 1

Settlers won’t let them pass.

GRACE

We started work in Tuwani, walking the children to school.

DIANE

Eventually, after settlers continued harassing the children *and* attacking the internationals who were accompanying them, the Israeli police responded. They said *they* would accompany the Tuba kids. Most days they do, but they are inconsistent and disrespectful to the children. So we monitor the police.

GRACE

We started accompanying shepherds in the area too.

SHEPHERD 1

Shepherds with land deeds

SHEPHERD 2

clear back to the Ottoman Empire.

SHEPHERD 1

Yet settlers won't let them graze their sheep.

SHEPHERD 2

At times, they are violent toward the shepherds.

(During the last line SHEPHERDS squat down, like they are watching their sheep, on one side of the stage. DIANE and GRACE stand near them.)

GRACE

One day Diane and I were accompanying the shepherds. A few settlers had been patrolling from a ridge overlooking the pasture—three days in a row. When we arrived, no one was out on the ridge. There was nothing but a clear blue sky... And then...

(Three SETTLERS storm in [on opposite side of stage as SHEPHERDS] carrying sticks, led by BENJAMIN, who carries a gun. As they enter, GRACE calmly walks toward BENJAMIN, meeting him at center stage, as DIANE picks up a video camera and begins to document the encounter. GRACE stands in front of BENJAMIN, blocking him with her arms away from her sides, pointed downward. DIANE is keeps herself positioned between the SETTLERS and the SHEPHERDS.)

BENJAMIN

Get out, you are trespassers!

OTHER SETTLERS

Go home, you terrorist-lovers!

We will not tolerate trespassers on our land!

GET OFF OUR LAND!

Get out of here, Nazi whore!

GRACE

These men just want to graze their sheep. They hold deeds to this land. They will not threaten you.

BENJAMIN

(Getting in GRACE's face) Get out, you Nazi bitch! These terrorists want to kick us out of our land, the land of *our fathers*. Get the hell out of my way.

(BENJAMIN tries to step around GRACE, but she sidesteps to block him again and again. He stands yelling in her face. While the other SETTLERS yell the same phrases as above.)

BENJAMIN

We will not tolerate this! This is our land!

(Scene suddenly shifts to slow-motion [red lighting; sound of heartbeat] as the three SETTLERS crouch down and pick up invisible stones. They hurl them at the CPTers and SHEPHERDS. The SHEPHERDS hover close together while GRACE and DIANE cover their heads and dodge rocks. DIANE gets knocked over when hit by a rock. She drops her camera in slow-motion, and the SETTLERS come forward with raised sticks. BENJAMIN observes, pointing his gun at GRACE. The SETTLERS hit GRACE and the SHEPHERDS with sticks. GRACE is hit squarely on the back as she is crouched forward on the ground. When DIANE falls she gets up and picks up the camera. Scene shifts out of slow-motion, back to normal lighting, and SETTLERS begin yelling again.

BENJAMIN turns attention to DIANE who has taken her cell phone out of her pocket and started to make a call.)

BENJAMIN

Who the hell are you calling, you Nazi nigger?!

DIANE

I am calling the police.

BENJAMIN

You think the authorities will help you while you assist criminals?

DIANE

What you are doing is against the law. These shepherds have a right to graze their sheep in these fields. If you are going to harass them, we are going to inform the police.

(An Israeli SOLDIER and COMMANDER enter on side of stage opposite GRACE. GRACE notices them. She addresses BENJAMIN.)

GRACE

I see you called the military...

BENJAMIN

(Rushing to COMMANDER) Our families own this land. We won't tolerate this trespassing. These men are inciting violence in our neighborhood. You must stop them.

GRACE

(Stands with hand on back. To audience.) My back doesn't even hurt at first. Good old adrenaline.

(GRACE walks toward BENJAMIN and COMMANDER.)

COMMANDER

(To Grace) You must leave the area! We have declared this a closed military zone!

GRACE

I'm afraid we cannot leave. Not while these men are being threatened.

COMMANDER

Leave the area or you will be arrested!

(As COMMANDER speaks an Israeli POLICE approaches and stands behind him.)

GRACE

I cannot leave unless you provide protection for these men.

COMMANDER

Do you have a passport?

GRACE

I am a US citizen. I work with Christian Peacemaker Teams as a human rights monitor. We must stay to assure...

COMMANDER

(Exasperated, to POLICE) Would you do something about this!

POLICE

I will take her down to the station.

(POLICE takes hold of GRACE's arm, but is not rough. They exit. SETTLERS pull SHEPHERDS to their feet and push them offstage. DIANE videotapes. SOLDIER, COMMANDER exit in same direction as the POLICE. DIANE walks to front and center as SETTLERS and BENJAMIN scatter across the stage.)

DIANE

When I meet settlers like Benjamin, I try to imagine their story. So much hatred, so much fear, doesn't arise out of nowhere, you know what I mean?

CHORUS (SETTLERS and SOLDIER)

CHORUS How many of these settlers had family members persecuted in Europe?

CHORUS How many heard firsthand accounts of Auschwitz?

CHORUS Bergen Belsen?

CHORUS Buchenwald?

CHORUS Dachau?

CHORUS Ravensbrück?

DIANE

How many settlers know the impact of terrorist bombings on the families of those who are killed?

(Images from the following bombings appear on screen during CHORUS' lines. CHORUS members exit after their lines.)

CHORUS (SETTLERS and SOLDIER)

CHORUS June 1, 2001. Tel Aviv disco. 21 killed.

CHORUS December 1, 2001. Ben Yehuda Street, Jerusalem. 10 killed.

CHORUS January 5, 2003. Tel Aviv bus station. 23 killed.

(ALL remaining settlers exit, leaving BENJAMIN and DIANE).

BENJAMIN April 17, 2006. Neve Shaanan Street. My wife, my son, and seven other killed.

(BENJAMIN exits.)

DIANE

It's mind-boggling how much pain is distilled in this one little strip of geography! The pain and anger keep cycling through generations, like dirty, infested water. New enemies ...but the same old hurts.

(DIANE exits. In next scene various locations are simultaneously represented onstage as characters enter and take places. Images on screens place them geographically as they speak. BILL enters.)

BILL

In Iraq I meet family after family who are tired—the threat of house raids by US soldiers, the imprisonment of their sons without charge, the violence on the streets and the fear of getting caught in the crossfire. US corporations getting rich off the occupation. In Iraq, the US is creating enemies faster than Saddam ever did.

(BILL exits.)

MARIA INEZ

I have met many Colombian women
who mourn their husbands.
Victims of guerrillas, victims of paramilitaries.
So many victims, and so much anger.
But I also meet the women who refuse—
refuse to teach hatred to their children.
Refuse to pass along the wounds.
They are the heroes.

(MARIA exits. ALEX, TRANSLATOR CPTer, and PAULO enter on side of stage. ALEX has guitar slung over his back. ALEX and PAULO are both crouched down on their haunches with TRANSLATOR CPTer standing behind them.)

ALEX

Once on the Opón, in Colombia, I met a young *para* named Paulo. We met up with him and his comrades at a boat-crossing and they saw my guitar. They asked me to play them a song—which I did! Anyway, after I played, we got to talking about peace. I just started telling them

my story... how I ended up in Colombia, what I thought about violence. I told them, “killing people will never bring peace. It can only bring more war.”

TRANSLATOR CPT

Matar a la gente nunca traerá la paz. Sólo lleva más guerra.

ALEX

Paulo looked at me and said...

PAULO

Cuando era niño, los guerrilleros secuestraron a mis padres.

TRANSLATOR CPT

When I was a child, guerilla kidnapped my parents.

PAULO

Violaron a mi madre. Amenazaron a mi papá.

TRANSLATOR CPT

They raped my mother. They threatened to kill my papa.

PAULO

¿Qué es la paz?

TRANSLATOR CPT

What is peace?

PAULO

Desde ese día, nunca he conocido la paz.

TRANSLATOR CPT

Since that day, I have never known peace. ...I have never known peace.

(PAULO exits while ALEX and TRANSLATOR look at each other. After a moment, they also exit.)

(A spotlight comes up on CHERYL as she enters from the side and walks to center stage. The sound of a loon is heard on occasion in the background.)

CHERYL

I ended up in Grassy Narrows, Ontario, a native reserve where CPTers are accompanying a logging blockade. The community here is tired of the clear-cutting on their treaty lands, so they decided to block the loggers. Logging trucks haven't shown up for weeks, thank God. It's very quiet.

(Talks slowly, as if tired. Long pauses.) Almost too quiet. There's so much time to think, you know? *(Listening to loons)* Out in these woods, with the loons. They've had a hard time keeping CPTers here. *(Laughs)* We're generally not so good at sitting around. Just two of us here now.

Man, it's quiet. It seems like the more time I spend thinking, the darker it gets. ...I worry that maybe I'm a failure, like I let my Colombian friends down cause I couldn't do it—CPT. But I just can't envision going back to my old life, either. Not after Colombia. After what I've seen.

(CHERYL exits. Light comes up on BILL as he and JEFF enter. BILL walks to centerstage. JEFF sits at the card table.)

BILL

Human rights organizations started pulling their workers out of Iraq as more and more people were kidnapped. Didn't matter if they were humanitarian workers or foreign contractors. Our Iraqi neighbors warned us not to go out. They would come visit, bring us food they'd prepared. But it put them at risk.

We were *plagued* with boredom—which is always worse than crisis. I kept thinking: *What am I doing here?* My family wants me home. And what am I doing? Playing cards in Iraq. Playing cards! I'd go out to get groceries and my life would be in danger.

(BILL exits)

JEFF

Being cooped up was the worst. I wasn't sleeping well. As soon as I closed my eyes I would be haunted by images of Sarah, of what her captors might be doing to her. Or I wondered if she was dead. Then I was haunted by images of murder, of Sarah being killed in some gruesome way. In the past, news stations had aired video footage of kidnap victims being murdered. I tried not to see these, but I'd caught glimpses—in shops in town. The images tormented me. My anguish, the torment of not knowing what had happened to Sarah...it made our friends' suffering so much more real.

(JEFF takes off his hat and bows his head like he is praying, his head resting on folded hands with his elbows on the table.)

A bright searchlight shines on one side of the stage. Audience hears the sound of a rifle banging on a door. VOICE comes from somewhere offstage as MR. AL-JABOURI runs onto stage carrying a rifle. As soon as the light hits him, shooting begins and he drops to the floor.)

VOICE

OPEN UP! THIS IS A HOUSE RAID! OPEN UP!

MR. AL-JABOURI

Meen Hoon? Meen Hoon? [Who is there?! Who is there?! in Arabic transliteration.]

(Two AL-JABOURI SONS run into the room.)

VOICE

DROP YOUR WEAPONS!

(More gunshots. All three men fall to the floor to dodge the shots. MR. AL-JABOURI lays his gun on the floor and pushes it away from him just as audience hears the loud crash of a door being broken down, and three US SOLDIERS rush into the room from the opposite side of the stage. They are yelling, “Drop your weapons” “Don’t move” “THIS IS A HOUSE RAID” “You are under arrest.” The three AL-JABOURIs rise to their knees with their hands in the air as a WOMAN in a long nightgown runs out yelling, “Allah, have mercy!” [“arHamna, ya allah”]. The men are saying (use Arabic transliteration) “What have we done” [“shunu sawaina”], “You have the wrong home” [“3andkum bait ghalaT”], “We have done nothing,” [“ma sawaina shay”], “We are not terrorists, we are your friends,” [“iHna mu irhabiyeen – iHna aSdiqakum”], and “Why are you doing this,” [“laish tisawwi hatha”]. Slow-motion sequence begins [red lighting; sound of heartbeat]. During slow-motion sequence, JEFF says the Lord’s Prayer (Our Father, who art in heaven...). In slow-motion, the SOLDIERS throw the AL-JABOURI men to the floor, some hitting the men in the stomach with the butt of their rifles. They handcuff the men, and one SOLDIER pushes the WOMAN aside. Slow-motion sequence ends as JEFF’s prayer ends (“Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever, Amen”) and the SOLDIERS violently pull the AL-JABOURI men to their feet and drag them off stage. The AL-JABOURI men yell the phrases above while the WOMAN yells “ALLAH, have mercy!” [“arHamna, ya allah”] over and over again. Her crying out continues, becoming more weary and anguished for a moment after the men have exited, and trails off as WOMAN exits. Light shifts to JEFF as BILL enters and stands behind him.)

JEFF

Our friends, the Al-Jabouri family—their sons were all home one night, the eve of a Muslim holiday. They were sleeping all over the house, the men with their wives and children, when they were raided. A routine house raid by Occupation forces. ... Only they had the wrong house.

BILL

All three men were arrested. The sons held in Abu Ghraib prison for several months. Never charged. Never compensated for damages to their home.

JEFF

We spent months advocating with Occupation officials for the sons' release.

(BILL and JEFF exit. Scene shifts to West Bank. Hebron imagery. DIANE enters.)

DIANE

In Hebron as well as Tuwani, we accompany school kids. I've been doing patrols for about three years now. And sometimes, when a group of us CPTers are walking along with a few Palestinian kids, trying to keep settlers from throwing rocks at them, ...I think of Ruby Bridges. You know, the black girl who was the first non-white kid to attend the Frantz Elementary School in New Orleans? Took a whole entourage of National Guardsman to protect Ruby from the screaming crowds of angry white folks.

The young Ruby Bridges prayed for the angry people and forgave them.

(DIANE closes eyes and folds her hands like she is Ruby praying.)

"Please God, try to forgive those people. Because even if they say those bad things, they don't know what they're doing."

(Looks up at audience.) I wonder, would I do the same? I think of these Palestinian boys we accompany. Will they forgive? Or will they join the fighters, hurl stones at the settlers, at the soldiers who bulldoze their neighborhoods? ...Will any of these children become suicide bombers?

(DIANE exits. Light shifts to JEFF as he enters. As he speaks, MR. AL-JABOURI enters [opposite side of stage as JEFF] and comes near him.)

JEFF

I got to know the Al-Jabouri family when I and another teammate were helping locate the sons. Both were eventually released...*eight months* after the raid.

When I go to their house, they treat me like a king. Me, an American—I am treated like one of their own sons.

MR AL-JABOURI

We know you are not like your government. We know the American people are kind.

(MR. AL-JABOURI hands JEFF a basket of fruit while touching him on the shoulder.)

JEFF

The whole family knows about Sarah... They have tried so hard to comfort me.

(Light shifts to GRACE as JEFF and MR. AL-JABOURI exit. GRACE enters with her hand on her side, sits down with effort. A PALESTINIAN WOMAN enters with GRACE, bringing her tea and bread. She sits down next to GRACE and pours glasses of tea as GRACE speaks.)

GRACE

I was released the same afternoon as the arrest; wasn't treated badly. The shepherds were very thankful for our accompaniment. They had grazed their sheep; they had resisted the settlers. But when they found out I'd been hurt, there was an *outpouring* of condolence in Tuwani. It was a bit embarrassing.

(BILL enters and light shifts to him as GRACE and PALESTINIAN WOMAN exit.)

BILL

Almost every week we heard another rumor about Sarah. Her body had been found somewhere, or she was soon to be released, or she was seen in another city, or the kidnappers had demanded a ransom. She was shown on the news once, but with a dark hood over her head. We could not tell if it was her. We kept the news turned off at the apartment—out of concern for Jeff.

(BILL exits, then JEFF enters.)

JEFF

At night I get pictures in my head of the men holding Sarah. They are terrible images (*closes his eyes, shudders*). And then I am thinking these things as I walk down the street. Every Iraqi man looks like those men in my head. And, I feel this *hatred*. Not toward anyone in particular—just this general hatred.

It is so sick! It is no different than some general who thinks: “what the hell, we'll just waste a neighborhood or two...who cares, they're only Iraqi kids!”

(JEFF exits.)

(Scene shift to Colombia. Colombia imagery. Jungle sounds in background. ALEX and MARIA enter, MARIA at the back of the stage, ALEX at the front. They carry rolled sleeping bags under their arms and backpacks over their shoulders. When they reach center stage, they each roll the sleeping bags out and set down their backpacks. MARIA says her line as ALEX reaches into his backpack and pulls out a book and flashlight.)

MARIA INEZ

The paras had been spotted in the Opón, not far from one of the villages we accompany. The community was afraid, so we slept out that night, near the entrance to the village, a little ways from the houses.

(Both ALEX and MARIA simultaneously mime getting into their tents [unzipping door, climbing in, laying down on sleeping bag]. MARIA lays down like she's sleeping, while ALEX lays reading a book with his flashlight, propped on one elbow and facing the audience.)

After a few seconds, three Colombian PARAMILITARIES carrying machine guns enter. ALEX hears them coming and turns off his flashlight. He lays down his book and light and holds his body in a rigid posture as the scene transpires. Two paras walk to ALEX's tent while one stands to the side looking around, like he is keeping guard. One para searches ALEX's backpack in front of ALEX's tent while the other watches. The one pulls out a shirt. He looks at it then tosses it to the one "on guard." He then pulls ALEX's red CPT hat out of the backpack, looks at it, and hands it to the man beside him. This man nudges his comrade, puts the hat back in the backpack, and starts to walk away. These two men walk around MARIA's tent, checking it out, while the "on guard" para makes "psst, psst" sounds, beckoning them to leave. While all of this is happening, ALEX lays frozen still in his tent, his eyes wide open and his head hovering a little above his pillow. The audience can see he is awake and terror-struck. After the paras have exited the stage, ALEX sits up just slightly, balanced on an elbow, like he is listening for the men. Slowly he sits up, opens the tent door slightly and pulls in his backpack. He inspects the contents of the pack, pulling out his CPT hat and holding it. He addresses the audience.)

ALEX

When I heard the footsteps outside, ...I just froze. I should have been thinking what to do, to protect the community, but all that was going through my head was: *God, I don't want to be tortured, I don't want to die.* I didn't even think about Maria Inez in the other tent.

...I heard them walk off. They walked away, *away* from the community—into the bush. Maybe it was because we were there. I don't know. ...I lay frozen in my tent all night, my heart racing. What would I have done if they had walked toward the houses, if they had harassed my teammate? I just lay frozen.

(ALEX shakes his head, then he and MARIA both arise, pick up their things and exit. JEFF enters from back of stage, BILL enters from side and walks to front of stage. Scene shift to Iraq. Iraq imagery. Muffled sounds of mortar explosions are heard in background, followed by machine gun fire.)

JEFF

Insurgent attacks had increased those weeks in Baghdad. It was really hampering our work. When we did go out, we couldn't get around—so many checkpoints. On one trip through the city, we passed through *ten* checkpoints.

BILL

We were in regular conversation with partners about whether to even stay in Iraq, whether we were helpful. We were Westerners and worried our presence could put our neighbors at risk—if some group targeted us.

(BILL exits as JEFF speaks.)

JEFF

But I wasn't leaving Iraq, not if Sarah was there. I wouldn't leave. I wanted to see her the *day* she got freed; I wanted to tell her how I felt about her. ...*If* she got freed. ...It had been thirty days. ...It felt like months.

(JEFF exits. Scene shift. Clearcut image on screen. CHERYL enters and walks to center stage.)

CHERYL

In Grassy Narrows, living with the native people there, my doubts just deepened. ...In the part of the US where I live, you just don't see Native Americans around much. But there I was in Canada...confronted with my own racism *head-on*. Here are people still being stolen from, in my *own backyard*. *(Pause)* And to be honest, I hadn't given them much thought before. Who is perpetrating the violence in that conflict? ...*I* am—a North American living off stolen resources.

It really threw me, you know? I thought I'd go to Grassy Narrows and get a break from Colombia, have some time to mend. ...It just brought me even lower.

(CHERYL sits down and DIANE enters from side, toward the back of the stage. Imagery shifts to a picture of barbed wire, with a city skyline in the background, or another general image.)

DIANE

You know, I wish I could say CPT was totally different from the rest of the world, that there's "No racism here"! But sometimes that's the hardest thing, seeing racism—however subtle—on the team. It's so blinding, you know. People really can't even see what they're doing. ...Sometimes, it feels like some of my teammates don't even *hear* me.

(MARIA enters from back of stage.)

MARIA INEZ

The pain doesn't cease.
Rejection and greed *never cease*.
So what are our choices?
I have seen the cost of hatred, of choosing revenge.
My own brother was shot by a guerilla, at an illegal checkpoint.
I was just a girl. My father refused to pay a tax at the checkpoint,
so the guerilla took out a gun and shot my brother.
In that one second, Hector was gone.
And on that day, hatred began to take my father too.

(GRACE enters from side of stage opposite DIANE.)

GRACE

I had to leave Tuwani, go back to Hebron. My back got worse and worse. Some mornings I could hardly move. I didn't even know how I would travel home on a plane—the pain was so bad.

(CHERYL stands up, front and center, as BILL, ALEX, and JEFF enter from the back and scatter across the back of the stage.)

CHERYL

There's a tendency around here for people to put their personal needs aside.

ALEX

I'll deal with my feelings on my own time.

BILL

Right now it's about the work.

CHERYL

Even with team worship, regular check-ins. Most CPTers are North American, and North Americans are pretty into efficiency, "effectiveness."

JEFF

There's no *time* for emotions!

ALEX

Wait till your break to sort it out!

BILL

There's no time!

CHERYL

It's pretty dysfunctional. ...I was trying to hold it all in. Not to burden my teammates. But it was leaking out my eyes all the time. Just leaking and leaking.

(CHERYL, DIANE, MARIA, and BILL exit while JEFF take place at front of stage, to the side, and ALEX stays in his place toward the back of the stage. As scene shifts to Iraq and Colombia, Iraq props [card table and chairs] are brought in, JEFF sits down at table, and Paulo comes in and speaks to ALEX, gestures to him to play his guitar.)

ALEX

Hola Paulo. ¿Está bien?

PAULO

Sí. Cántame.

(ALEX begins to play Riverbottom chorus on guitar while PAULO listens. Lights come up on JEFF as BILL enters the stage, just a few paces and with reluctance, looks over at JEFF, then walks toward him. He takes a seat next to JEFF as JEFF greets him.)

JEFF

Hey.

BILL

(With heaviness) Hi.

JEFF

What's up?

BILL

We got some news about Sarah.

JEFF

Tell me.

BILL

The body of a young woman was found in northern Baghdad this morning. ...They believe it is Sarah.

JEFF

(Pauses, shaking his head) No ... but they don't know. ... *No!*

BILL

She was shot. They are just waiting for an official identification. ...The description is that of Sarah.

(JEFF begins to shake. BILL extends a hand like he is going to place it on JEFF's shoulder, but stops and places it back on his lap. He continues to look down at his hands, then at JEFF, then back at his hands.)

JEFF

(With insistence, and as he is starting to cry) No..... Oh, God. (begins to cry silently, then a sob.) "Oh, God, no!"

(Light shifts to ALEX as he begins singing second verse of Riverbottom.)

ALEX

"No messiah holds the key to our locked doors,
There is no roadmap to peace
Only the fragile fumbling of mothers,
sons and daughters
Stumbling toward the hope of getting free.

(JEFF stands up and exits as ALEX continues to sing.)

(Chorus) Roots of a poison tree grow deep. They go out from a violent seed. Roots of a poison tree grow deep. Draw restless water from the riverbottom, oh..."

(ALEX's singing trails off on the "oh..." as he exits the stage and BILL's WIFE comes on. As she enters, BILL stands and walks to the front of the stage. A phone rings. BILL faces audience but is obviously "on the phone" with his WIFE.)

BILL

... Her body is being transported to Dover Air Force Base—that's the official policy. There's nothing we can do about it. The autopsy will be done in the US.

BILL's WIFE

When is Jeff going home?

BILL

We couldn't get him a flight until Sunday.

BILL's WIFE

Is anyone going with him, to accompany him?

BILL

Yes, Jennifer is going to go back. We didn't think he should travel alone.

BILL's WIFE

But didn't Jennifer just get there, just a few weeks ago? ...Bill, why don't you accompany him?
...*Please* come home.

(BILL and WIFE exit. Light shifts to DIANE as DIANE and MARIA enter on opposite sides of stage. Image of a chapel on the screen. Both women kneel on the floor as if praying.)

DIANE

Monastery of the Holy Spirit, a Trappist retreat center not far from home in Atlanta—set out of the way like a secret little paradise. When I come here I stay in a guesthouse with other *sojourners*. Eat enough of Brother Tom's curried rice to last a year.

But breaks go by fast. ...It's crazy how little time one gets to think. Being here clears up the confusion, I guess. *(Laughs)* ...Actually, I only scratch the surface.

(Imagery shifts to Colombian city at night. Light shifts to MARIA who looks out at audience as she prays.)

MARIA INEZ

Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
Deliver us from evil, God.
From the poisons people carry in their hands
and in their hearts.
Deliver us from the temptation to ingest poison
into our own bodies, the poison of hatred into our minds.
Kindle in us your love.

(Light shifts to DIANE as she stands.)

DIANE

It's so convoluted. ...I've been working in At-Tuwani more. ...I just don't know if it's enough—what we're doing. ...In Hebron, the violence is pretty clear. We see it, we confront it. But Tuwani is different. The shepherd communities we accompany, ...they almost seem to be dying. The settlers scattered poison all over the hills around Tuwani several months back, put dead chickens in the wells. They have poisoned the sheep. Poison has gone everywhere—the water, the soil. The losses are huge. ...I don't know what is going to happen to the people there. I just sit with them and try not to cry—like I'm at some vigil for the dying. ...I feel helpless. ...How do you make a difference here?

The authorities—they do nothing for the people of Tuwani. Our friends in Tuwani, they are on the brink of devastation. So what do we do? *What do we do?*

(DIANE exits. Entire stage becomes Colombia street scene. Light shifts to MARIA who stands and takes a couple of steps.)

MARIA INEZ

... As I was leaving mass that day, I was followed.

(PARAMILITARIES enter, one from back, two from opposite sides of stage. MARIA walks in triangle, running into one para, then turning and running into the other, then ending up in the middle of the stage, surrounded. PARA who entered from back of stage stays on the upper level looking down. He/she serves as TRANSLATOR.)

PARA 1

María Inés de los Equipos Cristianos de la Acción por la Paz.

MARIA

Sí, soy María Inés.

PARA 1

Tengo un mensaje del AUC para ti.

TRANSLATOR

I have a message for you from the AUC.

PARA 1

Vas a morir si te ven en el Opón más.

TRANSLATOR

You are as good as dead if they see you again in the Opón.

(PARAs exit. MARIA looks around. A second later, MARIA exits, covering her mouth. Scene shift. Imagery of mid-west farm. GRACE enters on side of stage using a cane and sits down, with much effort, as she speaks.)

GRACE

They practically knocked me out with painkillers and put me on a plane! I was home in Indiana with my sister, pretty much getting the queen's treatment. Physical therapy every other day, a long back rub! ...I got lots of visitors, some good press—local people wanting to interview me about the attack, the state of things in Palestine.

The doctors aren't sure how my back will heal up. There's the best-case scenario and the worst, then everything in between. Best case scenario, I will heal up just fine, be a spring chicken again. ...Or I could end up living with chronic pain.

(Light shifts to ALEX who enters opposite side of stage carrying a backpack. He takes it off as he starts to speak.)

ALEX

I went home on a break. Every time I did public speaking, there were people treating me like a hero. *Oh Alex, we salute you!* All I could think about was my body frozen in that tent, the courage all seeping out of me. I felt like such a sham.

(ALEX throws backpack to the side and sits on floor. Light shifts to GRACE who takes off her CPT hat and looks at it.)

GRACE

The hardest thing is leaving CPT. It has been my life for a long time now. I don't know what else I would do. ...Christian Peacemaker Teams has been my life.

(Light shifts to ALEX.)

ALEX

I mean, I guess people like to have heroes. Is it better for people to heroize CPTers than some army general sitting at a desk, sending poor men out to die for him? I don't know. It just gives me the creeps. Isn't putting someone on a pedestal just a cop out?

It's strange, but I just wanted to be back in Colombia. It was, like, I couldn't be myself back home—everyone thinking I was some kind of hero. When I'm in Colombia, people aren't inclined to put me on some pedestal, to make me their poster boy for peace.

(MARIA enters from side and walks to front and center of stage. Light shifts to MARIA.)

MARIA

After that day I knew I was a target.
My name scrawled on that list of death.
...But we always know we are at risk, don't we?
Should the verbal threat change what I do?
The threat of death no longer abstract.
It now has a voice, a specific army, a specific place.
It is harder to ignore.
But can I turn my back on my friends, my home
because I fear death?

(CHERYL enters at back of stage and stays to one side of upper level. Light shifts to CHERYL.)

CHERYL

After coming home from Canada on break, I left CPT. I just couldn't do it anymore. ...I wished that I could.

(CHEYRL kneels down on her knees.)

But I'd found where my strength came to its end. ...It ended on that river bank. In Colombia.

(BILL enters and stands near ALEX, a little closer to the audience. Light shifts to BILL.)

BILL

I understand my wife's concern, my *sons'* concern. But I can't deny the fact that I am called to this work. It is not some heroic delusion, ...not anymore.

It's more that I *need* to be here, because I can't *not* be here. That's how a calling is. ...Even if it puts your life on the line.

(DIANE enters on side of stage where GRACE sits. She stands toward the back of the stage, on the side. Light shifts to DIANE.)

DIANE

When I'm in Hebron, sometimes Palestinians will ask me "Why do you come here?" They can't fathom why North Americans leave our comfortable lives to try and support their struggle.

It is *good* to be here, I try to tell them. Many people in my country are starving for meaning. When they come to this place, the West Bank, and see what's happening here, ...when you welcome them, they realize there is something worth struggling for, something more important than anything they've ever been a part of.

(JEFF enters from back of stage, stands on upper level near CHERYL. Light shifts to JEFF.)

JEFF

...Sarah is dead. That is the *one* thing I know. How long will the Iraq war go on? Can anyone do anything to stop it? Was Sarah's sacrifice worth it? I don't care how much she loved Iraq, or her work. ...I don't know any of these things. All I know is that Sarah's ...dead.

(Light shifts to ALEX who stands up and walks a couple of steps toward center stage.)

ALEX

Among my friends, back where I went to college, it's popular to be anti-war. It's a *cool* club to belong to. But it's not how many people think about it—being a pacifist. It's not about being right and being superior. Being a pacifist is humbling. It is damned humiliating!

To be honest, I'm no longer sure I'm a pacifist. I'm not sure I'm ready for it. When I'm insulted, I'm angry, dammit. I'm *violent*. How can I call myself a peacemaker?

(Light shifts to MARIA who stands, front and center.)

MARIA INEZ

I have been working for peace in Colombia most of my life.
I will *continue* to work for peace in Colombia,
until we have stopped killing our brothers and sisters.
Yes, there's fear. Yes, I question,
Is any of this of any use?
Am I crazy to put my life in danger so willingly?

But when I am struggling with what I should do,
I try to remember a particular phrase...
I repeat it over and over in my head, like a prayer.
Saint Teresa of Avila said: "Do whatever most kindles love in you."
Haz lo que mejor encienda el amor en ti.
That is why *I* do this. I do this because it kindles love.
(With face turned toward audience, eyes closed as if she is reciting a mantra or prayer in her head)

... Haz lo que mejor encienda el amor en ti.
(Opens eyes. To audience.)
...*Do whatever kindles love.*
...Whatever kindles *love*.

(Lights go black. When lights come up for curtain call, the screens again display the composite image of Earth shot from the moon by Apollo 13 astronauts.)

END