

Fool's Gold:
The Struggles of Farming and Ranching in a Rocky Mountain Town within a Growing
Global Market

A Play in Two Acts
By Aaron Delman

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*Fool's Gold:
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Abstract: The many difficulties that family farmers and ranchers face are exposed in play format. These struggles include gaining economic stability, the effects of agricultural legislation on small farmers, the modernization of a historical and traditional lifestyle and means of business, the changing mind sets of younger generations within the community, hiring illegal immigrants as workers, and the emotional investments that independent farmers and ranchers go through while making decisions that could possibly lead to the demise of their life's work. This play focuses on a farmer who finds out he may lose his farm and has little options left to save it. He had relied on the help of a former Sociology and Economics teacher from Mexico that was hired as labor several years ago. After immigrating illegally to the US because of layoffs, he eventually became the farmer's economic adviser, but he too has to make a choice: stay on board with a failing future or find new work. Both the farmer and his adviser have sons the same age that grew up together, however racial tensions develop as the two grow older and they become distant. Conflicts arise between all four characters as each one tries to find their place in what was once known as the Old West, now a melting pot of real estate and agribusiness. Past and future clash in today's present.

Characters

Levi Ridge,	<i>a family farmer</i>
Colt Ridge,	<i>Levi's son, 18</i>
Maggie Ridge,	<i>Levi's wife</i>
Ignacio del Fuego Gallegos,	<i>economic advisor for Levi</i>
Javier del Fuego,	<i>Ignacio's son, 17</i>
Young Colt,	<i>around 10</i>
Young Javier,	<i>around 9</i>
Young Levi,	<i>around 10</i>
Douglas Ridge,	<i>Levi's father</i>
Chris Cox,	<i>a neighboring farmer</i>
Mr. Winters	<i>a Sun Pride representative</i>
Lucas,	<i>a laborer for Levi</i>
Carlos,	<i>a laborer for Levi</i>
Quintana,	<i>a laborer for Levi</i>
Sherman	<i>Colt's boss at the feed store</i>
Officer Clancy	<i>local police officer</i>
Chance,	<i>Colt's friend</i>
Jared,	<i>Colt's friend</i>
2 more of Colt's Friends	
Man	

All is set in the United States Rocky Mountains. The specific locations of the play vary from the mountain woods, the Ridge farm, the back of a truck bed, a jail cell-like office, and a hotel room. Required set pieces for the play are only on the farm. There needs to be a room indicating Levi's study and a barn door that can also be turned around to reveal a house door with a small porch. The set can be complex or simple. The truck bed can be imagined or actual. The same goes for the other locations, just as long as the idea of each location is apparent.

Act 1 Scene 1

(Group of 18- to 20-year-olds sitting around the woods drinking. Begin the scene in medias res of the conversation. It is evening. A couple boxes of beer and bottles are on the ground)

Chance: ...Then you know what I says to that bastard? I get real close and look him in the eye and real quietly I says, "You know how I know that you're a bastard? 'Cause I'm the one that fucked your mother." *(There is a hooting and a hollering by the rest of the group.)* Now get this. I see in his eyes some tears building up, and I know all he wants to do is hit me in the face. And what do I do? I push him on the ground and say, "Go cry to mommy, 'cause if you don't yer daddy's gonna give ya a beating. *(Chance shakes his fist at an imaginary kid on the ground laughing with the group then continues.)* And that son-of-a-bitch got up so fast and run off you'd think he was a corvette.

Jared: Shit, Chance, that's a good one. Damn, I wish I coulda seen it. But you know don't ya that his mom's a Mexican.

Chance: So?

Jared: So you saying that you fucked a spic?

Chance: Boy, you're dumb. It's a joke. I didn't really screw his momma, just told him that. Shit, I wouldn't touch that bitch with a ten foot pole. *(Group laughs except for Colt who has not really been laughing at any of this.)*

Colt: What do you know, Chance? The only good that came out of them wetbacks coming here is their women.

Jared: Yeah, Colt's right. Some of them girls gets some real nice curves.

Chance: Jared, would you just shut up for a little bit. First you're riding my ass about

'bout gettin' with a Mexicana. (*He exaggerates the "h" sound of the "x" as though he were speaking Spanish.*) Then Colt says something and all of a sudden you're riding his beaver-lovin' bandwagon.

Colt: (*Seriously*) What's that you say, Chance?

Chance: Oh get off yer high horse, Colt. You may act like you don't like 'em but everybody knows that yer daddy has been hiring 'em for years. Shit, he even lets the illegals live on your land. And what about that old one yer Pa suckles up to to help him run his farm? I even heard you used to be best buds with his dirty-skinned son. (*Mood becomes very tense.*)

Colt: (*Warning Chance*) I think you've had enough to drink.

Chance: I ain't even drunk yet, but maybe yer right, Colt; (*Sarcastically*) You always is. Perhaps I better sit down. (*Chance begins to sit down then stops suddenly and stands up again to continue.*) Although I wouldn't be surprised if yer mother fucked that old geezer and that little piece of shit was yer half-broth-- (*Chance is stopped suddenly by Colt's hand around his neck. Chance falls instantly silent and still.*)

Colt: (*Intense yet controlled*) Ha. Ha. Ha! (*To the group*) Little bird has shot off his mouth again. (*Now directly at Chance*) You may get away talking 'bout some punk kid's mom, but you just stepped in a cow pie that you ain't getting out of. You seem to know lots about mothers and bastards don't ya? I wonder why that is? Hey Chance, where's your dad? What's that? (*Chance struggles. Colt tightens his grip around his throat.*) Cat got your tongue? You see I'm curious, 'cause every time I see your mom she's with another man. I just wanna know which one of those losers is your dad. (*Colt leans his ear close to Chance.*) What's that Chance? Oh that's right, how could I forget? Your dad got locked up

for molesting your little sister. Or was it you he touched? You've got a nice little scar on your eyebrow, don't ya. Let me take a guess on how you got that. You woke up to your sister's cries like you did every night that your mom worked the nightshift, but this night, this night was going to be different. You'd had enough. It was time for little Chance to be a man, to stand up to your pervert of a father. You opened the door with your left hand 'cause your right had his 45 in it. Did he laugh at you when you pointed it at him? He wasn't afraid, but you was, wasn't you, Chance? (*Chance struggles and is on the verge of crying. The observers are still and uncomfortable.*) He took ten steps towards you. That's plenty of time to pull the trigger. But you couldn't shoot could you? Not even to save your sister. What happened? Did the tears in your eyes keep you from seeing the punch he threw, knocking you out, while he finished with your sister. What was the last thing you remember? Was it the smell of Wild Turkey or your pride flowing out from the wound above your eye?

Friend 1: Colt, that's enough!

Friend 2: He can't even breath.

Colt: Does this concern you!?! (*The friends back off, still tense.*) Look at you Chance. Hiding under your cowboy hat. It can't protect you anymore; in fact it never did. (*Colt takes it off Chance's head and puts it on his own.*) You really think you're a cowboy, don't ya, with your shit-kickers and your truck. Tell me Chance, how many cows you own in your trailer park? You farming wheat in little pots on the window-sill? I thought not. (*Colt throws him to the ground, letting go. Chance gasps for air. Colt continues.*) What's happening to the West? (*Chance catches his breath then charges at Colt who quickly dodges the attack and trips Chance, sending him to the ground.*) Boy, you don't learn do

ya? Pick yerself up by the bootstraps and get out of here.

Chance: *(Holding back tears)* Fuck you, Colt. Fuck you! Fuck you! AAHHH! Yer goin' to hell you shit-fuck! *(Stumbling off)* Fuck you! AARRGHH! *(He exits)*

Jared: Jesus, Colt. Did you really have to say all--

Colt: Shut up Jared. I don't want to hear it. That waste has had it coming to him for a long time. Drink your beer.

Jared: Nah, I don't want it. I don't know 'bout you guys but I'm outta here.

Colt: Oh come on, Jared. He'll be fine.

Jared: No. No he won't. He's our friend man. How could you bring that shit up? God damn, you know how to kill a good time. I'm out. *(Jared exits. Colt grabs a bottle of whiskey and starts drinking from it. The others get up and watch Jared walk off.)*

Colt: *(To the others)* What's up with you guys, you stayin' or goin'? *(Pause)* Ah, just get the hell outta here. *(They begin to leave. Colt keeps talking but to his bottle of whisky.)* God damn, a cowboy just ain't a cowboy anymore. It's a good thing whiskey don't get weak with time, only gets stronger. *(He takes a huge pull and finishes the bottle. He sits down and takes the hat and crumples it up behind his head as he lies down.)* Nice to know it's good for something. *(Starts to fall asleep. Lights stay up on Colt as he falls asleep. Slowly the next scene change happens. It is Colt's family's farm. The following scene is a flashback. Colt stays in low light dreaming until the flashback is over.)*

Act 1 Scene 2

(Enter a young Colt, about 10 years old, and Javier about the same age running)

onstage.)

Colt: *(A little out of breath)* Okay, okay new game.

Javier: What's a matter Colt-- you can't handle my fastball?

Colt: No, it's not that. Just getting too dark to see the ball.

Javier: You couldn't see it when it was light out. It's just that fast.

Colt: Oh, you wish. It may be fast, but I sure saw it fly out of the yard when I hit it.

Javier: Yeah that was my curveball. I gotta work on that pitch.

Colt: Where'd you learn to throw that hard? You gotta teach me Javier.

Javier: When my dad and me was in Arizona, on the weekends the guys would play ball.

They even let me play and showed me all the pitches. I practiced every day that summer.

Even while they worked. How 'bout I show you tomorrow, Colt; it's gettin' dark.

Colt: That's what I'm sayin'. Hey, I got the perfect game. You ever played hide-n-go-seek?

Javier: Have I? You're looking at Javi "el puma" del Fuego. I'm quick, I'm quiet, and then I attack. *(Javier jumps toward Colt pretending to attack him. They both laugh.)*

Colt: What'd you call yourself?

Javier: It's my nickname: Javi "the panther" del Fuego.

Colt: What's the last part mean?

Javier: That's just my last name.

Colt: Yeah, but what does it mean?

Javier: Um, from the fire.

Colt: Wow! That's cool. So you're Javi the panther from the fire.

Javier: No it's more like Javi the panther del Fuego. You don't count the last name as part

of the nickname.

Colt: You should though. It sounds way better.

Javier: Okay, so now I'll be Javi "el puma del Fuego" del Fuego.

Colt: *(Looks a little confused)* Whatever, let's play. *(Before they can start, Enter Ignacio, Javier's father and Levi, Colt's father. They are talking business. They see the boys and address them.)*

Levi: Howdy boys. Whadda ya been up to?

Javier: Howdy Mr. Ridge. We're gonna play hide-n-seek.

Levi: Boys will be boys. I used to play that same game here when I was a kid.

Javier: *(To Levi)* So you have been here a long time?

Levi: I was born on this farm.

Javier: Papa says that we'll be here a long time too. I'm sick of travelin'.

Ignacio: That's right miijo. What do you think about that, Colt? You'll have Javier to play with all the time. *(Colt whispers to Javier "Cool" but then sees Ignacio looking at him and looks at the ground silent.)*

Levi: Answer Mr. del Fuego, Colt.

Colt: *(Timidly and quiet)* Sounds great, sir.

Levi: All right, you boys run and play. *(The boys huddle and discuss the rules. Colt overhears the parents.)* I'm sorry, Ignacio, if my son came off as rude. He knows better to answer his elder's questions.

Ignacio: No. It's fine. He's probably not used to speaking with adults. You Americans scare your kids about strangers.

Levi: You're probably right Ignacio. That Javier sure is a good kid. *(The two walk off)*

starting on business again.)

Colt: One, two--

Javier: You gotta say one one-thousand.

Colt: One, two, three, (*Javier shrugs and runs off to hide*) four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten. (*Colt runs around looking. He sees the barn door cracked open and quietly walks up to it.*) Tricky little panther. (*Colt enters. It's dark inside. Silence for a moment, then Colt says*) Gotcha! (*A horrified scream is heard from Colt. Lights go out on flashback and come up on older Colt who has woken up with a jolt. He rubs his eyes and exits.*)

Act 1 Scene 3

(It is mid Morning. Levi is outside working on something. He is singing a country tune . Car sound effect offstage. Car shuts off and door slams shut. Chris Cox walks onstage. Levi notices him but keeps working.)

Cox: (*Upbeat*) Mornin', Ridge.

Levi: Mornin' Cox. Something I can help you with?

Cox: Not this fine morning. I just saw ya workin' as I was driving by and I thought I 'd say hello.

Levi: Hello then.

Cox: (*Watching Levi sweat.*) It's a shame you gotta do all that work yourself. Can't get none of your workers to do it?

Levi: Why pay someone else for something I can do myself. Besides, keeps me in shape. Maggie likes me strong. She'd leave me in a second if I came home lookin' like you. (*Levi flashes a smile at Cox.*)

Cox: (*Laughing*) Ho, that's a good one. (*Rubbing his belly*) I guess I have gained a little in the past year. I'm lucky Janelle likes her man thick. She's been trying to soften me up since I said "I do." Guess she finally did it. Ho ho. (*A pause, Levi keeps working.*) I used to be just like you Ridge. Busting my balls seven days a week for what? For a paycheck that gets lower every year, for a back-ache that makes it hard to sleep at night. You know, there was a point when I couldn't even afford to buy the beef I was raising. I'm telling ya Ridge, I been there, I know the anger behind those eyes. I was angry too, at a nation that no longer took care of the farmers and ranchers that got America on its feet. But I'm not angry any more. Nope, I'm fat and happy. You know why? 'Cause America is back! Right now opportunity has left the door wide open, but there is a trick. You gotta know where to find that door. Look I'll show it to you if you just lift that head up and stop working for Gol' darn second. (*Levi slowly looks at up at him a little upset.*) That-a-boy!

Levi: Now look Cox. We go way back and I really appreciate you trying to help me out, I really do, but my family has owned this ranch since they homesteaded it. Now the crops may have changed some, but the family hasn't. I intend to keep it that way.

Cox: Now what're ya gettin' at Ridge? Are you saying I don't own my ranch?

Levi: That's exactly what I'm saying. A corporation owns it; you just run it.

Cox: No, I sell to a corporation; I still run it. I'm in charge.

Levi: And what happens when they don't like the way you raise your cattle?

Cox: They got no choice. I signed a contract.

Levi: (*Still not convinced.*) Hmm.

Cox: Look, I'm swindling them. They give me money to buy land and cows so I can increase my product and profit. They buy from me at a higher rate than anyone else. That

rate will just keep going up the longer I'm with 'em. I run the show here. I can pay for my workers to do my labor for me. Look, we're gettin' old me and you; do you want to be out here when you're seventy? You still want to rely on Mexicans to harvest your crop?

Levi: I don't see why not; they're the best workers I ever had.

Cox: Why not?! Ridge it's an illegal practice that you've been getting away with for years, only because, well, no one is gonna turn you in.

Levi: What're you talkin' about? Nobody knows.

Cox: First, the whole town has known since you hired them. They know it's the only way you could keep your farm. Everyone understands. Second, no one is gonna turn you in.

This town is indebted to you. You're it's hero. Shit, I 'm just glad that I got to be a part of it. Three years straight. God, those were the days. (*Levi looks down at his work again and continues working.*) You made this town. Don't forget it. It was almost like nothing went wrong when we were in high school. For a while there even the crops were prosperous. It's not a coincidence that wheat and corn are the same color as gold. You know my dad was furious when I told him I was leaving farming for livestock. He wouldn't speak to me for weeks. If he didn't want me messing around with animals, then he shouldn't a put me in 4-H. God, I understand now. Lord gave me three girls. Oh, I love them more than ants love sugar , but well, you're lucky. Colt's a good worker, good kid. (*Cox senses he is talking too much.*) And that's why I wanted to talk with you. Ya see, I'm going to Chicago to resign my contract, and they distribute a lot of products. I'm sure they're looking for corn. I can always put in a good word.

Levi: Thank you, Chris, but I'm not interested. I'll be fine on my own.

Cox: Look, you got a family to support. And it's just that I heard some things.

Levi: (*Upset*) Things? What are the gossips saying these days?

Cox: Well, it's nothing. I just heard a lot of your labor left you, er you know, they found better wages. That's the problem with them Mexicans. They're not loyal, always gettin' up and leaving.

Levi: Go right ahead and believe whatever you like. Just because you're livin' the high life doesn't mean my family is suffering. It may appear that way to the gossips, but I've lived through worse, I'll tell you that much. Just cause we eat corn bread instead of baguettes don't mean shit. My dad, he-- he--

Cox: I'm sorry Levi. I wasn't trying to stir things up. I just wanted to let you know that if you ever need a little extra, not now, hypothetically in the future I can get you an "in" with Sun Pride Distribution.

Levi: Good to know. I'll keep it in mind. Hey, I hate to run, but I gotta get this to the barn. Thanks for stopping by, good chatting and have a good trip.

Cox: Hey, thanks Ridge.

Levi: And keep an eye on those city folk.

Cox: Oh I will. I'll see you later, Ridge. (*Cox exits. Maggie enters, walks up to Levi as the sound of Cox's truck takes off. She sneaks up behind him and starts massaging his back.*)

Maggie: What did he want?

Levi: (*Light-heartedly*) Oh, he just wanted to rub in his new truck. You never saw him pull over and stop to talk with that old beater of a pickup he used to drive.

Maggie: You two are always so competitive.

Levi: He's going to resign his contract. Thought he could persuade me to join him.

Maggie: And you weren't interested?

Levi: Why hell no. As a matter of fact, it's not as good as it's cracked up to be.

Maggie: Well, maybe just look into it a little more, I mean in case it's worth while.

Levi: I'll tell you right now, Cox may have a new truck and a new addition to his house, but he isn't in control of his ranch anymore. He's gotta do what they tell him.

Maggie: But the prices their buying at-- no one else compares.

Levi: Maggie, I won't have a man in a suite tell me how to work my land, tellin' me I need to take out a loan and buy so many acres, so I can pay them a percentage of my profit.

Maggie: But at least Cox is making a profit. We're just breaking even. Lordy, Levi, we just lost a quarter of our work force last month. Some of those guys have been with us for years and can get better wages at the meat packing company.

Levi: And when they get hurt over there, who's going to pay for their medical? I have always made sure that I can cover my employees' asses.

Maggie: Levi, we can't even keep Mexicans. Illegal ones.

Levi: And I've picked up the slack. It's just a rough time. When I was a kid there were hard times and what did my father do? He kept harvesting until they got better. It's a cycle. We just got to hang tough.

Maggie: Look, I know you saved this farm once. You couldn't control your dad's hospital bills, but you made a sacrifice and sure enough, you've raised a family and I'll love you in any condition. It's just that there's nothing left to sacrifice. All that's left is your family.

Levi: What do you suggest we do then?

Maggie: I was talking with Estelle at work. She says that property values are really high

at the moment. She showed me some numbers. Levi, it would be more than enough-- well, as a last resort at least.

Levi: As a last resort? We're not selling our land, not even as a last resort. This farm will not be sacrificed.

Maggie: But for your family?

Levi: We'll be fine, I promise. Who said living under the margin is a horrible thing? It adds character. And get that real estate out of your head. High property values aren't good unless you are selling. They only mean high property taxes. And dammit, I aint sellin'. I wish you never had to start working there.

Maggie: God willing, I won't have too much longer.

Levi: That's right, baby. Everyone's worried sick, except me. Just give me support, Maggie; that's all I ask.

Maggie: Okay Levi Ridge, you got my support. *(She kisses him.)* Colt came home this morning again. He got a ride into town with Sherman to help him at the store before I could talk to him.

Levi: What else is new?

Maggie: Jeannie called also. Said Chance came home all worked up and cursing Colt. She couldn't get an answer from him.

Levi: When's that boy of ours going to wise up? All he's been doing lately is work all day, then spend the whole night drinking. He's graduated and got no plans.

Maggie: Sit him down and talk to him.

Levi: I've tried. He don't even listen, I think. He just sits there and stares at me like I am not his father, like I've betrayed him. Shit, sometimes I wish he'd yell at me or

something. Just wish I could get a response from him.

Maggie: Well, don't lecture him. Maybe you two should just sit down and play some music together. You know he's been getting pretty good at the guitar. He can play all the classics. I remember when he first learned he would play for me and sing me the lullabies I used to sing him. He's got a good heart. He just needs some guidance. I think he might open up if he doesn't think you're giving him a talking to.

Levi: Maybe. He knows all the classics does he?

Maggie: From Merle to Patsy. Just don't ask him to play Garth. Says he killed country.

Levi: That's a Ridge for ya. I guess he learned couple of things from me.

Maggie: Are you kiddin'? Except for the adolescent attitude, he tries to be just like you. Why do you think he hasn't applied for Samuel's scholarship. He wants to run the farm with you, not go to college.

Levi: Yeah, but Samuel has been waiting for him to apply. Says there is a great Ag program at Colorado River University. He can still farm. And what's more, old Sam assured me he could get it.

Maggie: Give him time. He'll go when he's ready.

Levi: So we just wait around while he drinks with his friends every night?

Maggie: You should be happy that he is not rushing to leave. Think about all the kids who we know who've left for college and never come back. Sure they visit, but then they leave again. Both of Patti's kids are working out of state; they barely even call her anymore. Do you think you would have come back here had you gone to the university? If your dad had been there to run the farm. (*Levi is silent.*) No, with all the hype surrounding you, you woulda been swept away to God knows where.

Levi: But he's got the chance. One that slipped out of my reach.

Maggie: He's not you Levi. He's gotta decide for himself. Besides, you staying here didn't turn out all bad. I was a senior when you took over the farm. You were the most impressive 19-year-old I've ever seen.

Levi: Who would of thought I'd find a ray of sunshine in a gloomy time?

Maggie: Now don't go gettin' poetic on me. I'm not in high school anymore. *(She unbuttons the top buttons of her blouse.)* Come on inside. *(Maggie leads him offstage.)*

Act 1 Scene 4

(Colt is in the back of a truck bed, waiting to get a ride home. He is singing. Enter Javier with baseball glove, athletic clothing, and carrying baseball cleats.)

Javier: Hey.

Colt: Hey.

Javier: Where's Sherman?

Colt: He's just closing up shop. Should be here in a sec. *(Javier gets into the truck bed.)*

Javier: Okay, sounds good. *(Long pause.)*

Colt: So, um, how was practice.

Javier: Good, yeah. I think we'll win this weekend.

Colt: Good. *(Enter Sherman with keys in his hand.)*

Sherman: All right you boys all set?

Colt and Javier: Yeah, yup, Yes sir.

Sherman: Now don't go falling out on me. Road gets kinda bumpy.

Javier: Don't worry. We're experts at this.

Sherman: All right good to hear. *(Sherman gets in the cab. Starts truck. Sound of car driving. Colt and Javier look at each other, then look away. Awkward silence. They look back at each other and nod because they don't have anything to say then look away. Javier pulls out some chewing tobacco.)*

Javier: You want a dip? *(Offers Colt the pouch.)*

Colt: *(With a little enthusiasm)* Yeah. Thanks. *(He puts some in his lip and hands the pouch back to Javier who puts some in.)*

Javier: No problem. So you know Zeb, Jed's little brother?

Colt: Yeah, he's a punk ass.

Javier: No joke. So today he stares whining at practice because no one will let him sit on the bench. He's bitching because Jake keeps calling him bat boy and ordering him around, and Zeb goes off about respect and how it doesn't matter that he's the youngest and new to the team. That he should get respect for his skills. He actually said skills. So Jake really starts to fuck with him, but Zeb don't even know it. Jake tells him he's right about the respect and to come sit next to him and have a chew. Well poor Zeb has never chewed in his life, but wants to impress Jake, and he sticks his fingers in and takes a huge one. Fills his entire lip. Now all of us are trying not to laugh, but Jake is just sitting as cool as jazz and doesn't even crack a smile. Just tells him, *(Javier imitates Jake's voice.)* "The bigger the lip, the bigger the man" like these are words of wisdom.

Colt: *(Chuckling a bit)* Fuckin' Jake. Always pulling something.

Javier: And Zeb's just eating it up, putting even more in his mouth. Then Jake gets all serious and says to him, "Now if you spit any of that out before practice ends that's disrespect to me. And if I see you spittin', I'll pummel ya." And Zeb can only nod his

head cause he can't talk.

Colt: Ha! Jake's a little bastard.

Javier: Yeah, ain't he? So then it gets better. Coach comes over and calls us into the field but sees Jeb's lip and starts yelling at him to spit that shit out. And you know Jeb wants to, his eyes are watering, and is choking down his spit, but he won't spit it out, cause Jake is giving him a dead stare. Now Coach is getting pissed at him and starts yelling that if he's not gonna listen he can run till he does. So he sends Zeb sprinting around the field. I'm laughing my ass off and so is the rest of the team. We start practice and about ten minutes later we hear coughing and I look over at Zeb running in center field just in time to see him stop, lean over and puke, and he keeps on for seriously ten minutes till he's dry-heaving. I was on the mound and I could smell the Copenhagen and stomach acid from there. Awful, it smelled like that all practice.

Colt: Those guys ever mess with you?

(Offstage a coach screaming can be heard: "Run spic, run! Like the migra was after ya!")

Colt and Javier don't respond to it.)

Javier: Nah, never, even when I was the youngest. Truth is I was better 'n everyone, and I kept my mouth shut unless I really had sumpin to say.

Colt: First time I chewed, I was eleven. Shit, I think I was playing pick-up ball at the little league fields. This kid Derrick shows up with some mint snuff. We all tried it and spit it out. Ha. I was spitting all day trying to get that taste out. I swore to never do that again. Five years later I was chewing in class, leaving my chaw in the drinking fountains.

Javier: Hey, I was there at the fields that day with Derrick.

Colt: Were you there?

Javier: Yeah, don't ya remember?

Colt: Nows that you mention it, yeah. You tried chewing too; we swore not to tell on each other.

Javier: Yeah, later that day we got in a fight with Patrick.

Colt: Oh yeah, that's right!

Colt: *(In unison with Javier, below.)* That was the first fight I ever lost.

Javier: --the first fight I ever won.

(The two look at each other; Colt remembers all.)

Colt: Patrick knocked me good, got a black eye. *(Javier nods, unsure of what to say.)*

Yeah, and you, you fucked him up good, well, for an eleven-year old.

Javier: Well he started hitting ya. What else was I gonna do? Boy was your dad mad at us.

Colt: At us? At me you mean. He thought I started that fight. Took his belt to me.

Remember? He thanked you for looking out for me and getting me out of trouble.

Javier: No, I don't remember.

Colt: Maybe that's just how I remembered it. I could be wrong. *(There is a pause as the two both sit in the truck, not sure what to say.)*

Javier: Well, it was a long time ago. *(The two continue looking away from each other.*

Lights dim some on the truck. At this point a flashback begins. The farmhouse comes into view, either brought on or lit up. It begins at young Colt counting for hide-and-go-seek from the first flashback.)

Young Colt: One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten. *(Colt runs around looking; he sees the barn and quietly walks up to the door.)* Tricky little panther. *(Colt*

enters. It is dark inside. Silence for a moment, then Colt says) Gotcha! (Then a horrified scream. This time the lights stay up and the flashback is resolved. Colt comes running out the barn; crying, he runs offstage. Following him out are several confused Mexican workers who stop before going offstage. The barn door swings fully open revealing about six more Mexicans inside. Javier comes out of his hiding place and approaches the older Mexicans. He knows them and speaks to them in Spanish.)

Lucas: ¿Quién fue el nene Javier?

Young Javier: El hijo del Sr. Ridge. Estamos jugando, ¿qué pasó?

Quintana: No sé, entró, agarró a Manuel y gritó como si vio un fantasma. Y después se fue.

(Lights down on flashback, back up on truck. Sound of car turning off. It's dark now. They are back at the farm. The set should already be in place from the flashback.)

Sherman: Here ya go. See ya later boys.

Colt and Javier: *(Getting out of truck.)* See ya, bye.

(The two turn and go their respective ways.)

Javier: Hey, I'll see you later.

Colt: Okay, see ya. *(Both exit. Ignacio and Levi are already in the study when the lights then transition and focus on them.)*

Act 1 Scene 5

Levi: Now I just don't understand. How can prices drop so much when they have just been so high?

Ignacio: Well, you know it is complicated. Part of it has to do with global competition and overproduction.

Levi: But the bank, they told me that if I produced more I could balance out the money I'd lose if prices fell. "If" they fell. They said it would be a fail safe. Now corn has gone down tremendously. Even more so than ever. What happened?

Ignacio: If you had not produced more you wouldn't have met your quota. You would have gone under two years ago. It's what you call, tying your own noose to stall for time.

Levi: But you told me that in Mexico most can't even afford tortillas. Now, no offense but I figured that was a good sign for us. I just don't see how the prices could go from being so generous to dropping overnight.

Ignacio: Well, you're not the only one who increased your production. You know the rules of supply and demand. It was okay a couple years ago. But now it's all catching up. Everyone has too many crops to sell, so commodities dropped. What is killing us this year is Brazil. Not only has their production of corn increased as part of the IMF's plan to help pay back their twenty-year old debt, but they have another thing going for them.

Levi: What's that?

Ignacio: Sugar. Sugar makes ethanol.

Levi: And so does corn.

Ignacio: Yes, but the oil industry realized that a less amount of sugar yields more ethanol than corn is able to. Up to twice as much. When the government asked corn farmers to increase their production, it was before they realized the potential of sugar. They also found out that it takes more energy to produce corn ethanol than is gained in the product. Sugarcane on the other hand produces eight units of energy for every one unit processed.

Farmers were promised a new buyer, but then the government and oil companies backed out, leaving us with extra crops and no one to sell them to. Now prices have dropped substantially in order to get people, someone, anyone, to buy.

Levi: How can they do that? Those bastards in Washington would rather save a buck and buy from another country than support their citizens here, in America. Then, when they do decide to help us out, hand us subsidies, who gets 'em? The God damn agribusiness corporation cock-suckers. They're raking in millions without the help of the government, and Uncle Sam walks in, says, "Wow, you fellows sure are contributing to the American people," hands some business man, who's never farmed in his life, a check. Then walks out the door and spits on the family farmer. Doesn't even look at him. And what did they call that piece of legislation? The Freedom to Farm Act. Those God-damn deceitful politicians! Now it's the Farm Bill and it's even worse.

Ignacio: Come on, Levi. Calm down a bit.

Levi: (*Cooling off some.*) Yeah. Yeah, you're right. It's just that, just that one piece of legislation here, another there, it all adds up. Adds up in the pockets of businessmen and adds to the debt of this farm. They're not thinking.

Ignacio: Oh, they're thinking all right. Just thinking of the wrong people. Same thing happened to me in Mexico. I got laid off from the university, because of one piece of policy, United States policy no less. I was the chair of the sociology department, and was teaching Social Economics, but got, how do you say it, canned?

Levi: Yeah, canned. You never told me the details. I thought you left.

Ignacio: I got canned because Mexico borrowed money, billions, but that in itself isn't what shut down my department. It was on October sixth, nineteen seventy-nine, that Paul

Volker raised interest rates in the U.S. to curb inflation. Doesn't sound too horrible, unless you're a country who's paying back an enormous loan, and six months later the interest payments doubled. By nineteen eighty-two Mexico declared it could no longer afford to pay back a ninety billion dollar loan. Education was among the first cuts. Especially departments like mine.

Levi: At least you found a way to get some money back from the U.S.

Ignacio: Yes, tax-free too. *(Both chuckle at this.)*

Levi: Eighty-two you say? Let's see, I graduated high school in eighty, but eighty two, I almost lost the farm that year. I coulda used ya then. Boy I was young. Trying to figure out what a supply was and what a demand was. Everyone kept talking about a recession. I had to look that up in a dictionary. *(Levi smiles.)* All I knew was how to throw a football and run. *(Brief pause as Levi dabbles in nostalgia. Then breaks out of it.)* Well, let's get this worked out. What do I got to do to keep this farm ticking?

Ignacio: It's not looking good, Levi.

Levi: Oh, I've heard that before.

Ignacio: Your wife mentioned that Cox stopped by today.

Levi: Yeah, what about it?

Ignacio: It's just that she said he mentioned something about hooking you up with Sun Pride.

Levi: Now look here, I told Cox, and I'm telling you, I ain't going that route. Did you hear what I was just saying a minute ago.

Ignacio: Yes, I heard, and I agree with you.

Levi: Okay then. Tell me our options.

Ignacio: Well, you see Levi, there just aren't many options.

Levi: What do ya mean, aren't many options? There's always an option.

Ignacio: You've got a couple. I just told you one of them.

Levi: Selling to Sun Pride? You were serious?

Ignacio: I'm just saying to keep it as, well, an option.

Levi: Okay, keep going.

Ignacio: Another thing you could do is-- I hate to say it but, sell the farm-- or the land.

Levi: Come on now, what is this? Telling me the bad news first. Okay, what else?

Ignacio: What else? Well, Levi, that's all I got.

Levi: That's all you got? (*Perplexed.*)

Ignacio: That's your options.

Levi: Wait a second here. You're telling me I can either sell my farm or be under the thumb of a giant blood-sucking grocery store? (*Yelling some.*) That's all you got?

Ignacio: That's all.

Levi: So you're telling me, there's nothing left. That I've finished tying my noose and they're taking me to the gallows? (*Ignacio is silent.*) Come on Ignacio! Tell me there's something left.

Ignacio: Nothing.

Levi: You're lying to me. There's always been something in the past. A loophole, a loan. Come on Ignacio.

Ignacio: Have you looked at the figures? I thought you would know by now. (*Hands him a sheet of paper.*)

Levi: The figures. The figures! That's why I hired you. You're the educated one, not me!

(Levi is up and pacing, Ignacio is standing, sullen. Levi looks at the paper.) Shit! *(He slams the paper down. Looks at Ignacio across desk.)* There's a way. Has to be. I'll find it. I saved this farm before, without you here. I lost my chance to go to college, but I saved this farm. I'll save it again.

Ignacio: You, you don't understand.

Levi: No! No, you don't understand. My sweat drips into the ground every day. It's what has fertilized this soil. I started workin' when I was twelve. And I mean hard, up before dawn, physical labor. My father worked this land since he could walk. And you know what, his dad did the same, so did his father, and his father. This was a homestead. It looked a lot different than it does now. By God, they planted potatoes till that became a thing of the old country. This was America, a nation paved in gold. So it was fitting that my Grandpa chose corn. Native to the West. Damn potatoes would have killed him, but no, he found another option! He saved this place, this family. But what would you know about home. You wandered for how many years before you stayed here? Stayed here! And you're ready to just sell your home, sell your family. Well that doesn't work for me. I'm staying!

Ignacio: *(After a pause.)* I was gonna wait to tell you later, but it would not be right of me. After the harvest I'm turning in my resignation. *(Ignacio turns and leaves.)*

Levi: *(Yelling after him.)* Figures!

(Levi paces shortly, goes behind desk. Still standing, he looks at his papers. Picks one up and looks at it. Lets it float down, picks up another, looks, repeats. On the last paper, he lets it begin to float then punches it down on the desk. He hurts his hand, shakes it out a little while getting even more upset. Without thinking, punches the back of his chair. Levi

grabs his hand, and then slowly begins to cool off, as he is beginning to accept what has happened. He opens one of the drawers and reaches in. He pulls out something and begins to hold it. It becomes apparent that it is a rock of gold. Pyrite to be exact, not gold, but Levi turns it in both hands, letting the light gleam off of it, as if to him, it really is gold. Levi says to himself)

Levi: I was a fool to hire him. Just like I was by this fool's gold. *(He focuses on it for a beat, then is surprised by a loud knocking on the study door. He grabs the piece and quickly puts it in his pocket.)*

Levi: Who is it?

Colt: It's me Dad.

Levi: *(Rubbing hands through hair and settling a bit)* Come in.

Colt: *(Colt enters, shuts door behind him.)* Mom said you wanted something.

Levi: When did she say that?

Colt: Just a second ago. Look, if you're busy--

Levi: No, no. Right. I wanna have a talk with you. Well not a "talk," exactly. What'd your mom call it? *(Talking to himself.)* Um, go get your guitar.

Colt: My guitar?

Levi: No. Uh, nevermind that. Just have a seat with me. *(Colt sits down.)*

Colt: So what's up?

Levi: Up?

Colt: Are you feeling all right?

Levi: Yes, of course. I'm fine.

Colt: Just making sure. So what do you wanna "talk" about.

Levi: It's not a talk, see it's--

Colt: I was just making a joke. (*Smiling a bit.*) Don't worry.

Levi: Oh. Look, I don't know what I'm doing. Your mother wanted me to talk to you but not make it a talk. Frankly, I don't know what she's talking about. I didn't grow up quite like your mom. When someone had something to say, they just said it, didn't matter when or where. There was no meeting of a talk or discussion. But I guess since you're here, we'll try it.

Colt: Okay. (*The two sit for a second.*) I don't really have anything to say.

Levi: Yeah. I don't either. Your mom's technique is shit.

Colt: I like Grandpa's way better.

Levi: Sure seemed easier. Okay, I do got something to say. Can you pick up the meat at the butchers tomorrow? Here's the money.

Colt: Sure.

Levi: (*As he hands Colt the money*) How's your summer?

Colt: Can't complain.

Levi: You like working with Sherman?

Colt: Yeah, I get to stock a lot of feed. Gettin' better at the math.

Levi: Good. That job getting boring?

Colt: Yeah, it's boring as hell.

Levi: So what are you thinking of for next season?

Colt: Just keep working here and at Sherm's now and then.

Levi: That it?

Colt: Dad, I told you I'm not applying for college. I'm not cut out for that kind of place.

Levi: Who said anything about college?

Colt: I know that's what you're getting' at.

Levi: No, I think that you can do better, that's all.

Colt: Better?

Levi: Give yourself some direction, I mean. You can do anything you put your heart into. You said it yourself, the math's getting easier.

Colt: Thanks for the pep-talk coach, but I want to live here. Look, I'm not you. I wasn't all-American quarterback. I didn't win three state championships, the first when I was sixteen. I didn't get a full-ride to any college. I'm no fucking town hero. I like workin', I like drinkin', and I like sleepin'. Call it simple, cause that's what it is.

Levi: Well, you better start realizing that things aren't simple. They get complex. Now you already missed the deadline for Samuel's scholarship for this year. Don't miss it when it comes around again. This is a once-in-a-lifetime chance; he'll give it to you. You got nothing holding you back and yet you want to blow it. You gotta grab opportunity by the horns, and hold on, cause life ain't sweet. You think I was ready to take over a farm, give up my dreams, 'cause the Lord took away my father? Hell no, but I did it. Why? 'Cause this land has history. This land is family.

Colt: Well if this land is so important then why are you in such a hurry to kick me off it.

Levi: Because everything's changing! Owning a farm ain't what it used to be. Sure ,there was always the bank to deal with, but now there's world banks, and policy, and businessmen. A new kind of people are taking over. They just want more and more, and they're gobbling up acres East and West. It's a new ball game, and you're gonna need to know how to play in it. Son, this farm will be yours someday.

Colt: Then why am I working the farm only part-time and a feed store the rest? I should be here every day learning from you. But instead you pay a bunch of beaners to sneak into our country and do a job your townsfolk could do. You turn the barn into a goddamn house for 'em. I hope you know that everyone talks about it.

Levi: Let 'em. I got enough problems, like putting meat on the table, like paying the hospital bills of a dead man, like dealing with a kid who thinks drinking makes him grown up. You see Javier coming home drunk in the mornings? That kid's younger than you, but acts more grown up. Look, Colt, I ain't trying to kick you out. It's just that, well, if you think you're gonna be able to run this farm by learning how to run a tractor and plant some seeds, you'll be able to grow some corn, sure, but one day someone's gonna walk in your door and tell you that there is no money left. They're gonna tell you to sell the earth your ancestors brought life to. Then what are you gonna do? You could work here for twenty years, but if you don't get an education that man will come calling. It ain't about growing anymore, it's about selling. What if the money ran out tomorrow? What would you do? Get a full-time job at Sherm's? Use your head kid! Quit jackin' off and wise up.

Colt: All right, I'll wise up when you stop playing the victim. You want food on the table, leave it to me. It'll be one less thing for you to worry about. (*Stands up. Turns to leave.*) By the way, nice talk! (*Colt exits.*)

Levi: Fuck. (*Pause.*) At least he said something. (*Exit Levi.*)

Act 1 Scene 6

(*As Levi exits, Colt comes onstage, now outside, with a rifle in his hand. He has been*

crying. He walks offstage and a car door is heard opening and closing. Colt walks back onstage without the rifle. He wipes his eyes and knocks on what was the barn door, now turned around to resemble a house door with a small porch attached. Door opens and reveals Ignacio.)

Ignacio: Hello Colt, surprised to see you. A pleasant surprise. Can I help you with anything?

Colt: Um, yeah, is Javier around?

Ignacio: Hold on, one minute. *(Ignacio exits and returns with Javier.)*

Javier: Hi Colt. What's up, man?

Colt: You're coming with me tonight.

Ignacio: Where are you going?

Colt: Got a couple of girls in town who wanted to meet Javier. Real cute. Said they saw Javi pitching and that I should bring him out sometime. You wanna come or what?

(Javier glances at his dad.) I'm telling you man, they're hotties.

Javier: Yeah, for sure. You going now?

Colt: Yup.

Javier: 'Aite, let's go. I'll see you, Dad.

Ignacio: Adios, suerte mijo.

(The two exit toward the truck offstage. Door slams and truck roaring off heard, while Ignacio takes a seat on the porch. A transition into Ignacio's flashback begins. Quick blackout. Slowly lights get brighter and a group of migrant workers enter and are talking in Spanish. Ignacio is standing, having removed his grey wig in the blackout and taken off his outside shirt showing a dirty one underneath. He reveals a younger version of

himself. He walks to the group and the door behind him has been rotated so that the barn-side is showing. It is now Ignacio's first day of work on the farm.)

Carlos: Qué día.

Lucas: Sí.

Quintana: Qué fuerte el sol.

Carlos: Siempre hay algo contigo.

(Approach Ignacio.)

Lucas: Hola. *(To Ignacio.)*

Ignacio: Buenos días.

Quintana: Ahh, es el nuevo. Bienvenidos, soy Quintana. ¿Y usted?

Ignacio: Ignacio del Fuego Gallegos.

Quintana: *(Pointing to the rest.)* Carlos y Lucas.

Carlos and Lucas: Hola.

Ignacio: Mucho gusto. Así que ya trabajaban para el Sr. Ridge.

All: Sí, sí.

Ignacio: ¿Y les cae bien?

Lucas: No importa si él nos cae bien, pues importa que nosotros le caigamos bien a él.

Carlos: Quiere decir que no hay tanto trabajo en esa área. Hay que trabajar parar quedarse acá.

Ignacio: Ya sé. *(He raises his hands which are worn and leathery, strong and callused.)*

Quintana: Pues, bienvenido amigo.

Ignacio: Gracias. *(Enter Levi who approaches the group.)*

Levi: *(In a very American accent.)* Bu-enas dia.

All: Buenos días.

Levi: *(Talking slowly)* Today we have a nuevo worker, *(gestures to Ignacio)* Ignacio.

Hola Ignacio.

Ignacio: Hola. *(Levi smiles proudly about his Spanish.)*

Levi: Quintana, you work el tractora, si?

Quintana: Okay Mister Ridge.

Levi: Now I need Carlos and Lucas to begin sowing, sow the seeds. *(He kneels over miming it. Carlos and Lucas look at him confused. He stands up and sees their confusion.)* Entiende?

Carlos and Lucas: No.

Levi: All right let's see. You Carlos y Lucas, um, planta el seeda.

Carlos: ¿Cómo? ¿Planta el SIDA? *(Referring to Levi)* Está loco.

Lucas: No tengo el SIDA para plantar.

Quintana: Ah, ha, ha. *(to Lucas)* Mentiroso.

Lucas: ¡Cállate!

Levi: No entiende?

Lucas: No.

Levi: *(To himself)* Damn, I try speaking Spanish and they laugh. When are they gonna learn English. This is America.

Ignacio: I speak English, Mr. Ridge. *(All look at him surprised. Levi feels awkward that Ignacio understood his last sentence.)*

Levi: Well shit, why didn't you say so? Letting me go on and make a fool of myself.

Ignacio: Sorry.

Levi: Don't be sorry, tell 'em what to do.

Ignacio: *(To the others)* Quiere que planten las semillas.

Carlos: Oh las semillas. Eso tiene sentido. Ha.

Quintana: Mira a ese cabrón. *(Referring to Ignacio)* Sabe trabajar y hablar inglés también. Que cosa.

Lucas: Yes, *(Pronounced "jes")* Mr. Ridge. *(Carlos, Lucas, and Quintana start to leave to do their work.)*

Quintana: ¡Yes! Ay, escúchale. Sabes inglés también Lucas. Yes. *(He says this as they are walking offstage.)*

Ignacio: *(To Levi)* What can I do?

Levi: You know how to run a water pump?

Ignacio: Yes.

Levi: Okay, go behind the house and turn the first pump a quarter of a turn and the second one all the way. Then open the flood gates for each row, except the rows that the others are working on. Then come back to me and I'll tell ya what else to do. Got it?

Ignacio: Yes I got it. *(He begins to walk off.)*

Levi: Hey, uh, hold on a second. *(Ignacio turns back around.)* So where did you learn English?

Ignacio: I learned in the university.

Levi: Well, if you're educated, why ya working here?

Ignacio: I had to leave. Also I make more money here.

Levi: Well, I won't ask why you had to go. That's your own business. I don't mess with a man's privacy. Now do you got a family?

Ignacio: Did Parker tell you? I have a little boy.

Levi: Oh yes, that's right, he did tell me. How old?

Ignacio: Nine years old.

Levi: Well how about that, I got one who's ten. Yes, that's fine if he stays here too. Gotta wife?

Ignacio: No sir, she died giving birth.

Levi: Oh, I'm sorry to hear that. (*Changing the subject*) Well Parker told me you're a good worker. Gets a little colder here than Arizona, nights at least. Well, welcome. I think you'll like it here. Do you mind helping me translate?

Ignacio: No, no problem.

Levi: Well, I do appreciate it. Come find me when you're finished with the pumps.

Ignacio: Okay. (*He begins to leave.*)

Levi: Oh, uh, one more thing. (*Ignacio turns around.*) What did I say in Spanish that those boys were laughing at?

Ignacio: Well, you told them to plant the AIDS virus.

Levi: Jesus! Damn languages are tricky little buggers, aren't they?

Ignacio: Yes sir. (*The two part ways.*)

End of Act 1

Act 2 Scene 1

(*Sound of truck stopping and doors shutting offstage. Enter Javier into high mountain woods. Night still. Javier is talking to Colt offstage.*)

Javier: I don't know what you were thinking but the only girls we are gonna find up here

are heifers. And I mean that literally. Now if only they had free-range women. (*Enter Colt with rifle. Javier doesn't notice his entrance.*) If this is your idea of a good time, well I'm not so sure. I've heard of people fucking sheep, but cattle? God damn, Colt, that's sick. (*He notices Colt with the rifle.*) Whoa! What do you need that for. (*Silence.*) I was only joking about the sheep thing.

Colt: Yeah, I figured. (*Notices Javier looking nervous about the gun.*) What? You scared of guns?

Javier: No. Just didn't expect you to walk out here with one.

Colt: Well, get used to it.

Javier: Okay. (*Trying to figure out what's going on.*)

Colt: You ever get so mad at someone for being oblivious that it makes you even madder?

Javier: I'm not sure what you mean.

Colt: You ever been treated like no matter what you do, it's not enough, like someone else is always better than you?

Javier: Yeah, actually.

Colt: When?

Javier: Well a couple years ago, playing baseball, the coach wouldn't ever put me in, even though I could pitch better than everyone. Every time I asked to pitch he told me he would never depend on a Mexican to get things done. Some of the players heard him. They started calling me a wetback, spic, beaner, every day. They came up with clever things like, "Don't let Javi steal second, cause we'll never see it again," or, "Run home Javier, run home to Mexico." Dumbasses didn't even realize I was born in the U.S. But

you know, I started to believe them. That I was less 'cause I was Mexican.

Colt: (*Angry*) You gonna lie to my face.

Javier: I'm not lying.

Colt: You told me today that no one on the team ever messed with you. Now which is it?

Javier: Look Colt, I said that in the truck 'cause-- I didn't want you to think that I was like Zeb. Like I wasn't respected.

Colt: You swear that's the truth.

Javier: I swear on my mother.

Colt: Okay. I believe you. So what did you do? You're respected now. You're a starting pitcher.

Javier: Well, one day at practice, Coach was letting me pitch and he wouldn't shut up. Kept saying my strike-outs were luck. That it was the batters who were missing the ball, not good pitching. Well, I realized that he was wrong. That he'd been wrong the whole time. It was like God shined a light on me, showed me that I was better than all those racists, and not just at baseball, at being a human. So I told Coach that he should try and hit off me before he opens his mouth. He said it was a deal. I was even generous. I told him I'd give him six swings. The ball was sticky with sweat and dirt-- perfect for control. I started him off with a fastball down the middle. Whiff. He laughed it off but I could tell after I threw that pitch that he was starting to get nervous. Next was my slider on the outside of the plate, just out of his reach that he was stumblin' after it. He started taunting me so I sent a fastball past his jaw to shut him up. Just brushed him back a little. Then a curve and a miss. A change-up and a foul-tip. I messed him up by sending him a little spit on the next one just for fun. Bastard couldn't touch me. So for the last one I told him I'd

send him a real slow ball. And that's what I did. Had him chasing my knuckleball all over the place. Got so mad he threw his bat against the backstop as he cursed under his breath. Some of the kids in the outfield were laughing. Well, that weekend I got to the game and sure enough I was startin'. Coach wouldn't talk to me, but we won. Kept puttin' me in ever since. *(Pause.)*

Colt: Good. That's what I wanted to hear. I had to make sure you understood me before I was gonna ask for your help.

Javier: My help?

Colt: I'd do it myself, but-- Look I'm strong, but not this strong. I need another person.

Javier: For what?

Colt: My dad's kinda like your coach. I'm not the kind of son he wanted. Always getting into trouble, never living up to his expectations. Shit, his nickname's Midas. This whole town looks up to him. Me-- I'm his fuck-up son who never wanted play football. But I'm really not that kid. I got more inside me. He don't think I'll be able to keep the farm, but sometimes I think I care more about it than he does. He's worried about puttin' food on the table. Well tonight we're bringin' some home.

Javier: We gonna kill a cow?

Colt: Look, it's the perfect crime. These cows are free-range, that means they keep them here all summer to let them graze.

Javier: I know what free-range is. I grew up here.

Colt: Right. Sorry. The thing is though, they take into account that some are gonna die from natural causes. When they come to move them at the end of the summer and find that one ain't there, they ain't gonna fret none. They'll find a carcass, half-eaten by other

animals, and figure it broke its leg, got infected, and died.

Javier: Yeah, but it's poaching. No even worse, cattle rustling. If we get caught, we could go to jail.

Colt: You know who owns these cattle?

Javier: No.

Colt: Joseph Britton.

Javier: Who's that?

Colt: He's an asshole. You know Chris Cox?

Javier: Of course.

Colt: Well Britton screwed him in a share-holding deal. Cox didn't know any better.

Britton made out with about half of his stock and his cattle.

Javier: Damn.

Colt: Why do you think he joined up with Sun Pride? He was on the road to bankruptcy.

They offered to get him back on track, offered him a bunch of their money. Call it poaching if you like. As far as I'm concerned Britton can spare a cow.

Javier: But won't your dad know something's up if you come home with a whole bunch of meat.

Colt: Thing is, I'm supposed to go to the butcher's tomorrow and buy this month's supply.

Look, everyone knows that the farm ain't doing so good lately. It wouldn't be the first time that the butcher has sent me home with extra meat. Pop'll think that's the case.

Javier: What if he says something to the butcher about it?

Colt: You don't think I thought this through? Dad's too proud to ever acknowledge that someone else had to help him out.

Javier: But a whole cow is a lot of meat.

Colt: So-- (*Thinking*) we'll spread it out over a couple of months. I can keep what we don't give him right away in the freezer at the feed store. You in?

Javier: All right, I'm in. Let's do this.

Colt: Do you think we should shoot it or pistol whip it?

Javier: We'll have to beat it over the head for a while if we don't shoot it, but man, I think if we use a gun it will be too loud.

Colt: Me too. I hope you're feeling strong.

Javier: What do we gotta do after it's dead?

Colt: Gut it, hang it, bleed it, then cut it up in the morning. We can dig a pit for all the blood to drip in then we'll fill it in and no one will know anything happened. The perfect crime.

Javier: What're we waiting for? We got a lot of work to do.

Colt: That's what I'm talking about! (*The two exit. We hear a loud crack, a horrific moo, another hit, another moo, another hit, then a yeehaaww from Colt. Lights out.*)

Act 2 Scene 2

(*Night. On one side of the stage is Cox on the phone in a pool of light. On the other side are Levi and Maggie.*)

Cox: You should see the hotel they put me up in. Enormous! Gots glass elevators and bellhops.

Maggie: (*To Levi*) What is it, honey? You're smoking one of your cigars. (*He is looking off into the distance.*) I always know that if you smoke alone something is wrong; if

you're puffing away with others you are celebrating.

Cox: Tell the girls I'm on the 25th floor. I can see the whole city.

Maggie: Levi, talk to me. (*Levi is still looking off.*)

Cox: I know, I know they all want dresses from the city, but it'll have to be tomorrow. It's later here.

Levi: When I was a kid, my dad would take me out here and show me the stars.

Cox: They'll just have to be happy with what I get 'em. I'm no fashion expert.

Levi: He'd point to each constellation with his cigar and name it. I tried to learn 'em all.

Cox: Now Janelle. You gotta hear this. They got a Sun Pride shopping center here. Gigantic! I stopped in and guess what I seen.

Levi: The ones I didn't know, I invented. I'd find my own constellations and give 'em names like Jack Dempsey's left glove or Geronimo's headdress.

Cox: That's right. Smack dab in the middle of the beef section. Cox Family Cuts.

Levi: He told me he liked mine the best.

Cox: Oh, they were the best looking ones in the store. All the others were kinda grey and old lookin'. Ours were a true red. Bold against the white of the bone.

Levi: He said that successful men get to where they are, not by following others, but by leading the way. He told me he knew I would join the leaders 'cause I was inventive.

Cox: Well, seeing those laid out just waiting to be bought, it made me proud.

Maggie: What's this all about, Levi?

Cox: I'm tellin' ya Janelle, this ain't the thing like I got into with Britton.

Levi: It's all gone.

Maggie: What's gone!?

Cox: No more bills to worry about.

Levi: The money Maggie. The money's gone.

Cox: No more prayin' to God that we find a decent buyer.

Maggie: What do you mean gone?

Cox: You know we can start going on vacations.

Levi: The farm. There's no way to keep it. Ignacio showed me the numbers.

Cox: That's right, baby. That's right.

Maggie: You have to think of something.

Cox: From here on out, all our financial troubles are gone.

Levi: What do you think I'm doin' out here? I'm trying to be inventive. (*He starts to breakdown.*) Dad--(*Starts to cry*)

Cox: Gone.

Maggie: I know honey. I know. Come here. (*She holds him. Worried.*) You'll think of something.

Cox: Good night. I love you too. (*Hangs up the phone and smiling to himself.*) All that's gone.

Act 2 Scene 3

(Back in the woods. Javier and Colt are drinking from a bottle of tequila to their success.

Still Night. The bottle is already part empty.)

Javier: (*Takes a pull off the bottle.*) Whewee! That was a good time.

Colt: You said it.

Javier: I could get used to killin' my own food. Makes ya feel good about livin'.

Colt: You're damn right. You ever hunt?

Javier: Nah. My dad never wanted me shootin'.

Colt: That so? You'd like huntin'. It's harder than what we just did. Can't just walk up to a deer and bust it in the head. You gotta stalk it. Well first you have to find it. Then you stalk. Have to be aware of everything. Footprints, droppings, even how much noise you're making. Sometimes you just wait, watching every little thing that moves. You're not trigger happy are ya?

Javier: No, don't think so.

Colt: Good. Gotta be patient when you're hunting. If you go into the mountains ready to shoot anything that moves you'll wind up like Dick Cheney or if it is a deer you'll miss. And that's even worse 'cause you scare all the game away and then you're back where you started. I once sat for an hour with a buck in my sights. A real nice seven point. Just me and him. He knew I was there. I 'bout pulled the trigger six times, but every time that I came close to, he would bolt off. Then he'd come moseying back and drink from the creek (*Pronounced 'crik'*). Finally he figured I left and I got a shot off. Bam! Square through the shoulder and into the heart. Didn't even have to track him. He made it a couple of yards draggin' himself on three legs and dropped dead. Most people think that animals are dumb. Not me. I know better. Shit, they're watching us most of the time, and we are too stupid to know it. Funny thing was about killing that deer, the whole time I was waiting to shoot it there was a hawk perched in the trees just lookin' at me. I didn't notice him till after I shot. That bird didn't even fly away at the noise. He knew what I was doing. He wanted that meat too. You know, I could taken that whole deer with me, but I left some. When I told my dad, he thought I was crazy. I left some for that hawk 'cause if that hawk

knew how to shoot a gun, it would've been me in a pool of blood.

Javier: You know, I never woulda looked at it that way.

Colt: Most people don't.

Javier: Hey, would you take me huntin' with you next fall?

Colt: Yeah I could do that. After all we already rustled some cattle together.

Javier: I'll drink to that.

Colt: Me too. (*They drink.*)

Javier: I imagine this is what it was like back in the day.

Colt: You're damn right. The west used to be wild. The rich stole from the poor and the poor stole it right back. Nowadays the poor don't steal from the rich no more.

Javier: The rich got car alarms and lawyers now.

Colt: Well said. (*He drinks.*) What happened to the James' Brothers and Pretty Boy Floyd?

Javier: Dead. (*Drinks.*)

Colt: Yeah, dead. (*Drinks.*)

Javier: You know what, Colt. They may be dead but their ghosts are still walking. I bet Tom Joad is in these woods tonight.

Colt: Ghosts? Maybe I should cut you off.

Javier: That's not what I sayin'.

Colt: What you saying then?

Javier: I'm saying we're the outlaws now. The true cowboys. It's up to us to keep the West the West. No one else is trying. Just a bunch of hicks now. Playing Toby Keith and whining about how they were dealt a shitty hand. Did you ever hear of Cash complaining.

Hell no! He took his hand and bet the farm. Sure he kept an ace up his sleeve but he didn't go down without fightin' or at least bluffin'.

Colt: *(Hands bottle to Javier.)* Here. I'll be back. *(Colt exits. Javier drinks and starts singing a Mexican country song. Colt enters with Chance's cowboy hat.)* Hey pendejo, I got something for ya. *(He throws Javier the hat.)* You're a cattle rustler now. You gotta have a hat.

Javier: Hey, thanks man. *(He puts it on)* Fits.

Colt: Thought it might. What were you singin'?

Javier: I dunno what it's called.

Colt: *(Sitting down and drinking)* I like it. Keep singing. *(Javier continues until lights lower.)*

Act 2 Scene 4

(Mr. Winters is at a table with papers at his desk. Cox enters. There is a clock ticking unnecessarily loudly. The office looks more like a jail cell than an office.)

Cox: Howdy, Mr. Winters. It's a pleasure sir. This is a different place than last year. What happened to the fireplace?

Winters: Hello, Mr. Cox. Please have a seat.

Cox: I saw in the paper this morning that they're predicting a drought next year. That or global warming. To me it's all the same.

Winters: The weather is of no concern to me. We are here to go over the renewal of your contract with Sun Valley Distribution.

Cox: No concern? Ha! If there ain't water for my pastures then there's no grass, and then

my friend, my cows don't eat. Therefore, the weather should be of considerable importance to the both of us. I figure--

Winters: The only necessary figures are the ones in my hand. Please feel free to go over the contract and sign at the bottom. *(He hands Cox the contract.)*

Cox: *(Reading it)* All business I see.

Winters: Is that a problem, Mr. Cox?

Cox: No, no problem. I just remember a time when deals were made over a glass of brandy and a cigar. The cattle was important, not the contract. We'd discuss our families, the town, the history of the pasture, what animals had grazed there, and the generations that owned it before. Sure we wanted to make a buck, squeak out a livin'-- everyone wanted that-- still do-- but we understood each other, so we talked.

Winters: However touching those sentiments may be to some, they are outdated.

Fortunately, I do not have the time to spend reminiscing about one single pasture. You may not be aware, Mr. Cox, but I have five more meetings today with people just like yourself. Tomorrow's schedule is the same and will continue to be the same for a month solid. That comes to about a hundred people whom I have to talk business with. Tell me, do you think I want to talk about each one of their families, see if little Bobby made the team? *(Cox tries to respond but is cut short.)* No, I want to talk about cows, swine, sheep, corn, wheat, soy, dollars, and cents. I find out what the consumer's needs are and I buy those from you. I don't have time for conversations. Is that straight?

Cox: All right, a man who gets straight to business. Got it. *(He keeps reading, every now and then nodding. He suddenly stops, looks at Winters, then back at the contract.)* Now something's not right here. This is different from last year's.

Winters: Times change, Mr. Cox.

Cox: No, no. This has got to be wrong. (*Looking at Winters now*) You're offering me five percent less than last year. That's an outrageous amount of money.

Winters: Will that be a problem?

Cox: Yes, that'll be a problem! I don't think you realize how much it costs to raise cattle. I'm already paying the interest on the loans you gave me.

Winters: I'm well aware of the costs.

Cox: Well then, let's negotiate.

Winters: What is there to negotiate?

Cox: The price. What else?

Winters: I don't think you fully understand. This is our final offer. I'm not here to negotiate. I'm here to present Sun Pride's contract to you. Take it or leave it.

Cox: Well if that's the case, I'll take my business elsewhere. (*Cox starts gathering his things to leave.*)

Winters: May I offer you some advice?

Cox: What's that?

Winters: I believe you will have a difficult time finding another buyer. All the other livestock distributors have already signed with their producers. May I also remind you that you have co-signed on very large loans. Those will need to be paid off in some way. Sun Pride allows you to make payments through an exchange of your beef, making it easier for you to pay us simply by running your current operations.

Cox: What's going on here?

Winters: You are running on such a large scale that failure to sell all your product will

result in bankruptcy. According to our research (*He pulls out papers from a briefcase.*), you are also making payments on a 2007 Ford F-250 and on an addition to your house.

Cox: (*Demanding*) How do you know that?

Winters: We keep strict records of all your finances. The numbers we have gathered tell us that you have spent all of your profit from last year, leaving you without the proper means to fall back on in case you cannot sell all of your cattle or pay back your loans. My advice to you is to sign the contract. But that is just my personal opinion.

Cox: You-- why I-- when I signed last year they made no mention of any of this.

Winters: Times change. The consumer demands lower prices.

Cox: And what about those of us that produce the goods? Does the value of my cattle lower cause the consumer doesn't want to pay for it? I work just as hard every year, yet the value of my work is lower? Can you explain that to me?

Winters: As I said before, I don't have time for conversations.

Cox: You slimy businessmen. All of you are alike. Just in it for yourselves. (*He grabs the contract and finishes reading it.*) Well, I guess I got no choice. (*He signs it.*) I hope you are happy.

Winters: The American people are happy. (*He gathers the contract and his things and stands.*) Sun Pride Distribution thanks you for continuing your business with us. Good day. (*He turns to exit.*)

Cox: (*Weakley*) Go to hell. (*As Cox is walking off, another man enters. He notices Cox is shaken up.*)

Man: First year renewing your contract?

Cox: (*Barely noticing him.*) What?

Man: Yeah, I looked 'bout the same as you my first year.

Cox: Pardon?

Man: It gets easier with time. Sure, they take off a little more every year, but you learn to budget.

Cox: *(Repeating him.)* Budget.

Man: This'll be my fifth year. Got my meeting in fifteen minutes. Gots to get used to the room, otherwise it starts to feel like jail. Remember, it ain't so bad as it seems. Good luck. *(Man sits down at the table.)*

Cox: *(Walking offstage.)* Good luck.

Act 2 Scene 5

(Next morning at the Ridge home, Ignacio is dialing a number on the phone. He puts it to his ear.)

Ignacio: Hello, this is Ignacio del Fuego Gallegos. I am looking for Lucas Martinez-- He doesn't-- The meat-packing factory-- Yes, I see. Thank you. *(He hangs up and dials another number.)* Hello, this is Ignacio del Fuego Gallegos over at the Ridge farm. *(Levi walks in and watches Ignacio, who doesn't notice him.)* I'm fine, and you?-- Do you have a worker named Guillermo Quintana de la Torre?-- You do?-- Thank you-- Buenos días, Quintana. Soy Ignacio. ¿Qué tal?-- Bien, bien. Y tu familia, ¿están aquí?-- Que suerte. Te quiero preguntar algo. ¿Sabes si hay trabajo?-- Sí, para mi-- Tengo que ir, las cosas no quedan bien aquí. Sus campos van a cerrar-- Sí, yo sé-- ¿Solamente en la planta empacadora de carne?-- ¿Es todo?-- Okay, muchas gracias Quintana. Espero que tu familia estén bien-- Gracias, adios-- Nos vemos. *(He hangs up. Levi approaches, Ignacio*

notices him.)

Levi: Mornin'.

Ignacio: Good morning.

Levi: Do you mind if I use the phone? It'll be really quick. I just have to make an appointment.

Ignacio: Go right ahead. *(Levi picks up the phone and dials. Ignacio waits.)*

Levi: Hello, this is Levi Ridge, Maggie's husband-- Thank you, yes, she is a great lady. I was wondering if I could make an appointment with Estelle-- Yes, I'd like to know what I could get for the farm-- That'd be great. *(Levi looks at Ignacio.)* Oh, tell her I'd also like to know what I could get for a guesthouse-- Okay, okay. *(Levi writes down the appointment on paper.)* Thank you very much-- Yes, Maggie will be in this afternoon-- All right, I'll tell her. Have a good day-- Bye. *(He hangs up. To Ignacio)* See, I told you it'd be quick. It's all yours.

Ignacio: It's okay. I'll use it later. By the way, Javier didn't come home last night. He and Colt went out together.

Levi: They didn't come home?

Ignacio: No.

Levi: I'm gonna whoop Colt. He didn't come home the night before either. Something's going on.

Ignacio: Well, don't worry about it. When they do get back, if you see Javier, will you tell him to come see me?

Levi: Sure, no problem.

Ignacio: Thank you. *(He exits. Levi picks up the real estate appointment and looks at it.*

With his other hand he reaches into his pocket and pulls out the piece of iron pyrite. As he looks at the pyrite, a flashback transition occurs. Lights go low on Levi and up on the outdoors. Levi watches as his father enters and begins working on something outside. A young Levi, about nine years old enters and runs up to his father.)

Young Levi: Dad, dad you're not gonna believe what I found today.

Douglas: What's that Levi?

Levi: I was playing up near the cliffs and I saw something shiny in the rocks. It was stuck in the side. I had to bust it out with another rock. *(He pulls out the pyrite from his pocket.)*

Look Pop, gold! There was a ton up there. We're gonna be rich.

Douglas: Give that here son. *(He inspects it).* You say you found this up by the cliffs eh?

Levi: *(Proud)* Yes sir.

Douglas: You done good, boy. Only problem is, this here ain't gold.

Levi: Yes it is, look at it. It's gold.

Douglas: *(Stern)* Don't talk back, son.

Levi: *(Bowing head)* Yes sir.

Douglas: Nope, this here is iron pyrite. Come feel it. It's hard. Gold is real soft and a lot heavier. *(Levi feels it.)* This is what you call fool's gold.

Levi: Fool's gold.

Douglas: Yup, that's the stuff. It ain't worth squat.

Levi: So we're not gonna be millionaires?

Douglas: You wanna see some gold son? 'Cause I gots lots of it.

Levi: You do?

Douglas: Sure do. Take a look at the fields. What do you see?

Levi: All I see is corn.

Douglas: Exactly. *(He grabs a piece of corn from a basket) Watch. (He rips open the husk to reveal a golden interior.)* That, my boy, is gold. And I got acres and acres of it.

Levi: Oh, I thought you were serious.

Douglas: I am serious. This crop of mine is worth as much as gold; you remember that. You think it's a coincidence that you find gold and corn in the same part of the country: The West? No sir-ree, that ain't a coincidence. God planted them here himself.

Levi: Wow.

Douglas: All right now, run along. *(Douglas gives Levi the pyrite.)* I gotta finish some work. *(Levi turns to run yelling "bye" as he goes. Douglas calls after him.)* And don't go selling that to none of your friends, you hear? *(A groan is heard from young Levi as he exits. Lights fade up on Levi inside who is still watching his father work.)*

Levi: What did you know? It's all fool's gold. *(He puts down the pyrite by the phone. He folds the paper with his appointment on it and puts it into his breast pocket. Lights out on all.)*

Act 2 Scene 6

(Back in the mountains. Javier is sleeping on the ground. Colt is nowhere to be seen. The tequila bottle is empty. It is morning. Colt comes running in)

Colt: Wake up! *(Javier groans, hung over.)* Come on get up!

Javier: Not so loud. Can it wait?

Colt: No! We were got too drunk last night when we hung up the cow. We hung it on a dead branch. Damn thing broke and half the cow has been soaking in its own blood all

night. It's ruined.

Javier: (*Getting up.*) No way. There's gotta be some meat that's still good.

Colt: A little maybe. Fuck! All this for nothing.

Javier: Well let's cut off what we can.

Colt: I guess. There will only be about as much as I'd be buying any way. It's kinda useless.

Javier: It'll save your family the money for a month's worth of meat.

Colt: What, you think I can just come home with the meat and tell my dad it all free and give back the money he sent me with? No! He'd know something was wrong about it.

Javier: Then just give him a little meat at a time like you were going to.

Colt: It's still not enough. Face it. We failed. A couple extra sirloins a month ain't gonna feed a family. Maybe he's right. I can't even kill a cow properly, let alone take over a farm.

Javier: Come on don't think that. What's up with you?

Colt: No he's always been right about me. I'm not the son he wanted.

Javier: Oh yeah, then who is?

Colt: Are you blind? You are!

Javier: (*Surprised*) Me?

Colt: Yeah of course. Are you kidding? Who's side does he always take? (*Imitating Levi.*) "I don't see Javier actin' a fool." "Good thing Javier is there to bail you out, Colt."

Javier: Stop it.

Colt: Look, I don't need ya anymore, and frankly I'm getting tired of ya. Just go home and take my place. (*Javier doesn't say anything for a beat, then quietly mumbles.*)

Javier: Fuck you.

Colt: What?

Javier: (*Yelling*) Fuck you, Colt! Last night you were criticizing your dad for whining and here you are this morning playing the victim.

Colt: (*Threatening him.*) You better shut your trap.

Javier: Yeah and you better pick yourself up by the bootstraps and start actin' like a cowboy not a sally.

Colt: (*Advancing toward him.*) Who are you to talk?

Javier: Hey, I at least got a hat. (*Referring to the hat Colt gave him*)

Colt: Oh, you're dead!

Javier: Bring it. You're outta shape. (*Colt grasps Javier's shoulders. Javier does the same but uses Colt's momentum to throw him on the ground. Javi goes down with him but stays on top, pinning Colt to the ground. Colt struggles but can't get up.*) You ever hear of tough love, hombre? You think your dad is any different than mine? No, they both don't compliment us. They expect us to do everything right from the beginning or we're failures. You think my dad likes me playing baseball? No he says it's a waste of time. And you know what? When I get home my dads gonna sit me down and lecture me for staying out all night. And do you know why? 'Cause he wants what's best for me. Your father's exactly the same and if you can't see that, you really are a dumb hick. (*Javier pushes Colt away, gets up, and backs off.*) Tough fuckin' love. (*Colt gets up and is staring at Javier. Javier yells.*) What!?

Colt: Look-- I don't really wanna say you're right or nothin', but-- (*He catches his breath*) I ain't been thrown down like that in years, so I listened. And while you were

spittin' all over my face, I thought of something.

Javier: What's that?

Colt: I got a plan.

Javier: *(Does not speak immediately.)* All right. All right now you're talking like a kid from the range. Let's go cut up the cow and you can tell it to me. *(Javier walks over and picks up the hat that fell off during the tussle and puts it on.)*

Colt: Okay, sounds good. *(He puts his hand out to shake)* Partners in crime? *(Javier looks at him and slaps a firm handshake.)*

Javier: Partners.

Colt: Good. Mexicans know more about crime than white folk.

Javier: Shut up, daddy's boy. *(They both smile a little and start walking offstage.)*

Colt: Real clever tonto.

Javier: Honkey. *(They exit)*

Act 2 Scene 7

(Levi is outside trying to fix some machinery. Colt enters and walks up to him.)

Colt: Hey Dad.

Levi: *(Noticing him.)* Where you been? It's almost nine. PM!

Colt: I--

Levi: Ignacio's been looking for Javier. He's almost as pissed off at Javier as I am at you.

Colt: I know.

Levi: How could you know? You haven't been here worried.

Colt: I know.

Levi: Are you talking back to me?

Colt: No.

Levi: That the only word you can say?

Colt: No. Look, I got something to tell ya.

Levi: I need to say something to you too.

Colt: Go ahead.

Levi: No, you go first.

Colt: Okay. I applied for college.

Levi: (*Shocked*) You did?

Colt: And I got in.

Levi: (*Smiling now.*) Where?

Colt: Here.

Levi: Here? There ain't no college here.

Colt: Yes there is. Right here at home. It's on the internet.

Levi: (*Now skeptical.*) Really? You must be dumb if you think they accepted you. Of course they accepted you. They accept everybody. It's a scam. That degree ain't worth shit.

Man, I thought you were serious.

Colt: I am. It's a real degree. You watch class online. It's all videos. They send you the books, and you do your homework online.

Levi: You realize we don't have the internet.

Colt: We're getting it.

Levi: And you expect me to pay for all this.

Colt: It's paid already.

Levi: What, the internet? That's forty bucks a--

Colt: No, all of it. The courses and the internet.

Levi: And how much did this cost.

Colt: Don't worry about it. I got it covered. I'm thinkin' Ignacio can help me out with business. He can even teach me his own classes. This way I can still help in the fields.

Levi: How much?!

Colt: \$3,000 a year.

Levi: WHAT!!! And how may I ask do you have it covered.?

Colt: Well, I went and talked with Curt down at the credit union and it turns out I qualify for financial aid. I signed up. He said he did your taxes and still had the records. I can get up to \$6,000 a semester.

Levi: (*Upset*) You realize you gotta pay all that back.

Colt: Not much of it. Most of it is grants. Damn dad, we're poor.

Levi: No, you return all that. I won't have you wastin' money on a scam.

Colt: Will you quit calling it a scam? I did my research. The government acknowledges it.

Levi: The government acknowledges a lot of scams.

Colt: Come on, I bought the internet already.

Levi: They gave you the money right there?

Colt: No, I paid for it out of my own pocket.

Levi: Where you gettin' all this money from, Colt?

Colt: I earned it.

Levi: Don't lie to me. Where's that money I gave ya for the butcher's?

Colt: I bought the meat. It's in my truck.

Levi: I talked to Gary today. He said you didn't come in. I called him when no one knew where you and Javier were. Where's that money and where the hell did you get the meat from!? *(Colt is thinking.)* Colt!

Colt: Look, there ain't no gettin' around the truth, so I'm gonna tell ya honestly. I poached a cow and took your money to pay for the internet.

Levi: *(In disbelief.)* Say that again.

Colt: I killed a free range cow. One of Britton's . And used the money for the application form and the internet. *(Levi let's out one chuckle. Then another. He slowly begins to laugh.)*

Levi: Now if you are really telling me the truth, then that's the most god damn insane idea I heard in a while.

Colt: The branch it was hanging on broke. We lost most of the meat. *(Levi bursts out laughing even harder.)*

Levi: And I thought you went and done something stupid. Turns out you gone and done something crazy. That's what I should have been doing for years. *(Levi is roaring with laughter now. Colt is not sure how to react. He begins laughing along with him.)* And from Britton. Perfect!

Colt: I thought you'd be mad. You're crazier than I am.

Levi: *(Levi begins to settle down some)* At this point, I ain't mad. I'm just glad your trying your damndest. Truth is, nothing really matters anymore Colt.

Colt: What do mean?

Levi: I wasn't sure how I was gonna tell you this, but since you came out and told me honestly what you had done, I gotta be just as straight with you. Ha. We're losing the farm. Ha!

Colt: What? Why you laughin'? You're jokin'.

Levi: 'Fraid not. Not his time. I dunno what I'm gonna do with it quite yet. Ignacio's leaving. I'm not goin' through Sun Pride that's for sure. Got a call from Cox this morning. Poor guy got screwed over again, but then again we're gettin' screwed over too.

Colt: You serious? You don't have a plan?

Levi: Not this time son.

Colt: All right! I got one for ya. I wasn't finished telling you everything. While I was researching them colleges at the library today I searched something Javier was telling me about. He said he noticed that when you go into the grocery store they got that new organics section. All the prices are more expensive. I figured that the farmers growing it must be makin' more money. So I researched it. Well, they don't make that much more money but they're making more than we do. Most of the farms are small family ones like ours. Another thing Javier mentioned, it's all the rich folks buyin' organic, and we got ski slopes all over this area with money. Where do they go to do most of their shoppin'? Right here.

Levi: That sounds good and all, but that's starting a whole new operation.

Colt: I know. I looked that up too. With the extra money that I'm gettin' for college, it would be more than enough to make the switch. The USDA also gives out research grants if we document our progress.

Levi: Colt--

Colt: There's just one more thing. The Brady's have already made the switch. Only problem is they need to make their operation bigger to make profit. That's where we come in. We got land. They need it. Shit, the Bradys ain't a bad family. We could join forces. As a bigger farm we get more grant money too.

Levi: Look, I dunno. This is all too much for me to think about right now. Thing is I already made up my mind to sell. I'm sellin'. That's it.

Colt: Dad did you even listen to what I said? I got a plan. It'll work.

Levi: Colt, you done good son. I'm proud of you. But I'm tired. I'm old. Last thing I want anymore is to struggle to keep a broken dream in the air. (*The sound of a siren begins. It slowly gets louder.*) You hear that?

Colt: Yes sir. Maybe someone saw us. Cops don't come out this far. They must know we did it.

Levi: Now don't go panicking. Most likely it's an ambulance or something.

Colt: Look, it was my idea. I'll take the rap. Don't let 'em take Javier.

Levi: Nothing's gonna happen. (*The siren gets closer.*)

Colt: It's fine, Dad. Guess things just aren't going our way. (*The siren is really close. It's coming our way. The siren stops and a car sound is heard shutting off. Door heard shutting.*)

Levi: Son, I know I always taught you to be honest. But if you gotta lie, I don't care. This is the last thing we need right now. (*Enter Officer Clancy. Hello Officer. What brings you way out here?*)

Clancy: Well, I didn't want to come out here but I got a call.

Levi: About what?

Clancy: I think you already know. I suspect he's here.

Colt: Look. It's my fault. If you already know, then just take me.

Clancy: I'm not here for you, boy. I really don't see how this could be your fault, Colt.

Levi, would you call him out here or I'm gonna have to go inside. We have a warrant.

Levi: (*Confused*) Call who out? What is this about?

Clancy: We've overlooked it for years, but we got a call. The department can't ignore something like this when someone else brings it to our attention. Would you get Ignacio out here.

Colt: Ignacio? What's he done?

Levi: (*Aware of the situation.*) We took him for granted. I knew he was gonna go, but not like this. Not in handcuffs.

Clancy: As long as he's peaceful, we don't need the handcuffs.

Levi: I can't say no to the law. I'll get him. (*He walks to the guest house and enters.*)

Colt: What's he done?

Clancy: Son, I know you might not have been aware of this, but Ignacio, the man that lives here is an illegal alien.

Colt: (*Understanding now.*) What? And how would you know that? He's lived in this town for ten years without a problem. Why you come knocking now? He ain't done nothing wrong.

Clancy: I know you don't understand--

Colt: I'm not stupid. I understand. But why now? You all knew for years. But why now?

Clancy: Like I said, we got a call. If someone calls we can't ignore it.

Colt: Who called?

Clancy: I can't say.

Colt: (*Demanding*) Who called!

Clancy: It was just by chance, that's all. Pure chance.

Colt: (*Understanding. To himself.*) That motherfucker. (*To Clancy.*) Get outta here!

Come on, go on. This ain't your land. Get! (*Colt starts to get in Clancy's face right as a Levi enters with Ignacio and Javier.*)

Levi: Colt. Stop. It's okay.

Ignacio: It's all right Colt. I want to go home. (*Colt looks at him.*) I'm ready to go home.

(*To Clancy.*) I'll go with you. Just give me some time with my son. (*He turns to Javier.*

Colt stands next to Levi.) Mijo, ya es mi tiempo. Iba a regresar despues del verano sí o sí.

Ven conmigo. Viviremos juntos. Te puedo mostrar todo de mi juventud. Será perfecto.

Conocerás mi país. Tu país.

Javier: Papá. (*He gathers his courage*) No quiero ir. Te visitaré, claro, pero soy del

Norte. Estadounidense. Eres mi papá, pero mi hogar es aquí. I'm staying.

Ignacio: I thought you might. Te amo hijo. No me olvides.

Javier: (*Embracing Ignacio*) Nunca papá, nunca. Te escrito todo los días. Te quiero

mucho. (*Javier lets a couple of tears fall.*) Lo siento. Te amo.

Ignacio: Te quiero. (*Ignacio finishes hugging Javier and walks up to Levi.*)

Javier told me the boy's plan. It could work. Don't be a fool, Levi. (*He hands Levi the iron*

pyrite.) It'll always be fool's gold, but your family-- that's pure. (*He shakes Levi's hand*

who pulls him in to embrace.)

Levi: Gracias amigo. I mean that. (*Ignacio crosses to officer.*)

Ignacio: Take me to the airport. I'm going home.

Clancy: Right this way, sir. *(They exit. There is silence before anyone speaks)*

Levi: You boys want a drink? I need one. I think I got some brandy and some cigars.

We'll talk this here plan of yours over.

Javier: You two go ahead. I'll swing by later. *(He begins to leave.)*

Colt: Javier. Welcome home. *(Lights go down.)*